

5 The Relationship Between Style, Voice, and Grammar

Contemporary discussions of style often rely on the terminology of grammar, because it helps explain the rhetorical effects of language, both within sentences and at broader levels of discourse, such as paragraphs and passages. Earlier, we saw Elbow's difficulty in elaborating a theory of voice stemming partly from his resistance to grammar. While it is true that style is not a matter of grammatical correctness, style is a matter of using language in a way that grammar helps us to isolate and analyze. Work outlined here includes the stylistic grammars enumerated in Hartwell's article, "Grammar, Grammars, and the Teaching of Grammar." Unlike Harvard's New Curriculum, these pedagogies emphasize choice and innovation.

Many teachers may think of grammar as a monolithic concept. In fact, Hartwell identifies five different types of grammar. There is Grammar 1, innate grammar, or the unconscious syntactical rules that all native speakers "know" but struggle to explain. Grammar 2, linguistics or scientific grammar, tries to construct abstract models and principles that explain Grammar 1. Many teachers may recognize Grammar 3, linguistic etiquette, as the arbitrary set of rules that make up our idea of Standard English. In short, Grammar 3 can be defined more appropriately as usage—conventions that are currently accepted as dominant. Grammar 4 refers to grammar as it is presented in textbooks and handbooks; it is similar to Grammar 3, except that Grammar 4 also consists of yet more arbitrary rules about beginning sentences with conjunctions or using commas to breakup run-on sentences. Finally, Grammar 5 consists of the stylistic grammars that use the terms of Grammar 2 and Grammar 4 to explain the rhetorical effects of prose.

This section focuses on what Hartwell refers to as Grammar 5, specifically a kind of metalinguistic ability, or "the active manipulation of language with conscious attention to surface form" and "sty-

listic effect” (579). Hartwell considers Grammar 5 a “vocabulary of style” to be actively engaged with, “to be molded and probed, shaped and reshaped, and, above all, enjoyed” (579). Works by Fahnestock, Kolln, Williams, Christensen, and Weathers employ grammatical terms without dragging in the baggage of prescriptive school grammars. Yet, rhetoric and composition scholars have developed an aversion to grammar since the 1980s—including these stylistic grammars. In her contribution to *Refiguring Prose Style*, Nicole Amare traces this aversion back to the Braddock Report published in 1963, a report she describes as having “told us that formal grammar instruction not only does not improve our students’ writing but in fact may have an adverse effect on their compositions” (154). As Amare states, “We remain in the shadow of the Braddock study” (155).

In *Out of Style*, Paul Butler outlines a similar history beginning with Daniel Fogarty’s 1959 *Roots for a New Rhetoric*, in which Butler represents then-current approaches as dominated by correctness and “style qualities” such as “clearness, force, coherence, interest, naturalness, and other devices” in opposition to a “new or improved teaching rhetoric” based on the theories of New Rhetoricians such as Kenneth Burke (118). Richard Young’s “Paradigms and Problems” characterizes current-traditional rhetoric as preoccupied with “usage (syntax, spelling, punctuation) and with style (economy, clarity, emphasis)” (31). Sharon Crowley’s *Methodical Memory* explores an over-emphasis on style rather than invention in current-traditional rhetoric. Finally, Maxine Hairston’s Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) chair’s address, “The Winds of Change,” argues that teachers who focus on “style, organization, and correctness” (7) often overlook the need for instruction in invention. According to Butler, all of these landmark events culminate in the diaspora or dissolution of style into several areas within composition. As such, teachers lack a coherent framework for discussing language choices at the micro, macro, and meso-discursive levels.

Susan Peck MacDonald addresses the field’s turn to social-epistemic rhetoric during the 1980s and 1990s as a major reason for the marginalization of theories or pedagogies addressing sentence-level issues, including stylistic grammars. In the essay “The Erasure of Language,” MacDonald argues that other disciplines that might enlighten our understanding of language issues—such as linguistics, as it offered much to composition during the 1950s and 1960s—now rarely surface

in major journals. In her historical study of the CCCC, MacDonald writes,

linguistic scholarship embedded in the early CCCC sessions was often significant. Workshop discussions were summarized and published in each October issue of *CCC* as a form of extended professional dialogue, the kind of dialogue crucial for the compact work of an “urbane” discipline . . . these linguists within English were speaking at CCCC with authority about what and how to teach language, and their understanding involved complex linguistic training . . . both Chomsky and Sheridan might be part of the same discussion involving language. (598)

According to MacDonald, as the field professionalized and turned away from sentence-level pedagogies during the 1980s, it exiled language in general and became unreceptive to subsequent work in other fields that could contribute to the study and teaching of college writing.

A definitive moment in debates on style and grammar came in 1984, when George Hillocks declared, after analyzing hundreds of case studies, that “The study of traditional school grammar (i.e., the definition of parts of speech, the parsing of sentences, etc.) has no effect on raising the quality of student writing. Every other focus of instruction examined in this review is stronger” (160). Moreover, he added: “Taught in certain ways, grammar and mechanics instruction has a deleterious effect on student writing,” and that teachers and administrators who insisted on grammar drills for students “do them gross disservice which should not be tolerated” (248-249). Hillocks’s article all but silenced the debate about grammar instruction, regardless of its intent or methodology. In his contribution to *Concepts in Composition*, James D. Williams observes that the discipline’s major journals—including *CCC*, *Research in the Teaching of English*, *Written Communication*, and *College English*—“did not produce a single article address[ing] the question of grammar’s effect on writing performance” from 1986 onward” (317).

