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devoted to the
Teaching of the English
Language in India*

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TEACHING ENGLISH

VOLUME II

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EDITORIAL

WE ARE VERY glad to publish in this number two valuable and provocative articles by Dr. Michael West, one of which was provoked by some words in the editorial of our January number and the other by the discussion by Dr. Jean Forrester of the syllabus and detailed order of structures prepared for the High School course in English of Madras State. These articles are closely related to the theme discussed in Mr. Mackin's amusing article on the need for new types of examination. As Dr. West writes: "In fact, we need, besides a detailed syllabus, a Pattern Examination Paper" and as he and Mr. Mackin point out, and as Dr. Forrester is well aware, without this, any syllabus may fail to achieve its object.

Dr. West has certainly put his finger on the chief weakness of detailed recommendations on the order in which structures should be taught, even when they are specifically stated to be only suggestive. They may exasperate and exclude the expert writer of textbooks and, at the same time, they may encourage and fail to exclude the incompetent writer of textbooks who blindly follows the instructions given, without comprehending their significance, and produces something legitimate, abortive and dead. In practice a textbook committee can seldom reject a badly constructed, unimaginative, dull textbook that has been painstakingly and accurately put together according to an official formula. On the other hand it is difficult to see how else, in the present circumstances in India, textbook-writers can be brought to see the need for a disciplined grading of the structural material of the language. Dr. West's suggestion of refresher courses for writers of textbooks is, theoretically, a good one, but, in practice it would be very difficult to collect all the prospective writers of textbooks in a State and give them effective training in this very exacting work, and, not only this,—apart from Dr. West himself and a few others—it is difficult to think who could be found to run such courses. One way of overcoming the difficulties might be for a textbook committee to require evidence that the material offered had been experimentally worked over in classroom conditions, but with books written to a newly introduced syllabus this can hardly be insisted upon.

Some dangers we cannot fail to recognize in narrowly prescribing an order of structures to accompany a syllabus. One is that

any feature that proves in practice to have been a mistake is likely to be perpetuated and enormously expanded in its devastating effect, whereas a mistake in a textbook can soon be seen, in class-room practice, by a conscientious writer and unobtrusively put right in a later edition. A mistake in an officially recognized order of structures requires a great deal of time and effort to rectify. Another danger is that to prescribe not only what should be taught, which is reasonable, but how it should be taught, as if one were oneself the only fountainhead of wisdom and experience, is undemocratic and arrogant, but worse than that tends to rob the teacher of his initiative. The teaching of language in Indian schools tends already to be too closely bound by the textbook and the syllabus, to take away what initiative remains to a teacher—on the presumption that most teachers are bad and not to be trusted—can only result in his deteriorating as a teacher. To quote the words of Dr. I. A. Richards cited elsewhere in this number "We must not forget that blind rote kills the teacher as surely as his pupils". Successful language teaching must be spontaneous, a living personal relationship between teacher and pupil.

On one point Dr. West seems to be unduly pessimistic, in his condemnation of the teacher's hand-book. As he himself states, the material in the textbook is not presented in the form in which it will be used in the class-room, the teacher has to improvise on that theme; but most young teachers need help in learning how to improvise and a very large number, even of experienced teachers, have no idea that such improvisation is required of them. There are a great many teachers who have improved enormously as teachers through using a good hand-book to get the best results out of their textbook over the course of a few years. Quite obviously no textbook can meet the requirements of every class and the teacher needs help in showing his pupils how to build up that body of material in their notebooks which will come to form their personal and local textbook.

Finally, in spite of all our agreement with Dr. West over his main thesis, we may, perhaps, be allowed to differ from him in his conception of the role of the teacher in the language class-room, of the textbook as the source of language material and the teacher as a kind of supervisor of the process. He uses the word 'master'. The implications of the word 'master' are of an adept, a skilled craftsman whose example and skill are to be copied and developed in everyday contact. The learning of a language is not comparable to the learning of mathematics or a knowledge subject, the human mind is not a bag in which a

private pile of language can be accumulated. Language is more like a handicraft or a skill such as music ; it is a social affair and cannot exist in solitude, it can only be healthily acquired in association with others and by the use of language in relevant situations. The answer to the large class is a wider application of group work. Language must be learnt from the teacher but can then be practised to the point of fluency in groups of 4 or 5 pupils and in pairs. A great deal of this work can be done out of school. The textbook, on which the teacher has been basing his teaching, can then be used to summarize and extend what has been learnt in the situation of the class-room and the background of the pupils' lives.

These considerations all bring us to the same conclusion. If we allow ourselves to despise the teacher and presume him to be incompetent and idle ; if we take away his responsibility and depress his status to that of a taskmaster or supervisor, we shall see lower standards and less effective teachers. If we give the impression that we are telling him to do what we say and not ask questions, he may do what we say, but no useful training of the pupils' minds or effective language habits can result. We must give him all the advice and help he needs to do his work well, but we cannot do his work for him ; it is fatal to try.

THE SYLLABUS, THE TEXTBOOK, AND THE EXAMINATION

BY MICHAEL WEST

I HAVE DISCUSSED elsewhere the function of the Textbook and of the Examination¹ in Language teaching. The function of the Syllabus is a more difficult subject to deal with because what has to be said might easily be misinterpreted if it were written by anyone who has an interest in some particular method of teaching the active use of English (English speech and writing).

Now, the Madras Syllabus for English in Madras schools² reaches me at a peculiar juncture. I have no interest in textbooks for the teaching of English speech and writing in India, but I am at present engaged on an experimental course which will become the property of the institute which carries out the experiment. In constructing that experimental material I am finding this syllabus of the greatest value : it is very detailed not only in matter but in method so that it will, I hope, act as a useful control in this experiment. In these special circumstances I can write freely about a subject which has been troubling me for some time.

* * * * *

There are in India at the present time a number of different syllabuses for English work drawn up with great care by various provincial Departments of Education. Some are very detailed as to all the items to be taught, number of words, etc., etc.; others are less so. Is it perhaps desirable in the interests of the teacher that the syllabus should be detailed and even instructive as to the method of presentation?—or is a looser syllabus desirable as allowing more competition between varieties of method and a larger market to attract expert textbook-writers and to reduce the cost of the books?

The answer to these questions is to be found in a consideration of the exact function of the syllabus, its relation to the textbook, and the relation of both to the examination.

Nothing here set down is to be considered as an adverse criticism of the Madras Syllabus in particular. As stated above, I

¹ Articles in *English Language Teaching* reprinted in *Learning to Read Foreign Language and other Articles*, Longmans, 1955.

