DIRECT METHOD COURSE
THE "ENGLISH AS SPEECH" SERIES

VOLUME THREE

CURIOUS ORIGINS OF COMMON WORDS AND EXPRESSIONS

BY

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Curious Origins of Common Words and Expressions

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GENERAL PREFACE

TO THE

"LIVING-ENGLISH" SERIES

The most effective approach to a foreign language is the Oral Approach. The teacher talks to his pupils in the foreign language, and by dint of pointing to objects or pictures, of performing actions, or causing his pupils to perform actions, he makes his talk intelligible. His pupils come to understand what they hear; they follow the thoughts expressed in the language without mental translation; they come to "think in the language." Before long they find themselves able to talk the foreign language in imitation of the teacher. The teacher asks them simple questions each of which suggests an obvious answer:

Is this a table or a chair? It's a table.

Is it a large table or a small one? It's a small one.

Can you see anything on it? Yes, I can.

What can you see on it? I can see a book on it.

Please come and take the book. [The pupil does so.]

Open it, please. [The pupil does so.]
What have you opened? I've opened the book.
Have you opened the door? No, I haven't.

and so on. The teacher teaches by example rather than by rule, by the living word rather than by the dead text. The pupil learns, in short, by a process comparable to that by which he learnt his mother tongue.

Later comes the time when the pupil learns to read. In the first instance he reads texts the contents of which are the words and forms that are already familiar to him; he re-learns in written form what he has already learnt in spoken form. Here again, the process is similar to the process of learning the mother-tongue.

Sooner or later, however, study will become centred about the *book*. Through reading, the student will not only more and more completely digest the vocabulary with which he is already more or less familiar, but he will continually make additions to this vocabulary and so gradually increase his stock of linguistic material. As time goes on, too, he will become more and more independent of his teacher, and will look more and more to books as the medium of communion with those whose thoughts are formed by and expressed with the same language.

Now there are two extreme types of reading-discipline, both of them useful and necessary—and between the two are others of an intermediate character.

One of them is what is called "Extensive Reading," or "Reading for Literary Content." According to this discipline, the student is more interested in the things he reads about than in the form in which those things are expressed. He says to himself not so much, "What does this word or phrase really mean? Let me now master it before going further" as, "I understand imperfectly or vaguely this word or phrase, so let's get on with the story." For students whose requirements, or partial requirements, are in the nature of such "Extensive Reading" there exists a multitude of material. The new movement in favour of "simplified texts," composed within the limits of specially chosen vocabularies, is steadily growing and contributing further to the material needed for this purpose.

The other extreme of reading discipline is "Intensive Reading," or "Reading for Mastery." According to this discipline, the student is more interested in the form of expression than in the literary content. He says to himself not so much,

"Let's get on with the story" as "Now let us examine this word, phrase or form very thoroughly, learn it, and add it to our stock of linguistic material."

It is for the benefit of those engaged in the Intensive Reading of English and of their teachers that the present "Living-English" series has been designed.

Each volume contains the following features:

1. The Text (or texts) either in specially simplified English or the original unsimplified versions.

Vols. I, III, V, VII, contain texts of the easiest or A grade; Vols. II, IV, VI, VIII, IX, XI, of the intermediate or B grade, and Vols. X, XII, of the advanced or C grade.

2. The explanatory Oral Introduction to the texts, together with a selection of suitable questions to be answered orally by the pupils.

3. Direct Method Composition Exercises to be written by the student and corrected by the teacher.

Hints to Teachers Using this Series

The first, and most important, thing for the teacher to observe is that from the classroom point

of view, the book does not begin at Section A (the text) but at Section B (the explanatory introduction). In other terms, we do not in the first instance treat the story as something to be read but as something to be told and talked about.

We tell our pupils not to open their books but simply to listen. We turn to the page at which the explanatory introduction starts and tell our pupils all that is communicated in paragraph 1. We may content ourselves with reading it out exactly as it stands or we may care to amplify it even very considerably. Each word or expression that is unfamiliar to our pupils may be explained by appropriate examples.

All that we read or say in the explanatory introduction is intended to introduce and to explain; we explain the unfamiliar by the familiar, and so proceed from the known to the unknown. By dint of this procedure the pupils not only come to understand the meaning of the new words and expressions but, what is more important, also to have abundant opportunities for hearing in appropriate contexts those with which they are already acquainted. Let us suppose that the words *crime* and *criminal* are at a given moment new and unfamiliar words. The teacher says for instance:

"Stealing is a crime; to take money that does not belong to you is a crime. It is a crime to kill somebody; killing is a crime. It is a crime to set fire to somebody's house. Is it a crime to kill somebody by accident? No, that isn't a crime, but it is a crime if you kill somebody as a result of not being careful. One who commits a crime is a criminal. Criminals are punished by the law; they are generally put into prison ....." etc. etc.

