

FOREWARD

You will doubtlessly be asking “Why do we need another book about English?” What is special about this book that makes it different from other books about the teaching and learning of English? Why should I bother, why should I waste my valuable time and attention reading and studying this book?

This question readily reduces itself to seven more pointed or specialized questions to which we will try to give relevant and satisfying answers.

Question 1: Why does this book constitute a fundamental breakthrough in the understanding of the English language? Why can it make a dramatic difference in the speed, competence, and efficiency with which people learn to write and read the English language?

Answer: The ground-breaking feature of this book and system of instruction is that for the first and only time – unlike any other book or system now in existence – we have identified and provided numerous excellent examples (from students and professional writers alike) of **the eleven major forms of the English sentence**. With these eleven forms, anyone can recognize, learn how to write, and appreciate the stylistic efficiency of roughly 90% of all sentences in the English language.

Of course, the eleven forms so identified can in turn be subdivided into **more than 130 sub-forms**. Why does this, you might say, constitute a breakthrough?

Please be a little patient while we explain this matter, because it is a matter that is both terribly simple and terribly complex. You might say that prior to this book, it has always been standard practice to identify four kinds of sentences: simple, compound, complex, and compound-complex. Well, that is all well and good. But merely to define these kinds of sentences does not help one write them. Somehow, almost all composition books believe that by telling students the theory of four different sentences that somehow they have enabled students to comprehend the structure of the sentence and empowered them to write excellent sentences, or at least to recognize them.

In practice, everyone knows that students benefit very little from this. Why? Well, for one thing, **the classification system is too vague, utterly lacking in specific identifying features that can help students practice a varied repertoire of sentence constructions. This is an incredibly deficient system of identifying the most used forms of the English language**, and even with this deficient system students (1) are seldom asked to construct

more than a few examples of the four types, and (2) are never , or seldom, asked to practice them in the compositions they write.

We have now come to the heart of the problem: why this matter is so simple yet so terribly difficult to explain. It is so simple because what is missing from all existing composition books and theories is **that they lack any clear specific instructions** of how students can practice good **writing from the most simple to the most complex levels.**

Writing, as everyone should know by now, is primarily a skill that cannot – absolutely cannot – be learned through theory, but only by practice.

All skills – such as learning to write – can only be mastered by continuously and repeatedly practicing the skill. And people can only practice the skill and master it by dividing it into the component parts of a total performance **where the parts are seen to possess a visible form that can be clearly recognized and therefore steadily practiced until mastered.** The component parts of the whole performance of any skill must be mastered **separately at the second stage of learning, after they have been initially identified at the first stage of learning.** Then the **separate component parts or forms of the skill must be integrated in a whole, fluid, and seamless performance in the third, and final, stage of learning.**

Every skill in other words can only be mastered by incessant practice of clear models, or what we call forms, that one can emulate. You cannot learn to ride a bicycle by being told the theory of how to ride a bicycle. Many people know how to ride a bicycle without learning the theory of riding a bicycle. You learn to ride a bicycle by the constant practice of riding a bicycle.

You learn to play a piano by practicing scales, various patterns of playing, and the forms of music such as jazz, classical, blues, honkytonk, or pop. The theory of music is useful, some would argue even indispensable, but theory alone will not teach you to play the piano, certainly not well and not even poorly. You learn to play the piano **by practicing playing the piano.**

You cannot learn to play basketball in masterly fashion by being told the theory. You have to practice lay-ups; you have to practice jump shots from the key, the corner, and outside the key; you have to practice specific kinds of passing patterns. You have to keep the specifics of each skill in mind, until they become second nature, and **that can only be done by constant practice of the individual features of the game.** In the game, of course, eventually and finally, you have to put them all together. **The game is more difficult than the practice, and is the final test of your performance, but nobody plays a serious game without prior practice, and nobody wins a championship without endless hours of practice.**

Now here is the million dollar question for present-day composition teachers: **with the present state of composition instruction, where and how exactly do students practice for the game of writing?** Where do they rehearse for the final performance? **What inventory of skills or forms is required for both short and long compositions?** Presently, the practice and the rehearsal are all in theory (if at all), and theory does not teach anyone a skill. It provides at best an initial orientation and acclimation to the game. **And what is the orientation to the game of writing? It is grammar, usage, and punctuation. These aspects are useful and helpful, some would say indispensable, but when all is said and done, they manifestly do not insure that students can write a variety of sentences, to say nothing of a finished composition.**