Without grammar, it is difficult to discuss style at any level, either within sentences or at a more discursive level. Coherence at the level of paragraphs and passages often relies on stylistic decisions at the sentence level. It is all tied together, and so failure to teach grammar

leads to failures all the way along the chain—paragraphs, passages, and entire articles. There is no need to see grammar as antithetical to style. In fact, many of the stylistic devices in classical rhetoric can be explained using grammatical terminology. The classical sentence scheme known as *parison* refers to crafting coordinating or subordinating clauses of equal length and structure to achieve balance or parallelism in one sentence, or across many sentences. For example, someone might write, “Although Obama lost a state, he won a nation.” There is also the famous saying by Neil Armstrong, “That’s one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind.” Both statements achieve balance by mirroring grammatical structures such as the two-verb phrases “lost a state” and “won a nation,” or in the noun phrases, “small step for man” and “giant leap for mankind,” both of which possess adjectives and prepositions in the same positions in each phrase.

The device *anaphora* can be explained as the repetition of words or phrases at the ends of clauses or sentences. So can the device *epistrophe*, the repetition of words at the beginning of clauses, or *symploce*—a combination of the previous two devices. Devices such as these affect sentences, but writers can repeat them across paragraphs or passages to achieve stylistic cohesion at the broader levels of discourse. This is especially true of anaphora; for example, Obama uses anaphora in his 2004 speech at the Democratic National Convention to promote his brand of hope as

the hope of slaves sitting around a fire singing freedom songs; *the hope of* immigrants setting out for distant shores; *the hope of* a young naval lieutenant bravely patrolling the Mekong Delta; *the hope of* a millworker’s son who dares to defy the odds; *the hope of* a skinny kid with a funny name who believes that America has a place for him, too. (emphasis added)

In this case, we need the language of grammar to explain the effects of this passage, as well as how the atoms of grammar enable its very construction. Obama effectively uses the repetition of a particular prepositional phrase, “the hope of,” in a series of dependent clauses that are punctuated by semicolons rather than commas. Through the use of the prepositional structures, Obama links several key characters through himself, the “skinny kid with a funny name.” One could only imagine how awkward the passage might sound if Obama had simply

used possessive nouns, saying, for example, “slaves sitting around a fire singing freedom songs’s hope” and so on.

Jeanne Fahnestock also treats syllogism and enthymeme as stylistic and grammatical units, because they are lines of argument that govern the organization of sentences (374–376). Rhetoricians from Aristotle to Quintilian regarded the syllogism as a method of generating arguments using major and minor premises, one famous example being, “Socrates is a man. All men are mortal. Therefore, Socrates is mortal.” Here, the first sentence is the major premise, the second a minor premise, and the third a conclusion. The enthymeme is merely a rhetorical syllogism that is used to tie together opinions rather than facts. Seen through style, both become a way of creating links between sentences, similar to the ones described above based on similarity, difference, cause, or simultaneity. The syllogism and enthymeme organize information at the level of discourse, but they require stylistic skill in working with grammatical units. According to Fahnestock, “Students [of classical rhetoric] needed enough grammatical competence . . . to manipulate the three critical terms into the appropriate subject and predicate positions in comprehensible sentences” (375). Once again, style occurs at the level of sentences and discourse, and we understand it via grammatical terminology.

Grammar can help explain stylistic matters across sentences, at the level of paragraphs and passages. Fahnestock shows that to create cohesion, a writer can substitute a shorter word or phrase in one clause used in a prior one (347). For example, the phrase “done so” can refer back to a verbal construction in a previous clause or sentence. The stylistic device *ellipsis* can also create cohesion by omitting entire phrases without substitution, prompting readers to infer connections between clauses or sentences. The most prominent pattern for creating cohesion is the given/new or topic/comment pattern, in which writers use sentence position to arrange old and new information (Fahnestock 348). Writers normally make old, familiar, or assumed information part of their subjects or first clauses, and then introduce newer information later in the predicate. Linguists use the phrase “right branching” to refer to sentences that reveal new information or more detail about a topic as they progress. These patterns enable writers to organize information in paragraphs and stretches of prose, generating a sense of cohesion that readers associate with stylistic effectiveness. Clumsily organized passages, with ineffective grammatical structur-

ing of old and new information, often come off as stylistically immature or undeveloped.

Writers also develop coherence through manipulation meaning relations between sentences, adding introductory clauses or individual words such as “likewise,” “however,” “furthermore,” “consequently,” or “meanwhile” to scaffold relationships of similarity, contrast, addition, cause, or temporal simultaneity (Fahnestock 356–57). Such words lend cohesion when relationships between sentences could be unclear. For example, imagine a writer evaluating a source: “The article contains some factual inaccuracies. It presents an interesting theory.” The relationship becomes clearer with a word like “nonetheless” at the beginning of the second sentence, explaining that the writer still values the source despite the factual problems. Fahnestock also describes re-statement as a stylistic move in which phrases like “in other words” or “to put it simply” lend coherence and clarity to paragraphs and passages (360). These are grammatical decisions that also create a sense of style or voice at the discursive level. Academic writers rely on these strategies to guide readers through complex sequences of information.

