HING AND LEARNING ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

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by

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PREFACE

The English Language Institute of the University of Michigan has, for the past four years, been engaged in the preparation of new materials to be used in intensive courses in English for those of foreign speech. This work has been an attempt to interpret, in a practical way for teaching, the principles of modern linguistic science and to use the results of scientific linguistic research. In spite of the fact that there has been more than a hundred years of vigorous linguistic investigation in accord with sound scientific methods, very little of the results of this investigation has actually got into the schools to affect the materials and methods of teaching language and the actual conditions under which language teaching is attempted. At the time the Linguistic Society of America was founded, Leonard Bloomfield wrote

"Our schools are conducted by persons who, from professors of education down to teachers in the classroom, know nothing of the results of linguistic science, not even the relation of writing to speech or of standard language to dialect. In short, they do not know what language is, and yet must teach it, and in consequence waste years of every child's life and reach a poor result."[1]

Even where there are well-equipped teachers who have acquainted themselves with the modern approaches to language teaching, the administrative circumstances to which they must conform are usually such as to make impossible effective use of their knowledge and ability. In fact, the naive and conventional views of language have been so much in control that it has taken a world war, with its practical contacts with a dozen languages little heard of before, to provide an opportunity even to <u>try</u> materials and methods based upon our scientific knowledge and research.

In the teaching of English language the situation in this country has been, if possible, even worse. The rank and file even of <u>English</u> teachers are not equipped to deal with English as a language. In spite of the fact that "more time is being spent in the high school English classes of America today upon grammar and usage than upon any other single phase of instruction,"[2] prospective English teachers are given practically no training in preparation for this part of their task. Usually our English teachers know nothing of phonetics or of phonemics, and their knowledge of grammar is limited to the kind of sentence analysis to which they were subjected in the later grades of primary school and the early years of high school. The views of language that prevail in the schools and among even the "educated" public still perpetuate the authoritarian attitude of the second half of the eighteenth century and serve to create a huge market for cheap dictionaries and unscholarly handbooks of "correctness."

"The subject-matter of English Philology [Language] possesses a strange fascination for the man in the street, but almost everything that he thinks and says about it is incredibly and hopelessly wrong.... In no subject, probably, is the knowledge of the educated public at a lower ebb. The general ignorance concerning it is so profound that it is very difficult to persuade people that there really is a considerable mass of well-ascertained fact, and a definite body of doctrine on linguistic questions."[3]

In view of the facts, it is not strange that a search of the materials available to teach English to those of foreign speech who have come to us revealed very little that was soundly

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[1] Leonard Bloomfield, "Why a Linguistic Society," in <u>Language</u>, I (1925), p. 5.

[2] Dora V. Smith, "English Grammar Again," in <u>English Journal</u>, 27 (1938), p. 647.

[3] Henry Cecil Wyld, <u>English Philology in English Universities</u> (Inaugural Lecture, Feb. 2, 1921), p. 10. See also for evidence Leonard Bloomfield, "Secondary and Tertiary Responses to Language," in <u>Language</u>, 20 (1944), pp. 45-55; and Robert A. Hall, Jr., "Language and Superstition," in <u>The French Review</u>, XVII (1944), pp. 377-382.

effective, and nothing that had attempted to use the few fragmentary descriptive analyses of Present-day American English that have been published. Many important areas of our language--intonation, for example--had not been satisfactorily described. It was necessary, then, to start from the beginning, to collect the scientific studies that could contribute to our task of building lesson materials, and to engage in some that would furnish essential new information. After four years of work the materials for an intensive course in English for Latin-American students have been written and published in semi-final form in six volumes. The building of a text for an intensive course in English for Chinese students was begun in November, 1944.

In order that these materials may render their best service it is necessary that the teachers who use them understand the principles upon which they are based and the implications of these principles for teaching method. The present volume attempts to set forth in a non-technical manner the linguistic approach employed in building these texts and in teaching them. In each section of this volume there are presented the principles or the assumptions underlying the choice, the sequence, and the handling of the materials of the Intensive Course in teaching, with considerable detail of actual content by way of illustration.

Although this book is devoted to the specific problems of dealing with English as a foreign language, it is my hope that the discussion of these problems will also contribute to a general consideration of the teaching and learning of other languages. "Foreign" language teaching is always a matter of teaching a specific "foreign" language to students who have a specific "native" language background. Specific problems will demand special and different emphases but the principles of approach, the fundamental considerations, have validity, we believe, for all language learning and language teaching. In addition, there is another consideration which may make this book of special interest to foreign language teachers in the United States. In this country, whatever foreign language is taught is directed to those who speak English as their native language, and many of the problems of this foreign language teaching arise out of the special character of the English language. It is not enough for the foreign language teacher to be able to speak English; to be most effective he should know English--its sound system, its structural system, and its vocabulary--from the point of view of a descriptive analysis in accord with modern linguistic science. Teachers of foreign language in this country and, we believe, English speaking students would improve the efficiency of their approach to a foreign language by devoting a brief time to a preliminary survey of the chief features of English.

All who are familiar with the materials will recognize my debt to those who have tried to bring to bear upon practical teaching and learning problems the results of linguistic science. For particular help in producing this book I am under special obligation to the various members of the staff of the English Language Institute. Contributions that bulk large are acknowledged at the places where they are introduced, but there are other contributions made informally in the discussion of these problems over several years, that can be given recognition only by the expression of my gratitude to a generous and devoted staff of teachers and assistants. Dr. Aileen Traver and Miss Virginia French have made the reading of the proof much more than a routine task.

