

TEACHING ENGLISH



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devoted to the
Teaching of the English
Language in India*

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TEACHING ENGLISH

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J. G. BRUTON

*British Council, Indra Palace Lodge, Block "H"
Connaught Place, New Delhi*

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EDITORIAL

THE BRITISH COUNCIL is happy to be able to contribute to the development of English studies in India by the publication of a new quarterly magazine devoted to the specific problems of teaching English to Indian students.

The columns of the daily newspapers indicate very clearly that great public interest exists in the teaching of English, although this interest is bound up with the difficult question of whether English can continue to be the medium of instruction at Indian universities. This is a controversial issue which we have no intention of discussing in the pages of this journal. Suffice it to say that those who prophesied the immediate disappearance of English from educational life in India have been proved to be wrong, and that those teachers who felt that English had no future may take heart in the conviction that they have a valuable contribution to make to India's cultural and educational life.

If, however, this contribution is to be effective, and if the critics of the methods by which English is at present taught are to be silenced, it is absolutely essential that teachers should know about recent developments in other countries in the field of foreign language teaching, and should freely discuss their own problems. We hope that this new publication will afford ample opportunity for teachers to keep abreast of such developments and provide a forum for the free exchange of ideas.

We are glad to be able to publish in this first number some excellent articles by Indian contributors. It is our hope that a great many teachers will be encouraged to set down their views on specific teaching problems for publication in future issues. We shall welcome articles which deal with actual teaching problems rather than with linguistic theory, since we believe that discussion of these problems is vital and useful. Articles should be submitted to the Education Officer, British Council, Indra Palace Lodge, Block "H", Connaught Place, New Delhi. Articles accepted for publication will be paid for.

Since the first announcement of the intended publication of *Teaching English* we have received a host of messages of goodwill from all over India. We have also received excellent advice from both teachers and friends in the publishing trade. To all these we offer grateful thanks, and express the hope that the result of our efforts will not disappoint them.

MESSAGES

I am intensely interested in the teaching and study of English in this country. In recent years, there has been a steady deterioration in the standard. This is greatly to be regretted. The position occupied by English as an international language demands not only that its study be continued in this country but that a fair standard be maintained. All efforts directed to this end must be welcomed and given every assistance.

LT. COL. C. V. MAHAJAN,
Vice-Chancellor,
Agra University.

After all the recent discussion on the value of English in India, the time has come, I think, for a Quarterly like this to help the teacher restore old standards amongst select students while ensuring a sound working knowledge of the language in different levels of education. I wish it success.

DR. V. S. KRISHNA,
Vice-Chancellor,
Andhra University, Waltair.

I welcome the publication of a magazine to be called *Teaching English*. Our Constitution directs that Hindi should be our National language. There can be no doubt that free India must have a national language of her own. At the same time it may not be possible for us to replace English within a short space of fifteen years. Language like trees has to grow. In my last Convocation address, I dealt with the matter at some length. I quoted from a letter addressed to the Ministry of Education, Delhi, by the different Vice-Chancellors of Universities, a portion of which is as follows :—

If the study of English is killed in our country with an almost indecent haste, the work of a century, perhaps on the whole more good than bad, will be undone in a few years and this will seriously affect the quality of our education.

I, as the Vice-Chancellor of this University, was one of the signatories to the letter. I adhere to that view. English for some time at least has to be learnt by our boys. I shall be happy if your magazine contains concrete suggestions as to how the teaching of English may be improved, not only in the University classes but also in schools, secondary and primary.

S. N. BANERJEE,
Vice-Chancellor,
University of Calcutta.

I have great pleasure in welcoming the magazine *Teaching English*. It is very appropriate that it should be devoted entirely to the problems of teaching English in India. So far we have been studying English with particular emphasis being laid on its literature but the time has now come when we have to concentrate more on the technical problems of employing English as a means of communication. I am sure that teachers of English will find this magazine very useful.

Dr. B. L. MANJUNATH,
Vice-Chancellor,
University of Mysore.

ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE IN THE UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

By PROFESSOR BRUCE PATTISON,
*Head of the Department of English as a Foreign Language,
Institute of Education, University of London*

THERE is now scarcely any part of the world in which there is not an insistent demand for English. The urgency of the need to learn the chief medium of international communication in the modern world has caused administrators and teachers to look for better techniques of language teaching, and they have turned for help to the country where English developed. Since the end of the war educationalists from all over the world have been coming to London, and most of them have been concerned in some way with the teaching of English in their own countries. It was to meet their requirements that the University of London in 1948 established a Chair of Education with special reference to English as a Foreign Language.

The Department of English in the Institute of Education aims at concentrating the results of linguistic scholarship and educational enquiry on the practical problems of teaching English. It is concerned primarily with the study of the English language and of the nature of language learning, since only research into these fundamentals can provide a sound basis for educational programmes and teaching procedures. As in all British Universities, however, research is closely allied with teaching. The Department can influence the teaching of English in various parts of the world only by sending out students trained in its approach to language learning. Its main work is the training of teachers for service overseas.

The Institute of Education, the institution of which the Department forms part, is what the Americans would call a graduate school. It takes graduates from British Universities and trains them for teaching in English grammar schools. The course for these students lasts one University session, from October to June, and the qualification granted to those successfully completing it is the University's Post-Graduate Certificate in Education. It is a general course in education and includes classes in the philosophy, psychology and history of education, in addition to supervised teaching in schools. Graduates are nearly always preparing to be specialists, and for those with degrees in English who are pre-

paring to teach abroad there are special classes in the teaching of English as a Foreign Language and a paper on this subject in the Post-Graduate Certificate Examination.

The Institute of Education does not in general attempt to provide primary professional training for overseas students, who usually can get their first training better in their own countries. Nevertheless, some graduates with teaching experience have been admitted to the Post-Graduate Certificate Course and are at present working under the supervision of the English staff.

More advanced students who are already qualified teachers may take the Diploma in the Teaching of English as a Foreign Language. The course for this also lasts one session and is entirely devoted to the special problems of teaching English. It includes lectures and seminars on linguistics, phonetics, the study of the English language, the preparation of teaching material for all levels of English language and literature learning, and aspects of British life and thought. Practical teaching is an integral part of the course, and no candidate can satisfy the examiners for the Diploma unless he attains a certain standard in teaching.