Parataxis and hypotaxis qualify as yet other grammatical patterns that work at a larger, discursive level. The difference between parataxis and hypotaxis lies in the loose coordination of ideas using conjunctions and the intentional refrain from subordinating clause structures. Hemingway’s distinctive style of writing owes to his use of paratactic structures. In the last few sentences of *A Farewell to Arms*, for example, main character mourns his dead fiancé:

But after I got them [the doctors] to leave and shut the door and turned off the light it wasn’t any good. It was like saying good-by to a statue. After a while I went out and left the hospital and walked back to the hotel in the rain. (355)

The paratactic organization of these sentences emphasizes the seemingly random and relentless event of experiencing someone’s sudden death. Readers might see the narrator’s failure to link these sentences as well-suited to the psychological state of someone who has just lost a fiancé. By contrast, many nineteenth century writers often show a much higher degree of organization by relying on subordinating clauses, as such a pattern suited the hierarchical social structures in which their characters were embedded. Edgar Allen Poe often used hypotaxis

in long, twisting sentences that conveyed the inner mazes of human emotion.

Now that we have a firmer appreciation for the relationship between style and grammar, we can look at specific stylistic grammars that have emerged over the past fifty years. The next section provides a brief account of the linguistic turn in composition during the 1950s. During this period, composition embraced linguistic theories of language and its explanatory power to help teachers and students define and practice style. Specifically, linguistics offered a technical vocabulary for talking about style that teachers found lacking in prior conversations. Several sections after that are devoted to theories and pedagogies of style by Francis Christensen, Winston Weathers, Martha Kolln, and Joseph Williams. These approaches all draw from linguistics and grammar to explain aspects of style.

LINGUISTICS AND STYLE IN RHETORIC AND COMPOSITION

Linguistics, Noam Chomsky's transformational grammar (TG) in particular, gave rhetoric and composition a useful set of terms for analyzing style and teaching it to students. Stylistic grammars that emerged starting in the 1970s rely on the language of TG. Before TG, articles on style in composition journals demonstrated a murky, fragmentary approach to its theory and pedagogy. They offered idiosyncratic ideas for assignments with little in the way of analysis, terminology, or method. Moreover, they accepted prescriptive grammar despite efforts by linguists as far back as the 1880s to demonstrate the ever-shifting values of usage (i.e., what counts as "acceptable" changes over time).²⁹ Charles Fries, also influential in the evolution of second-language writing at the University of Michigan, made concerted endeavors to inform college writing teachers about linguistics and descriptive grammar as an alternative to prescriptivism and mechanical correctness. The National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE)

29. Connors' essay in *The Territory of Language*, recollected in his *Selected Essays*, outlines several decades worth of linguistic research that never had much influence on writing instruction. These theorists include Thomas Lounsbury, Brander Matthews, and George P. Krapp, who went so far as to state that "in order to have a language become fixed, it is first necessary that those who speak it should become dead" (qtd. in Connors, *Selected Essays* 127).

published Fries's book, *English Grammar*, in 1940 with the intent of spreading linguistic knowledge; unfortunately, to little effect.

One *College English* article illustrates the approach to style before linguistics was accepted by the field. Written by plain-style proponent Rudolf Flesch, the article suggests assigning students sets of words to compose into sentences to illustrate "the great variety of expressions possible in stating even the simplest idea" (22). The notion echoes Cicero, Quintilian, and Erasmus without reference to the classical tradition. Flesch had already published books on readability in writing, such as *The Way to Write* (1946) and *The Art of Readable Writing* (1949), and he would publish *The Art of Plain Talk* in 1962, promoting what Francis Christensen later criticized as "The Flesch Doctrine," for its reductive insistence on plain style, simple words, and short sentences.³⁰ Another composition article from this decade describes classroom exercises in which students calculate the sentence length and types in their compositions to discover, as the author tells his students, that "You have a style of your own" (Rivenburgh 75).

Such microanalysis precedes workshops in which students read their in-class writings to each other, and then made suggestions for improvement in sentence variety that included combining shorter sentences and introducing clauses. Beneath these exercises lies a belief that "[a]s a student progresses toward adulthood he should write longer sentences and more of the complex type; he should vary his sentence patterns," although "[t]hrough carelessness and laziness . . . most college freshmen have got into a rut" (Rivenburgh 75). Although none of these authors cite classical treatises, they follow Roman prejudices in equating eloquence with virtue and flatness with moral vices such as "laziness." This trend changes after the publication of several books, including Fries's second attempt, titled *The Structure of English* (1952), Donald Lloyd and Harry Warfel's *American English in Its Cultural Setting* (1956), Harold Whitehall's *Structural Essentials of English* (1956), and Noam Chomsky's *Syntax and Structure* (1957), after which point composition scholars openly considered the merits of structural linguistics and TG for pedagogical purposes.