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CHAPTER I

ON LEARNING A FOREIGN LANGUAGE AS AN ADULT

Vigorous claims and counter claims characterize the discussions of learning a foreign language. On the one hand it is insisted that unless one begins a second language as a very young child he can never "master" it completely and even twenty or thirty years of residence in a foreign country will not suffice to remove the clear marks of a foreigner from one's speech unless he happens to have a "special gift" for languages. On the other hand one hears reports of men and women who, as adults, have learned to speak "perfectly" eight or ten different languages, and recently there have been many assertions concerning the "miracles" of language learning in Army courses--of "mastering Chinese during the voyage from San Francisco to India," of "learning Arabic in six weeks," of officers who became "thoroughly equipped in Italian in fifteen hours a week for less than two months." In this babel of conflicting assertions one naturally begins to raise such questions as "Just what does learning a language mean?" "When can one be said to have mastered a language?"

Such questions seem especially pertinent when we remember that in our own schools and colleges we continue to teach "English" to native English speaking Americans for some twelve or thirteen years, and then frequently insist that "few of our college graduates can use English effectively or even correctly."[1] Vocabulary tests made up of the typical American English words of sports, business, politics, music, literature, art, religion, physics, biology, mathematics, have provided a rather reliable instrument for evaluating the knowledge which our native English speaking college students have of each of these various subjects. The tests have assumed that unless one has had considerable experience in a particular subject field he will not know the typical vocabulary of that field. If, therefore, mastery of a language is taken to mean the ability to use or even to understand "all the words" of a language, then none of us can be said to have mastered his own native language. On the first trip through France with our automobile our two French friends were as helpless as we on the one occasion when it was essential for us to know the French words for certain parts of the engine. Their experience with automobiles had been solely that of riding with their friends and they were wholly unfamiliar with the French language symbols necessary to communicate our precise difficulties by phone to the garage workmen. In our own native language we know the words for those areas of life with which we have had some experience. No one, not even the editors of our dictionaries, can know all the "words" of our language. Many of you who read this book would hesitate and some would be at a complete loss if suddenly asked whether you "believe in the historicity of the common Christological predicates." There are always areas of experience in

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[1]The following statement represents this point of view:

"...a recent broadcast by Mark Van Doren....reiterated the old complaint that American children cannot read, write, or speak their own language properly. Perhaps we can all agree that this is a widespread defect and many of us may think this to be a peculiar American weakness. From my own experience, however, I can report that French and Dutch educators voice a similar criticism about the instruction in their native languages..." [In the next paragraph there is a long quotation from the report of the so-called Norwood Committee issued in 1943 by His Majesty's Stationery Office. The following is a part of that quotation.]

"From all quarters, Universities, Professional Bodies, firms and business houses, training colleges, and many other interests and many individuals, we have received strong evidences of the poor quality of the 'English' of Secondary School pupils."

Harry D. Gideonse, "The Coming Showdown in the Schools," in The Saturday Review of Literature, XXVIII (Feb. 3, 1945), pp. 5, 6.

which a native speaker of the language will not be familiar with the special terms commonly employed by those who work in that particular field.[2] "Mastery" of a language must mean something other than knowing "all the words" of the language.

It is true, however, that whenever we think of language and language learning we usually think of mastering the vocabulary--of learning the "words." This common reaction seems to arise from our experience with our own language. Very early as small children we master the sound system of our language. We learn to hear the significant sounds in sequences that become familiar, and then to produce these significant sounds and sound sequences with amazing accuracy. "The muscles of our speech organs have early in life become exclusively accustomed to the particular adjustments and systems of adjustment that are required to produce the traditional sounds of the language."[3] This mastery of the sound system of our native language has (for all of us without noticeable speech defects) become entirely unconscious and, like the ability to walk, we cannot remember the learning process. The same thing is true concerning our mastery of the use of the devices which our language uses structurally--the fundamental matters of word-order and the patterns of form. These we learn to use automatically and they are not items of conscious choice. The ordinary adult speaker of English finds it extremely difficult to describe what he does in these matters, so thoroughly have they become unconscious habits in early childhood. But in matters of vocabulary the situation is entirely different. The "words" one knows depend upon the experience one has had. A child's experience is much limited in its range. His vocabulary is therefore greatly limited. But he continually grows in experience and also in the vocabulary that necessarily accompanies new experiences. Unlike our early mastery of the sound system of our language and its structural processes, our mastery of the "words" of our language, its lexicon, is a constantly developing mastery. Knowledge of new words and of new meanings keeps increasing as we grow older and we are often very conscious of this growth and change. It is quite natural, therefore, that the naive person, thinking about language, should consider only vocabulary mastery, that part of his own language development of which he has been conscious, and ignore the learning of the sound system and the structural devices, that part of his language development which became unconscious habit so early that he cannot remember it.

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[2] I have just been struggling through passages like the following in a recent book I have been trying to read, entitled How to Abandon Ship, by Phil Richards and John J. Banigan, Cornell Maritime Press, New York, 1943, pp. 36, 37.