Both the students receiving a general training in the Post-Graduate Certificate course and those specialising entirely in the teaching of English in the Diploma course are able to get practice in teaching children whose native language is not English. In Wales there are still nearly a million people who speak Welsh at home and learn English first at school. Through the generous co-operation of the authorities of the Counties of Caernarvon and Merioneth all students spend two months in schools in Wales under the close supervision of their tutors from London.

On a still higher level the Department has students with good academic qualifications and teaching experience working for higher degrees. Two years residence is necessary for the M.A. degree, and after that a further two years for the Ph.D. Intensive research on limited topics is one of the main contributions to the building up of a body of tested knowledge about the problems involved in teaching and learning English.

Those who are interested may obtain fuller information about all these courses from the Secretary, Institute of Education, London, W.C. 1. Here they are briefly described merely to show the range of courses provided for students from overseas.

The English Department is not a school of methodology. It does not aim at supplying students with teaching material or instructing them in specific methods. Since it caters for students from all over the world, it can deal only with problems common to all of them. It tries to send out students who can operate effectively in the classroom, and that is why much of its work

is practical, although there is also plenty of theoretical work of post-graduate standard, and the practical and theoretical are always closely related. Much of the planning to make English teaching effective will have to be done in various countries, with full allowance for conditions in each particular country. A Department in London is bound to be concerned more with basic principles than with particular applications of them. It has one great advantage, however, that it is in close touch with most of the work on the English language being carried on in the English-speaking countries. By sending out even a few students who have been brought into contact with such work, and who have a grounding in the basic principles of language teaching, the University of London may help to guide and stimulate all the dispersed efforts in many countries to make English available to all who need it.

THE READING HABIT

By K. NARAYANAN

*Lecturer in English, Dr. Alagappa
Chettiar Training College, Karaikudi.*

A. Need for Extensive Reading:—The idea that reading consists in the mere association of symbols with sounds has been responsible for the fact that too much attention has always been paid to reading aloud in the classroom, and too little attention to silent reading. As Professor Sandiford has remarked: "That the final end of reading is the comprehension of what is read, was lost sight of for many years. Reading in the elementary school meant oral reading. If a pupil could read aloud, giving due emphasis to the pronunciation and articulation of the words and to the modulation of his voice, he satisfied all demands. Any test applied to him showed that he could read. That the pupil might be merely pronouncing the words without comprehending their meaning, very much in the same fashion as a beginner in German might read a difficult passage in that language and be totally ignorant of what it was all about, nobody apparently discovered. The Teachers' point of view was that if a child could pronounce the words, he could ipso facto understand them. Silent reading which could not be tested by any known device, was regarded either as an extra-curricular activity or as solely a matter for the home. The swing of the emphasis in the school from oral to silent reading is in the right direction since probably 99% of all adult reading is silent reading." It is now clear that

from the very beginning reading must be regarded not as a mechanical trick, but as a means of getting at ideas.

From the standpoint of practical utility, reading may be regarded as the only subject of instruction which is absolutely indispensable. Of all subjects it contributes most to the development of general intelligence. Books are the chief means of obtaining information, and when once the ability to read with ease has been acquired, educational progress can proceed throughout life. The extent and character of a person's reading determine the extent and character of his education; and, rightly directed, a love of reading may become a powerful means of intellectual advancement.

Reading is an unfailing source of pleasure and recreation. The child who can read loves his story book, and the adult, his newspaper, work of fiction, education, travel, etc. Hence it is essential, not merely to success, but also to pleasure and interest in life. Silent reading has a practical value: through its agency children may develop a love of reading which they will carry throughout life.

Ten years hence, English will no longer be the Federal language, and hence rightly does the Madras syllabus aim at retaining the present standard of ability to read and comprehend English, whilst realizing the necessity for accepting a lower standard in the ability to speak and write English. In fact, we are not only to retain, but considerably to improve, the present standard of ability to read and comprehend English.

From the above it is evident that one of the most important habits that must be built up in our pupils by us in the Teaching of English, is the habit of extensive, rapid, useful reading, with a view to getting at the thoughts and ideas expressed in books. Our primary aim in teaching a child to read should be to enable him to understand the written thoughts of others. It is hence absolutely necessary that this kind of reading ability, the capacity for silent reading, taking a book apart and mastering it, reading for thought, should be cultivated in our schools, for it is largely through English books that a person can make himself acquainted with modern knowledge of all kinds. In this sense, reading is an intensely mental act. As the child's schooling proceeds, he should be taught more and more to read to himself; for the ability to read is the master-key that admits him to all places of knowledge. More—he has the passport to heavens unguessed. In fine, as Doctor West puts it, we have to cultivate in our pupils the faculty of "tearing the heart out of a book", of getting quickly at the facts of the thoughts. Thus, the ultimate purpose of foreign language study may, in Jespersen's words, be

said to be "access to the best thoughts and institutions of a foreign nation, its literature, culture—in short, the spirit of the nation, in the widest sense of the word". Here is the real justification for as much extra reading at school as possible.

B. Fostering the Reading Habit: The proper training in reading means the formation of the habit of continuous and varied reading, and it further means imparting the techniques for finding information and assimilating it. This cannot be achieved by reading a few text-books. It must be accompanied by a study of non-detailed texts, by library reading, by collateral reading, and by library visits.

Rapid Reading: If it is urged that rapid reading is superficial reading, the answer is, firstly, that it suffices, nevertheless, to achieve the purpose in view; namely, 'the creation of an interest in reading foreign works for their own sake. It results certainly in the acquisition of a considerable vocabulary by unconscious assimilation, the same process that is responsible for much the larger part of the native vocabulary we each possess. The commoner words in fact impress themselves by repetition upon the memory, and the recurrence of each in a number of different contexts ensures the building up by accretion of its connotation. "Some books are to be tasted; others to be swallowed; and some to be chewed and digested." Bacon makes a difference between books to be read carefully, with diligence and attention, and others to be read in a cursory manner, read rapidly, noting only the main thought. The detailed reader is the centre of language instruction. The non-detailed reader is also useful for promoting language study, but it aims at proficiency in certain special skills in language acquirement. The special aim of the extensive reader is to promote rapid silent reading by the pupil. It is thus intended to promote the habit of silent study, silent independent reading. Text reading hardly deals with the development of adequate silent reading habits.