² Reported in an article by Dr. Forrester in *Teaching English* (Orient Longmans for the British Council, August, 1954).

have much admiration of it as a list or lay-out of items to be taught.

The question which I wish to raise here is not one of detail but the larger problem, What is the function of a syllabus? In all Language subjects we have three Teaching Directives—three things which control and affect the teacher in his work—the Syllabus, the Textbook and the Examination.

Now in a Non-linguistic subject such as Handwork, Art, Physical Training, there is no textbook. The knowledge and skill are in the teacher's head and hands; he conveys them direct to the class, and he is guided in what he conveys and in what order by the Syllabus. He is, as it were, both Teacher and Textbook. But in a linguistic subject (or even a Symbolic Subject such as Mathematics) we have a textbook intervening between the Teacher and the class.

No teacher, however brilliant, can expect to teach a language entirely unaided by a textbook. The teacher has certain Structural items (grammar, collocations, patterns, word-order, accident and suffixes etc., etc.) to implant, and in doing this he has to use a certain restricted number of Content words (names of things and their adjectives etc.). If (as was the custom among certain older exponents of the oral method) he is so concerned with his structurals that he lets his Content words go hang, (does not select them, nor index them), he gets his structures flooded and masked by a mass of useless Content words—useless because so seldom repeated that most of them are forgotten and lost. For this reason the Madras syllabus very correctly indicates approximate levels of vocabulary but it does not indicate how the "words" are to be counted: e.g. Is /-er a word? Are Painter, Teacher, Cutter (instrument) 2?—3? or 1? My personal opinion is that, whereas words with their range of inferrability can be counted in a reading-text, in a speech-course Item-counting is the only satisfactory procedure. (See "The Selection and Counting of Words", *Year Book of Education*, reprinted in *Learning to Read & Other Essays*.)

The point is that the teacher of a foreign language must, for any degree of efficiency, have a textbook if only to save his own labour; and the class needs a textbook for out-of-school practice, reading, written work and review.

Just what sort of textbook depends on the teacher and the class. We have the skilled teacher with good command of the language who can carry an oral lesson in his mind and needs only a scheme and outline; on the other hand there is the unskilled who cannot be trusted to speak correctly and needs all the help

that a textbook can give him. We have the city child who sees and hears English names of things all around him and has even adopted many into the vocabulary of his own language (lemonade, ticket, cigarette, tennis, table, station . . .) so that Content words are a light burden and may be liberal; on the other hand there is the village child to whom almost every Content word is a new learning item. There are children who know the English alphabet; children who do not; children in over-large crowded classes where oral work is difficult; children in moderate-sized classes in spacious classrooms; children whose language diverges in certain ways from English structure (He said *that* "I will go"); others with different divergencies. Various textbooks may be written taking into account these different types of need and disability.

But there is also divergence among the writers of textbooks themselves. The aim of a Director of Education is that the children in his charge should have the very best instructional material that it is possible to supply—the best suited to their needs, the most skilfully constructed, those proved to be best by experiment and experience in each particular circumstance. A Director knows roughly what his children need (what items of grammar, of idiom, of Content words, of reading ability, etc.) and how much they can be expected to achieve in a given time. Let us suppose that he lays down his exact requirements and expectations in a list of items to be taught. That would, in fact, be hardly sufficient because it would leave several matters indefinite. What standard of pronunciation is demanded?—In fact is there to be an oral test? What fluency is demanded? What about spelling and handwriting (speed and quality); will these be tested specifically?—or merely penalized if too bad? What about speed of reading? Will there be a reading test?—a speed test? or merely a test of comprehension? Will there be a test of range of reading vocabulary outside the smaller active vocabulary of the *Speech and Writing* course? Will there be any translation? To? or From? or both? In fact, we need, besides a detailed syllabus, a Pattern Examination paper. As I have pointed out elsewhere,¹ where syllabus and examination conflict the examination always wins.

Now supposing we know exactly what is required and invite Dr. Palmer, Mr. Gatenby, Professor Pattison, Mr. Hornby, Professor Fries, Mr. French, (or any other competent persons we please) each to compile a textbook fulfilling these requirements, we shall find that each and every textbook is different, because the

¹ Op. cit.

authors all have different techniques and emphases. Some would teach all the prepositions in a mass; some would spread them out. Some would prefer pictures for teaching 'There is' 'Have/has' (Has Mr. X a big car?); some prefer classroom objects. Fries would tend to teach Phrase and Sentence units; Palmer would fancy substitution tables; Hornby might lean towards Sentence Patterns. Some would teach the Simple Past tense orally in the classroom. "What will Ram do? What did he do?"; others will deal with it through story material. Some, eager for early reading, will bring in past tenses as soon as possible; others may defer them to the latest possible moment. Indeed, after the first three or four lessons not one of them will introduce the items of the syllabus in the same order or in the same way. They will all be equally right, all equally prepared to admit the rightness of the other five, and all certainly unwilling to be ordered by anyone to do anything different from what they have done.

That is where one cannot but be at loggerheads with the compilers of the Madras Syllabus.¹ A syllabus should tell the teacher *where* he has got to get to; it is not its business to order the teacher *how* to get there: at most it may make the most tentative suggestions (like the British Ministry's "Suggestions to Teachers"), but they are very tentative and are no part of the syllabus.

We must, moreover, remember that the direct impact of the syllabus is not on the teacher but on the textbook-writer. We (the compilers of the syllabus) are not giving directions to a lot of graduates or even Failed B.A.'s in High Schools, we are telling the greatest experts in India or even in the world what and how much to teach. That we *may* say—but are we wise in telling them how to impart it? Such directions might be a hindrance rather than a help. As for the less expert authors, why should the Department write their books for them?

It is on this point that one tends to disagree with this otherwise excellent "lay-out" of work to be done. It seems to fall between two stools. To use a metaphor from building, either it might be a Statement of Requirements, leaving the architect and contractor the widest possible latitude in their crafts,—or it might be a Detailed Plan and Specification, in which case there is no latitude

¹ The Preamble to the Madras Syllabus states that authors are free to work out their own schemes provided that they cover the items of grammar and usage set out in the syllabus, do not exceed the prescribed limit of vocabulary, and point out where they diverge from the syllabus. But so detailed a syllabus as this must inevitably tie an author's hands: he may allow himself some minor divergencies but will all the time be asking himself "Am I keeping close enough to the beaten track?"

at all and only one possible building can be erected according to those specifications.

In fact, this is not a syllabus; it is not a statement of aim but a statement of method; and that, in our opinion, is a confusion of the function of a syllabus.

