

Committee since 1932.

The Liaison Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources (until the spring of 1970 this was known as the Liaison Committee on Agriculture) is one of several sub-committees of the Articulation Conference. In addition to the Liaison Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources there are also liaison committees for

Business Administration, Northern Section
Business Administration, Southern Section
Creative Arts
Engineering
English Foreign Language
Foreign Students
Letters and Science
Mathematics
Natural Sciences
Nursing Education
Ad Hoc Committee on Childhood Education

The Administrative Committee of the Articulation Conference is composed of representatives from high schools, community colleges, state colleges, universities, the Coordinating Council for Higher Education (a council established by the California State Legislature to coordinate the programs in the above institutions), a representative from the State Department of Education, and a consultant who is a representative of the California Community Colleges.

Although the membership of the Administrative Committee is different from that of the Articulation Conference, the chairman and secretary are common to both.

The Liaison Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources is composed of representatives from community colleges, state colleges, the University of California, the State Department of Education, and the consultant of the California Community Colleges as well. This liaison committee meets at least once in the fall and once in the spring of each year.

Prior to 1960, the state colleges were not included officially in the Liaison Committee on Agriculture. The minutes of the February 20, 1960, meeting reveal the following interesting statement:

"Members present decided to request the Articulation Conference to make the Agricultural Liaison Committee a tri-partite committee with representation from the junior colleges, state colleges, and the University. The unofficial attendance of the state college representatives has been most valuable and the difficult times ahead make it imperative that these representatives have an official voice in the committee deliberations."

As you can imagine, the agenda of the liaison committee meetings covered problems and opportunities familiar to all of us. Curriculum patterns, articulation, quality and quantity of students, relevancy of programs, entrance requirements, limited admissions, the future of the Industry of Agriculture,

and hundreds of other items were given considerable attention.

One of the most significant developments of the efforts of the Liaison Committee on Agriculture was the successful funding by the U. S. Office of Education of a quarter-of-a-million-dollar study of the agricultural occupations in California. By July or August 1970, there should be a report of this project. The occupational study was composed of interviews conducted in ten California counties. Questionnaires were mailed to every agribusiness firm in all ten counties that had more than fifty employees. There have been nearly 5,000 individual interviews and 1,700 firms have been covered.

The report should

- 1) identify and describe jobs, by level of education, available in California agribusiness;
- 2) determine the number of jobs in the state related to agriculture; and
- 3) present views of the leaders in the Industry of Agriculture.

The following paragraph appears in a progress report of the study:

"Contrary to some opinions, employee problems of health, absenteeism, accidents, and insurance were of relatively little concern. Even employee turnover seemed not important. The things that are worrying the growers and agribusiness leaders are all functions of education; time to train workers, lack of good trainers, the need to train and the lack of qualified workers were most important by far."

Another development which relates to the Liaison Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources is a study of higher education in agriculture in California. The Coordinating Council for Higher Education (CCHE), through an advisory committee, engaged Dr. George A. Gries, Dean, College of Arts and Sciences, Oklahoma State University, as a consultant to study higher education in agriculture in California. Dr. Gries has visited many community colleges, state colleges and universities that offer agricultural programs. At least a preliminary report of this study will be made this fall.

In summary, the articulation between and among institutions that offer agricultural programs is continuing. Every effort is being made to cultivate even closer relationships than the fine relationships which prevail. As all of you are well aware, this is a human relations, public relations "kind of thing." It demands the best from all of us in order to present the highest quality educational opportunities to prepare young men and women for an ever greater and more dynamic and, yes, ever more challenging Industry of Agriculture.

Research and Action on Teaching Writing Skills

Franklin E. Eldridge
Associate Dean, College Of Agriculture
University of Nebraska

One of the most frequently voiced complaints coming from employers about College of Agriculture graduates is related to their inability to communicate, with special reference to writing. Graduates from other colleges are also less than perfect in communication ability, but our concern is with our agricultural graduate.

As educators in the field of agriculture we, too, are desirous for our students to improve their abilities to communicate. We would like more accurate written answers to our examination questions. We would appreciate more clearly written term papers. We could evaluate content more accurately if words were not misspelled, if sentences were complete, if paragraphing were consistent and if the composition moved logically from one step to the next. Ability to express ideas clearly, accurately, and forcefully is important to a person's economic success, to his contribution to society, and to his own personal, intellectual development.

What do we mean when we use the term "communication"? Several answers can be given. In a broad sense it simply means to transmit information from one person or group to another, and to receive relevant answers. This involves many factors. The "information" may be transmitted through one or more of many senses: visual, auditory, tactile, gustatory, or olfactory; it may be accurate or inaccurate; it may be factual or fictional; it may express knowledge or emotions. Communication involves not only the specific ability of a person to express himself, but also requires an understanding by the originator about his audience, empathy. Frequently, employers or other critics mean any segment of the communication process. They may be complaining about attitude, personality, perceptivity, factual knowledge, or the mechanics of speaking and writing. Usually we educators have interpreted the criticism to be directed toward the ability to write (or speak) clearly, accurately, and without ambiguity.