It has to be remembered that the prescribed non-detailed reader is intended as an intermediate step between the detailed reader on the one hand and library work or the reading of extra books, magazines, newspapers etc., at home on the other.

According to the revised syllabus, the authority specified in the Madras Educational Rules 58 and 79 shall prescribe three or four books, interesting in subject matter and in easy, idiomatic modern prose (of about 240 pages in all), for class library work in Form IV, and five or six books (about 300 pages in all) for Form V.

Selection of Books: Considerable care has got to be exercised in selecting books for non-detailed study.

There should be no language barrier between the pupil and the book he reads.

The complaint is frequently made that the silent reading lesson fails to compel by its own intrinsic charm. This estimation is invariably due to the fact that the books are generally above the heads of pupils. A non-detailed reader for Form IV must evidently be based on the vocabulary and the sentence forms taught in Forms I to III. In recreative reading the object is not to study difficulty of language but to enjoy the narrative with as few interruptions as possible. Language and grammar exercises are entirely out of place. The language should be simple and, in school editions, designed for recreative reading: difficult words and allusions, if any, should be explained in footnotes, so that the pupil may not be delayed by having to hunt for their meaning in a dictionary.

Books should be highly interesting. Books of stories, travel, exploration, discoveries, are suitable for Forms III and IV, and books of general knowledge may be introduced in Forms V and VI. Again, books should be short enough to admit of being read through in the secondary school course. In fine, books should be interesting, easy and short.

Most of the books on the market are not suitable for our pupils because they do not satisfy these three requirements. One way of solving this difficulty is to insist that publishers of text-books for detailed study should also publish non-detailed readers based upon them. For example the publisher who prints a detailed text-book for Form III should be required to publish non-detailed readers for Form III, based largely on the vocabulary and the sentence forms taught in Forms I and II. The author of both the readers, the detailed and the non-detailed, should be the same. This is very important.

It is pleasant to note in this connection the publication by Macmillans of the *Coromandel Reader I*, and the two supplementary readers, mainly based upon the vocabulary of Reader I, written by Prof. A. Rama Iyer, Former Principal, National College, Trichy. The books are simple, short, and attractive, with matter suited to the age of the pupils. It is hoped that other leading publishers will follow the example of Macmillans.

For the present, to meet our immediate needs it is better to make use of adaptations of standard English stories and works. The books for non-detailed study published by the Oxford University Press, Macmillan & Co., and Orient Longmans are worthy of note.

Formation of Reading Circles: If it is not possible for pupils to purchase all the books prescribed for rapid reading, the school can buy them with Library fees and lend them out.

I would suggest the formation of reading circles. If there is a plentiful supply of books, the whole class, even if it be a large one, may form a circle. A large class, however, may be divided into four circles of ten each. A class of forty may be divided into 2 or 3 circles which will be able to read 2 or 3 books in turn at the same cost as that of providing one book for the whole class. By dividing the class in this way into sections, the object of securing a greater variety of books without additional expense is to some extent attained.

The limitations however must be observed. There must not be more sections than can be effectively controlled by the teacher who will have to spend some time with each, discussing the subject matter of the book which is being read. Two or three sections can be managed in this way. Each section must contain enough children to make possible an effective discussion to which a number of pupils contribute their ideas. I would suggest twelve as the minimum number for a circle. In a large school where Forms are divided into sections, all the pupils in any one section may read the same book at the same time.

The Rapid Reading Lesson: Three Stages. As the reading is to resemble ordinary home reading for pleasure as much as possible, it should be done silently. The book can be divided into a convenient number of portions, a certain amount of time being allotted for the reading of each.

The Preparation Stage: If necessary, an introductory talk may be given. Some of the special difficulties of language may be cleared up at this stage. Pupils should be definitely provided with a few objectives. Before pupils begin to read the portions assigned, a few broad objectives must be given to ensure meaningful reading and to serve as a guide to reading. In the Muslim High School, Abiramam, *The Stories of Shakespeare*, Volumes I & II, in the *Tales Retold for Easy Reading Series*, Oxford University Press, were two of the books prescribed for rapid reading in Form V, in 1949-1950. The following questions were given on the story of "As You Like It."

1. How did the exiled Duke and his courtiers spend their time in the forest of Arden?
2. Why did the Duke banish Rosalind?
3. What disguise did Rosalind and Celia put on before their flight and why?
4. Why did Orlando go to the forest of Arden?
5. Describe the mock courtship by Orlando of Ganymede.

6. How did Celia and Oliver come to love each other ?

7. Describe the happy ending.

The Presentation Stage : At this stage pupils are engaged in reading the portion assigned silently with a view to answering the objectives given above. The Teacher has to guide the pupils when they are reading, to discover the impressions and ideas that they receive, and to lead them to appreciate the right things. All this must be done tactfully and unobtrusively.

The Application Stage : At the end of the time there should be an informal discussion of the part read, the teacher acting as the leader of the circle, drawing out from each child his ideas on the story and characters, amending them where they are mistaken, calling attention to points missed and so on—all this not as a taskmaster, but as a fellow reader who is enjoying the book, and wishes others to do so. In doing this he gets a good idea of the extent to which each child has understood and appreciated what he has read. Much more ground is covered by oral discussion of this kind than by two or three written answers, and it is less exacting for both teacher and children. A written composition may be set, based upon the book being read, and the terminal examinations should include some questions on it ; but in the main, the testing should be done orally.

(To be concluded)

THE USE OF THE BLACKBOARD IN THE LANGUAGE CLASSROOM

By F. L. BILLOWS

Lecturer in English, Teachers' College, Saidapet.

IN TRYING to teach a foreign language in a classroom, we are at a serious disadvantage : languages are best learnt in contact with normal life. The child learns its own mother tongue, running round its mother in the kitchen, playing with other children in the street, listening to its parents talking to friends. Its mother washes its face and says : "Now we'll wash your little nose, now we'll wash your little cheeks ; now we'll wash your little chin ; now we'll wash your little neck," etc. With endless repetition that is only natural in the context of washing a small child, she builds up associations between action and language. Or she says : "Don't touch that pot : it's hot." The child touches it, and it is hot. The sailor in a foreign ship learns to do certain things in response to certain orders ; he has to concentrate on the language to understand, but his primary interest is in fulfilling the orders. Everyone learns not only his mother tongue, but also a second

or third language, best in association with the natural world and the learning of other more absorbing things. The constant effort of the teacher must be to recreate in the language classroom, as far as possible, the illusion, if not the reality, of the real world.

