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The Teaching of

Structural Words

and

Sentence Patterns

STAGE ONE



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INTRODUCTION

In recent years education authorities in many countries have compiled and published syllabuses for the teaching of English as a foreign language. In these syllabuses there is more emphasis upon the teaching of structural words, and upon phrase and sentence patterns, than upon the teaching of vocabulary.

Problems of vocabulary control received attention in the early part of this century. The Interim Report on Vocabulary Selection (P. S. King & Son, Ltd., London, 1936) was accepted as a reliable guide by textbook writers in many countries. In its revised form, A General Service List of English Words (Longmans, London, 1953), it is an even more valuable reference book, because the editor, Dr. Michael West, has added semantic frequencies.

When questions of vocabulary control had been dealt with there was a shift in emphasis. It was recognized that the learning of words was not the most difficult aspect of learning a language. Not enough was known, however, about methods of presenting other aspects. There was, as there still is, a large number of 'Methods', and in these the order in which structural words, patterns, and tenses should be presented varied widely. The majority of courses started with finites of be and statements of identification ('This is a pen', etc.). Courses that gave prominence to reading presented the Simple Tenses (essential for narrative) early, but those that claimed to use a 'Direct-Oral Method' presented the Present Progressive (or Continuous) Tense first and postponed the Simple Tenses.

Work on patterns was undertaken by the Institute for Research in English Teaching, Department of Education, Tokyo, in the years before the Second World War. Some of the results of this work may be found in Dr. H. E. Palmer's

Grammar of English Words (Longmans, 1938), with its emphasis on structural words, its collocations, and verb patterns. They are also to be found in the verb patterns in An Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English (O.U.P., 1948) and in A Guide to Patterns and Usage in English (O.U.P., 1954).

Important work has also been done by the authors of the various Oxford English Courses (O.U.P.), notably L. W. Faucett and F. G. French. The Teaching of English Abroad (Three Parts, F. G. French) provides much information on

the subject.

The grading of structural words and patterns has benefited in more recent years from the work done by Professor Bruce Pattison, Dr. J. A. Noonan, and others at the University of London Institute of Education. Those who have studied there, including numerous Education Officers of the British Council, have helped to make the Institute's work known in many parts of the world.

Important work on structures has been done in the U.S.A., notably at the English Language Institute of the University of Michigan, and especially for Spanish-speaking students from Latin America. This work may be studied in the numerous publications of the English Language Institute, and in books by Professor C. Fries, including *Teaching and Learning English as a Foreign Language* (University of Michigan Press, 1946), and *The Structure of English* (Harcourt Brace, New York, 1952).

Structures are closely related to grammar, but not to traditional grammar. The structural approach to language learning does not require the student to know or learn definitions of the parts of speech or of clause and sentence. Structures are the devices that we use to make signals, to convey meanings, and indicate relationships. In English, word order is far more important than inflexion. The inversion of subject and finite verb in 'Is she' indicates the question form, and the

word order in 'Harry gave Mary a book' indicates what was given, to whom and by whom.

Contrasts of position are far more important in English than inflected forms of words. Such terms as nominative, accusative, and dative, necessary for Latin grammar, are of little or no value in the study of English, and quite unnecessary in the teaching and learning of English as a foreign language.

Stress and intonation are an essential part of the language. A 'leather 'jacket (two equal stresses) is a jacket made of leather. A 'leather-jacket (stress, with change of pitch, on the first element of the compound) is a kind of grub that will develop into a crane-fly. The hyphen helps when we see the word in print, but in speech (if the word is in isolation) the signal for meaning comes from stress and pitch.

All these various items have, in syllabuses, been put together under the common label 'structures'. This is convenient but inexact. The use of the conjunction but is hardly a problem of structure. It is a lexical item. Many of the items listed in the syllabuses are lexical, not structural. They all have to be presented, illustrated, learnt, and practised. Instead of being called 'structures' they are, in this book, called 'teaching items'.

The teaching items set out in this book are those considered suitable and desirable for the first stage of an English course for children of 10 or 11 years and upwards. This stage may be anything from six months to two years, depending upon the number of hours per week devoted to English. Most syllabuses and textbooks in common use today, if compiled or written in recent years, will deal with teaching items almost identical with the items included in this book. Where there may be disagreement is in the order of presentation of these

¹ Children under 10 will probably be taught by quite different procedures.

items. Teachers may, if they wish, either follow the order in which the items are presented here, or they may readjust this order to bring it into conformity with the syllabus they are

following or the textbooks they are using.

Considerable flexibility is always possible, and, indeed, desirable in any language course. The order in which these items are presented must depend upon the extent to which those of the learner's language are parallel or not. In Chapter 1 of this book the first pattern to be presented is one for identification: 'This (That) is' The statement may identify a person ('This is David'), or an object ('This is a horse'), or an object and its owner ('This is my watch'). The selection to be made from these three possibilities will depend upon which pattern is most closely paralleled in the mother tongue of the learner. If, in the mother tongue, there is no equivalent of the indefinite article (in the sense 'specimen of the sort of thing called'), learners will be happier, probably, if a start is made with 'my (your) watch' instead of 'a watch'.