Briefly defined, a transformational grammar describes language through sentence positions that consist of different arrangements of

30. Interestingly, Flesch's 1949 book was re-published in 1996 by Collins, and was given a new title: *The Classic Guide to Better Writing: Step-by-Step Techniques and Exercises to Write Simply, Clearly, and Correctly*.

noun phrases, verb phrases, auxiliaries, and modals. For the first time, TG offered a unitary system of tree branches that parsed sentences into syntactically meaningful units. Sentence positionality is responsible for the infinite generative power of the English language, as speakers combine simple kernel sentences such as “The aardvark is eating” and “The aardvark is happy” in a seemingly infinite variety of ways. Sentence positionality and kernels later served as key ideas behind the sentence-combining movement of the 1970s, as well as rhetorical grammar (see Kolln and Micciche). It is essentially the same idea behind Erasmus’s notion of *copia*, illustrated through hundreds of variations on the simple sentence, “Your letter pleased me greatly.”

A number of books exist that distill Chomsky’s theory for writing teachers while still doing justice to the complexity of TG. One of the earliest is Owen Thomas’s *Transformational Grammar and the Teacher of English* (1965). Thomas notes the insufficiency of prevailing pedagogies addressing grammar and style, stating that they

are based almost exclusively on the models of the eighteenth century English grammarians. They are largely prescriptive, and their “explanations” of such things as agreement and the passive voice are based upon an intuitive perception of the structure of English. (11)

While recognizing that writing teachers do not need to teach TG itself, Thomas maintains that teachers “have not made use of all the devices that modern scholarship offers us,” and “have been content merely to preserve the traditional” (17).

Linguistic approaches to style and grammar appeared with increasing regularity in the 1960s. The linguistic approach was a refreshing alternative to those described earlier, not only because they offered a more precise terminology, but also because they did *not* fall into the trap of prescriptivism. Archibald Hill recognizes the socially-contingent dimension of style and “correctness” as shifting between discursive contexts. As an example, a school boy’s language may be too casual for class, but passes as “correct enough” with “playmates.” Hill even describes Standard English as inappropriate in some workplace environments, where one must communicate with speakers in different registers and dialects. From this view, phrases in student papers commonly perceived as incorrect actually involve the use of different linguistic registers. Telling students these phrases are “wrong” ignores

other socio-linguistic spaces outside the classroom, and treats language in a vacuum.

The linguistic turn in rhetoric and composition also revealed the subjective nature of literary approaches to style. Linguist Eljenholm Nichols criticized writing instructors for their lack of rigorous terminology and specificity in analyzing written works, stating that “contemporary linguistic methodology . . . provide[s] important data for a definition of style, that subject on which English teachers are wont to wax eloquent” (261). Terms such as “limpid, flowing, sonorous, staccato, lyric, epic . . . may do well enough to label a reader’s overall impression of a given style, but they do not really describe the stylistic features that produce the impression” (261). Nichols turns to syntax and constituent elements such as sentence position and the prevalence of conjunctions and appositives. Louis T. Milic echoes this critique when referring to the vague adjectives used by literary scholars to describe style. Milic labels the overuse of such terms a “Rhetoric of Metaphysics” (129) that contains “no method beyond the method of impressionistic description and a vague use of rhetoric” to analyze the various styles of authors (124). For Milic, the solution to this problem lies in “the study of style . . . by rigorous means derived from linguistics and the quantitative sciences,” a source of knowledge that “seems to be the inevitable direction such work must take” (126). Here, Milic anticipates the emergence of stylistics, a sub-discipline of linguistics that became popular in the 1960s and 1970s, faded in 1980s, and then regained some prominence as a discipline, especially in Britain.

Arguments for more rigorous approaches to style continued with articles by Richard Ohmann, Martin Steinmann, and Seymour Chatman. In a 1967 *CCC* article, Chatman wrestles with definitions of style offered by prior scholars, and eventually settles on a linguistic one that takes into account the “personal idiosyncrasy of expression by which we recognize a writer” (72), a definition he elaborates on as a “pattern of choosable recurrences, the idiosyncratic selection of features he makes from the language’s reservoir over and above the features it requires for its ordinary function” (75). Chatman supports this definition with a linguistic analysis of writers such as Samuel Johnson.

Some literary stylists responded with vehemence against linguists, as evidenced in an article by A. M. Tibbetts, who saw linguistics and stylistics as relying too much on “a manufactured, non-human language, which is rather like trying to explain the beauty of a woman’s

face by using calipers, a slide rule, and a book of logarithms” (634). Tibbetts’s remarks directly implicate Richard Ohmann’s “Literature as Sentences,” published at the outset of his editorship of *College English* in 1966, in which Ohmann directly acknowledges the influence of Chomsky in his analysis of a sentence in James Joyce’s story “Araby.” Ohmann also published work that attempted to usher stylistics into rhetoric and composition, though it proved unsuccessful after a devastating (and amusing) critique of its methods by Stanley Fish in an essay titled “What is Stylistics and Why are People Saying Such Terrible Things About it?” and essay that was eventually collected in Fish’s now-canonical *Is There a Text in This Class?* Debates on stylistics are explored in the next chapter, but for now, it is sufficient to understand stylistics as the application of linguistics to the analysis of prose, with influences from Chomskian grammar.