There are many kinds of ways of doing this: getting the children to make things and talk about them as they are making them, or do simple actions; above all every lesson in the classroom or at any rate a group of two or three lessons, should be followed by some time spent in the playground or the street going over the structural material learnt in the classroom in natural conversation, using perhaps new content vocabulary, but repeating essentially the same speech forms as have been introduced in class. There are also various audiovisual aids which are used to transcend the narrow limits of the classroom and try to create the illusion of carrying the class out into the real world. Many of them are expensive and beyond the means of most schools in India, but two of the cheapest—the classroom window and the blackboard—happen also to be two of the best. The classroom window is altogether neglected, and the blackboard is, in my experience, not by any means fully exploited: all too often it is only used to write up the new words that are being introduced, and even for this purpose it is frequently wrongly used. I cannot claim to have explored all the possibilities of the blackboard, but I should like to make teachers more conscious of its potentialities and perhaps they can make their own experiments. Or there may be teachers who have thought out and made use of the blackboard in some other ways that I have never thought of.

First of all, at a quite early stage, the blackboard can be made a vehicle of activity: I have seen a teacher keep a class in a state of ant-like activity for ten or twenty minutes at a time by telling as many as five or six children at a time, in rotation, to go up and draw on the blackboard such things as a square, a circle, a triangle, a bottle, a glass, a spade, a woman with a child, a man with a dog, a ship in full sail, rain falling from a cloud. As one finished his drawing the class had half a minute to decide whether it was good enough, and then the next came and rubbed it out and began an attempt to do a better one, or a new subject. I once found myself in a large, rather lively class of more than 60 little girls who were evidently used to overwhelming their teacher's rather small voice and slight personality in a babel of conversation and mischief. By drawing a picture of a dog on the blackboard and getting the champion artists of the class to come up and try and do better, and then comparing the length of the tails of the dogs, I soon found that we had quite forgotten that we were having an English lesson and were concentrating on drawing dogs with

white tails, with long legs, with spots; cats with long and short tails, sitting and standing; mice; birds flying and walking, and so on. The lesson passed in no time, nothing but English was spoken, although the girls had only been learning for about three months, and there was nobody who didn't take full part in the lesson. We finished up with pictures of a man with a dog on the blackboard and a man cutting grass, and then learnt the song:

One man went to mow
Went to mow a meadow
One man and his dog
Went to mow a meadow.

and the girls went home singing it. The blackboard had been used to give the illusion that we were not in a classroom at all.

The teacher teaching a class usually has his back to the blackboard, so that it's not surprising that he often forgets about it. I once saw a teacher trying to teach the idea of sending signals by means of fires from hill-top to hill-top. She was struggling hard to explain, but had to give up. I took over the class and quickly drew on the blackboard a line of elementary but undoubted hills and from the top of each in turn showed a pillar of smoke rising from a fire that was being lit in response to the one before it. It was so simple, yet the teacher with her back to the blackboard hadn't thought of it. There the blackboard was used to stimulate the imagination of the class of older boys to picture a scene they had certainly read about, if they hadn't actually enacted it in their scouting. This teacher had complained that her class wanted everything explained in the mother tongue; yet after two lessons with liberal use of the blackboard, coupled with a little acting—two boys signalling from one end of the blackboard to the other with telegraph instruments drawn and connected with chalked wires—and explanation with drawings and diagrams of the use of radar at sea—and the boys all voted for exclusion of the mother tongue from English lessons, as it was so much more fun if one wasted no time on translating and explaining, and talked about real things instead.

Of course good text-books have pictures in them that can be made use of, but usually they have been drawn so as to include as much material as possible and they are too confusing to use without preparation. There is the same drawback in wall-pictures prepared for classroom use. The great advantage of a picture on the blackboard is that it can be made under the eye of the pupils and every stage can be used as an occasion for comment. For example: "I am drawing a picture of a man; this is his head. How many eyes has he? Is his nose over his mouth or under it? Who can draw his hair? I can't draw it very well. This is his

neck; his neck is between his head and his body. Now I'm drawing his left arm, now his right arm. Have I made his arms too long? These are his two legs; is he walking or standing still? Shall we give him long trousers or shorts? Now what is his name? His name is Mr. Brown. Shall we give him a wife? Her name will be what? Mrs. Brown? Yes, that's right." In this way a family can be built up on the blackboard that will live for the class in a way no picture in the book can live. If the teacher can't draw very well the picture is likely to be all the funnier, and the best artist in the class can always be brought up to save the situation. But my experience is that the best artist in the class often produces too insipid a picture, or is over careful of his reputation and takes too long. The teacher can draw a picture of a bus and forget to draw the wheels—he should train the class to notice things like that—then he can put the luggage on the top, or he can say that the bus has had a puncture and it must all be taken down and the wheel taken off.

I always encourage students in training to spend whatever odd moments they have practising drawing the simple things that will often be needed, trying to learn a simple form for a bus, a train, a house, a horse, a dog, a cat, a mouse, etc. When teaching about the house it is best to begin with the simple form of the house, showing the roof and then drawing the chimney, the windows, a door, etc; then gradually drawing in a garden with trees and bushes, commenting all the time, as with the man and the family; then a path from the front door, a garden wall and gate in it; Mr. Brown doing some work in the garden; the dog running down the path: Mr. Brown standing in the door-way. A little experience soon shows the most economical and effective forms. Some people draw people in the form of insect-like indications in single lines, others, amongst them myself, attempt to show them as solid figures in the round. Above all one must learn to be quick and to keep up a running commentary, that shall be as interesting, and even amusing, as possible.