The question of the stage at which question-and-answer work should be introduced is difficult to answer. Some experts argue that it should be postponed for a considerable time, even for three to six months. They assert that this postponement is particularly necessary when the language of the learner does not use word order-inversion of subject and finite verb-for the question form. It is possible to continue for many months without question-and-answer work, and, through the use of statements in suitable sequences, to obtain good results. Yet those who have seen classes of young learners, arms eagerly raised to answer questions, know that the stimulus provided by questions is real and valuable. In this book question forms are presented at an early stage. Again, however, flexibility is provided for. A note is given from time to time to indicate the possibility of postponing question-and-answer work if this is thought to be desirable (or if postponement is required by a rigid syllabus). In any case, teachers should distinguish between question forms used by the teacher to elicit responses from the pupils and question forms to be used by the pupils to elicit responses from their classmates.

Note that when, in the following pages, answers to questions are enclosed in parentheses, this indicates that they are to be given by the pupils. If answers are not enclosed in parentheses, they are to be given by the teacher as part of the presentation of new material. Parentheses are also used to indicate possible alternatives, additions, and sequences.

A list of symbols for the English phonemes, and brief notes on tone symbols, follow. A phoneme is a unit of sound. In English the symbol /p/ represents the p in pin, which is aspirated, the p in nip, which is to some extent aspirated, and the p in spin, which is not aspirated at all. Phonetically these are three distinct p-sounds, but they are a single phoneme. The one symbol /p/ is used for the three p-sounds because the difference between aspirated p in pin and unaspirated p in spin is not used in English to distinguish any two words. It is non-phonemic.

SOUNDS AND SPELLINGS

PHONEMIC SYMBOLS

1. THE CONSONANTS

Phonemic symbol	Examples			
p	pen	pen	top	top
b	bag	bag	rub	rab
t	ten	ten	wet	wet
d	desk	desk	head	hed
k	cap	kap	back	bak
g	get	get	bag	bag
m	mouth	mauθ	come	kam
n	nose	nouz	nine	nain
ŋ	sing	siŋ	English	'iŋgliʃ
1	leg	leg	well	wel
f	face	feis	knife	naif
v	very	veri	five	faiv
θ	thin	θin	mouth	rnauθ
ð	these	ði:z	mother	mAðə*
S	six	siks	face	feis
Z	nose	nouz	his	hiz
ſ	shoe	ſu:	fish	fiſ
3	pleasure	ple 39*	measure	me 39
r	right	rait	very	veri
h	hat	hat	head	hed
tſ	chair	t∫eə*	teach	ti:tſ
d3	jump	d ₃ vmp	John	dzon
w	window	windou	we	wi:
j	yes	jes	you	ju:

2. VOWELS AND DIPHTHONGS

Phonemic symbol	Examples			
i:	green	gri:n	three	θri:
i	sit	sit	this	ðis
е	desk	desk	leg	leg
a	hat	hat	back	bak
a:	glass	gla:s	father	lfa:ðə*
0	box	boks	clock	klok
o:	ball	bo:l	draw	dro:
u	book	buk	put	put
u:	moon	mu:n	two	tu:
Λ	sun	SAN	come	kam
ə:	word	wə:d	first	fə:st
Э	again	ə ˈge(i)n	under	"Anda"
ei	day	dei	name	neim
ou	nose	nouz	go	gou
ai	five	faiv	high	hai
au	mouth	mauθ	down	daun
oi	boy	boi	noise	noiz
iə	here	hiə*	near	niə*
еә	chair	t∫eə*	where	wea*
uə	poor	puə*	fewer	fjuə*

NOTES

1. The symbols set out in these Tables can be used for a simplified transcription of English. Its advantages are set out in Appendix A of Daniel Jones's An Outline of English Phonetics (8th edition, 1956).

Many teachers and students of English are likely to be more familiar with the transcription used in Daniel Jones's English Pronouncing Dictionary, in An Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English, and in numerous textbooks on English phonetics. Others may have become accustomed to the narrow transcription used by I. C. Ward in her The Phonetics of English (Heffer, 1929). A table of equivalences for the vowel symbols in the three systems (marked 'Simplified', 'E.P.D.' and 'Ward') is given below. Consonant symbols are identical in all three systems

Slant bars // are used to enclose symbols denoting phonemes and sequences of phonemes when these occur in contexts for which ordinary spelling is used. Slant bars are not used when symbols for phonemes or sequences of phonemes occur in columns (as in the Tables) or when a phonemic transcription is separated clearly from its equivalent in ordinary spelling.