Tibbetts’s remarks do not mention stylistics as a discipline, but they do contest this linguistic, empirical method of rhetorical research offered by Steinman and Ohmann, whom Tibbetts sees as ignoring the “great writers and rhetors” of prior ages and their pedagogical models based on “practice and imitation” (634). Steinmann and Ohmann responded to Tibbetts. Steinmann answers that reservations to linguistic study of language seem to

belong to a depressingly large class of English teachers who believe their intuitions to be a leased wire to the World of Being enabling them to pronounce easily, authoritatively, and finally on all human questions, factual and moral; who, therefore, believe systematic pursuit of knowledge of any “fully human affair” to be either unnecessary, impossible, or immoral and fear that this “scientism” will . . . discredit their mystery Are Aristotle’s “forensic,” epideictic,” and “enthymeme” folk terms? Quintilian’s “metaplasm,” “schematism,” and “trope?” Are they part of a manufactured, non-human language? (635)

Ohmann responds in a similar manner, observing that Tibbetts’s view obviously “prefers appreciation to analysis,” though one “does not explain without analysis,” and therefore needs “the best analytic tools available” (635). This debate between classical, literary, and linguistic approaches to style continues through the 1960s, and ultimately shifts the discourse of teachers and scholars toward a view of style as depending on instruction in grammar, but not as a series of prescrip-

tions and rules, as seen in the New Curriculum developed by Harvard. Linguistic frameworks for style promote knowledge of grammar to enhance a students' awareness of options when composing a text, as well as sensitivity to the effects that construction and organization of phrases and clauses could have on readers.

Over time, a linguistic conception of style that uses the explanatory and analytical power of grammar had considerable impact on rhetoric and composition regarding the ways that style was conceived and taught. The turn toward linguistics and its grammatical terminology laid the foundation for pedagogies such as Christenson rhetoric, sentence-combining, alternate style, and rhetorical grammar. These approaches, explored in the next three sections, all share a mission to educate students about the implications of grammatical decisions for their writing styles.

Christensen's Rhetoric

Francis Christensen's contributions to style include the essays "A Generative Rhetoric of the Sentence" in *CCC* in 1963, and "A Generative Rhetoric of the Paragraph" in *CCC* in 1965, both of which are collected in the six-essay volume, *Notes Toward a New Rhetoric* (1967). Despite similarities, Christensen distinguishes his approach from that of TG, declaring that "It is not derived from generative grammar; I used it before I ever heard of Chomsky" (2). Christensen resists the linguistic approach that relies on combining kernel sentences. Instead, the key to an effective style lies in the "cumulative sentence" in which modifiers advance the "main clause" through addition (5). For Christensen, sentences and paragraphs move from general levels to specific ones. Sentence cohesion can be achieved by ensuring smooth movement between these levels of generality and specificity.

Christensen's pedagogy is articulated most thoroughly in *A New Rhetoric*, where he contests the "Flesch doctrine" (xvi), referring to Rudolf Flesch's advocacy of plain writing, simple words, and short sentences.³¹ Due to scholars such as Flesch, "we have no effective way to teach sentence improvement" (xv), he argues, based on his dissatisfac-

31. Rudolf Flesch recommends the plainest writing possible for college writers in works such as "Let's Face the Facts about Writing" (*College English*, 1950), and his books, *The Art of Readable Writing* (1949), *The Art of Plain Talk* (1946), and *The Way to Write* (1949).

tion with “chapters on the sentence in our handbooks and rhetorics [that] all adduce the rhetorical classification of sentences as loose, balanced, and periodic,” and so constitute “some of our worst perversions of style” (xv). As an alternative, Christensen offers four principles of sentence and paragraph movement: addition, direction of movement, levels of generality, and texture (6–9). These are explained in the first chapter, and the rest of the book is dedicated to writing exercises and exemplary passages drawn from literary works. The principle of addition refers to the expansion of simple sentences by tacking on free-modifying clauses. This core principle leads to the second principle that sentences should be cumulative, moving rightward, as opposed to periodic sentences with clauses stacked in front of the main clause. Christensen’s third principle holds that as sentences and paragraphs progress, they become more specific and concrete. Finally, the principle of texture refers to variation. By varying the length of phrases and sentences, writers keep readers from falling into a set pattern as they read, and thus pay less attention to content.

Christensen’s rhetoric received as much criticism as praise. Some who adapted his ideas include Robert Beaugrande, who sought to mesh his rhetoric with Milic’s theory of style to form a “generative stylistics” that would give students “the ability to go beyond the typical use of language toward the development of an individual style, to move . . . toward a set of registers to serve special goals, and to expand the options offered by the English language” (246). Despite a handful of adaptations, criticism almost immediately overshadowed Christensen’s generative rhetoric. Whereas Christensen maintained that stylistic innovation could spur reflection and revision at a more global level, the discipline never fully accepted the idea. David Stevens epitomizes such reservations when he states that style is generative “only in a secondary (not to say unimportant) way—as, to use a crude analogy, a storeroom of wood-working tools might be generative by its affecting and serving a wood-craftsman in ways that would result in his making a knick-knack or a cabinet” (174). James Britton refers to Christensen’s pedagogy as a series of rote exercises without context and a substantive theoretical foundation. Tom Pace interprets this criticism in *Refiguring Prose Style*: “What most of these critiques assume . . . is that learning to write eloquent and interesting sentences and paragraphs is somehow antithetical to learning to express ideas effectively” (22).