The teacher has three directives in his work:—

1. *A Syllabus*—which tells him where he has got to get (the result which he has to produce within a given time). It may merely detail the achievement required at the end of the (four) year course when the first public examination is held, leaving the year-by-year allocation of items (tested only by school exams.) to the discretion of the textbook-writer.
2. *A Textbook*—which, by one route or another according to the technique of the writer and the capabilities and circumstances of the teacher, helps him to get there (to produce that result).
3. *An Examination*—which tests whether he has reached his goal (whether he has produced that result). Incidentally the examination helps to clarify and demarcate the aim set out in the Syllabus.

I believe that it will be in the best interests of education if these three functions were more clearly realized, if Syllabus-compiler, Textbook-writer and Examiner could eliminate mutual interference, but rather co-operate in serving their pupils with the maximum efficiency.

THE PROBLEM OF THE TEXTBOOK

BY MICHAEL WEST

IN THE EDITORIAL of "Teaching English" (January 1955) we find these sentences : "In countries where foreign languages have been taught for a long time writers have in the process of time been able to produce textbooks which, based on actual classroom experience, in themselves constitute a syllabus. But this is not the situation in India, and there is, therefore, a great need that a syllabus should be as detailed and specific as possible in order that it may offer the maximum guidance to teachers and writers."

We may paraphrase this as follows : "India wants to produce textbook-writers, wants textbook-writers in India for Indian pupils. Therefore let us produce very detailed syllabuses telling the teachers what to teach and how to teach it."

With the first sentence there can be no quarrel, but the conclusion does not follow. It should be "India needs textbook-writers ; therefore let us teach people in India how to write textbooks." Let us have a set of lectures and classes given by expert textbook-writers to would-be authors on this highly difficult art. Let this course not be confined to foreign languages, but cover the Mother Tongue, and even other subjects. Let them write sample lessons and have them criticised, and see them taught and tested in typical classes—weak classes for choice, and by weak teachers as well as good ones. Let us have research workers engaged upon this subject (the technique of the textbook) in Teachers' Colleges or Departments of Education.

The fundamental error contained in the above quotation is the idea that by giving a list of items to be taught you can *ipso facto* produce a good textbook. The technique of the textbook is a problem in itself. You can have an excellent textbook based on a thoroughly bad syllabus, or a bad textbook based on an excellent syllabus. The What and the How are two completely different problems.

The phrase "maximum guidance to teachers and writers" shows just this confusion. The guidance to writers has to indicate WHAT (the aim to be attained by the textbook); the guidance to teachers is HOW to use the textbook. This confusion has resulted in the type of textbook in which the teacher's part of a lesson

is embodied in the pupil's book. We see books which contain pages and pages of dialogue :—

Teacher : What is this ?

Pupil : That is a book.

Teacher : Is it my book ?

Pupil : No, it is not your book.

etc., etc.

In the classroom as often as not this matter is read aloud and translated in the traditional manner, just as the Fable of the Hare and the Tortoise used to be read aloud and translated before the "Direct Method" came into vogue.

Alternatively we find an attempt to distinguish the teacher's function and the function of the textbook by providing an enormous *Teacher's Handbook* to accompany a rather dwarfed *Classbook*. This *Teacher's Handbook* (usually written by a very accomplished teacher) consists in a more or less verbatim account of the lesson as he himself would give it. The teacher is told exactly what to do, and one lesson may cover two, or three, or even four printed pages of dialogue and description :

The teacher takes a book from Pupil 1's desk :—

Is this my book ?

No, it is not your book.

Is it his book? (*pointing to Pupil 2*)

No, it is not his.

Is it their book? (*pointing to Pupils 3 and 4*)

No, it is not theirs.

Whose is it ?

etc., etc. etc.

What is the less-skilled teacher supposed to do with this ? Memorize it ? Read it aloud in class—but reading aloud from a handbook can hardly be considered an effective form of teaching, and in the more complicated lessons the class may not respond according to plan. Should he make a synopsis of the lesson as presented in the *Handbook* ? That is as difficult as making a synopsis of one act of a play.

We turn to the *classbook*. It contains a brief continuous passage : "This is my book. It is my English book. Ram has an English book. It is his book", etc. What is the pupil supposed to do with this ? Read it over and over ? Copy it out ? Or what ? If, of course, the teacher skilfully follows the elaborate directions of the *Handbook*, all that the class needs as a supplement is no more than a *Handwriting copybook*. But how many teachers will, or can, follow the *Handbook* ? We have to remember that the output of trained teachers is, compared to the total

teaching strength, very small and in many areas does little more than replace the deaths and retirements, and most of the few trained teachers tend to be absorbed in the highest classes. What help is a mere copybook to the pupil in his out-of-class practice in oral English? We have to remember that many of our teachers are working in classes of about 40 (or more) pupils, and they have some four hours a week for that subject. In a 40-minute period each pupil will get half a minute's individual speech: the rest of the time he is listening or speaking in chorus, an act which requires no effort of recall: one can shout in chorus almost subconsciously without mental effort and without subsequent impression.

The highly detailed syllabus is not the answer to the problem: it leads straight to the monster *Teacher's Handbook* and to techniques of teaching practicable enough in the hands of the trained teacher but impracticable elsewhere.

What then is the answer? The answer is to be found in a proper assessment of the function of the textbook and of the teacher and in a realisation that language is a skill, and skills are learnt: they cannot be taught.

There are certain things that only the teacher can do: it is the function of the textbook to set him as free as possible for those things.

A textbook cannot give individual attention, encouragement, rebuke, praise. A textbook cannot correct mistakes, or (still better) anticipate and prevent them before the fatal word is spoken or written. But a textbook can do something which the teacher cannot do. It can control its vocabulary, bringing in item by item, one thing at a time, and never anticipating something which has not been taught yet, spotting shifts of meaning or traps of grammar which might easily be overlooked in improvised oral discourse. A textbook-writer can spend a whole day thinking over and working over and over an exercise to make it interesting, fool-proof and as effective as possible. He can improve his work by testing it on all sorts of classes to discover just where his exercises fall down and re-writing again and again.

