

**Beginning
to Teach
English**

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To my Mother and Father

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PREFACE

This book is meant for three kinds of people. It is meant for the young teacher in training, for the untrained primary school teacher who is looking for help and guidance in the teaching of English, and for the trained teacher who wishes to reconsider the problems of teaching English to young people.

The book sets out to do two things. It provides the teacher, or would-be teacher, with a simple introduction to the theory of foreign language teaching. It also provides a set of fifty oral lesson plans for the first weeks of a primary school English course.

Both these things have been done before, but usually separately in separate books. Theory and practice, however, cannot be separated without loss to each. Here, therefore, they are treated together. The lesson plans illustrate the theory chapters. The theory chapters explain the lesson plans.

Readers of the book should, however, clearly understand that nowhere does it say, 'This *must* be taught in this way'. We think about the theory of foreign language teaching to help us to adapt to our pupils' needs and circumstances our own and other people's ideas and suggestions about how and what to teach. Methodology does not (and should not) tell us exactly what to do: its purpose is to help us to understand why in particular circumstances it may be wiser to do one thing rather than another. There is no perfect method which fits all teachers and all classes. But it is possible to state and explain certain principles which may guide a teacher in shaping his techniques to the needs of his pupils. These principles depend partly upon what we know of the nature of the subject, and partly upon what we know about how that subject may best be learned. In the theory chapters, therefore, the reader is invited to begin

thinking about what sort of a thing a language is and how children learn a language. These are the facts which should control our methods.

The oral lesson plans should not be slavishly followed in all details; the good teacher will adapt them freely to meet his pupils' changing needs. But he will be wise to adapt them in accordance with the general ideas of language teaching which are discussed in the theory chapters.

In the drafting of the lesson plans certain assumptions have been made. It is assumed that each lesson period will last for about thirty minutes. It is assumed that the children are about seven years old and that they have learned or are learning to read and write in their mother tongue or community language. It is assumed that during these fifty lessons they will have no reading book in English, but that they will be given one as soon as these purely oral lessons have been taught. It is assumed that there will be about thirty or forty boys and girls in each class. It is assumed that there will be at least one lesson a day for English. If one or more of these assumptions do not apply in your case, it does not mean that the plans are useless to you. But you will have to think out the simplest way of adjusting them to your own circumstances.

But the book is only an introduction. It offers only the first steps in considering and reconsidering the problems of our subject. The short reading list (see page 187) will help you to go further. You will find that these books often make suggestions which are different from those made here. That does not matter. The important question in methodology is not '*How* should this be taught?' but '*Why* should this be taught *in this way*?' No method book can answer all your problems. It is hoped that this book may put you on the way to answering some of them for yourself.

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KEY TO PHONETIC SYMBOLS

VOWELS AND DIPHTHONGS

<i>Number</i>	<i>Symbol</i>	<i>Ordinary Spelling</i>	<i>Phonetic Transcription</i>
1	i:	eat	[i:t]
2	i	it	[it]
3	e	head	[hed]
4	a	black	[blak]
5	a:	arm	[a:m]
6	o	box	[boks]
7	o:	ball	[bo:l]
8	u	book	[buk]
9	u:	shoe	[ʃu:]
10	ʌ	cup	[kʌp]
11	ə:	turn	[tə:n]
12	ə	under	[ˈʌndə]*
13	ei	plate	[pleit]
14	ou	go	[gou]
15	ai	five	[faiv]
16	au	count	[kaunt]
17	oi	point	[point]
18	iə	here	[hiə]
19	eə	where	[weə]
20	ʊə	sure	[ʃuə]

* The sign ' is called a stress mark. It is put before a syllable to show that the syllable is stressed.

KEY TO PHONETIC SYMBOLS

CONSONANTS

<i>Symbol</i>	<i>Ordinary Spelling</i>	<i>Phonetic Transcription</i>
p	pen	[pen]
b	bag	[bag]
t	take	[teik]
d	down	[daʊn]
k	coat	[kout]
g	give	[giv]
m	many	['meni]
n	no	[nou]
ŋ	ink	[iŋk]
l	long	[lɒŋ]
	little	['litl]
f	fork	[fo:k]
v	very	['veri]
θ	thank	[θaŋk]
ð	these	[ði:z]
s	saucer	['so:sə]
z	eyes	[aiz]
ʃ	show	[ʃou]
ʒ	measure	['meʒə]
r	red	[red]
h	how	[hau]
tʃ	chalk	[tʃo:k]
dʒ	jam	[dʒam]
w	water	['wo:tə]
j	yes	[jes]

TONE SYMBOLS

When a person sings his voice rises and falls with the tune that he is singing. Similarly, in speech also the speaker's voice rises and falls according to certain tunes or *tones*. These tones are used differently in different languages. You cannot, therefore, speak a foreign language correctly unless you learn to use its tones in the right way.

