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The Journal of ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING

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Vol. XI

January - February 1976.

No. 1

EDITORIAL

The first issue for the current year comes to you after considerable delay but it couldn't be helped as we changed our Printers and it meant making a fresh declaration before the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate who took his own time to fix a date for this purpose. But we assure our subscribers, members and readers that we will bring out all the six numbers before the end of this calendar year. The new printers have all the resources and equipment needed to complete the printing within a short span of time and so we are confident of implementing our assurance.

The second annual Conference of the English Language Teachers Association of India is to be held soon. We are grateful to the members who have sent us suggestions regarding the problems that may be taken up for discussion at the Conference. We seek the co-operation of our members and well wishers in making a positive contribution to the improvement of teaching English at all levels.

In this issue, improvement of reading is the main theme and the first article by Hubbard C. Goodrich (whose name must be familiar to our old subscribers) deals with the problem of training foreign English Teachers to teach a few basic reading techniques. "One learns best by doing" is a golden maxim and Goodrich has shown how teacher-trainees must practise first what they propose to teach later. Mr. K. P. Verma has clearly enunciated the objectives of teaching a comprehension lesson which is closely related to the skill of reading; the action-steps suggested by him may be tried out by our teachers in the high school classes. Miss Lakshmi Menon of Regional College of Education, Mysore, has dealt with the preparation of suitable instructional materials by the teachers of English which need not necessarily be original but can be clever adaptation of available materials to realise specific objectives. We welcome further contributions from her. 'Let them Listen' by Mr. Verghis Chandy stresses the importance of training pupils in listening, a skill often ignored in our language classrooms. We heartily endorse his views and suggestions.

BOOK REVIEW

A new functional Grammar with Usage and Composition' (A Practical Course)

by

M. L. Tickoo

A. E. Subramanian

**Published by Frank Bros. and Co., Chandni Chowk,
Delhi-110006. Price Rs. 9-75**

Very often there is not much of correlation between the title of a book and its contents but in the book under review the long title gives a true indication of what it contains. Instead of adopting the outmoded and rightly condemned method of dealing with the parts of speech before proceeding to sentences, the learned and experienced authors of this book have commenced with sentences and treated parts of speech as functional units of sentences. The approach is inductive helping the learner to arrive at generalizations through his own efforts. Part II of the book which deals with different types of composition like letter-writing, paragraph writing, essay-writing and precis-writing provides ample testimony to the rich experience of the authors and their keen awareness of the needs of our students. This book will certainly be a useful guide to our students in the higher Secondary Schools and is within their reach for it is moderately priced in spite of its size, comprising 420 pages.

M.D.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

We acknowledge with deep gratitude the generous donation of Rupees Seven Hundred given by Sri Bhilweswara Trust. This was of great help in meeting the cost of the last issue of this Journal.

THE TEACHING OF BEGINNING READING TECHNIQUES

by

HUBBARD C. GOODRICH

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The purpose of this paper is to describe how one might train foreign English teachers to teach a few basic reading techniques, specifically, practical techniques which have been developed for teaching students in minimal school environments, who have learned a writing system which has little relationship to the English writing conventions. This paper will discuss specifically the method of training teachers to teach beginning reading in Part I. The actual methods they will be asked to learn are complex and will take more space. They will be included in Parts II and III.

There are many reading techniques that will not be introduced at this time. If the student teachers were more advanced, the following techniques would be taught :

1. Additional variations of those mentioned with more advanced material,
2. Phrase Reading,
3. Reading for sequence of details,
4. Pre-Reading,
5. Analytic Reading (to recognise the variant and relative levels of paragraph structure),
6. Inferential Reading (especially bringing the student's own knowledge and experience into the reading process), and

7. **Vocabulary Development** (the use of the dictionary, context clues, suffixes, compounding, etc).

The practice examples given here are by no means limited to just these few. A mass of material should be prepared to be used in teaching the teachers, lecturing and demonstrating, and for their use when they are asked to actually practice teaching the material in a normal class situation.