"SWUNG OUT.--Remove the boat cover, make it up snugly, and place it in the boat's bottom. Remove the outboard and inboard gripes.

Lead the sea painter, toggled at the thwart, from the inboard side of the boat well forward, outside of everything.

Do not put the plug in while the boat is hung.

Hoist the boat clear of the chocks until the falls are not quite two-blocked, and swing out. This will two-block the falls.

Fit a stout spar or a strongback to the davits temporarily, so that it may be shifted if necessary.

Chafing pads of good size are fitted to the strongback, so that they are between it and the boat. Shift them to conform with the boat's shape.

Use a handy-billy to haul the boat to the strongback, meanwhile easing the falls gently until snug up.

Keep shifting the strongback and the chafing pads or ease the falls until the boat takes up a satisfactory position.

The boat should then be griped in and the handy-billy removed. The gripes should be fitted with a toggle, if they are not already fitted with pelican or slip hooks.

The slack on the gripes should be taken up from time to time. Thus swung out and griped, the boats require watch-to-watch inspection, especially during heavy weather.

HALF CHOCK.--A safer method of securing the boat ready for quick lowering is to have the boat resting on a half chock, the inboard side. Remove the outboard gripes and lower the outboard half of the chocks. When ready to swing out, trip the releasing gear on the chock and let go the inboard gripes."

[3] Eduard Sapir, Language (New York, Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1921), p. 46.

Mastery then of the "words," the vocabulary, the lexicon, of even our native language is always limited, never complete. Growth in the knowledge of "meanings" accompanies our expanding experience. The mastery of the "words," the vocabulary, of a foreign language is also bound by our actual experience and takes time. There are no short cuts to a control of the complete vocabulary of a foreign language. Of course it is possible to find the few hundred lexical terms most useful in particular situations and really master these items first rather than try to assimilate all types of vocabulary at once. It is possible also to attack the problem of learning vocabulary systematically and efficiently, rather than in haphazard fashion, with no method, and leaving the choice of items to chance. This matter of mastering vocabulary will be dealt with in Chapters IV and V ; it is enough here to insist that one cannot achieve a complete control of the vocabulary of a new language in eight weeks or eight months or eight years. He can, however, master a limited number of extremely useful items within a short time.

In learning a new language, then, the chief problem is not at first that of learning vocabulary items. It is, first, the mastery of the sound system--to understand the stream of speech, to hear the distinctive sound features and to approximate their production. It is, second, the mastery of the features of arrangement that constitute the structure of the language. These are the matters that the native speaker as a child has early acquired as unconscious habits; they must become automatic habits of the adult learner of a new language. Of course these things cannot be learned in a vacuum. There must be sufficient vocabulary to operate the structures and represent the sound system in actual use. A person has "learned" a foreign language when he has thus first, within a limited vocabulary mastered the sound system (that is, when he can understand the stream of speech and achieve an understandable production of it) and has, second, made the structural devices (that is, the basic arrangements of utterances) matters of automatic habit. This degree of mastery of a foreign language can be achieved by most adults, by means of a scientific approach with satisfactorily selected and organized materials, within approximately three months. In that brief time the learning adult will not become a fluent speaker for all occasions but he can have laid a good accurate foundation upon which to build, and the extension of his control of content vocabulary will then come rapidly and with increasing ease.

As a matter of fact one can achieve mere fluency in a foreign language too soon. In the classes of the English Language Institute we have often had students who have come to us with a knowledge of a considerable number of English words and thus speaking with some fluency. Unfortunately, however, their pronunciation was not English either in the separate sounds or in intonation, and thus was extremely difficult to understand. Their use of structural devices was also not English. Such students, with fluency in vocabulary but with no basic control of either the sound system or the structure, are almost without exception hopeless so far as ever achieving a satisfactory control of English is concerned. They are usually unwilling or incapable of starting again at the fundamentals of the language and building up new habits within a limited vocabulary. Our teachers do much more in less time for those students who, when they come, know no English whatever, than for those who already have some fluency with no accurate control of the sound system or the structure. In learning a new language then one must not become impatient to expand his vocabulary and attain fluency. Accuracy of sound, of rhythm, of intonation, of structural forms, and of arrangement, within a limited range of expression, must come first and become automatic habit before the student is ready to devote his chief attention to expanding his vocabulary.

The "accuracy" which is advocated here does not mean the so-called "correctness" of the common handbooks--the spelling pronunciations often advocated there, the forms of words pronounced in isolation, the school-mastered structures that have no vogue outside the classroom. The accuracy here stressed refers to an accuracy based upon a realistic description of the actual language as used by native speakers in carrying on their affairs--the exact reproduction of all parts of whole utterances as they appear in the normal conversation of native speakers. Contractions and "reduced" forms are just as accurate and as "good" as full forms; they are more accurate in the speed of usual conversation and discourse. The language which is described and made the basis of

practical exercises in the several volumes of the "Intensive Course in English for Latin Americans" consists of the forms and structures used in common conversational situations by socially accepted speakers in college and university communities of midwest United States. This is the particular type of American English that is often called "General American" and said to be used by an overwhelming number of the people of the United States in carrying on their affairs.[4] It is fruitless to argue in the abstract concerning the relative merits of the various types of English. Each is the desirable form of English in its own locality and among those who are native speakers of it. In learning English as a foreign language it is necessary to decide upon the particular type to be mastered, for there is no single kind that is used throughout all the English speaking world. The practical approach is to decide for the kind of English that will be used by the particular group with which one wishes to associate and converse.