The function of a textbook is to present material to be acquired under the direction and guidance of the teacher. Ideally it should be completely automatic so that the clever pupil needs a minimum of help and the teacher's attention can be mainly directed to the slow and the careless. It is necessary to invent the pattern of a book which will do this. To a large extent such a pattern exists in mathematics (though the explanations given in the textbooks often leave much room for improvement). Has any

systematic research been done to discover (by actual writing, re-writing, testing and re-testing) the ideally best introduction to some of the more difficult concepts? Such a pattern existed in the classical method of teaching languages: there was the grammar and the annotated textbook. In both these subjects (Classics and Mathematics) the teacher was rather a master than a teacher; he was a supervisor, goader and director of learning. Such a pattern exists in the "Reading Method" of learning to read a foreign language. In all these subjects the teacher set work, made sure that the pupils knew what they had to do, supervised and helped while they were doing it, and tested whether the work had been done. Moreover, the learning process was not imprisoned in the classroom: actually more learning was often done outside the classroom (as home-work and preparation) than in.

The effect of the Direct Method and the Oral Method has been to throw the whole emphasis back on to the teacher, to make foreign language learning a classroom subject, a study which ceases (except for some writing) when the bell rings. The Detailed Syllabus will not rectify this: it may make the situation worse.

I am not attacking or criticizing the principles of the "Direct" or "Oral" Method. It originated in Europe, in the Language schools and among the highly skilled teachers of the State schools on the Continent of Europe—though even there we find far too much teaching and too little learning. The results of French work in England are far from satisfactory so far as ability to speak the language is concerned. But the answer to the problem does not lie in the highly detailed syllabus; nor even in better trained teachers: it lies in a new and better type of textbook to be evolved by research and experiment.

The chief obstacles in the way of such research are the cost of printing and the difficulty of obtaining "guinea-pig" classes. These are almost insuperable under European conditions: India and similar sub-tropical or tropical areas are the ideal places for such work, and work there might indeed set a pattern for the rest of the world—as indeed India has twice done already.¹

The hints for the solution of the problem are lying about here and there already—in some of Palmer's techniques, in a device used by French in Burma, in work done long ago in Dacca, and perhaps most of all in the individual "Self taught" and "Teach yourselves" courses (of very variable merit) retailed at high prices by the Language schools.

¹ In the Bell-Lancaster Monitorial System and in "The Reading Method".

"I AM A BANANA"

BY R. MACKIN

Education Officer, the British Council, Pakistan

THE PROBLEM OF reforming the teaching of English in the early stages is complicated by a number of factors, all closely connected and virtually inseparable. If teachers are to be expected to teach effectively, they must be provided with the kind of text-book which does not force them into bad teaching habits. If good text-books are to be written, then the syllabus must prescribe as clearly as possible what is to be covered in a given year, and it may even be necessary to specify the step-by-step progress by which the language should be taught, and according to which the text-books should be written. (This, as readers of this publication know, has already been done in Madras). It follows, of course, that a re-shaping of the syllabus must be accompanied by a review and, if necessary, a modification, of the examination system. It is the purpose of this article to show how a system of examination may be a great obstacle to good teaching in the first place, not really test the child's knowledge of English in the second place, and, because many teachers cannot envisage any alternative method of examining may be a great obstacle to the introduction of a well-planned syllabus in the third place.

Here is an examination which was set recently to boys who had had one year 'learning the alphabet', and a second year learning . . . well, learning what would be hard to say, as will become apparent. (The instructions for each question were written in the mother tongue and not in English as they are given below):

1. Explain the meaning of the following words:
Tap, short, up, have, then, them, may, feel, fire,
away, flower, neat, year, deer, corn, now, wood,
blazing, catch, found.
2. Write out the first six lines of the poem 'Rainbow'
3. Translate (into the mother tongue):
 - (a) At last the day broke, and the sun rose. The dog now caught hold of the fox. It bit the fox with its sharp teeth and tore it to pieces.
 - (b) When the blazing sun has set,
When the grass with dew (!) is wet,
Then you show your little light:
Twinkle, twinkle, all the night.

4. Translate into English:

(The following sentences were given in the mother tongue):

- (a) A man has an ass.
- (b) Meena is at the well.
- (c) It is a kitten.
- (d) Then you will feel well.
- (e) It is 9 o'clock.
- (f) We got up from bed at five.
- (g) They were wearing sarees.
- (h) Bees live in swarms.
- (i) They are neither clean nor tidy.
- (j) People till lands and sow seeds in them.

5. Make sentences containing the following words:

bird, corn, water, banana, wings, fast and fair, got out, come back, side by side, drag along.

6. Fill in the blanks:

The man is—the tap. They—at the shop. He feels—.
It sucks—from—. That—be a great fun. You—be kind.
An old fox—a bone. The night—cold. It is—pet.

7. Answer briefly:

- (a) What does the bee do?
- (b) When do we see the star?
- (c) How does the corn grow in the field?
- (d) Where does the rain fall?

(6 marks for good handwriting)

The first thing that emerges from the most cursory glance at this paper is that the person who set it is himself out of his depth. It would be difficult to find any word that could be put in the blank of the sentence :

That—be a great fun.

One cannot normally say that grass 'with due is wet'. If asked 'When do you see the star?' most of us would first want to know which star, before answering.

The second thing is that although the paper is extremely difficult (we shall return to this point) a bright child might get his 30% without knowing any English worth the name, thus:

- (a) He could write neatly and so get 6 marks.
- (b) If he is a normal child he will know by heart the translation of all the English poems he has 'studied' during the year. Provided he spots one or two words in the verse which will tell him at which point to start, he will get 8 marks for this.
- (c) The sentences in question 3a are obviously taken from a stock of which the translation has undoubtedly been learned by heart. 8 more marks.

(Still no knowledge of English required)

- (d) He will certainly know the first six lines of 'Rainbow'.
(He will equally certainly be quite incapable of using any of the English used in them).

Thus a child might pass his examination without getting anything right in the remaining questions. And, of course, he would be sure to score a few marks by mere guess work.

In fact, when one examines the remaining questions, one is forced to the conclusion that *only* by guess work or by learning by heart, could the average child possibly score a reasonable number of marks.

Let us take a closer look at question 1. Here the child is asked to give in his own language equivalents of the English words. This is required of the child even though in fact there is no single, universal equivalent for several of those given. It is a simple fact that no two languages behave in the same way either from the point of view of sound, structure or form. For this reason question no. 1 is demanding the impossible. However, the children have probably been made to learn by heart a list of 'English equivalents' for all the words given, and many more besides: and though they may have learnt the list, they have probably not learned the meanings. (So again they can score marks without proving their understanding). It may be permissible, though of doubtful value, to ask for an equivalent of a content word like 'tap'. But what about a structure word like 'up'? The reader should ask himself what the equivalent of 'up' is in his own language. If he thinks he has found it, he should try to use it in the following sentences:

I am going up the hill.

Where are you up to?

He is up to no good.

I am reading the play up.