This minimal preparation is far too theoretical, whereas in truth, **the students would be better off with just a short orientation in grammar, usage, and punctuation followed by incessant practice of the recognized, duplicable forms as used by countless writers both past and present.** The practice is necessary **(1) to build their confidence and competence, gradually increasing their abilities to write, and (2) to build their awareness of multiple strategies and competencies for writing – a repertoire of many sentence constructions which they can then employ or deploy as need, opportunity, and imagination demand.**

Students with such competencies and such a repertoire of sentences then know that they can **(1) write fluidly and copiously at a first draft session, and (2) revise and re-edit their writing with precision, grace, and clarity.**

Essentially, there are three levels that students must master to write well:

- (1) the first, or basic, level of grammatical correctness and competent usage of the language for which they need a brief grammatical orientation;**
- (2) the second level of sentence construction where they must be instructed and enabled to master a repertoire of varied, stylistically precise, and graceful sentences;**
- (3) the third and final level where they put all the sentences together in a grammatically correct, fluid, and graceful prose.**

Present-day composition theory is reasonably adequate at teaching the first and third of these levels, **but performs disastrously at the second level which is the most crucial and decisive level.**

The absence of a comprehensive, but economically limited set of sentence forms, has been and remains the crucial missing link in methods aimed at teaching English composition.

The first task is to clearly identify the most fundamental forms from which all others are derived. **The forms discovered must be few in number, or the students cannot use them effectively. We reduce them to the five fingers of two hands, with simple designations that are easy to understand and recall.**

This is a major achievement of enormous significance.

The next great advantage of this system is that once the students recognize the forms and master them in writing, **we have developed a method that enables the students to practice the sentences in long and short compositions and enables the instructor to control what sentences are learned and when they are learned.** Students are simply assigned a set of forms that they must include in paragraphs and essays, and that they are required to footnote when they use the specified forms. **This is a method by which students can practice the sentence forms in rehearsals or scrimmages before the final performance. The stress of the final performance is eliminated because they are adequately prepared for it.** By the time they must produce the final composition, they are ready to perform, because they have experienced their competence and skill.

Finally, once students have learned to write the sentences in essays, **they can also be asked to identify them in literary reading passages. The more they identify them in reading passages, the more they will be able to recognize and understand when the forms are employed in the most graceful and effective manner.** Day by day, their ability to write and to read will grow exponentially.

Question 2: What new and valuable knowledge or techniques does this book make available for learning English? **What is unique or original about this book that sets it apart from other books and makes it distinctly innovative and cutting-edge in its usefulness?**

There is much new, or newly arranged, information and knowledge about the English language in this book, including the following examples:

- (1) eleven primary sentence forms catalogued and described lucidly in terms of thought processes;**
- (2) twelve kinds of words (as opposed to the previous eight parts of speech) doing only five jobs in the English sentence;**
- (3) We announce, for the first time in a clear and unequivocal manner, that all language revolves around the bi-polar focus of the verb and the noun – a statement which makes it simpler and easier to**

approach and understand language, and a truth which ought to be a matter of universal common sense though – tragically – it isn't. We would like then to get back to basics in this matter in the instruction of language, or as the motto KISS says, "Keep it simple Stupid."

- (4) complete compendiums of correlatives, coordinating conjunctions, and adverbial conjunctions with much clearer definitions, descriptions, and examples of all three conjunctions;**
- (5) new definitions, descriptions, explanations, and instructions (along with clearer examples) of the powerful punctuation marks of the semi-colon, the colon, and the dash, highlighting these punctuation marks and giving them their rightful place of prominence;**
- (6) a new method of reading which designates two potent innovative concepts: the Meaning Unit and the Meditative Unit . These Units are extremely useful for fully comprehending the meaning of passages as well as for effective oral recitation and powerful public reading, two traditional art forms which have suffered eclipse from the domination of the printed word over the past five hundred years;**
- (7) a marked emphasis on the importance of the oral dimension of language, and new instructions of how adjectives, adverbs, conjunctions, and other kinds of words should be pronounced to achieve effective communication and understanding in both the spoken and written word;**
- (8) new rewordings and definitions of old terminologies , and a more accurate assessment of their relative importance;**
- (9) instructions on and visual mind maps of the creative process; and much more.**

Question 3: How does this book offer a more (1) more clear and simple, (2) more comprehensive, and (3) more organized integration and presentation of previous insights, knowledge, information, and data about language instruction?