In this book only the most important tones are marked in the sentences given in phonetic transcriptions. The symbols used are:

-

1.

↘

2.

↗

3.

1. The symbol - means that the syllable that follows it should be stressed and spoken with a high tone.

2. The symbol ↘ means that the syllable that follows it should be stressed and spoken with a falling tone.

3. The symbol ↗ means that the syllable that follows it should be stressed and that syllable and all the succeeding syllables *in the same phrase* should be spoken with a rising tone.

All other syllables in the sentences should be spoken with low or medium tones.

Intonation is the name given to the study and use of tones. You know that you cannot speak a foreign language properly unless you pronounce the words correctly and use them in the right sentence patterns. Intonation is just as important. You cannot speak a foreign language properly unless you use the right tones with every sentence. The tone symbols will help you to do this.

Intonation, like pronunciation, is best learned by imitation.
It is wrong, therefore, to talk to your pupils about intonation.
Do your best to use the right tones yourself and then let your
pupils imitate you as closely as possible.

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I

LESSON ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 You are going to teach your pupils their first English lesson. Have ready a large map of the world and at the beginning of the lesson put it up on the wall where everyone in the room can see it. Take with you also a tray on which you have two cups, two saucers, two plates, two knives, two forks and two spoons, a large and a small one of each.

1.2 First of all, start by talking to the pupils in their own language.* Talk to them about learning English. Tell them why it is important that they should learn English. For example: very soon, in another two or three years, most of their lessons will be given in English. If English is the language of government of their country, wherever they go in it they will find people who speak English and will expect them to speak English. In many other countries too English is spoken—not only in England but also, for example, in America, in Canada, in Australia and in New Zealand.† It is widely spoken in many Asian countries like India, Pakistan, Ceylon and Malaya, and in many African countries like Nigeria, Ghana, Uganda, Tanganyika, Kenya, Gambia and Sierra Leone. And in many countries in Europe, Africa and Asia, people learn and use English as well as their own language, for example, in Switzerland,

* In this book by 'the pupils' own language' we mean either their mother tongue or the community language in which they are taught when they first come to school.

† Your pupils may be too young to know of all the countries named here. Mention only those you think they already know or would like to know. The full list is given above for your convenience only.

Holland, Germany, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Turkey, Iraq, Jordan, Egypt and Libya. Choose as your examples countries whose names the children may already know, but do not be afraid to mention others and show the children where these countries are on the map. Spend about five minutes talking to the class in this way.

LISTENING AND DOING

This is a

2.1 When you have finished your talk, you may ask the class if they want to learn English. We hope they will all say they do, and you can reply (still in their own language), 'Very well then, look at these things' (pointing to the things you have put on the teacher's table) 'and listen to me very carefully. Don't say anything; just listen.'

2.2 Then you pick up one of the cups from the table; hold it so that every pupil in the room can see it and say, **This is a cup.** Repeat this sentence, **This is a cup.** Then put the cup back on the tray.

2.3 Speak clearly so that everyone in the room can hear you, but also speak normally and simply. Do not use any special emphasis. Do not, for example, separate each word in the sentence: **This—is—a—cup**, in the hope that the children will hear and remember the separate words. That is not important at this stage. Be careful to use the unemphatic pronunciation of the word **a** [ə]; the emphatic pronunciation of this word **a** [ei] is rarely used in ordinary speech and should be taught to your pupils very much later in the course. Equally, do not give special emphasis to the word cup. (**This is a CUP.**) Speak as you would in an ordinary friendly conversation. This rule applies to all the things you will say in these introductory oral lessons.

2.4 Next, pick up the second, smaller cup, show it to the class and again say: **This is a cup.** Repeat the sentence and put the cup back on the tray or on the table.

2.5 Do this with all the other things you have brought with you, so that you will say each of these sentences four times:

This is a cup. [ˈðis iz ə ˈkʌp.]

This is a saucer. [ˈðis iz ə ˈsoːsə.]

This is a plate. [ˈðis iz ə ˈpleit.]

This is a knife. [ˈðis iz ə ˈnaɪf.]