One problem with Christenson's approach may not lie in the above criticisms. Rather, Christenson's oversight may have been his dismissal of other syntactic structures, given his resistance to TG. It is true that the cumulative sentence is a powerful tool for writers, but it cannot be the only tool. Other stylistic grammars by Kolln and Williams treat grammar and its rhetorical effects more comprehensively, and they discuss a variety of sentence schemes inclusive of cumulative sentences, but not limited to them. While Christensen may have contributed to stylistic studies by showing the generative power of free-modifying phrases, teachers should be cautious of accepting his work at face value if it means the exclusion of other frameworks.

Winston Weathers and Alternate Style

Winston Weathers is another important, though largely forgotten, scholar who proposed a dynamic stylistic pedagogy. Weathers published three books: *Copy and Compose, A New Strategy of Style*, and *Alternative Style: Options in Composition*. These books build off of Weathers's central argument expressed in the 1980 CCC article, "Teaching Style: A Possible Anatomy," in which he calls on teachers to prove the relevance of style to students by showing them concrete strategies for negotiating rules in different rhetorical situations. As Tom Pace points out, "Weathers follows much of the same ideas about imitation that Corbett learned from the classical rhetoricians and that Erasmus encouraged students in the sixteenth century to practice" (17). Weathers offers a pedagogy of imitation that is dialogic in approach. Pace summarizes alternative style as follows: "The more styles students experiment with, Weathers argues, the more able they are to resist dominant structures of language and use language more democratically" (17).

In *Alternative Style*, Weathers grounds his pedagogy in a theory of Grammar A and Grammar B. Grammar A functions as the conventional rules students are expected to learn, and is akin to Patrick Hartwell's Grammar 4 (or school grammar), a series of exhortations about the proper use of mechanics and punctuation. When teachers correct students for beginning sentences with conjunctions or producing comma splices and run-on sentences, they promote Grammar A. By contrast, Grammar B is

a mature and alternate . . . style used by competent writers and offering students of writing a well-tested set of options that, added to the traditional grammar of style, will give them a much more flexible voice, a much greater communication capacity, a much greater opportunity to put into effective language all the things they have to say. (8)

Grammar B is similar to Hartwell's category of stylistic grammars that use the descriptive language of linguistics (TG) to help writers understand their options. Writers may not be consciously thinking about Grammar B as they write, but it helps to practice and imitate patterns of language until they become natural—something they do not have to think about.

Like Christensen rhetoric, Weathers's work has also been marginalized. None of his books are currently in print, and they are difficult to find. In an interview with Wendy Bishop in 1996, Weathers recounts an anecdote illustrative of the contempt for his ideas and the larger turn away from style during the 1980s. Invited to give a keynote at the 1982 CCCC in San Francisco, Weathers ultimately spoke to a miniscule audience—a fraction of the average turnout at such an address:

It was, in effect, boycotted Alas, though the conference attendance was large, I gave the address to about fifty people—in a vast, cavernous Hyatt Regency ballroom that would have held a thousand. It was obvious that that title of the address, or my reputation perhaps, had led vast numbers of people to stay away. (79)

Weathers's alternate style is a progressive one that echoes Bakhtin's work on dialogism, heteroglossia, and double-voicing. If Grammar A is the conception of language as rule-governed and static, it is one of the centripetal forces that seek to standardize language and make it coherent. If Grammar B is the alternative, having the tendency to disrupt standard practices in light of individual circumstances, then it is one of the centrifugal forces of language that work against conformity and standardization, maintaining diversity. Grammar A is authoritative, often shutting down a writer's confidence in writing him or herself into a discourse. Grammar B is more open, inviting writers to participate and appropriate conventions and principles for themselves.

Wendy Bishop's edited collection, *Elements of an Alternate Style*, includes a number of essays influenced by Weathers's pedagogy that

advocate a more creative style in academic writing. One fairly representative essay of the collection is Elizabeth Rankin's "It's Not Just Mumbo Jumbo," an essay that discusses less conventional writing assignments modeled on a class she completed as an undergraduate on the eighteenth century novel. As Rankin says, "One assignment in that class was to write a new chapter for the novel *Tristram Shandy*, a chapter that would show, through imitation, an understanding of and appreciation for the innovative formal aspects of that work" (72). Rankin offers her own students a range of possibilities that include such experimental academic essays. In the book's appendix, "Responding to, Evaluating, and Grading Alternate Style," Bishop advises teachers to construct evaluation criteria for these types of assignments based on a student's ability to transition between styles, take risks, and reflect on stylistic decisions in cover letters to the instructor (176). Bishop's appendix includes samples of such guidelines as well as grading options. These materials may be helpful to teachers interested in addressing alternate style in the classroom.