Even grammar can be taught with the help of simple pictures. For example, I draw a little square or cube which is being looked at intently by a figure of a mouse, the mouse in its turn is being contemplated by a cat. The mouse and the cat can each be suggested by a single continuous line which, with a little practice can be drawn very quickly. Then I write underneath or say "What eats the mouse?" In ninety percent of the classes where I do this, the answer is "The cheese." Then I can give a lesson which summarizes the rules for making questions in English.

the piece of cheese

the mouse

the cat

There are some books in which the teaching of grammar has been pushed to great lengths by means of pictures; the teacher can always get a more lively and appealing result if he draws the pictures on the blackboard himself first. Even if they are artistically inferior, they can be simplified and built up piecemeal, they can be fresher and adapted to local needs; but above all, the whole class can take part in the process of building them up; forgetting the narrow limits of the classroom, as the picture helps them leave it in their imagination.

Apart from pictures, of course, systematizations of the tenses of the verb can be arranged, for greater clarity, when doing revision work, on the blackboard; and all sorts of language material can be taught easily with the help of diagrams. One use of the blackboard which I have seen, is, in my opinion, improper. Some teachers begin the lesson by writing all the new words, which are to be met in a new lesson, on the blackboard. In this way, the class are asked to meet them in their most difficult form first. The words should first be made familiar in speech, and only when they are thoroughly familiar should they be written on the blackboard, and then alone without any vernacular equivalents beside them. The vernacular equivalent of a word beside a new word robs the new word of most of its power to make an impression on our minds.

New words must be learnt in genuine associations within their own language in a similar way to the way we learn words in our own mother tongue, and to build up these associations I hope I have shown that mere pictures are not enough, but a building up of language situation with the help of pictures and diagrams. Our pictures must have life in that they can be imagined in three dimensions and are built up under the eye of the pupil, but also we must try to give them position in time. A picture of a house and garden will be drawn when these objects are being taught as a vehicle for the first simple structure, the present tense of the verb "to be," the present continuous tense of simple verbs, the simple present tense and so on. A similar picture can be drawn again as revision for the objects and tenses and to practise the other tenses too. For example "What have we drawn so far?" "Have we put a chimney on the house?" "Shall we put in some trees?" "I think we had better use coloured chalk for the flowers, don't you?" "Tell me what there is behind the house, that we can't see." "What could we see if we stood in that corner of the garden?" "Now it is eight o'clock; who will come out of the house in twenty minutes' time?" etc.

Of course, the illustrations given here are only indications of what can be done. Every teacher must be ready to adapt his

ability to use the blackboard to stimulate the visual imagination of his pupils, in accordance with the age, development and needs of every class. Above all, work on the blackboard should be suited to the character of the blackboard. Finished drawings are best presented in text-books, or carefully prepared wall-pictures or charts; actual objects, such as fruit, vegetables, etc., which can actually be brought into the classroom should be shown as they really are; an actual or cardboard clock-face should be used for telling the time; but work on the blackboard should be improvisatory, should exploit the moment and be used to give an extra dimension to the classroom. It should be used freshly and naturally to indicate and suggest, to remind of experience and situation, and to focus the attention of the class.

THE PRONUNCIATION OF ENGLISH

By HARVANT SINGH

*Head of the Department of English, Government College,
Hoshiarpur*

SO FAR as spelling and pronunciation are concerned, modern English is one of the most erratic and untrustworthy languages. The spelling of an English word need not and does not invariably represent its exact sound, and it is due to this peculiar difficulty that English dictionaries have to employ a separate set of symbols to show pronunciation. Compare this with, say, any of the Indian languages. They are spoken and read very much as they are written, and there is no need to call in the aid of separate sound notations. But English orthography is quite different. It exists in its own right, for its meaning content, etymology and past history, and is hardly responsible for the pronunciation, which is left to take care of itself.

This difficulty of English spelling or pronunciation, as one may choose to call it, is of two kinds:

(a) One set of letters represents more than one sound, e.g. the combination *OUGH* stands for six different sounds in the words:

rough, cough, plough, through, though, thorough.

(b) Contrariwise, one and the same sound is represented by different sets of letters. Take for instance the vowel sound in *SEE* and *TEA* also occurring in the following fourteen words:—
*believe, receive, leave, machine, mosquito, cede, fiend,
quay, epoch, clique, suite, aesthetic, foetid, qui vive*

Again the vowel sound in *IT*, *PIN*, etc. is also represented by different combinations of letters in the following words :—

market, business, biscuit, definite, excess, carriage, village, Monday, monkey, diocese, lyric, Ceylon, foreign, forehead, lettuce.

These are just a sample of the patent anomalies of English, and their name is legion. Confronted with such a terrible difficulty the foreign student of English must needs have patience and perseverance, and it is ample testimony to the heroic efforts of the Indian student that he gets on with English as well as he does.

It is interesting to know that, conservative as they are, the English people have occasionally made efforts to reform English spelling. One can well imagine how the downright Bernard Shaw must have long chafed under the necessity of using the impossible English orthography and his campaign for a simplified alphabet is well known. The practical Americans likewise could not feel very happy about English spelling, but their efforts seem to be limited to a token curtailment of a letter or two, such as writing *color* for *colour*, *labor* for *labour* and *center* for *centre* etc. In England itself a Spelling Reform Bill was actually introduced in the House of Commons in March, 1948, but was rejected, though by a narrow majority of three. During the debate on the Bill, a member of Parliament, Mr. Donner, was quoted by John O'London's Weekly as saying :

The whole proposal is a fatal over-simplification: English Spelling is England's pride. It reveals the richness of our culture and the many-sidedness of the potent and prolific English genius. Our language is a living organism, it is a convention which has been created. This is a Bill to kill classical influence, culture, philosophy, style, taste, rhythmic prose and innumerable prayers.

So the problem of English pronunciation, thanks mainly to England's pride and the unhelpful English spelling, remains as difficult for us as ever. Nay, with the British connection severed and the Britishers, the native speakers of the language, practically all gone from the country, the problem has become all the more difficult. While they were here their speech and utterance provided some sort of impetus and a norm which was sufficient to guide us, but now, in Independent India we are, in the matter of English pronunciation at least, thrown on our own resources which, at best, are only slight. But then what are we actually doing about it? Are we content to decipher pronunciation from the spelling or imitate the none-too-correct pattern set by teachers or speakers of English in general. Or are we, as enlightened

citizens of a renascent India, going to raise our standards and make a systematic and better effort? We do well to realize the importance of education and to feel justly proud of our desire to extend and improve it. And, we also do well to remember that English has been an integral and a very important part of our education, and will, detractors and doubters notwithstanding, continue to be so in the years to come. But are we justified in calling ourselves educated, and supposing that we have learnt English and are speaking it properly, and teaching it to our students, when we are paying practically no attention to the right pronunciation of English? On this point, John Ruskin has said something apposite :

A well-educated gentleman may not know many languages, may not be able to speak any but his own—may have read few books. But whatever language he knows, he knows precisely ; whatever word he pronounces, he pronounces rightly. But an uneducated person may know by memory any number of languages and talk them all, and yet truly know not a word of any—not a word even of his own a false accent or mistaken syllable is enough in the parliament of any civilized nations, to assign to a man a certain degree of inferior standing for ever.

