

SECTOR ANALYSIS AND W

by Lynn E. Henrichson

Sector analysis, as embodied in the textbook *Working Sentences*, is rapidly gaining widespread prominence as an effective way of teaching writing skills.

Not a recent development, sector analysis dates back to the time when Kenneth Pike was developing Tagnemics—slot-and-filler grammar. Not until 1975, however, was *Working Sentences*, the first widely-used textbook based on sector analysis, published.

Unlike transformational grammar or other grammars intended to describe or generate the entire language, sector analysis is a specialized grammar designed by Robert L. Allen of Teachers College, Columbia University as a teaching grammar of "edited" English, the English used in mature writing. As the book's foreword to the instructor explains, "Sector analysis differs from most other grammars in two important ways: it is construction-oriented, not word-oriented; and it is a grammar of written English rather than of spoken English." The underlying premise of both the grammar and the text is that "in English, as in many modern languages, writing is a separate system—related to, but different from, the system of the spoken language."

Often called x-word grammar, sector analysis uses a number of modal auxiliaries called x-words to make yes-no questions, locate subjects, carry time, and much more. The manipulation of these x-words is the first step in dividing sentences into various units. In analyzing writing, language "chunks" are seen as being just as important as individual words, and student attention is focused on the large constructions that make up a sentence.

Intentionally ambiguous, the book's title, *Working Sentences*, indicates the book's dual purpose. The introduction explains, "*Working* sentences are obviously sentences that are productive and businesslike -- sentences that do their job. But there is also another meaning for *working*: potters work clay in-

to pots and vases, and glassblowers work glass into different shapes for different purposes. *Work*, in this sense, means 'to shape' or 'to form' for a special purpose." After learning what *Working Sentences* teaches, students should be able to produce sentences that exhibit signs of care and reflection; sentences that are more interesting, more effective, and more tightly knit together; sentences that have been loaded to their meaningful capacity; sentences that make up what is called "edited" English.