This same problem confronts one every time he sets himself to learn any foreign language. If one's actual contacts have been solely with the Spanish speaking people of Mexico, he will inevitably learn the particular type of Spanish spoken there. If they are with those of Argentina then he will learn the type of Spanish spoken in Buenos Aires. In neither case is it especially desirable to center fully upon the Castilian type of Spanish spoken in Spain, although if one has learned that particular brand of Spanish he will be able to get on in the Spanish speaking

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[4] See George P. Krapp, The English Language in America (The Century Company, for the Modern Language Association of America, 1925), Volume I, pp. 35, 36, 41.

"One may say that in America three main types of speech have come to be recognized, a New England local type, a Southern local type, and a general or Western speech covering the rest of the country, and also all speakers in New England and the South at the moments when their speech is not local in character.... This threefold division in American speech is a matter of common though not always of clearly analyzable feeling on the part of Americans. Merely as a fact of pragmatic experience, the average American realizes these large and representative types of speech which he ordinarily designates as Eastern, Western, and Southern. He may realize also a number of other less extensive local types, but there is no other type which he would be inclined to place upon the same level as these three in comprehensiveness and in significance. The geographical terms, Eastern, Western, and Southern, are commonly used, to be sure, without any implications of clearly defined geographical boundaries between the several types of speech. Neither is it ordinarily implied by this use of terms that all speakers in any community speak uniformly. It is recognized that there may be as much difference between a speaker from Eastern Massachusetts and one from Western Connecticut as from one from Western Massachusetts and one from Ohio. The terms Eastern, Southern, and Western are merely used to designate several types of speech which though not finally and scientifically differentiated either socially or geographically in the popular mind, are nevertheless in practice distinguishable in the experience of every observant American....

"The New England type of speech had for its center that life of Eastern Massachusetts and Connecticut which by the end of the seventeenth century had passed out of experimental uncertainties into an organic social unity such as could have been found at no other place in the North at that time. The striking characteristic of the New England of the early colonists was its unity.... The same thing was true in the South. The earliest seventeenth century settlers of tidewater Virginia were in general of the same kind. They all came at about the same time and with the same purposes. They developed their own civilization within their own limits and they gave to this civilization...a typical quality.... The eastern Massachusetts towns and villages and the plantations of the James and Rappahannock established themselves as fixed but radiating centers of cultural influence before the great movements westward began and before the great tides of European immigration set in. The population of these two communities was relatively small, but their social significance has been great. This it is which has given to the speech of eastern Massachusetts its representative quality for the Eastern type of American speech, and to the speech of tidewater Virginia its representative quality for the Southern type of American speech. No other locality can be fixed upon as standing indisputably for the Western or General type of speech, as these two regions do for their own types. The reason is that the Western or General type did not assume its form in one locality. It does not belong to one locality, but to the nation as a whole."

See also James F. Bender's article entitled "Ninety Million Speak 'General American,'" in The New York Times Magazine, August 27, 1944, pp. 17 and 29. Dr. Bender insists that approximately "eleven million Americans speak Eastern, twenty-six million speak Southern, and at least ninety million speak General American."

countries of Latin-America just as the Latin-American who has learned British English will be able to get on in the United States. It is inevitable that those who have mastered the special speech of one particular geographical area will encounter some friction of understanding and of communication when his contacts are with speakers from other areas. Latin-Americans who have learned the English of the northern midwest United States usually have some difficulty when they first go into the area of the "Old South." The only "correctness" there can be in any language is the actual usage of the native speakers of that language. In learning English one must attempt to imitate exactly the forms, the structures, and the mode of utterance of the native speakers of the particular kind of English he wishes to learn.

But the person who is untrained in the methods and techniques of language description is not likely to arrive at sound conclusions concerning the actual practices of the native speakers he observes. He will certainly not do so economically and efficiently. And the native speaker of a language, unless he has been specially trained to analyze his own language processes, will be more likely to mislead than to help a foreigner when he tries to make comments about his own language. On the other hand, the modern scientific study of language has within the last twenty years developed special techniques of descriptive analysis by which a trained linguist[5] can efficiently and accurately arrive at the fundamentally significant matters of structure and sound system amid the bewildering mass of details which constitute the actual rumble of speech. If an adult is to gain a satisfactory proficiency in a foreign language most quickly and easily he must have satisfactory materials upon which to work--i.e. he must have the really important items of the language selected and arranged in a properly related sequence with special emphasis upon the chief trouble spots. It is true that many good practical teachers have, out of their experience, often hit upon many of the special difficulties and some of the other important matters of a foreign language that would be revealed by a scientific analysis. Usually, however, such good results from practical teaching experience alone are achieved by chance; are not related to any principle and are thus unsystematic and uneven. The techniques of scientific descriptive analysis, on the other hand, can provide a thorough and consistent check of the language material itself and thus furnish the basis for the selection of the most efficient materials to guide the efforts of the learner. The actual application of these techniques to the development of satisfactory materials for learning and teaching will be discussed and illustrated in the two following chapters. It is enough here to insist that only with sound materials based upon an adequate descriptive analysis of both the language to be studied and the native language of the student (or with the continued expert guidance of a trained linguist) can an adult make the maximum progress toward the satisfactory mastery of a foreign language.