Now, the pupils have not only come to make the acquaintance of *crime—criminal* in a manner that is likely to imprint these words on their memory, hearing them repeatedly in a proper context, but they have also been given the occasion to hear again and to deepen their recognition-knowledge of, e.g. *steal, belong, set fire to, accident, result, careful, punish, law, prison*, etc., not to mention that they have been given practice in listening understandingly and continuously to the language which is the object of their study.

It should hardly be necessary to point out that in no case must we be tempted to explain the unfamiliar by the still more unfamiliar, or to make opportunities for introducing gratuitously rare or difficult words or expressions. Sufficient to the

text are the difficulties thereof. If the compiler of the text has, with some pains and effort, succeeded in turning the more original more difficult wording into easier wording, it is not for the teacher to undo the work of the compiler by re-introducing the original unsimplified wording. Suppose that one of the explanatory sentences runs: "It's the sort of place in which business men might live." The teacher may legitimately reduce this further to "Business men might live in a place like this," but if he should paraphrase it as "This is a locality in which might dwell those who gain their livelihood in commercial operations," he will be doing nothing to help and probably a great deal to hinder the acquirement by his pupils of the relatively simple sentence in question.

The first paragraph of the story having been thus introduced and explained, the teacher will reinforce the associations by dint of the question-and-answer procedure. He will do this in order to drill his pupils in the fluent and easy use of the newly-acquired material. Among this newly acquired material may be the construction "*supposed to*—followed by the infinitive." A few questions are given in order to provide the pupils with opportunities for using this form, and for

thinking the thought that this form symbolizes e.g. "Who is supposed to write this story?" "Does he really write this story or is he only supposed to write it?" These may be enough, but if the teacher deems that they are not enough, he may add other questions embodying this form, e.g. "Am I really your teacher or am I only supposed to be your teacher?" "Have I really a book in my hand or am I only supposed to have a book in my hand?" "Are you really taking a lesson or are you only supposed to be taking a lesson?"

The question-and-answer procedure may be applied in various ways, depending on circumstances. If the pupils have been already trained in that particular (and most valuable) skill of giving prompt and accurate oral answers to questions received auditorily, they will answer such questions orally (either in chorus or individually). If they have been trained in another particular (and also valuable) skill that consists of converting written questions into written answers, they will write the answers accurately and easily; if they have not been trained to acquire these easy "knacks" they will fail (and perhaps fail lamentably on both counts). In the latter case the teacher would do well to concentrate on both, or either, of these two

points; to stop temporarily the story-telling procedure in favour of the question-and-answer procedure either orally or by writing. For if the pupils for whom these "Living-English" series are designed are so backward in the technique of the question-and-answer procedure that they fail to react either orally or by writing, it is not only reasonable but a measure of necessity—a measure directed by all the grounds of common-sense plus all the findings alike of speech-psychologists and linguisticians—to prescribe for them a short, special, and intensive course of question-answering, as a skill or as a technique, or both.

A rapid course in the question-answering skill is provided in a text-book composed specifically to meet this need. It is entitled "Aids to the Living-English Series: The Technique of Question-Answering."

Then the pupils may open their books at the page containing the text itself. The teacher will read them paragraph 1, once or several times. The pupils will read it out aloud (in chorus or individually, after the teacher or straight from the book). The teacher takes this opportunity, if necessary, of correcting or improving the pronunciation of the pupils.

The teacher may, at his discretion, use the paragraph (or portions of it) as material for dictation. Such dictation should be given not as word by word dictation merely to test the spelling skill, but as a series of "slices of sonority" to give practice in observing and picking up the flow of words as they occur when the language is used in normal intercourse.

Then the second and subsequent paragraphs are treated in the same way: the teacher, telling and talking about the story, drilling in the new material and recapitulating the old, reinforcing new and old associations between the words and the things they symbolize, demonstrating the relation between sounds and spellings, the pupils absorbing the language progressively and cumulatively.

This is intensive reading at its best and in its most effective form.

That form of work known as "Exercises in Grammar and Composition" is needed by all who wish to obtain an easy command of the skill of composing with accuracy. To this end, pupils are usually given a succession of detached sentences to be translated from or into the foreign language. A better procedure is to provide them with familiar material in the foreign language and to give them

opportunities for handling it in various ways, and by so handling it to cause them to explore the technique of sentence-building. Translation is by no means the only way of causing students to handle the material of a foreign language. The devices known as "conversion," "completion," "substitution," "selection," and "exemplification" are in their results generally superior to the translation procedure. When such devices are used in connection with *a text which has been made thoroughly familiar to the students through intensive reading* the results are found to be satisfactory in the highest degree.

And so, to each of the volumes of the "Living-English" series, a number of *Direct Method Exercises in Grammar and Composition* are appended in order to ensure in the fullest measure "depth of knowledge" in addition to effective "surface knowledge."

The technique of the "Living-English" series has been worked out in such a way as to bring about not only a progressive knowledge of the foreign language (English in this particular case) but also a "unified knowledge," in which the respective claims of vocabulary-learning, direct associations, reinforced associations, pronunciation,

spelling, grammar and sentence-building are combined and centred about a text designed for the purpose of intensive reading.

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