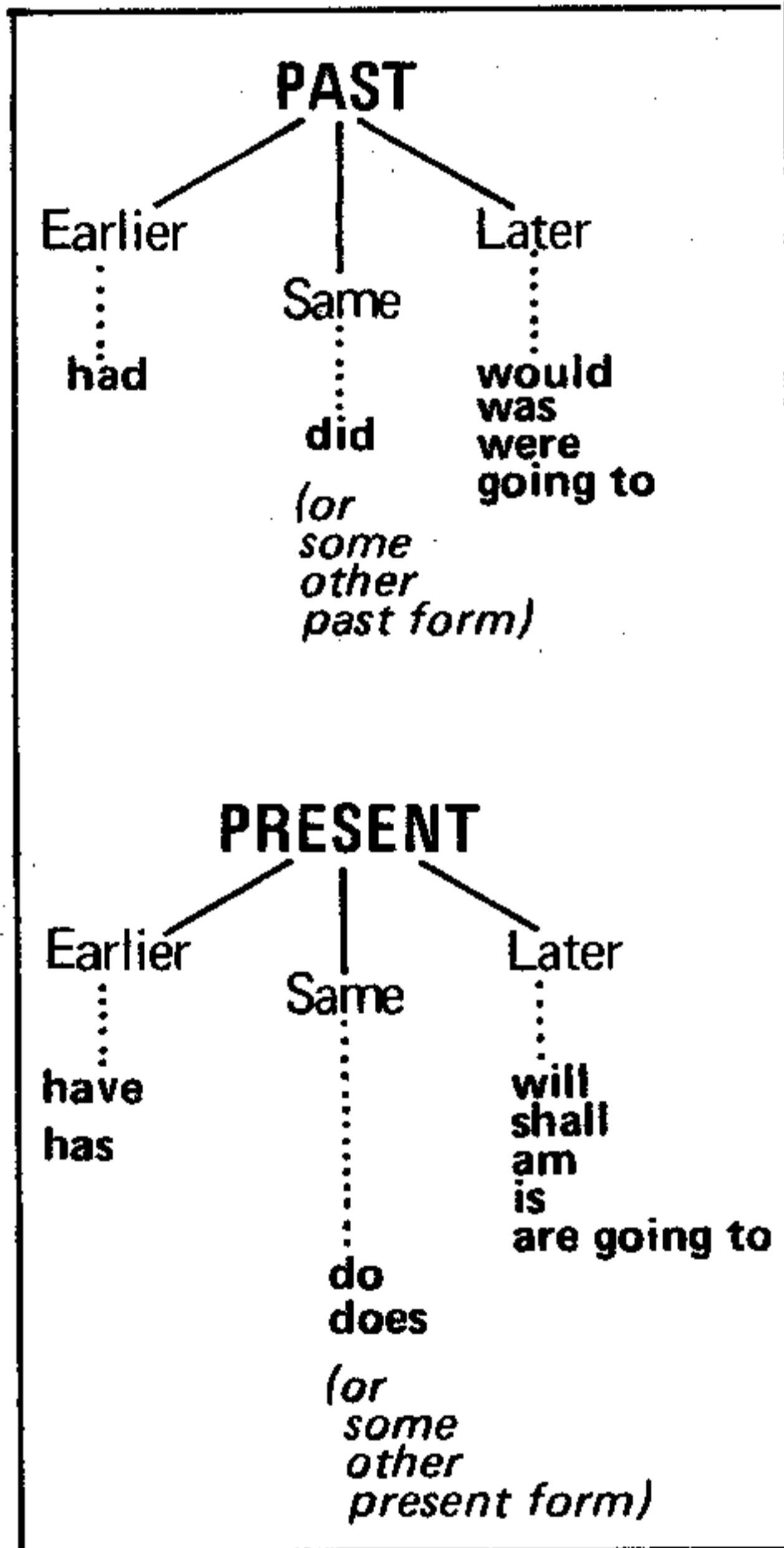
The first thing that many people see when they examine *Working Sentences* is a barrage of new and unfamiliar terms. *Shifters, includers, predicatids, trunks, half sentences, roving linkers*, and more confront the casual inspector of the book. Unfortunately, English teachers schooled in the Latin grammarians' tradition of eight parts of speech and the like are usually the least able to tolerate such a variety of new descriptive terms, and they are often the first to close the book in combined derision and bewilderment. This is unfortunate, because many of the new terms are more "logical," or at least more descriptive, than the traditional ones. A good example of this is found in the new names given to verb forms. Even staunch defenders of the traditional term "past participle" are hard pressed to define what "participle" really means. And besides, *past* participles don't always indicate past time (*Tomorrow I will have started*). In sector analysis the same form is called the *D-T-N* form simply because it most often ends in the letter *d*, *t*, or *n*. Following the same line of reasoning, sector analysis presents the *ING*, the *S*, and the *No-S* forms of the English verb. Rounding out the picture are the *base* form and the *past* form.

There is more, however, to sector analysis than just a new set of names, and to really understand this new grammar one should study the entire book. An example or two, however, may help to make the point here. The above mentioned forms of the verb are divided into two categories: time oriented (*S*, *No-S*, and *past*) and timeless (*base*, *DTN*, and *ING*). Since they carry time, x-words

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can only be used alone or in connection with a timeless verb form, and they cannot be combined with time-oriented forms. Once students understand this, sentences such as *He working*. (no time) or *He doesn't works*. (time twice) are eliminated.

Sector analysis in *Working Sentences* gives some particularly lucid explanations of the grammar of written English. Perhaps the most valuable of these is the treatment of time-relationships in clauses. A simple diagram in the book does much to clear up student confusion in this important area.



As the diagram indicates, certain x-words are used only in certain time slots. A sentence

with past time orientation uses past throughout: *Tom said* (past orientation) *that his car had* (earlier) *broken down, that he was* (same time) *trying to fix it, and that he would* (later) *be here as soon as possible*. Even though some of the events have already occurred (i.e. the breaking down of the car) the same sentence with present orientation uses present forms: *Tom says* (present orientation) *that his car has* (earlier) *broken down, that he is* (same time) *trying to fix it, and that he will* (later) *be here as soon as possible*. Any teacher who has struggled trying to explain this complex relationship to students will realize the great value of this simple-to-understand explanation of time in clauses.