Even with such materials the desired result does not follow inevitably without the thorough cooperation of the student. The student must be willing to give himself whole heartedly to the strenuous business of learning the new language. He must throw off all restraint and self-consciousness as far as the making of strange sounds is concerned. If he achieves an accurate reproduction, he will sound very peculiar to himself; if he fails to achieve accurate reproduction and does not sound peculiar to himself he will sound very peculiar to the native speakers of the language he is trying to learn. It is much better for him if he at once accepts the necessity of letting himself go no matter how peculiar he sounds to himself--to try over and over again until he wins back some of the flexibility he had as a child in making unusual sounds. The one who can become the best mimic learns most rapidly and achieves the best result. It is necessary to mimic not only the native speaker's production of separate sounds or words; the mimicry must extend also to his tones, his gestures, and his facial expressions,--in fact to his complete manner of speaking. The student must be willing to practice and use the new language constantly--to himself in reacting to every situation even if no hearer is present. This kind of unrelenting practice and use is at first extremely hard and the student will feel himself bound as in a strait-jacket. But

[5]The word linguist as used in this book does not mean one who "speaks many languages"--a polyglot. It means rather one who is competent in the "scientific study of language," one whose profession is linguistic science.

the only way to attain his freedom in the new language is through this struggle. The more thoroughly educated he is, the more sensitive he is to fine discriminations in his own language, the harder it will be for him to reach a satisfying use of a foreign language. The child who is placed in a foreign language environment attains a satisfactory competence in the new language with amazing speed not only because he is linguistically more flexible and without restraint and selfconsciousness but also because his language needs are much less than those of an educated adult. His experience and his vocabulary are much limited in his own language and it takes him comparatively little time to gain control of an equivalent vocabulary in the new language. An adult who has already learned a native language extensive enough to grasp and express a rich and varied experience can never again be in the same position as a child learning his own language. For an adult the new language will probably never function in the same way his native language does.[6] It is almost inevitable that, at first, the learner will go from the new language symbol through his own language symbols to and from experience, but he should constantly strive against such translation and the practice of seeking word equivalents in his own language until he has established a direct connection between his experience and utterances in the new language. Translation and "word equivalents" which seem to save time at the beginning really cause delay in the long run and may if continued even set up such habits and confusions as to thwart any real control of the new language. Constant practice and use of the language forms being learned with free and complete mimicry of the speaking habits of native users of the language must be contributed by the student if he is to make really effective use of the materials that are scientifically chosen and arranged for the efficient mastery of a foreign language.

The practice which the student contributes must be oral practice. No matter if the final result desired is only to read the foreign language the mastery of the fundamentals of the language --the structure and the sound system with a limited vocabulary--must be through speech. The speech is the language. The written record is but a secondary representation of the language. To "master" a language it is not necessary to read it, but it is extremely doubtful whether one can really read the language without first mastering it orally. Unless one has mastered the fundamentals of the new language as a language--that is, as a set of habits for oral production and reception--the process of reading is a process of seeking word equivalents in his own native language. "Translation" on an exceedingly low level is all that such "reading" really amounts to.[7] Such a reader never enters into the precise particular way the foreign language grasps experience; he is still using as a means of grasping meaning or understanding only the processes and vocabulary of his own language with the added difficulty of seeing a different set of symbols on the printed page which must act as clues from which he must guess the correct words of his own language to be substituted in order to make some kind of sense. He never really enters into the "thought" (the full meaning) expressed by the foreign language.

More than that, the oral approach--the basic drill, the repeated repetitions of the patterns produced by a native speaker of the foreign language—is the most economical way of

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[6] "It is quite a mistake to suppose that an English speaking person's command of French or German is psychologically in the least equivalent to a Frenchman's or a German's command of his native language. All that is managed, in the majority of cases, is a fairly adequate control of the external features of the foreign language. This incomplete control has, however, the immense advantage of putting the native speaker and the foreigner on a footing of approximate mutual understanding, which is sufficient for the purpose desired." Edward Sapir, "The Case of Constructed International Language," in Actes du Duexième Congrès International de Linguistes, p. 87.

[7] Translation is really a difficult task--that is, the translation that attempts to grasp thoroughly the essentials of the meaning expressed in one language and then render these essentials in another language in such a way that speakers of the second language may fully understand, may relate that meaning to their experience without distortion. Such translation is an exercise well worth while but it can be accomplished only by those whose control of the languages to be use and whose power of expression are of a very high order. Many fluent speakers of a foreign language fail miserably when they attempt translation.

thoroughly learning, for use even in reading, the structural methods of a language. Only when one has such a thorough control of the fundamentals of a language that he can almost automatically produce utterances in accord with the usual patterns of that language is he ready to proceed to the process of reading. With such a control the grasp of new words will come easily and speedily with increasing experience with the language, and reading will be profitable. One never seems to gain satisfactory control of language material by silent study and memorizing. The struggle with new words through a two language dictionary which seeks to give word equivalents in the two languages is exceedingly laborious and ineffective. Practically never do two words (except possibly highly technical words) in different languages cover precisely the same areas of meaning. When it is necessary, in addition to the struggle with new vocabulary, to puzzle out the structural devices in which the new words are used, the task becomes one that but few students can accomplish. Even if one wishes to learn the foreign language solely for reading, the most economical and most effective way of beginning is the oral approach. This oral approach for reading should be continued throughout at least the first stage of the language learning--that is, until the learner can within a limited vocabulary manipulate the structural devices of the language and has grasped the sound system.