It is time to give up.

Probably the reader found that it was time to give up before he reached the last sentence!

Now consider the word 'Have'. This is a word which in English is used to express many ideas which in other languages are expressed in quite different ways. 'I have two ears' would in some languages be rendered by words which taken literally in their order would be 'my two ears are'. This is the case in the mother tongue of the children to whom this examination was given. They had therefore been taught that the word for 'are' in the above sentence in their own language meant 'have' in English, and this was the word which was expected of them in

this question. They are therefore taught the wrong thing and then rewarded for writing the wrong thing.

No more will be said about question one except that one or two of the words would probably occur anywhere after the first twenty thousand most frequently used words in any word-count of the English language.

Question 4 was translated for the writer by a person who is bilingual in English and the children's mother tongue, and who has lived in the country all his life. He had great difficulty in translating some of the sentences. He could not decide, for example, whether (g) should read 'They are wearing sarees' or 'They are putting their sarees on'. He was doubtful whether in the mother tongue there was any real difference between the two words. He finally rendered as 'clean' and 'tidy' in (i). (a) might just as easily mean 'The man has an ass'. If a bilingual adult had difficulty in translating these sentences one can only feel pity for any children who were required to attempt it after a year or so of English.

Question 5 is the first question in the paper which might have provided some small clue to the children's knowledge of English; but only a small clue. For example, if a child writes 'that is a bird' it is undeniable that he has formed a sentence containing the word 'bird'. It does not show that he understands it, however. Nevertheless the examiner is probably so happy to find a sentence that contains no grammatical error that he gladly gives the child a mark for it. If he finds 'this is corn' for the next word he will probably give a mark for that too. 'That is water' as the answer for the next may be stretching his patience a little too far, but if the boy's parents hear that their child has not received a mark for it—and it is undeniably correct—he will be in trouble. So the boy gets another mark. It is only when the boy is unfortunate enough to write 'I am a banana' that the examiner can ply his red pencil with a clear conscience. And yet if 'are' in the mother tongue equals 'have', why should not 'have' equal 'am'?

But what is this? 'Fast and Fair'? Where can the examiner have dug that up? The writer has vague recollections of sailing ships being described sometimes in those terms, but he would bring it out only flushing in conversation with his compatriots. Is this another phrase that will soon join the overworked ranks of 'near and dear', 'do my level best', 'forget and forgive', 'teeming millions' etc etc? Let us hope not.

Question 6 is a real test, but one or two of the sentences reveal that the vocabulary used is so unselective that the sentences have

probably all been learned by heart from some exercise book, reader or grammar. Then it should be noted that if the child can fill in the blanks of 'It sucks—from—', he will also be able to answer the question 7(a) 'What does the bee do?', so that one of these tests is unnecessary and the child is rewarded twice for the same piece of knowledge, or penalised twice for the same piece of ignorance.

Leaving question 7 with the single observation that question (c) deserves the answer 'very well', our conclusion must surely be that this kind of examination must go and that something which really tests, and hence encourages, the pupil must be put in its place. It is obvious that the whole emphasis is on learning by heart. This method of educating children may do less harm in other subjects such as History and Geography, though it is really a bad method for any subject, but in language teaching it is contrary to all modern practice. In later life a man may be able to conceal his ignorance from the less discerning by voicing ill-digested opinions acquired parrot-fashion in the course of his education, but if he has tried to learn language in the same way it will be evident as soon as he opens his mouth. It is more likely, however, that he will never even dare to open his mouth. It will not have escaped the reader's notice that not a single mark in the examination discussed above was given for oral ability. And yet speech *is* language. But that is another story. Suffice it to say for the present that if the authorities really wish to improve the teaching of English, a change in the method of examination must be made also. Needless to say, alternative methods of examining have been in use for some time where the language is taught by modern methods.

A NOTE ON COMPREHENSION

BY S. NAGARAJAN

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THE TEACHER'S AIM is to help his students to comprehend their reading clearly and to judge it accurately. The teacher tries to make his pupil alert-minded and thoughtful. Thinking includes, among other faculties, observation, discrimination and judgment. This task of the teacher does not arise from a sense of self-imposed importance; it is, rather, a recognized function of education. Thinking is, of course, very difficult but education must help

us to achieve a constant awareness of ourselves, of our environment, and ultimately of the values of life, through thinking. Comprehension and judgment are the aims of all reading. How important, essential to sane living it is, in a democracy and in an industrialized economy to put people on their guard against the insidious forces of mental corruption that too often achieve print, is a theme elaborated by many writers. The problem is especially acute in adult education. By making, for instance, the illiterate adult merely literate, we only expose him to printed falsehood, for instance advertisements. The merely literate adult is only a Caliban:

You taught me language; and my profit on't
Is, I know how to curse. The red plague rid you
For learning me your language.

In what follows, a few elementary elucidations of the tasks of comprehension are offered. There is no attempt made to provide a complete plan of action that can go into operation at once. All the suggestions concern only the teacher and will not, therefore, I venture to hope, be condemned as too ambitious.

Comprehension is the result of interpreting language—i.e., the meaning of words. The meaning of words arises in several ways to all of which the teacher must be awake. Firstly there is a central core of significance which the word always carries. This is provided by the dictionary. But this is not all. Meaning also arises from the place of the word in a unit of utterance. The neighbours of a word—in a sentence, or, to go further, a poem, for example—also influence the meaning of the word. They may modify that central core or enrich it; this happens very frequently in poetry. Again, there are the mental associations for each one of us that cluster round a word.

Thus, in interpreting, extreme care is necessary to find out, how the position of a word in an utterance affects its original meaning and what associations are called up by each word. It will be readily appreciated how poor Shakespeare, for instance, becomes if we rely only on the dictionary. Our task when we read him will be firstly to find out what the original core of meaning which I shall call nuclear meaning, of a word for Shakespeare and his contemporaries was; secondly to study the context of the word in the passage and ultimately in the entire structure of the play; lastly to recover through historical scholarship, the associations of a word for Shakespeare and for his audience. Attention to these several layers of a word's meaning has resulted in recent years in a good deal of brilliant Shakespearean interpretation. The best work of Mr. William Empson is an illustration.

For instance, consider the word "cell" in the following lines from Gray's *Elegy*, without which no reading of English poetry, even for an examination, is complete:

Each in his narrow cell for ever laid,
The rude Forefathers of the hamlet sleep.