Though our main focus is on the hitherto ignored level of sentence construction, **we nonetheless have provided a much simpler framework and description of grammar that will take a much shorter time to learn than what is available in traditional composition books.** For the third level, **we have provided mind maps of the composition process that will help students visually to remember the tasks and processes involved in writing.** We have also **stressed the need to join the practice of sentence**

combining with our own system to make it easier for students to practice rewriting which is so essential to good writing.

Question 4: How does this book make it tremendously easier to integrate knowledge about language instruction through the use of metaphor, images, and visual graphics as well as through oral techniques? How does it enable students to memorize easily and permanently the knowledge about language, writing, and reading that they acquire?

Traditional methods of composition largely ignore the use of (1) metaphors, (2) images, (3) graphic charts and diagrams, and (4) the use of the human body as essential means to enable students to learn, remember, and retain the key points and lessons of language acquisition and arrangement. Of course, **they tell students about the importance of metaphors and images in writing, but they don't use many metaphors and images to teach and explain grammar, writing, and the writing process to students. They tell students what to do in writing, but don't do it themselves when it comes to teaching the language itself.**

You need only consider our guiding metaphor of the Two Hands Approach to the English language and survey the 45 color charts in this book to understand how effectively we have used images and visual graphics. **And the entire book is integrated in the metaphor, image, and physical use of the two hands; it is itself an embodiment and incarnation of the principals and methods it espouses.**

Question 5: How does this book provide an innovative methodology by which the learning ability of students is immensely empowered through the use of shared contributions and community learning?

Students are empowered to learn from one another in an engaging, lively, and interesting environment for language learning – an environment that challenges them yet does not intimidate them, and enables them to learn gradually from the instructor and each other – going from the simple to the complex, and from the familiar and the known to the unfamiliar and the unknown. This method insures immediate success for all students in an enjoyable setting, in company with one another, sharing their sentences together. These procedures foster camaraderie, and provide an incentive to imitate the best sentences contributed by fellow students; there is positive peer pressure as students vie with one another to make polished and perfect sentences that speak to their generation, and that resonate with the voice and

ideas of their generation. The initial stage of instruction in this system does not intimidate or overwhelm students, **but it dispels their fear of language and writing, and proves to students that a method exists that enables them gradually and incrementally to master a repertoire of varied, excellent sentences. Once students realize that they can write many varied and excellent sentences, they have overcome the first major hurdle of learning to write.** While they still have a long way to go, they perceive that sheer practice and diligence in writing will make them at least competent, if not masterful or professional, writers.

Students learn best from the examples that reflect the situations of their own lives and not from examples in a dry, dusty textbook. When they see the interesting sentences of their classmates, they become interested in their lives, thoughts, and unique perspectives on life. **They experience the power of language to express, reflect, and illuminate their everyday lives and those of their peers, and language becomes a living, indispensable, reality in their lives and not a deadly textbook exercise.**

Question 6: Why does your book about English open with a discussion of Silence, what is so terribly important about Silence, and why do you insist that it is the inseparable partner, the other half of all Language? Why this insistence in your book that Language must be seen to abide in a metaphysical and philosophical foundation?

Well, readers, frankly we may have here an unbridgeable problem of communication, but we feel, if there is a fault in this area, it lies with the conceit or woeful ignorance of modern readers (and yes, modern teachers and scholars of all persuasions) regarding (a) the wisdom of Ancient World; (b) the nature of Metaphysical Reality; and (c) the overwhelming importance of Silence for spiritual, mental, and physical well-being.