One needs to stress this point, as unfortunately our ideas in matters of education and learning are generally vague and nebulous, and wherever they happen to be sufficiently formed, they are utilitarian. In the past we would make an effort to speak English correctly only if it pleased our masters and improved our position in business or in the office, as it largely did in pre-Independence days, but now the picture is different, and the incentive to speak better practically non-existent. One of my esteemed old friends is not tired of seriously advising me to give up all this 'fad for phonetics' for says he, "What is the use, Sardar Ji? The English people have gone, so let pronunciation also go." One dreads to think that that is the way in which our minds work. Instead of a ready willingness on our part to raise or even maintain standards, there is already evidence on all hands that we are ready to accept half measures and compromises. "Sloppiness is the bane of the Country," Mr. Nehru has said and nobody knows his country better than he. In another context he has exhorted us : "In everything we do in this country we should aim at the highest level." But are we aiming at the highest level in the teaching of English, still the most important subject in the School and College Curriculum? Do we realize that English is not taught only as literature, but also as a language, a spoken thing, which by its very definition presupposes an adequate knowledge and practice of correct speech and pronunciation? I am

afraid not. Indeed the general view is that in the matter of English pronunciation at least we need not be too particular, and therefore just anything will do. This is all well and good, if we can pick up some correct form here and there, but for the most part we are well content to leave it to chance or an occasional sporadic effort. Sadder still, our proneness to take things for granted and our aversion to checking and verifying has invaded the printed word also, and one can name whole lists of English text-books and English Dictionaries by Indian writers in which the pronunciation of words given is entirely un-English, if not definitely wrong. But that is hardly the way of a people with a progressive outlook, who want to aim "at the highest level." What is worth doing is worth doing well, and if English is worth learning and speaking, it is a good deal more worth learning and speaking with a good pronunciation and proper accent, and our aim as teachers of English, therefore, should be to secure first for ourselves and then for our students a form of speech that is not merely intelligible but also correct, and therefore pleasant to the greatest number of educated speakers of the language. Even from a utilitarian point of view, a defective pronunciation is a disadvantage.

Granted that we are sufficiently agreed on the objective, namely the learning of correct English pronunciation, how are we going to achieve it? (The word pronunciation is being used here in a comprehensive sense including all elements of spoken English, such as sound, stress, intonation etc.)

Of course the best way to learn a foreign language is to have a good ear and a ready tongue, and to live among and consort with people who speak it as their mother tongue. But since that resource was never fully available to us and is now practically non-existent and expensive after the British withdrawal from India, we have to have recourse to the next best method, namely, learning the sounds or the phones of the language. For this purpose the study of English Phonetics is necessary. Now Phonetics is not a fad or fancy. It is a truly scientific and accurate method by which we can learn the phones of a language, and by fixing them by symbols (the phonetic notation) and sufficient practice, achieve correct pronunciation. Phonetics is not at all difficult. A student of average intelligence can learn it in about four weeks, devoting, say, one hour to receiving instruction and one hour to practice every day, or in other words, a total initial outlay of 60 hours. Phonetics is, moreover, a fascinating study, which, besides being of the utmost assistance in the learning of any language, is a source of perpetual interest to the learner. The only trouble with phonetics is that it cannot be learnt from a "book", but needs guidance and instruction at the hands of a trained person

who has mastered the sounds of the language. It is therefore suggested (what appears at first sight a bold thing to do) that in all our educational institutions, particularly in the Teachers' Training Colleges and Schools and Arts Colleges where M.A. English is taught, we should have duly qualified teachers of English Phonetics, who would impart the necessary training to all those who intend to qualify as teachers of English or teachers of subjects in which the medium of instruction is English. Using the Linguaphone records and listening to good speech on the wireless or by a good English speaker are all excellent and important aids, but the best method is that of Phonetics, and once the phones are learnt the ability to use a pronouncing English dictionary in the phonetic script is but a step, and a life-long asset. And what is more, the benefits arising out of this study are not limited to English alone; they pave the way to the study of the sounds of Indian languages or, for that matter, of any European or other modern language we care to pursue.

One might say there is dearth of phonetically trained teachers. But such teachers will become available only if we want them and we shall want them only when we realise that Phonetics, by its very definition, is an integral part of the study of a living language, which English is. Only when we have made such an appraisal and revised our sense of values, will the cost of producing a group of phonetically trained teachers or even importing a few English phoneticians from abroad not be considered excessive.

Doubts are often expressed as to the precise form of English pronunciation we should acquire, for, say the detractors, there are hundreds of variants in England itself, let alone the American variety which is clamouring for recognition. But luckily for us the choice is obviously and has already been made. In hundreds of years of British connection we have followed and are continuing to follow the pronunciation which is most widely understood, and regarded by the majority of the English people themselves, as the accepted mode, namely the pronunciation of the educated people of England and of the Universities such as London, Oxford and Cambridge. This is also the pronunciation of the B.B.C. Phoneticians in England such as Daniel Jones have modestly called it Received Pronunciation, through for all practical purposes it may be regarded by foreigners as the standard one. An indispensable book of reference on the subject is *An English Pronouncing Dictionary* by Daniel Jones.

One thing, however, is quite clear. We, as foreigners cannot become perfect exponents of English pronunciation, some eminent exceptions notwithstanding, for it is idle to expect an outsider to learn to speak a language as well as a native. But then, nor can we,

if we make it our business to study and speak English, be content with being slipshod or arbitrary or merely intelligible. For if that is the criterion even an appallingly bad pronunciation can pass muster and be quite intelligible. No, we in our resurgent India, are not supposed to take all this trouble with English simply for the sake of being intelligible. The prizes, as we know, are higher and much richer.