In interpreting the word, the task is to perceive how its nuclear meaning, i.e. "a small apartment as in a monastery, a nunnery or a prison, occupied by a single person" fits into the structure of the poem, the total poetic meaning. An analysis of the poem, as made, for instance, by Prof. Cleanth Brooks, reveals that the word is significant of the very theme. It will be remembered that the poem's argument is conducted through oblique suggestions and that the surface statements with which the poem is replete are enforced by the social context of the poet who was out of tune with his times and who, however, did not wish to declare publicly his divergence.

The two meanings of "cell" are (i) "the cell of a monk" and (ii) "the cell of a prisoner". The general idea implicit in the stanza "Full many a gem", namely that the ignorance of the world regarding the presence of anything valuable does not mean the very absence of the valuable object but means a loss to the world, rather, is foreshadowed in the first meaning of the word. The world's unawareness of the holy men living in the world is a matter of sorrow to the world. Similarly, the entire stanza "Far from the madding Crowd's ignoble strife" is linked up. Again, the theme of fortuitous circumstances, of denial of opportunity and freedom of expression, is related to the second meaning of the word: the villagers are unjustly imprisoned.

It will thus be seen that a confinement of the meaning of the word to "grave" greatly impoverishes our understanding of the thematic development of the poem. The teacher should bestow critical attention on how meaning arises and ramifies. The method hinted at—a major part of contemporary literary criticism could be described as an extended illustration of this mode of reading—should be introduced to the students as early as the teacher can decide. Naturally, the stage of conscious introduction of the boys to this method might vary a little but if it is not done early enough, it might not become a habit and much of its value will remain unrealized.

A study of the use of words is, therefore, essential to those who claim to interpret at all in teaching. The interpretation is best achieved not through "lectures" as in college classes, or through "paraphrase"—that obnoxious thing—or in pre-college classes but through criticism of the student's own efforts. A passage is set

and questions are framed intended to elicit the student's comprehension. The method, of course, is not at all novel or strange but the type of questions requires to be reorientated: the student as he progresses in his study of the language should be convinced that a dictionary understanding is not always adequate or final. The criticism of the students' efforts should be done by comparing the various scripts submitted. The scripts of course will remain anonymous for obvious reasons. This method of study is known as "the protocol method"; it is associated with the name of Dr. I. A. Richards of Cambridge and Harvard (on whose work the present article is based).

When a passage is studied with this type of attention devoted to the words, we obtain the sense of it. To stop here would be inadequate, for a piece of writing may have much more to offer than only sense. It may have a Feeling and a Tone.

Feeling refers to the writer's or speaker's emotional attitude to the sense. Language is used in normal circumstances to express not only sense but feeling. Feeling is a state of mind which may not, it should be remembered, be specifically directed toward anything as "a feeling of joy". But when Feeling seems to have an object "to imply something towards which it is directed, it gets this direction either from an accompanying thought or from an intention" (I.A.R.).

Tone refers to the writer's attitude to his readers. He may not be always consciously aware of the nature of this attitude but it nevertheless influences the choice of his language. A complete understanding therefore involves on the part of the reader an apprehension of the tone.

The intention of what is read is the effect made on the mind by the Sense, and Feeling and Tone. Evidence of intention from external sources is interesting but not indispensable to interpretation.

"A perfect understanding would involve not only an accurate direction of thought, a correct evocation of feeling, an exact apprehension of tone and a precise recognition of intention but, further, it would get these contributory meanings in their right order and proportion to one another and seize *though not in terms of explicit thought* (my italics) their interdependence upon one another, their sequences and interrelations." The discernment of the internal order that harmonizes these contributory meanings is the final aim of comprehension. It must be clearly understood that when a passage has been analysed intellectually into Sense, Feeling, Tone and Intention, comprehension is not complete. What does complete it is "the actual formation in the

receptive mind of a whole condition of feeling and awareness corresponding in due order to the original meaning which is being discerned." Analysis is not possible without some kind of discernment to start with; proficiency is hard to attain and requires long and devoted training and more than all, patience and courage not to be downcast if sometimes we fall victim on the way to what is later seen to be factitious and second-rate (Prof. C. D. Lewis: Oxford Inaugural Lecture). Dr. Richards himself has written: "The teacher's task has no virtue to protect him from misinterpreting. But once the point has been granted that the study of almost any misinterpretation may be profitable (i.e., as a case of misunderstanding and its causes) the source of the blunder is unimportant. It may even humanize the subject to realize still more often that Fate has us all in its hand here!" And again, "Even to state distinctions between them (sense etc.) clearly—if we are to go beyond dictionary understanding, is difficult. What is thought? What is feeling? How are we to separate a writer's attitude to us (or to a hypothetical listener) from his intention? To be able to answer these questions is not of course necessary for the good understanding of a phrase involving these four functions. All that is required is that the mind should actually receive each contributory meaning without confusion. It is not even desirable, as a rule, that it should think of the feeling, the tone, the intention. It is sufficient if it thinks of the sense. The other meanings are best received when possible each in its more appropriate, more direct and immediate manner. But when difficulty arises, thought may come to the rescue." This is the ideal in teaching comprehension. We must, as Richards insists, gain some power of diagnosis, some understanding of the risks involved and some capacity to detect what has occurred. To such as may be a little dubious whether all this may not be a tall order—"Say, Prof. your sentences skid off our domes"—and there are many who are highly sceptical, Richards retorts: "This may be considered too abstruse and baffling a matter, bad enough for the determined adult and self condemning as an educational suggestion. The reply is that those who think so have probably forgotten how abstruse and baffling every subject is—until it has been studied and the best methods of learning it and teaching it have been worked out." Richard's ideas have had their influence—not of course without opposition—on the literary criticism of the last twenty-five years and surely it is not extravagant or too early in the day now to plead that those ideas should fructify schoolroom teaching also, instead of remaining—what a poor way of acknowledging our debt to him!—a topic for lectures to

'Honours' students of English. In connexion with the need for the intelligent teaching of interpretation, he has written, "We must not forget that blind rote and drill kill the teacher as surely as his pupils. Unless we can see a mistake as a problem we cannot make it fruitful for its victim. And only so can we raise the occupation of the teacher of elementary English into a profession that can, without self-sacrifice, attract the talented. The correction and analysis of interpretation and composition can and must be developed into a study worth pursuing for its own sake. But there should be no difficulty in doing this once we realise that *it is nothing else than literary criticism descended from its windy heights and restored to contact with its actual facts* (my italics)". Such books as Denys Thompson's *Reading and Discrimination* (Thompson and Leavis' *Culture and Environment* is not irrelevant to us; its approach is valuable), Leavis' *How to Teach Reading* (included now in his *Education and the University*), Coombes' *Literature and Criticism*, show that the ideas of Richards have not remained without their deserved impact. These books have their interest for us also. Obviously they cannot be taken over *in toto*; for the problem of English teaching here is not that of teaching the mother tongue, but a foreign language. But this difference, highly important though it is, does not justify our ignoring the controlling impulse behind all these books. Besides, Richards's ideas should engage the study and practice not only of English teachers but teachers of other languages also; for the broad effect aimed at by Richards is to promote in the student a more alert attention to language, a greater precision of thought and speech and ultimately, since language plays the part it does in life, a more acute awareness of one's environment and one's life in it.