Sentence-Combining Pedagogies

Sentence-combining pedagogies of the 1970s adapted TG grammar and Christensen rhetoric by devising assignment sequences in which students were given lists of short sentences and then asked to combine them into longer ones using subordinating and coordinating clauses. A 1983 CCC essay by Ross Winterowd traces the evolution of sentence-combining from Christensen to Donald Bateman and Frank Zidonis's *The Effect of Study of Transformational Grammar on the Writing of Ninth and Tenth Graders* (1966), through John Mellon's *Transformational Sentence-Combining* (1969), to Frank O'Hare's *Sentence-Combining: Improving Student Writing Without Formal Grammar Instruction* (1973). Winterowd then explains the often-overlooked theoretical foundation of sentence-combining within transformational grammar:

early in life people acquire an almost total *competence* in their native language: a reservoir of potential that may or may not be realized in *performance* . . . sentence combining exercises give students access to the tacit knowledge in their reservoir of competence and thus allow them to develop *technique* [through which] they are able to switch registers and thus create chords that are, to them, unique. (83)

Winterowd points out a second major theoretical input from the distinction in transformational grammar between deep and surface structures that enables the understanding of roughly equivalent meaning from many variations. Someone can express roughly the same idea in one sentence, or in several. Winterowd attempts to inaugurate a new method for instruction in style that he calls “pedagogical stylistics,” instruction based on research in linguistics, literature, and psychology. Although stylistics had been a discipline since Roman Jakobson’s time, as discussed in Chapter 7, it had yet to fully catch on as a research method or pedagogy in the US.

Sentence-combining pedagogies were largely effective in helping students acquire technique, though they also fell out of favor due to the rise of post-process theories, specifically the social-epistemic approaches to rhetoric and writing advocated by James Berlin, David Bartholomae, and Patricia Bizzell during the 1980s that stressed writing as a social act, therefore teaching aspects of writing such as style less explicitly and more as matter of adapting to different discourse communities. For example, David Bartholomae’s “Inventing the University” analyzes the language choices of first-year writing students, but without the explicit focus on rhetorical devices or syntax that seemed acontextual to social epistemics. Bartholomae emphasizes students’ attempts to appropriate or “invent” for themselves the discourse conventions of academia, based on their perceptions of it. A social-epistemic pedagogy therefore attunes students to the socially-constructed nature of academic writing, rather than its formal features. However, contemporary stylisticians have argued that the discursive elements of academic writing manifest in these very formal traits, meriting attention.³²

In a synthesis of more than four thousand articles on sentence-combining and writing instruction, Robert Connors acknowledges the empirical success of these pedagogies, as does James D. Williams in his contribution to *Concepts in Composition*. These studies include those notable to college writing teachers, such as Combs (1977); Dai-ker, Kerek, and Morenberg (1978); and Howie (1979). A cogent retrospective on sentence-combining pedagogies appears in A. Suresh

32. Ironically, among the scores of articles on sentence-combining, there exists a practical, how-to article in a 1981 issue of *CCC*, co-written by James Berlin, whose later book, *Rhetoric and Reality*, would usher in social-epistemic rhetorics and contribute to the marginalization of sentence-level scholarship.

Canagarajah's *Critical Academic Writing and Multilingual Students*, in which he indicates that "teachers who use sentence combining have to be mindful of its limitations" because it "sometimes encourages the misleading notion that the essay is generated by stringing one sentence with another to produce extended texts" (58). Like most contemporary theorists, Canagarajah maintains the importance of "larger discursal and rhetorical processes that account for [an essay's] coherence," and cautions teachers that writers "who have syntactic fluency don't necessarily display complexity or effectiveness in their writing" (58). Thus, it is not necessarily that sentence-combining pedagogies themselves were preoccupied with form, but that they were (and are) easily misappropriated.

Sentence-combining and Christensen rhetoric were synthesized by at least one scholar, William Stull, whose textbook, *Combining and Creating*, shows the influence of TG as well as Christensen's generative rhetoric. *Combining and Creating* prompts students to combine sets of short sentences using different parts of speech, such as coordinating connectives (Chapter 2) and relative and subordinate clauses (Chapter 3 and Chapter 4). The rest of the book stresses the importance of the cumulative sentence, drawing directly on Christensen's four elements of effective style—addition, direction of movement, levels of structure, and texture (108–116). Following Christensen, Stull introduces students to a range of different types of free modifiers (e.g., prepositional, verbal, appositive, and absolute phrases), and provides exercises using them to combine short sentences.

Rhetorical Grammar

The past several sections have shown how different pedagogical approaches employed the descriptive grammar used by linguists for teaching writing. These sections also noted how social epistemic theories and pedagogies that arose during the 1980s faulted stylistic approaches for their preoccupation with formal, rather than contextual and discursive, aspects of writing. Rhetorical grammar serves as a response to this critique—a term coined by Martha Kolln in the 1980s, and revived by Laura Micciche in her 2004 article "Making The Case for Rhetorical Grammar." Micciche argues that "The grammatical choices we make—including pronoun use, active or passive constructions, and sentence patterns—represent relations between writers and the world" while expressing our attitude toward a given subject (719).