Let us therefore be pronunciation-minded and aim at a correct utterance of English, and so call to our side the very necessary aid of Phonetics. We teachers of English owe it to ourselves and to our students. We owe it to the glorious tradition of linguistic scholarship that our ancient land possessed. And we owe it to the great English language itself, which unfolds its beauty and riches more bountifully to those who speak it with a full sense of the importance of correctness in speech.

THE TEACHING OF INDIRECT SPEECH

By J. G. BRUTON

Education Officer, British Council, New Delhi.

I FIND that among teachers and students of English the study of Indirect Speech presents a very major problem. Largely, I suppose, because in Indian languages there are no modifications in verb and pronoun forms involved in reporting. The usual way out of the difficulty adopted by teachers seems to be to provide students with lists showing how tenses, pronouns and certain adverbs are changed in passing from one form of speech to the other, and to demand that students get these lists by heart. The dangers of such a method are manifold, apart altogether from the risk run of inducing boredom in students, a risk always present when the learning of a living language is reduced to a purely mechanical process.

In tackling this problem, it is absolutely vital to remember that Indirect Speech is used in reporting, and this fact should be brought home to students by showing them clearly that it is so used. This cannot be done by writing upon the blackboard an example like "My mother is ill to-day and I cannot go to school," and then telling the class that "my" becomes "his", "is" becomes "was", "cannot" becomes "could not", and "to-day" becomes "yesterday". Let the students actually report one another's statements in the classroom and discover for themselves, with adequate and skilful guidance, how indirect Speech in English works.

The sooner the problem is tackled the better, and there is no reason at all to postpone dealing with it until the third or fourth

year of English. As soon as pupils are able to make short statements and know the verb "to say" they have all the necessary equipment for handling the simpler forms of Indirect Speech, if they are skilfully guided and questions are presented in such a way as to evoke correct answers. But it is absolutely essential to grade the difficulties and to deal with each one separately and not to try to tackle too many at a time. The difficulties involved in Indirect Speech are really of two kinds—(a) Those involving verbs, and (b) Those involving pronouns and possessive adjectives: and the logical approach would surely be to concentrate on one of these and to disregard the other for the moment. If we wish to introduce Indirect Speech at an early stage in an English course, it is obviously preferable to ignore (a) and to concentrate on (b), which can easily be done if we use as our introductory verb the present tense of the verb "say". I have personally tried the method I shall outline with a class of Indian boys who were at the end of their first year of English—with complete success. It is important to notice the form of some of the questions, e.g. *Where does he say his book is?* in preference to *What does he say?*, because the first form should evoke a correct reply, while the second offers the student no help at all. It should also be noticed that there is no need at all to introduce the difficulty of the use of "that" which, in any case, is quite normally omitted in current English speech.

The following outline series of questions and answers shows how it is possible to lead up to the simpler forms of Indirect Speech, and they do show the principle of reporting actually at work.

Teacher: Say "book"

A: Book.

Teacher: "What does he say?"

B: He says "book".

A number of examples of this type can be given, until students are familiar with the pattern—He says something. The next stage consists in offering examples in which a noun clause is the object of "says".

Teacher: Where's the red book?

A: The red book's on the table.

Teacher: Where does he say the red book is?

B: He says the red book's (it's) on the table.

After a number of similar examples, in which the original statement is in no way modified when reported, a new form of question may be added—What does he say?

The class, after a number of such examples, should be able to tackle the first real problem, the use of possessive adjectives in Indirect Speech. Once again there should be no major problem if questions are framed in such a way as to leave little margin for error.

(A) Teacher : What's your name?

A : My name's A.

Teacher : What does he say his name is?

D : He says his name's A.

Teacher : What does he say?

C : He says his name's A.

(B) Teacher : My shirt's white. What colour do I say my shirt is?

A : You say your shirt's white.

Or

Teacher : What colour's my shirt?

A : Your shirt's white.

Teacher : What colour does he say my shirt is?

B : He says your shirt's white.

B will need a good deal of practice and examples will have to be given to cover all the possessive forms. In classes of boys where the feminine forms are a problem, and classes of girls where the masculine forms cannot be normally used, recourse must be had to simple line drawings on the blackboard; statements may be written in balloon forms issuing from the mouths of the figures, of the type to be found in comics and cartoons.

I feel that if this method is used, and a good deal of frequent practice given, many of the difficulties of Indirect Speech can be successfully overcome at an early stage in the teaching of English. A form of written exercise which may profitably be used is the answering of questions on a letter, written for the class by the teacher, using only the verb forms familiar to the students. Such a letter might begin :

Dear Harish,

The weather in Bombay is not very good, and as we cannot go out, my brother and I are writing letters to our friends. My brother is not very pleased, because he wants to go to the cinema. One day we hope to go in my father's car to Juhu for a swim."

Questions might be :

What does the writer say about the weather in Bombay?

Why does he and his brother are writing letters?

The point here once again is to frame the questions in such a way that there is the least possibility of error by students: if this

is done, certain patterns used in Indirect Speech should become firmly fixed in their minds, and these will be the basis of much future work.

So far as the present tense is concerned, there is nothing contrary to normal English usage in using the introductory verb "to say" in the examples given above, but it would be incorrect to use the verb "to tell" in a similar context—"What does he tell you?" is a possible question only in certain limited circumstances. For this reason, and because "to tell" involves structural complications, we must postpone using it until our students are ready to be introduced to the use of Indirect Speech in the Past Tenses. This should normally happen in the second year of an English course, after the Simple Past, the Present Perfect and the Past Perfect have been mastered.

If the forms used in reporting in the Present have been well established, that is to say, if the difficulties relating to pronouns and possessive adjectives have been successfully overcome, it should be possible at this stage to ignore these difficulties and to concentrate on those which refer to verb forms.

A further difficulty which must be dealt with adequately is that of the different structures required by the verbs "say" and "tell".

SAY SOMETHING (TO SOMEBODY)

TELL SOMEBODY SOMETHING

This formula is perhaps over-simplified, but it does cover a very large number of uses. The really important point to be established is that TO SOMEBODY is by no means essential in the "say" construction while with "tell" SOMEBODY normally is. It would, however, be unfair to confuse the student by introducing too many difficulties at once, and it would therefore be preferable to deal first with the problem of changing verb tenses before touching upon the structural points indicated.