MAY AND MIGHT

BY J. G. BRUTON

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IT IS FREQUENTLY said that "may" is the equivalent of a subjunctive in English. It would be truer to say that "may" appears in English when a subjunctive form would normally be used in another language. The subjunctive in fact disappeared completely from English centuries ago, and the few forms that have survived are interesting as fossilised remains, but are not worthy

of any serious attention, especially as they are so few in number—*Long live the King; If I were you.* The fact that English does not possess a subjunctive may be a cause for regret, but it is also a considerable advantage, since the use of the subjunctive and the learning of actual forms offer very serious difficulty to students of, for example, French and Hindi.

Another serious misconception about these two verbs is the belief that “might” is the past tense of “may”. This is by no means always true, and the only safe statement of this particular aspect of the problem is to say that “might” is what “may” normally becomes in Indirect Speech.

If we consider the forms of these verbs, it suffices to say that “may” and “might” are anomalous finites and are followed by the infinitive form without “to”. They should therefore be considered with other structurally similar verbs—must, can, could.

From the point of view of usage these two verbs present some difficulty, since they are employed to express two quite different concepts—possibility and permission. “He may come” has therefore two possible meanings—(a) It is possible that he will come, and (b) He has permission to come. Apart from the clues to meaning to be found in the context, we express the difference in spoken English by the accentuation we give to the sentence. So “He *may* come” indicates possibility and “He *may come*” indicates permission—at least in normal unemphatic utterances. We may summarise these different uses in the following way:

	<i>Possibility</i>
<i>Simple Present</i>	He <i>may</i> come
<i>Present Cont.</i>	He <i>may</i> be coming
<i>Past</i>	He <i>may</i> have come
<i>Past Cont.</i>	He <i>may</i> have been coming
	<i>Permission</i>
<i>Simple Present</i>	You <i>may</i> look at this
<i>Present Cont.</i>	You <i>may</i> be looking at this

In both circumstances the same forms as are found under Simple Present can be used with Future meaning by the addition of some time expression. The use of “may” to indicate permission is necessarily very restricted, since obviously we cannot now give permission for something to have happened. It is interesting to note what happens when negative forms are used: under “Possibility” the fundamental pattern remains unchanged, and

“may” is accented—“He *may* not come”; whereas under “Permission” the pattern changes and “not” is accented—“You may *not* look at it”.

If the examples given are turned into Indirect Speech in every case “may” becomes “might”,¹ but the pattern of accentuation remains the same: “He said that he *might* come”, “He said that I might *look* at it”. The other considerable use of “might” is, of course, in conditional clauses, but in these the pattern of accentuation is not quite so clear. “He *might* do it if you asked him” indicates possibility and “He might *do* it if you wanted him” indicates permission, but most people in the latter case would probably prefer some other form of expression—“He would be allowed to do it if you wanted him to”.

It is simply not possible to teach these various uses of “may” and “might” by translation, and they should consequently be taught situationally, that is by building up situations in which known material is used to lead on to something new. This general technique is the obvious one to use in many situations where so often it is said that “The Direct Method doesn’t work”. Very obviously, this particular problem is not one that can be dealt with in the early stages of learning and it should therefore be postponed for consideration until at least the end of the second year of an English course, by which time students will possess a good deal of knowledge that can be made use of.

The use of “may” to indicate permission is manifestly the easier to teach. It may be approached in the following way:

Teacher (to pupil) : You have a book on your desk. I want to look at it. May I look at it?

(to another) : That’s a nice pen you have. I should like to see it. May I see it?

(to another) : I need a pencil. Have you one? I should like to borrow it. May I borrow it?

After a number of such examples, in which the teacher asks pupils for permission, the situations should be reversed and pupils should ask the teacher:

A: I want to open the window. May I open it?

T: Yes, you may *open* it. (Yes, you may.)

B: I should like to go outside. May I go outside?

T: Yes, you may *go* outside. (Yes, you may.)

C: I need a pen. May I borrow B’s?

T: Yes, you may *borrow* B’s (Yes, you may.)

To teach the uses of “may” to indicate possibility it will be

¹ After a verb in the past tense.

useful if pupils already know "perhaps", which also can be taught situationally:—

Is B coming?

I don't know if B is coming or not.

Perhaps he is coming, perhaps he isn't.

Then we can pass on to sequences of this kind:—

1. Has A a bicycle?

I don't know if he has a bicycle or not.

Perhaps he has a bicycle, perhaps he hasn't.

He *may* have a bicycle.

2. Is it raining in Bombay?

We don't know if it is raining in Bombay or not.

Perhaps it is, perhaps it isn't.

It *may* be raining in Bombay.

3. Has X arrived yet?

I don't know if X has arrived yet or not.

Perhaps he has, perhaps he hasn't.

X *may* have arrived.

After a good deal of practice with sequences of this kind, pupils should be expected to jump from the original question to the "may" answer without passing through the whole sequence.

If the fundamental uses are dealt with in this way, the more complicated ones will offer little difficulty. There remain two quite idiomatic uses which will need to be dealt with. One is the use of "might" in such expressions as "You might have told me!" in which a reproach is implied. This should be taught as an alternative to "I wish you had told me" or "Why didn't you tell me?" The other use is that of "might" in softened requests—"You might close the door", which should be taught as an alternative to "Will you please close the door?".

TOOLS OF THE TRADE

A simple scheme of revision for the most important tenses.

IN THE FIRST three years of language teaching the main structures of the language should be made familiar. If this is not done systematically and thoroughly, all subsequent work on the language will be held up. In the fourth year or early in the fifth year, according to the class, systematic revision must be done of all the structures of the language. If teaching has not been systematic in the early stages, the situation can be saved now by relating all structure so far learnt to a coherent grammatical plan, filling in the gaps where there are any. The best framework to build it up on, in English, is the tense system.