The "oral approach" here advocated does not mean the "direct method" as that method is usually understood. A very brief statement of the essential features of the "direct method" is the following.[8]

"Direct method. A method of teaching a foreign language, especially a modern language, through conversation, discussion, and reading in the language itself without use of the pupil's language, without translation, and without the study of formal grammar. The first words are taught by pointing to objects or pictures, or by performing actions."

It is true that the "direct method" described in this quotation and the "oral approach" indicated above have a number of things in common. In both, the emphasis is upon the actual use of the foreign language rather than upon the memorizing of paradigms and forms out of context. In both, translation is eliminated. But in the "direct method" reading in the foreign language may form an important part of the early work whereas in the "oral approach" it is deliberately postponed until the structure of the new language is firmly grasped, and it may never become an important part of the study. In the "oral approach" although the language of the pupil is avoided as much as possible it is used when necessary to make sure that explanations are thoroughly understood. Generalizations concerning structure, or grammar, are a regular feature of the "oral approach" although they are always intimately related to the oral practice of the language. In the Intensive Course in English for Latin-American Students there are four volumes of lesson materials covering grammar, pronunciation, and word study, but these materials as they are taught are always developed orally first and the statements that are given concerning structure or use are always summaries or generalizations drawn from the actual sentences the students have already practiced and understood thoroughly. The lesson materials in the book become for the students the notes they might have taken of the exercises they have just been led through. Never are the students assigned a lesson in advance for silent study before coming to class. Whatever study there is outside of class is always in repetition of the matters already practiced orally under the leadership of and also in imitation of a native speaker of the language. Then too, as has been insisted upon before, the "oral approach" as here advocated depends for its effectiveness not solely upon the fact that there is much oral practice in hearing and in speaking the foreign language, but also and fundamentally upon having satisfactory materials selected and arranged in accord with sound linguistic principles. It is the practical use of the linguistic scientist's technique of language description in the choice and sequence of materials and the principles of method that grow out of these materials that is at the heart of the so-called "new approach to language learning."

[8] Webster's New International Dictionary, Second Edition, 1934, p. 738.

Nor does the "oral approach" here advocated mean the arbitrary exclusion of all graphic symbols in connection with the language learning. Teachers will often use written symbols in the classroom; printed manuals or textbooks will be used by the students; written notes will be taken by the students; and even written exercises may be part of the work. The "oral approach" does not preclude any of these practices which can be used in mastering the language as a living means of communication. If the usual spelling of a language is phonemically regular as is that of Spanish or Finnish that spelling can be used; if the graphic symbols a language uses are such as are used in Chinese or Japanese then the process of learning to read or use these symbols must be attacked as something entirely apart from learning the language. In any case learning the traditional spelling of a language is not a necessary part of learning the language. The "oral approach" centers attention fundamentally upon learning a language as a set of symbols to be spoken and understood when heard, but it uses without limitation every means which can be made to contribute to that end--the living voice, mechanical records, sound films, manuals, text-books, written notes, written exercises. "Oral approach" is a name primarily for the end to be attained in the first stage of language learning rather than a descriptive limitation of the permissible devices to attain that end. That end is the building up of a set of habits for the oral production of a language and for the receptive understanding of the language when it is spoken.

In the statement just made, as in several that have already occurred in this chapter, the two complementary aspects of communication are recognized in the two phrases "oral production" and "receptive understanding." It seems important to recognize the fac that one's mastery of any language--even of one's own native language--is always on two major levels, production and recognition. These two levels are practically never equal. The range of "words" that we can recognize and understand exceeds that of the "words" we actually use in speech or even in writing. Many can read appreciatively a poem, or a play, or a novel, who cannot write one. In the use of a foreign language the difference between the ability to recognize or understand and the ability to produce or speak stands out even more noticeably. It is true that the two interact and condition one another and in the actual practice of the language can hardly be separated. As one advances in the ability to produce or use the language he increases the range and depth of his understanding; and an increase in understanding shows itself in a greater ability to produce. But in spite of the fact that these two abilities are so closely interwoven, from the point of view of teaching and of learning in the early stages, they constitute two distinct even if complementary aspects of language control, and it has proved helpful to consider them separately.

This recognition of the difference between the productive and the receptive controls of language does not imply a mechanical separation of the materials into "practices" in producing for the sake of production only and "practices" in recognition for the sake of receiving only. As a matter of fact practice in production is one of the best means of developing recognition. Pronouncing the words leak, lick, lack, lake, look, luck, look, with a careful discrimination of the vowel sounds may be one of the best ways for the Spanish speaking person to develop his ability to hear and to recognize these distinctive vowel sounds in English. On the other hand practice in listening carefully in order to hear accurately may be used to advantage in learning to produce. The division of attention to "production" and to "recognition" is from the teaching point of view primarily a matter of purposes and materials not of methods, and from the learning point of view a matter of distribution of emphasis. In the treatment of the materials of pronunciation, of structure, and of vocabulary in the three chapters following, this distinction between production and recognition is applied more definitely to the problems of the choice and the sequence of the language materials to be mastered.