Rhetorical grammar is the study and practice of how language options have different effects for different audiences. For Micciche, “To shift the structure of a sentence alters the meaning of that sentence, as definitely and inflexibly as the position of a camera alters the meaning of the object photographed” (721). The ideas behind rhetorical grammar are now commonplace for stylisticians, and they appear to reconcile social-epistemic and stylistic frameworks.

Despite its unpopularity, rhetorical grammar rests on the ubiquity of grammar. As Micciche concedes, “In composition studies, grammar instruction is unquestionably unfashionable . . . frequently associated with ‘low skills’ courses that stigmatize and alienate poor writers while reproducing their status as disenfranchised” (716). It is precisely this negative perception that rhetorical grammar contests. Anticipating Micciche’s stance, Martha Kolln challenges the growing suspicion about grammar and style in her 1981 *CCC* article, “Closing the Books on Alchemy,” published in a special issue devoted to issues of language study that includes Joseph Williams’s “The Phenomenology of Error.” Acknowledging widespread attention to the Braddock Report of 1963 on the ineffectualness of grammar, Kolln critiques the methods and parameters of rhetorical grammar. She asks:

What do [the authors] mean by “formal grammar”? Do they mean memorizing rules and definitions? Diagramming and parsing sentences? Or does “formal grammar” simply refer to an organized subject in the curriculum? And certainly they would have asked another, related question: If formal grammar has a negative effect, is there an alternative that might have a positive one? (139–140)³³

For Kolln, grammar is always present in writing classrooms. Thus, the question is, “Do we acknowledge its presence and its importance?” (150). Sentence-combining pedagogies illustrate her point well, such as

33. Kolln turns to Henry C. Meckel’s “Research on Teaching Composition,” published in the *Handbook of Research on Teaching*. The study makes more reserved claims about grammar instruction, namely that “More research is needed on the kind of grammatical knowledge that may reasonably be expected to transfer to writing,” and that “teachers cannot safely rely on textbooks used in schools but must depend on the expert opinion of linguists based on modern studies of the usage and structure of the language” (qtd. in Kolln 140–141).

Frank O'Hare's *Sentence-Combining: Improving Student Writing without Formal Grammar Instruction* and Daiker, Kerek, and Morenberg's *The Writer's Options* (2007), both of which work on the premise that students can improve their style without explicit attention to "the study of grammar, traditional or transformational" (O'Hare 30). As Kolln points out, sentence-combining pedagogues discuss the same structures of language as do linguists, but simply choose to label them "who statements" rather than "clause modifiers" (149). The argument laid out here informs the textbook that Kolln later produces, *Rhetorical Grammar*, now in its sixth edition (discussed in Chapter 8).

Rhetorical notions of grammar reposition commonplace attitudes about style, such as clarity, as situational and audience-based. In 1981, Rosemary L. Hake and Joseph M. Williams published the *College English* article, "Style and Its Consequences," finding that writing teachers do not always reward students for writing in a plainer, more active style. In fact, their study finds that high school and college teachers tended to rate student essays higher for using nominal sentences (sentences that focus on noun phrases) that are harder to read than verbal ones (sentences that focus on strong, active verbs). According to Hake and Williams's study, "graders overwhelmingly preferred the nominal version of each essay over its paired verbal version"; moreover, the preference was so strong that "it appears to have influenced their discursive judgments about other, more general components of the essay" (437). Their results challenged the dominant ideology that certain grammatical structures always led to a reader's perception of if the writing as well-written.³⁴ In 1981, Williams also published "The Phenomenology of Error," showing that even conservative writers often break their own stylistic rules—usually unconsciously, and without anyone noticing. Williams's own deliberate "errors" confront readers with the fact that many stylistic rules are the particular, eccentric preferences of writers, codified in handbooks and passively accepted. Williams's textbook, co-authored with Greg Colomb, titled *Style: Lessons in Clarity and Grace*, takes a rhetorical approach to clarity and

34. Two comments in the article raised questions about its assumptions and methods (Secor 1982; Yearwood 1983), with persuasive responses to each by Hake and Williams.

economy of style still evident in the current edition. It is explored in more detail in Chapter 8.³⁵

Rhetorical grammar may never appeal to every teacher, but it is clearly different from acontextual approaches to grammar that value correctness. Approaching style through grammar requires the acquisition of a technical terminology, but one that is not so different from catalogues of tropes and schemes. In fact, many of the classical dimensions of style can be explained grammatically—especially schemes such as parallelism and antithesis, as these depend on knowledge of clauses. Writers may be able to develop a sophisticated style on their own, through arduous trial and effort, but rhetorical grammar endeavors to give writers a language in which to think about their styles critically at every point of their drafting process. As the next chapter shows, even scholars who contest the conforming pressure of Standard English, promoting linguistic diversity and heterogeneity in its place, use descriptive grammar to account for the choices writers make when deviating from language norms.

35. In a somewhat skeptical review of the textbook in a 1983 issue of *CCC*, Ian Pringle wonders whether any approach to style based on principles of clarity and efficiency, even linguistically-based and well-articulated, should be taught to freshmen, or whether they are best saved for upper-level writing classes or even education beyond college.