It is important to realize that the use of one tense or another is determined by the attitude to the action in the mind of the speaker, rather than by the application of a mechanical grammatical rule. As the present is most real and nearest to the speaker, the present tenses are most used and are best taught and revised first. If considerations of time are not uppermost in the mind of the speaker, the simple or General Present Tense is usually used; if the highly differentiated tenses are not required a more general tense is always used.

To illustrate any principle of grammar only complete sentences and, as far as possible sentences which have real meaning for the pupils, should be given. We should never teach paradigms or naked verb forms without meaning; even sample sentences should have relevance to the life of the pupils or the situation of the classroom. No pieces of language material which cannot be absorbed should be given to the pupils.

We usually begin with the Present Continuous Tense when teaching beginners, because it is the tense we use to describe actions going on at the moment of speaking, but the simple or General Present Tense should be taught soon after, so that pupils don't get the habit of using the Continuous Present when they are really thinking of an action that should be spoken of in the General Tense. The General Present is the tense for describing what is generally or always true, it is the generalizing tense used in demonstrations and explanations; it is the tense of the class-

SIMPLE

CONTINUOUS

GENERAL PRESENT (in general)	I speak Telugu I do not speak Chinese Do I speak Telugu to you ?	I am speaking English now I am not speaking Telugu now Am I speaking Telugu ?	CONTINUOUS PRESENT (at this moment)
SIMPLE PAST	I spoke to Mr. B. yesterday I did not speak to Mr. B. last week Did I speak to him last Wednesday ? (action and time finished)	I was speaking to him at 6 o'clock I was not speaking to him at 7 o'clock Was I speaking to him for long ? (action and time finished)	CONTINUOUS PAST (at that moment)
PRESENT (SIMPLE) PERFECT	I have spoken to Mr. B. this week I have not spoken to Mr. A. this week Have I spoken to you this week ? (action finished, time unfinished)	I have been speaking to you for 10 minutes now. I have not been speaking Telugu Have I been speaking quickly ? (action and time unfinished)	CONTINUOUS PRESENT PERFECT (until this moment)
PAST PERFECT (SIMPLE)	I had spoken to Mr. B. before I came here I had not spoken English before I came to school, etc. (action finished ; time unfinished then)	I had been speaking to him for half an hour when his wife came in, etc. (action and time unfinished then)	CONTINUOUS PAST PERFECT (until that moment)
SIMPLE FUTURE	I shall speak to Mr. A. tomorrow I shall not speak to Mr. B. tomorrow, etc.	I shall be speaking to him tomorrow at 6 etc.	CONTINUOUS FUTURE (at that moment)
FUTURE PERFECT	I shall have spoken to Mr. A. before I see you again (action finished, time unfinished then, in the future)	I shall have been speaking to you for an hour when I stop, etc. (action and time unfinished then, in the future)	CONTINUOUS FUTURE PERFECT (until that moment in future)
FUTURE PERFECT in the PAST	I told him I should have spoken to you before I saw him (action finished, time unfinished then).	I told him that I should have been speaking for an hour when I stopped (action and time unfinished then).	CONTINUOUS FUTURE PERFECT in the PAST (until that moment)

room, so it must also be taught early as the most useful tense of all. In the revision grammar course at the fourth or fifth year it is quite convenient to take the general tense first, opposing it or contrasting it to the continuous tense. Questions should be asked, e.g., "What language do you speak at home?", "What language do we speak here?", "What language are we speaking now?"; etc. As the various tenses are brought into consciousness, discussed and explained in this way a table should be built up as under; we must make sure that the sentences are true for the individual pupils.

Many teachers nowadays like to teach the Present Perfect Tense immediately after the two present tenses and before the simple Past Tense, but in this scheme I have preferred to keep to the order most teachers are accustomed to. In any case the order of revision is not very important, provided the tenses are seen to have a coherent relation to one another.

See, hear, smell, feel, think, etc., are used with the General Present or with "can" rather than with the Continuous Present Tense, because, seeing, hearing, smelling, thinking, etc., are actions that cannot be voluntarily terminated; we do not normally think of them as continuous consciously applied actions; whenever we can think of them as continuous consciously applied actions, we use the Continuous Present Tense. The use of a particular tense must be shown to depend on the nature of the action and the attitude to it of the speaker.

When this scheme has been worked out on the blackboard and copied down, the making of similar schemes for other verbs may be set as home work.

QUESTION BOX

Question : I often hear people putting in the word "of" after "enough" where it doesn't seem necessary. For example, "We have enough of vegetables in our garden for our own use". Can you give a rule for its correct use?

Answer : "Enough" should never be followed by "of" when it is used purely as an adjective, meaning a sufficient quantity of something.

e.g. Have you had enough sugar?

He gave me enough money to buy a meal.

If the word "enough" is used as a noun as the subject or object of a sentence, the word "of" is

needed to join it to other nouns. N.E.D. quotes from Jane Austen's "Mansfield Park".

"I have had enough of the family for one morning".
Another example might be :

"That's enough of mistakes for this morning, now let's concentrate on correct English for a change" meaning that we have spent long enough in thinking about mistakes. If we meant that we had made enough mistakes, we should say "That's enough mistakes for this morning".

As subject of the sentence :

"Enough of those we invited came to the party for it to be a success".

"Enough of the broadcast was clear for us to understand it".

It is used a good deal emotionally:

"I have had enough of your nonsense".

"Enough of that! If you can't be quiet you'd better leave the room".

In conclusion, "enough" used generally, referring to any amount of something, is an adjective requiring no "of"; if it refers to a particular known quantity of something, it acts as a noun and requires "of". This particularity is usually marked by the presence of the definite article "the", or a demonstrative adjective "this, that" etc., or a personal pronoun, before the chief noun referred to.

Put enough sugar in my cup, please.

Put enough of the sugar in this bag into my cup to make my tea sweet.

He has now accumulated enough ideas to write a book.

He has now absorbed enough of Blake's ideas to write a book.

He has stolen enough books to make a library.

He has stolen enough of our library books to make a library.

Question : I find that instead of "penultimate", the words "second last" are used by people from Scotland, Australia, India, etc.; in England I have only heard "last but one" used,—or, as a possible alternate, "second from last" (cf. "third from last", and *not* "third" last). Is "second last", ("third last", etc.) to be regarded as idiomatic, or grammatical?

Answer : In standard English the normal expressions are “the next from last”, “the next to the last”, or “the last but one”. “The second last” would probably—if ever—only be used of people standing in a queue, where the next from last is seen to be the second person standing, reckoning from the back of the queue. The expression is best avoided because of its ambiguity; the penultimate is the first from the last whereas the expression “the second last” in the queue context also seems to be intended to mean the penultimate.

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