Not only is it true in general that the ability to produce never equals the ability to receive; in the early stage of language learning it is helpful to recognize the fact that "production" itself will be on two levels. The fundamental matters of the language that must be mastered on a production level should, as soon as possible, be made unconscious habits. For this purpose many whole sentences, questions and responses, demand repetition and more repetition and these

will become automatic reactions early. But besides such specific formulas, useful phrases and sentences, there are many "patterns" that must eventually become the customary molds into which the productive expression must fit without conscious thought. Examples in English are the word-order patterns of statements, questions, and requests, and the fixed positions of single word modifiers of substantives. These, in the early stage of language learning, remain for considerable time on the level of production with conscious choice rather than of production as an automatic unconscious habit. Only after much practice of the same "patterns" with diverse content do the patterns themselves become productively automatic.[9] When the student has reached this level of achievement, within a satisfactorily useful but definitely limited range of vocabulary items, he has "learned the language."

The evidence we have seems to lead to the conclusion that any adult who has learned one language (his native speech) can learn another within a reasonable time if he has sound guidance proper materials, and if he cooperates thoroughly. The most efficient materials are those that are based upon a scientific description of the language to be learned, carefully compared with a parallel description of the native language of the learner. It is not enough simply to have the results of such a thorough-going analysis; these results must be organized into a satisfactory system for teaching and implemented with adequate specific practice materials through which the learner may master the sound system, the structure, and the most useful lexical materials of the foreign language. To develop the implications of these assertions will be the function of the next four chapters.

[9] Volume VI of An Intensive Course in English for Latin-American Students contains the "pattern practices" which accompany the lesson materials of the first four volumes.

CHAPTER II

THE SOUNDS: UNDERSTANDING AND PRODUCING THE "STREAM OF SPEECH"

"The feeling that the average speaker has of his language is that it is built up, accoustically speaking, of a comparatively small number of distinct sounds, each of which is rather accurately provided for in the current alphabet by one letter or, in a few cases, by two or more alternative letters. As for the languages of foreigners he generally feels that, aside from a few striking differences that cannot escape even the uncritical ear, the sounds they use are the same as those he is familiar with but that there is a mysterious 'accent' to the foreign languages, a certain unanalyzed character, apart from the sounds as such, that gives them their air of strangeness. This naive feeling is largely illusory on both scores."[1]

As a matter of fact a trained phonetician can observe hundreds of distinguishable differences of sounds in the speech of any native speaker--differences of which that speaker is entirely unaware. In English, for example, the p of pin is different from the p of spin. In the p of pin the lips are opened with a rather strong puff of air which does not accompany the p of spin. The same "fullness of breath" is true of the t in till as distinct from the t in still and the k in kill as distinct from the k in skill. Although the initial sounds of kill, call, and cool all have the same characteristic puff of breath, the k in kill is made with the base of the tongue touching the roof of the mouth much farther forward than it does in the first sound of call. In the first sound of cool the lips are rounded. In other words, the initial sounds of kill, call, and cool, although alike in the fact that each is accompanied by strong breath release, are also all different in certain other features. The vowel sound of mead takes a measurably longer time to pronounce than does the vowel sound of meat. Phonetic analysis has devoted itself to distinguishing these so-called minute sound features of language and describing them.

If one analyses a foreign language phonetically he will find that practically no sound of that language is exactly like any one of his own. In Spanish, for example, an initial t as in tener is not only not followed by a puff of air as in English, it is made with the tip of the tongue on the back of the upper front teeth, rather than on the gums (the alveolar ridge) as in English. In general it may be said that, in the pronunciation of Spanish sounds, the tongue is farther forward than it is in English.

When then one tries to estimate the actual number of distinguishable differences of sound that the human vocal apparatus can make as these sounds appear in the many languages of the earth, he finds that number running into thousands. In each language there are hundreds. And yet the naive speaker, in the feeling that his language is built up of only a small number of distinct sounds, is right in a way. Although the actual number of differences of sound in a language is great, the number of distinctive sound features which a language uses to distinguish meanings is very limited. For example, the word race is distinguished in sound from the word raise only by the buzzing that accompanies the last sound in the second word, raise, as contrasted with the hissing of the last sound of the first word race. The word beet is distinguished in sound from the word bit solely by the differing quality of the vowel sounds standing between the b and the t. Thus when two separate words differ by one sound only, the sounds that differ are distinctive sound units. Distinctive sound units of this kind, sound features that constitute the sole difference of sound between separate words, that thus occur in contrasts, are in any language comparatively few, usually from twenty to fifty. In American English there are approximately 24

[1]Edward Sapir, Language, pp. 43-44.

such contrasting sound units of a consonant nature, eleven vowels, and three diphthongs, thirty-eight in all.

On the other hand, sound differences that never constitute the sole contrasting feature between two separate words are non-distinctive. The k sound of kill is clearly different from the k sound of call in that the second is made with the base of the tongue touching the roof of the mouth farther back than when making the k sound of kill. But this phonetic difference is never used in English as the sole contrasting feature to distinguish separate words; it is a difference that depends on the character of the vowel sound which follows the k sound. So also the difference between the t of till and that of still is never the sole contrasting sound feature to distinguish separate words; it is a difference that depends on the fact that the t of till is the initial sound of the word and the t of still is preceded by an s sound. Such differing sound features that in a particular language are never the sole contrasting features to distinguish separate words, but differ because of the different positions in which they occur or because of the differing sounds near them to which they are adjusted, are said to be in that language in "complementary distribution." These are the ones that constitute the hundreds of different sounds that can be found in any language. It is the few differences that are used in contrast to distinguish separate words that are called the "phonemes" of the language. Thus a language will have many phonetic differences that are not phonemic.