In an attempt to correct the inadequacy, we have usually turned to our departments of English and asked them to improve their efforts in teaching English composition. They, in turn, have responded in various ways, one of which was to study their methods in order to adopt the most effective ones. A problem immediately encountered and not yet satisfactorily solved is one of determining an acceptable method of measuring achievement, and with this, also identifying achievement itself. It is simple to count misspelled words, lack of capitals at appropriate places, incomplete sentences, and incorrect paragraphing. It is a more difficult matter to define "acceptable" thought development, clarity of conveying the whole picture, accuracy with respect to detail or its lack, etc. The correlation among grades in the latter categories is not high. One report (1) Braddock et al (page 41) mentioned "reliability of reading" of 0.57 among readers of examination compositions, on the low side, to indexes as high as 0.90 in some cases. Kitzhaber (4) quotes (page 68) a study by Diederich, French and Carlton where 300 papers were given 53 "judges" to be placed in one of nine grades. None of the papers received less than 5 different grades, and "94 per cent of the 300 papers received seven, eight or all nine of the nine possible grades." The correlation among the 53 readers was 0.31.

A classic study was made in 1906 by Franklin S. Hoyt (2). Many books refer to this study, "The Place of Grammar in the Elementary Curriculum", which, according to Lyman (5) "Reports the results of measurements which disclose the absence of relation between knowledge of English grammar and the ability either to write or to interpret language." A more recent study by Harris reported by Braddock et al (1), on students aged 12 to 14 indicated no value from grammar study on ability to write, and perhaps even a negative effect.

Kitzhaber (4) reported on teaching of writing at Dartmouth, which was a general appraisal and review but with little attempt at analysis of new data. This report seems to me to be the best single book for your review, because it identifies the many segments of teaching writing.

Jewell (3) in 1968 reported a study from State College of Iowa which found that writing performance later in college was no different between two groups, one which had taken freshman composition and one which had not.

Based on reports such as these, which predominantly indicated that writing performance was not improved through required English composition courses, our English Department at the University of Nebraska told us that they no longer expected to improve writing ability through these courses. Our faculty, therefore, after considerable debate and study,

dropped these courses as requirements. This is fully effective in 1970-71.

We are striving to develop composition courses in a department of the College of Agriculture. This department already teaches technical writing. We are still convinced that we must try to improve writing ability, but may need to assist only a portion of our incoming students.

We are also committed to efforts to improve communication in its broad sense. The faculty members have expressed this interest with real forcefulness through debates on this subject.

In conclusion, it appears that teaching grammar and spelling in a traditional manner does not accomplish our goals to improve communication skills in our students. Furthermore, to require a freshman composition course taught mainly by graduate assistants, in a department which does not believe they can improve writing ability through such a course, seems to be reaching for a rainbow. We have no real answer yet. We won't find one unless we face up to the hard facts that improvement in writing is every faculty member's responsibility.

LIST OF REFERENCES

1. Braddock, R., Lloyd-Jones, R., and Schoer, L.
RESEARCH IN WRITTEN COMPOSITION. National Council of Teachers of English, Champaign, Ill. 1963. (Reported on study by Harris, Roland J., 1962, unpublished PHD dissertation).
2. Hoyt, Franklin S.
THE PLACE OF GRAMMAR IN THE ELEMENTARY CURRICULUM. Teachers College Record VII, 467-500, 1906.
3. Jewell, Ross M.
THE EFFECTIVENESS OF COLLEGE-LEVEL INSTRUCTION IN FRESHMAN COMPOSITION. Unpublished report. State College of Iowa, Cedar Falls, Iowa. (Information obtained from Research on Education Index 3(2):12-13, February 1968 as follows:)
"The writing performance of students completing freshman composition was compared with the writing of students not taking freshman composition when both had been in college the same length of time . . . Students (325) were tested at start and at end of 1st, 2nd, 4th semesters. Results show that writing performance of those completing a year of composition did not differ significantly from those who had not."
4. Kitzhaber, Albert R.
THEMES, THEORIES AND THERAPY: THE TEACHING OF WRITING IN COLLEGE. McGraw-Hill, 175 pp., 1963.
5. Lyman, R. L.
SUMMARY OF INVESTIGATIONS RELATING TO GRAMMAR, LANGUAGE, AND COMPOSITION. Suppl. Educ. Monograph. University of Chicago, 302 pp., 1929.
6. Sherwin, J. Stephen
FOUR PROBLEMS IN TEACHING ENGLISH: A CRITIQUE OF RESEARCH. National Council of Teachers of English, International Textbook Company, Scranton, Pa., 209 pp., 1969.

Communications for the Vo-Tec Agriculture Student

Harold Kaufman, Coordinator of Communications
Lake Land College — Matton, Illinois

"Lead us not into frustration by delivering us from writing now and forever."

This is the prayer of many of the junior college vo-tec agriculture students as they enter Lake Land College. The vo-tec student who is enrolled in the two-year program presents a different set of problems when it comes to improving communication skills than does the college transfer student. The emphasis in the college transfer program is placed upon developing and improving the writing skills of the student. In the vo-tec program, however, a different orientation and approach must be utilized. This change in orientation and approach is needed as the typical junior college vo-tec agriculture student maintained a "C" or below average in high school English courses. His ACT scores in areas which reflect his ability to communicate is seventeen or lower. The low scores of the vo-tec student reflect four or more years of frustration in high school. This frustration leads to a lack of

confidence in the student in his ability to communicate. This frustration and lack of confidence often cause the student to take cover in apathy. This three-headed monster of frustration, lack of confidence, and apathy guards the door to the classrooms of the vo-tec students who are enrolled in the communication courses. If the instructor wants to succeed in helping the vo-tec students improve in the ability to communicate, he will find that it is better to tame the monster than it is to pretend that it does not exist. The instructor of communications will soon learn that this monster thrives in a course which has initial emphasis on writing skills.

The need for a different orientation and approach than is usually used in the four year institutions or in the college transfer program is based upon the premise that the junior college must provide an avenue that will insure the success of the student. If the vo-tec student is "plugged" into the college transfer English program, his prayer for insured success will not be answered, and the three-headed monster will continue