Along with the new approach to sentence construction, time, and verb forms, *Working Sentences* displays good pedagogical sense. The book is very teachable with understandable explanations of the new grammar and very workable exercises for student practice.

The book itself is divided into fifteen units. The first five provide a foundation in sector analysis and, at the same time, a good review of some basic grammar concepts such as agreement, subjects and predicates, and pronouns, but approached from a different angle than traditionally. Just because it offers this new viewpoint, sector analysis' way of explaining the same old English is often helpful to students who have studied traditional grammar for a long time but never really understood it. After understanding the points presented in these first units, students will be able to write correct sentence *trunks* and continue on with the remaining ten chapters which explain the construction of more complex sentences and how additional information is added onto or "packed" into the basic sentence trunk.

Just as valuable as the new concepts and their explanations are the many good exercises which the book provides. Each unit has two or three "practices" interspersed through the unit and four "tasks" at the end which allow the student to use what he has learned. Whenever possible, a context is provided to make these challenging exercises

more meaningful. For example, Task A of unit four, "Writing about Past Time" does not simply direct, "Change the following sentences to past tense." Instead, it explains, "The following is a transcript of notes made by a private detective shadowing a suspect. The detective recorded his notes on a miniature tape recorder in his pocket. He intended to type them up later on. In doing so, he intended to change all of the present forms to past forms, leaving the rest of his sentences pretty much as he had recorded them, but you are asked to help him out by making the changes for him." This contextualization and humanization of exercises is appreciated by students and teachers alike.

For foreign ESL students, one drawback to the exercises is what may be called their "cultural difficulty." Interesting sentences about Andrew Wyeth or knock-knock jokes are not so interesting to ESL students who have never heard of the artist or the jokes. In some cases this extra cultural content may be an extra burden for the struggling student to bear.

A lot has been said about what *Working Sentences* does. Perhaps it would be in order to also mention what it does *not* do. After all, the book is not meant to be a complete English language teaching program.

First of all, it does not teach many basic grammatical points. Count and non-count nouns, proper use of articles, order of noun modifiers, and many other important points are not explained. It is assumed that the student has already learned such things through a thorough study of the spoken language. When students do not have a sound understanding of basic grammar, supplementary exercises must be provided.

A number of other assumptions are made.

In the Summer 1977 issue of the *TESL Reporter*, Mr. Henrichsen will report on the combined use of *Working Sentences* and *Composition: Guided-Free* in remedial classes for Samoan teachers in an in-country bachelor's program.

The explanations of how to use such things as includers ("Because he did not study, he failed.") are very good. But knowing how to construct such a sentence is only half the battle. Besides knowing how to make constructions using words such as *because*, *since*, *whether*, *if*, *in case*, or *although*, ESL students need to know *which* includer to use for the desired meaning or relationship and *when* to use it. Especially when their native language does not have similar terms, students will need explanations and practice in the appropriate use of such constructions and the proper choice of includers, coordinators, and linkers showing contrast, reason, condition, etc.

The proper use of a number of constructions is left to the intuition of the writing student. The book explains that a certain construction (the half sentence, for example) "does not always 'feel' quite right" in a certain position. Native speakers working to improve their writing may know when something "feels" right. ESL speakers with a good deal of experience and exposure to the language might also have developed some sort of "feel" for the language. Many ESL students who do not have this "feel," however, will need some explanation in addition to that provided by the book.

In summary, the title of the book, *Working Sentences*, provides a good clue to what it does and does not do. The book is *not* called *Working Paragraphs* or *Working Essays*, because it does not pretend to teach organizational skills, thought development, stylistic conventions, or many of the other things requisite to good, formal writing. Properly used, it provides an essential interlude between standard instruction in basic grammar and later instruction in logical and coherent paragraph and essay writing.

TYPING TEXT

In answer to many requests about the publication *Learning to Type in English as a Second Language*, the following information is given:

The publisher, University Press of America is a division of R. F. Publishing, Inc. 4710 Auth Place, S.E., Washington, D.C.

20023. Although the text and format are identical with the first printing, the second printing of this text has large typing-size print, with an 8 x 11 size page. It also has ring binding, eliminating closure while typing.