An alphabetic system of representing or spelling the "sounds" of a language is good in so far as it is "phonemic"--that is, in so far as there is one distinct graphic symbol for each of the distinctive sound units of the language. Some languages like Finnish are from this point of view excellently spelled. Spanish is well spelled. English, however, is very badly spelled. In English the same symbol or letter stands for a number of distinctly different sounds as, for example, the letter i in bite, bit, machine, or the letters ea in beat, breath, heart, earth. On the other hand, the same sound is represented by a variety of symbols; e.g., the vowel sound in sweet is represented by ea in beat, e in mete, i in machine and caprice, eo in people, ie in believe, ei in receive. In discussing the sounds of English then it is necessary to use a special alphabet in which each symbol is assigned to one of the distinctive sound segments or phonemes of English and consistently represents that phoneme. For such an alphabet it is possible to use the ordinary letters in most cases with very few symbols that differ from these letters. In our materials for teaching English to foreigners the particular alphabet we have adopted to represent the phonemes of English is the following.

Consonants

p	for the sounds	pin, spin, nip, happy
b	for the sounds	bin, rub, rubber
m	for the sounds	mine, ram, hammer
f	for the sounds	fine, staff, coffee
v	for the sounds	vine, live, never
w	for the sounds	win, woman, want
t	for the sounds	tin, stem, net, water
d	for the sounds	den, nod, fodder
n	for the sounds	net, ten, sand
s	for the sounds	seal, race, basic, cats
z	for the sounds	zeal, raise, razor, cousin, dogs
š	for the sounds	shell, cash
ž	for the sounds	azure, measure
č	for the sounds	chest, match, church
j	for the sounds	jest, wedge, judge

[2] We have used for sometime the symbols [ʃ] and [ʒ] in our texts and thus also the [tʃ] for the sounds in church and [dʒ] for the sounds in judge. Convenience in dealing with clusters however has led us to adopt the symbols [č] and [j] instead of [tʃ] and [dʒ] and for simplicity of writing the symbols [š] and [ž] instead of [ʃ] and [ʒ].

θ	for the sounds	thin, breath
ð	for the sounds	then, breathe, weather
k	for the sounds	kiel, coal, rock
g	for the sounds	gill (of fish), goal, rug, finger
ŋ	for the sounds	long, sing, ink, finger
h	for the sounds	hen, hog, who
y	for the sounds	yes, you, young, cute, beauty
l	for the sounds	lip, loop, pill, pool, pillow, polo
r	for the sounds	rat, tar, very, borrow

Vowels

i	for the sounds	beat, bead, weep, keep
ɪ	for the sounds	bit, bid, wit, kit, city
e	for the sounds	mate, cape, made, way, rotate
ɛ	for the sounds	met, bed, kettle, contest
æ	for the sounds	mat, bad, cattle
u	for the sounds	pool, cool
ʊ	for the sounds	pull, wool
o	for the sounds	note, notation, coat, quotation, Mexico
ɔ	for the sounds	autumn, autumnal, bought, caught
ɑ	for the sounds	father, hot, cot, cod
ə	for the sounds	but, cup, china, above

Diphthongs

aɪ	for the sounds	eyes, ice, ride, write
aʊ	for the sounds	now, house, bout
ɔɪ	for the sounds	boys, oil, soil

The person who examines this alphabet will notice at once that many clear distinctions of sound in English pronunciations are not provided for by the symbols. There is but one symbol for the palatal voiceless stop [k] regardless of the fact that the position of the contact of the base of the tongue with the roof of the mouth in kill is quite noticeably different from that of the [k] in call or cool. Our use of one basic symbol for these sounds that differ phonetically rests upon the fact that this particular phonetic difference is never used in English to distinguish meanings. Whenever it is necessary for any purpose of pronunciation to mark this phonetic difference we do so by means of special diacritic marks such as an arrow head to indicate whether the position is farther forward or farther back; thus [k˃] or [k˂]. The aspirated [t] [p] [k] can, when it is necessary, be indicated by a small h following the t, p, or k, as [t^h] [p^h] [k^h]. Such phonetic differences need not be marked in every word. It is possible in situations such as these to make a general statement indicating the conditions under which these phonetic differences occur, and thus the "rules" for their use in English. They are "conditioned variants" of the same phoneme.

In the vowel sounds the same principle has been followed. The [i] of bead is of longer duration than the [i] of beat, but such a difference of length is a regular feature of a vowel before a voiced consonant. Whenever it is necessary to call especial attention to quantity or length, a colon is added to the vowel symbol, [i:]. Then too the vowel sound in the word but, pronounced in isolation, is phonetically different from the last vowel of China. But these two sounds are never in "opposition." The one occurs in stressed syllables, the other in unstressed syllables. There is therefore no need to call attention to this phonetic difference in every instance by using separate symbols. In similar fashion, the vowels in raid, in rode, in read, as usually pronounced by English speakers are phonetic diphthongs or are followed by consonantal