Simplified		E.P.D.	Ward
i:	(as in seat)	i:	i
i	(as in sit)	i	I
e	(as in set)	e	3
a	(as in sat)	æ	æ
a:	(as in father)	a:	α
0	(as in hot)	Э	C
o:	(as in hall)	ɔ :	Э
u	(as in full)	u	U
u:	(as in fool)	u:	u
ə:	(as in word)	ə:	3

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ei	(as in day)	ei	eı
ou	(as in boat)	ou	០ប
ai	(as in buy)	ai	ar
au	(as in cow)	au	au
oi	(as in boy)	oi	IC
iə	(as in idea)	iə	19
еә	(as in chair)	63	63
uə	(as in poor)	uə	ຜອ

The asterisk (as in /weə*/) indicates the possibility of r-linking:

Where was it? weə 'woz it? Where is it? weər 'iz it?

The r-sound can be used when the word that immediately follows begins with a vowel sound.

If a symbol is printed in parenthesis, this indicates an alternative pronunciation. Thus again, transcribed as /ə'ge(i)n/, indicates that the word may be pronounced either as /ə'gein/ (rhyming with chain), or as /ə'gen/ (rhyming with ten). The transcription /'pous(t)mən/ (for postman) indicates that /'poustmən/ may be heard in slow or careful speech and that /'pousmən/ is commonly heard at ordinary speed.

The Tone Symbols

Several systems have been devised to indicate pitch level and change of pitch. In this book a very simple system is used. NOTES

The symbols used in this book are:

The short horizontal stroke – to indicate a high-level pitch, the short horizontal stroke – to indicate a mid-level pitch, and the short horizontal stroke – to indicate a low-level pitch.

The symbol \(\cap \) indicates a fall from a high-level pitch to a low-level pitch. The symbol \(\forall \) indicates a rise from a low-level pitch to a high-level pitch.

Here are examples, with notes.

I. _I'm touching the wall.

The words I'm are on a low-level pitch. The words touching the are on a high-level pitch. There is a fall in pitch on the word wall.

2. Am I -touching the Jdoor?

The words am I are on a high-level pitch. Because there is a stress on the first syllable of touching, the words touching the are uttered on a lower pitch, mid-level pitch. The voice then drops to low-level pitch at the start of the word door and rises during the utterance of this word.

Conventional punctuation marks are usually considered adequate in phonemic transcriptions without tone symbols. They are not always adequate, however, in tonetic transcriptions. If, in a statement or question, there is more than one intonation phrase, the boundary may not be indicated by a comma. In the question

Am I touching the Jwall or the Jdoor?

the only conventional mark of punctuation is the question mark at the end. There is no mark after wall to indicate that with this word one intonation phrase ends.

To indicate tonetic boundaries of this sort a single vertical stroke or bar is used.

Am I touching the Jwall | or the Jdoor?

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Other examples of the use of this bar to indicate tonetic boundaries are:

Is this a pen or a pencil?

The first intonation phrase ends on pen.

The fgreen book is in my right hand. The black book is in my left hand.

In these two statements attention is called to the adjectives. This is done by the use of a rising tone on green and black and a falling tone on right and left. In each statement the first intonation phrase ends on book.

Abbreviations (Used in Patterns)

i.e. the present and past participle and the infinitive.

i.e. one of the short preposition-like adverbs such as on, off, in, out, up, down, back, away.

TABLE No. 1
Summary of Material in §§ 1-8

This		John (Mary) Mr (Mrs, Miss)	Brown (Green, White).	
1 mis	a	a	stone (cow, horse, desk, book).	
That	is	ari	apple (egg, inkpot, umbrella).	
	my	my (your)	bag (desk, pen, head, mouth).	

TABLE No. 2

Summary of New Material in §§ 9–12

These				stones (cows, trees, desks, books, eggs, umbrellas).
Those	are	my (your)	books (pens, pencils).
This	is	my	left	hand (area area)
That	is	your	right	hand (eye, ear).

TABLE No. 3

Summary of New Material in § 14

It is It's	a my your	book. pen. pencil.	
They are They're	(—) my your	books. pens. pencils.	

TABLE No. 4
Summary of New Material in § 15

What is What's	this?
What are	these?

TABLE No. 5

Summary of New Material in § 16

Is	this	a pen or a pencil? a bag or a box? my book or your book?
Are	these	pens or pencils? bags or boxes? my books or your books?

TABLE No. 6
Summary of New Material on §§ 17-20

Is	this that	a	cow? bird? horse?	Yes, it's	a	cow. bird. horse.
	it	my your	book?	No, it isn't	my your	book.
	these		cows?	Voc they're		cows.
Are	those		horses?	Yes, they're		horses.
	they	my your	books? boxes?	No, they aren't	my your	books. boxes.

TABLE No. 7

Summary of New Material in § 21

Yes,	it is. they are.	No,	it isn't. they aren't.
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TABLE No. 8

Summary of New Material in §§ 23–25

My Your His Her	name	is	Paul. John. Anne. Mary.
What	is	your his her	name?

TABLE No. 9

Summary of New Material in §§ 23–27

This		John's	head. face. nose. book.	
That It	is	Mary's	right left	hand. arm. foot. leg.
These Those They	are	her	arms. legs. books. pencils.	