This is a fork. [ˈðis iz ə ˈfoːk.]

This is a spoon. [ˈðis iz ə ˈspuːn.]

This is a tray. [ˈðis iz ə ˈtreɪ.]

Last of all introduce the word **table** by touching the table and twice saying the sentence, **This is a table.**¹

2.6 This section of the lesson should take about three minutes.

Show me a

3.1 Now speak to the pupils again in their own language and tell them you are going to ask them in English to show you the things on the table, one at a time. Then tell them that when they hear the command **Show me a cup/saucer/plate/etc.**, everyone who thinks he can do what you want should put up his hand and you will choose one of them to come to the table and do it. If you like, you may yourself demonstrate what you want them to do.

3.2 Then give the command **Show me a cup.** The pupils will put up their hands and you will choose one of them who will come to the table, pick up the cup and show it to you and to the rest of the class. Repeat this once or twice with different pupils, and then with all the other things *in the order in which you first named them*:

Show me a cup. [ˈʃou mi ə ˈkʌp.]

Show me a saucer. [ˈʃou mi ə ˈsoːsə.]

Show me a plate. [ˈʃou mi ə ˈpleit.]

Show me a knife. [ˈʃou mi ə ˈnaɪf.]

Show me a fork. [ˈʃou mi ə ˈfoːk.]

¹ [ˈðis iz ə ˈteɪbl.]

Show me a spoon.

[ʃou mi ə ˈspuːn.]

Show me a tray.

[ʃou mi ə ˈtreɪ.]

Show me a table.

[ʃou mi ə ˈteɪbl.]

In response to the command **Show me a table** the chosen pupil should touch the table.

3.3 Repeat the exercise once more *in the same order*, and then repeat it again, using the nouns in any different order you wish, until the pupils can respond to the commands correctly with ease and confidence.

3.4 This section of the work should take about ten minutes.

COMMANDS

4.1 Now all the pupils should be back in their places and what is needed is a complete change of activity. So we will give them some simple commands which require simple actions.

4.2 Using the pupils' own language, tell them all to watch you and listen to you very carefully. Put the teacher's chair in a convenient position and stand in front of it. Then, pointing to yourself, and slowly sitting on the chair, say: **I'm sitting down.**¹ Then, still pointing to yourself, and slowly standing up, say **I'm standing up.**²

4.3 Then say to the whole class: **Stand up.**³ To help them understand the command, make an upward movement with your hands. The class will stand up. Then, making a downward movement with your hands, give the command: **Sit down.**⁴ Repeat this once, and then repeat it once or twice more without moving your hands, so that the pupils are doing the actions *in response to the words only*.

4.4 Take care to give the commands in an easy friendly way. Do not shout them as if you are an army sergeant giving orders to fifty or a hundred men in the open air. You are a teacher

¹ [aɪm ˈsɪtɪŋ ˌdaʊn.]

² [aɪm ˈstændɪŋ ˌʌp.]

³ Either [ˈstænd ˌʌp.] or [stænd ˌʌp.] ⁴ Either [ˈsɪt ˌdaʊn.] or [sɪt ˌdaʊn.]

giving simple instructions to young children in a small classroom.

4.5 This activity should occupy about two minutes.

SOUNDS AND LETTERS

5.1 Now write the following words on the blackboard, arranged like this:

eat
seat

it
sit

Write them in large, clear, printscript letters. The letters **e**, **a**, **i** and **s** should be about three inches high and the letter **t** should be about 4 or 5 inches high. Write the words high enough up on the blackboard for every child in the room to see them but also low enough for every child in the room to be able to touch them. You may tell the class in their own language that those are some English words which they are going to learn to read aloud.

5.2 Since you may be doing this work for several years, you will save yourself a lot of trouble (and save precious classroom time) if before the lesson you prepare a large sheet of paper on which the words are already written. Form the letters carefully and use a dark ink. Dark blue, dark green, dark mauve or black will do—in fact, almost any colour except red. Red may be too dazzling and also you may need to use red ink for other special purposes later.

5.3 Read the four words aloud to the class in order: **eat**,¹ **it**,² **seat**,³ **sit**.⁴ As you read, hold a ruler in your hand, and as you say each word let the farther end of the ruler move along just below the written word from left to right. Read the words aloud once or twice more in the same order and pointing to each one as you say it.

5.4 Using the pupils' own language, tell them that you are going to give the command, **Show me 'eat'**. When you do so,

¹ [i:t]

² [it]

³ [si:t]

⁴ [sit]