The first introduction to Indirect Speech involving past tenses can most easily be made through the verb "to be" used in combination with adverbial expressions of place, since in this way it is possible clearly to show how the past tense is used in reporting, e.g.

Teacher: Where's my blue book?

A: Your blue book's on the table
(Teacher removes book)

Teacher: Where did A say the book was?

B: He said it was on the table.

Once the students are confident in their use of this structure it will be possible to go on to the study of more difficult forms using past tenses with verbs other than "to be".

e.g. Teacher: (to A) Go and stand near the door.

(A goes)

(A) Teacher: Where are you standing?

A: I am standing near the door.

Teacher: Go back to your place.

Teacher: Where did A say he was standing?

B: He said he was standing near the door.

(B) Teacher: (to A) Go to the door and open it

(A goes)

Teacher: What can you see?

A: I can see a car.

Teacher: Go back to your place.

Teacher: What did A say he could see?

B: He said he could see a car.

The same examples can be used for illustrating the structural problems of "to tell".

e.g. Teacher: Where's my blue book?

A: Your blue book's on the table

(Teacher removes the book)

Teacher: Where did A tell me my book was?

B: He told you your blue book was on the table.

This is a suitable juncture at which to introduce the use of "to tell" and other verbs in indirect commands. Here again the form of the question must clearly indicate the form of the reply.

e.g. Teacher: A, give me your book.

(A does so)

Teacher: What did I tell A to do?

B: You told A to give you his book.

Teacher: Please go to the door, A.

(A does so)

Teacher: What did I ask A to do?

B: You asked A to go to the door.

It should be possible by the use of this technique, to establish in the first two years of English the essential structural patterns of Indirect Speech, and to lay surely the foundations of future work in such a way that students will be able to absorb further ideas with a minimum of effort. What is essential about the procedure is that students should not be frightened by reference to such terms as Indirect Statement and Sequence of Tenses, and should not be daunted by being faced with long lists of words in columns labelled Direct Speech and Indirect Speech. It is also essential that they should see reporting actually at work in the classroom.

Indirect Speech is like so many other difficulties students are faced with in the study of English—the passive voice, relative pronouns, the use of tenses; they can all be reduced to formulae, a method which will inevitably kill interest. If, however, these difficulties are treated vividly and directly, and forms are used, rather than talked about, it should be possible to overcome them efficiently and at the same time pleasantly.

TOOLS OF THE TRADE

In this section we propose to publish brief notices of those books which should form part of the basic library of every serious teacher of English.

AN ENGLISH PRONOUNCING DICTIONARY Daniel Jones (*Dent*, 12s. 6d.)

The standard reference work on English pronunciation compiled by the most outstanding contemporary English phonetician. It is a pronouncing dictionary and is not concerned at all with the meaning of words. Words are transcribed in phonetic symbols, and when different pronunciations of words are found, these are given in order of acceptability, the norm being "Standard" or "Received" English.

The Oxford Dictionaries

Of the many dictionaries published by the Oxford University Press, the most useful to teachers are probably:

THE SHORTER OXFORD DICTIONARY: (Rs. 85/5.) a two-volume version of the thirteen-volume O.E.D. which will more than answer the everyday needs of the teacher.

THE CONCISE OXFORD DICTIONARY: (Rs. 10/8)—an excellent small dictionary adequate for the needs of the Matriculation and Intermediate student if a dictionary is to be used at all at these levels.

THE ADVANCED LEARNER'S DICTIONARY OF CURRENT ENGLISH (Rs. 14/10): An excellent work specially designed for foreign learners of English. Definitions are given in simple terms, and words and phrases are used in sentences to illustrate their use. Pronunciation is given in phonetic symbols.

A useful innovation is a system by which verb-patterns are referred to by a number included in the appropriate entry. A key to these verb-patterns is included in a most useful introduction.

AN ENGLISH READER'S DICTIONARY (Rs. 4/-): This dictionary is designed for use by students who have gone beyond the elementary stage and who need such a reference book for use when engaged in their intensive or extensive reading. Pronunciation is given in phonetic symbols.

THE PROGRESSIVE ENGLISH DICTIONARY (Rs. 3/-): The simplest of the series, this one is intended for beginners who need a dictionary for use when reading. Stressed syllables are marked, but pronunciation is not indicated.

DEEPAK READERS BOOK I. J. R. Forrester. (Oxford University Press. As. 12.)

This book, written to meet the requirements of the Madras syllabus, has been most carefully prepared. The writer has managed most successfully to write interesting lessons within the limits of the vocabulary and range of structures laid down by the syllabus, although at times she has been led into producing sentences which sound unnatural, e.g. She caught the one stone in her hand (p. 39): which book is red? (p. 63): there are two boys (p. 77.)

The great virtue of the book lies in its control of structures and in its logical and ordered presentation of material. So many writers of text-books in India, while exercising rigid control over vocabulary, ignore the problem of structures, which is vastly more important.

The book is well produced, with a good number of clear and useful illustrations. We shall greatly look forward to the other books in the series.

QUESTION BOX

WE INVITE readers to submit questions relating to difficulties in English or to the problems of teaching English. We cannot promise to answer all that we receive, but will promise to deal with those we consider to be of the most general interest.

Question : Will you explain the uses of the word "due"?

Difficulties over the use of "due" usually arise because it is forgotten that this word in English is an adjective and not a preposition or a conjunction. When used correctly as an adjective, in combination with "to", it normally means "caused by".

The accident was entirely *due to* the driver's carelessness.

The child's poor physical condition is *due to* malnutrition.

"Due" may be used in combination with an infinitive to mean "expected".

The train is *due to arrive* at 6 o'clock.

(which could also be expressed thus :

The train is *due in* at 6 o'clock.)

You are *due to speak* after the Chairman.

"Due" may also be used to mean "fitting" or "proper":

The President was received with *due* ceremony.

I treated him with the respect *due to* a man of his eminence.

and also "owed":

Fifteen pounds are *due to* me for the work I have done.

Many people make the mistake of using "due to" as a preposition in such sentences as :

Due to the rain, I couldn't arrive in time

which could be perhaps clumsily rendered.

My failure to arrive in time was *due to* the rain—or better I couldn't arrive in time because of the rain, *or* on account of the rain.

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