The neglect of Silence in the Contemporary world, the absence of important literature and significant discussion about it, is truly astounding – an eloquent testimony to the obtuseness, prejudice, and blindness of so-called Modern People about the spiritual and transcendent dimension of reality and its constant, everyday, verifiable effect on innumerable aspects of life. The dismissal of the spiritual dimension of life goes back to the Scientific Revolution brought by Copernicus, Galileo, and Newton, though, as the eminent British historian Herbert Butterfield wrote in his History of Modern Science, those great scientists themselves never denied or minimized spiritual reality, nor have most of the really first-rate scientists ever done so. **"We should take care", wrote Einstein, "not to make the intellect our god; it has, of course, powerful muscles, but no personality. It cannot lead; it can only serve."**

If we do nothing else with this book, perhaps we may serve at least to acquaint the world with a neglected masterpiece of the twentieth century The World of Silence by the Swiss psychologist Max Picard. Let Picard have the last words about this matter:

"Speech came out of silence, out of the fullness of silence...Speech is in fact the reverse of silence, just as silence is the reverse of speech."

"There is something silent in every word, as an abiding token of the origin of speech. And in every silence there is something of the spoken word, as an abiding token of the power of silence to create speech."

"Silence is original and self-evident like the other basic phenomena; like love and loyalty and death and life itself. But it existed before all these and is in all of them. **Silence is the firstborn of the basic phenomena. It envelops the other basic phenomena – love, loyalty, and death; and there is more silence than speech in them, more of the invisible than the visible.**"

"There is more silence in one person than can be used in a single human life. That is why every human utterance is surrounded by a mystery. The silence in a man stretches out beyond the single human life. In this silence man is connected with past and future generations."

Of course, readers, if, in good conscience and according to your own reasoning, you disagree with us and Max Picard and believe what we are saying is bunk, you are perfectly free to ignore this aspect of the book, and profit from the parts that you do find valuable.

Question 7: Now that we have told you what the book does, to avoid unnecessary confusion, **what does the book not do, or presume to do?** This question is directed especially to **composition teachers, present and prospective.**

We understand that composition teachers are undoubtedly the most undervalued, underpaid, and overworked members of the teaching profession. We are not trying to minimize or downgrade what composition teachers have contributed in the past, nor deny or underestimate the great and steady advances which have been made in the last twenty years in teaching students to write. We owe an enormous debt to many groundbreaking works in composition – from the work of Peter Elbow to the recent great examinations of English Style by Joseph Williams, John Trimble, and Joe Glaser. We are not – and do not profess to be – better guides to proper style than these people, or for that matter than most composition teachers.

Our book does not profess to take anyone to the third level of learning to write, namely, **the third and final level where they put all the sentences together in a grammatically correct, fluid, and graceful prose. Only a composition teacher can take students to that final level, in close and concentrated interaction with the student where there is time for intense, individualized instruction of the student. But how many composition teachers today have the necessary time to accomplish that task? They spend so much time getting students to level one, and to some degree of literacy and fluency in writing at the second level that little or no time is left for the last and most important of their responsibilities: to get students to the third level.**

This book provides for the systematic instruction that should be employed in an introductory course in basic, usable grammar and in basic composition. It will insure that students come in the future to a more advanced composition class able to write grammatically correct, reasonably coherent, sensible sentences, and students will have learned to write with considerable confidence and fluidity as well as with some flair and sense of style. They will be at the point where a good composition teacher can then take them to the level where they can write coherent and polished prose.

Even more importantly, perhaps, this book provides that long talked about, much touted, but nowhere achieved system for writing across the curriculum. Once every student and instructor becomes familiar with the basic eleven forms of the sentence, and many of their sub-forms, then instructors in all fields can insist that students practice those forms in which they are found to be weak or in error. And the instructor does not need to engage in direct instruction or explanation, but can simply remind the student to practice what the student has already been taught. Moreover, the student has, in this book and elsewhere, innumerable models of sentences to examine for guidance and direction.

Finally, students will be provided with a tool that enables them to do Close Reading of passages in literature, and with closer attention to not only the meaning of a passage and to the figures of speech employed in it, but also **to the varied forms of the sentences**, they will have acquired a new power of attention and level of sophistication in their reading and writing that will remain with them forever.