PART I

The method of training (student) teachers depends upon one major premiss: *one learns best by doing*. This means that lectures and discussions are not enough to teach a skill. What is required is to have the teachers actually practice the methods they are being asked to learn until they can use the methods automatically. These are the steps the teachers should be asked to follow :

1. The lectures and discussions should be limited in time and scope. There is no need to introduce all the reading theories, all the terminology of reading, all the complexities and arguments involving the reading process. These lectures and discussions should be limited to what the teachers can understand, to methods they can learn and by which their student can learn, and for which materials are or can be made available. Rather than following one theoretical model, the approach should be eclectic to meet the needs of the students, the teachers, and the limitations of the environment.
2. The teachers should be taught reading by the professor using the methods which are the objectives of the programme, the content the teachers are required to teach, and the minimal directions and suggested gestures which the teachers need in order to conduct their own future classes in English.
3. After the lectures and demonstrations, the teachers should be required to practice the method with the material demonstrated until they are at ease with it.

4. The teachers should then be asked to prepare different but similar material under supervision and to practice with this new material. This would include the making of flash cards, selecting pictures, writing on the black board, and etc.

5. As part of the larger in-service training programme, the teachers should be asked to introduce the reading exercises into elements of a lesson plan including other activities such as writing or aural-oral drills or dialogues. The purpose of this practice is to give teachers the experience necessary to (a) show them that it can be done, (b) give them practice and confidence in the transition, and (c) give them experience in developing and presenting related elements of a lesson plan. The emphasis here would be in making smooth transitions from and relating one activity to another in a normal class hour.

6. The materials with which the student teacher should become familiar are the blackboard and chalk, flash cards and pictures (and their construction), realia manipulation, and text books.

PART II

A Definition of Reading

Reading involves the recognition of the printed or written symbols in words and structures which serve as stimuli for the recall of meanings built up through past experience, and the construction of new meanings through adaption of concepts already possessed by the reader. This process must operate smoothly, mechanically, promptly and habitually. The reader does not respond solely to visual symbols; he also responds to some sort of reconstruction of a spoken message which he derives from the written message. Therefore, *the greater the language facility before reading, the more prepared the student is for learning to read.*

The activities of reading can be analyzed into two basic processes :

1. Recognition or Reconstruction of a Spoken Message or some Internal Representation of it; and
2. The Comprehension of Messages so constructed.

It is of the greatest importance to consider these two processes separately, even though typically they may occur almost at the same time. Nevertheless, nothing said here should be taken to imply that these two processes—Recognition and Comprehension—should be separated in the procedures of class teaching. They are separated for the purpose of clarification. For all class activities (except phonics) Recognition and Comprehension exercises should never be separated by more than a few minutes

In order to recognize something, it is necessary for you to have had some previous experience with it. In the case of reading, it is also necessary for you to not only see it but to see it in an appropriate sequence, for the letters, words and sentences you read all have a certain order and this order has as much or more meaning than the individual words do. Therefore, the direction in which you move your eyes is important. If you read from right to left as in Arabic or from top to bottom as in Chinese, your eyes become used to the order in which letters and words come into your consciousness. Reading in English is from left to right and students who do not have this experience must be told what to do, and in some cases, especially if they are young students, they must practice this movement.

A. Eye Movement Exercises :

To train the eyes to move from left to right.

1. Using Pictures—Set up a series of pictures and ask the students to identify the pictures from left to right.

2. **Using Numbers**—Write the numbers from 1-10 in order and in mixed order and ask the students to read them from left to right. Your hand or a pointer may be used to direct the eyes of the students. A few students may be asked to come to the blackboard and be directed to read the numbers using a pointer to be sure they are responding to the numbers they see and not to some order they have memorized.

2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
or							
5	9	7	1	4	6	2	8

3. At a later time words should be used and the same procedure followed:

one	two	three	four	[etc.]
or				
three	five	nine	seven	[etc.]

4. Still later, sentences should be used and the same method followed to direct the eyes of the students until the habit has become established. (The sentence order should not be changed i.e. no non-sentences).

The student can also be required to use their fingers to underline the words they are reading in their books to help them to direct the movements of their eyes. (This should not continue once the eyes have been trained. If a student continues to use a reading crutch in his second year, he needs special remedial help).

B. Word Calling Exercises :

To develop a sight vocabulary (300-400 words) of units of increasing length. This is Recognition. Without recognition there is no reading and no comprehension.

1. **Write name cards for each student.** From the first day of class, the students should have these cards in front of them to help the teacher become familiar with their names. It will also help the students to become familiar with the written form of their names.
2. **Basic Method for Group and Individual Activities.**
Association of printed card with person (or thing) named.
 - (i) Ask four or five students at a time to come forward with their name cards. Drill the remaining students on the name cards which are held in front of the student. Remove the students one at a time and put his name card in the pocket chart. Drill on the name cards alone.
 - (ii) When 10—15 name cards have been learned, put all of them in the pocket chart and practice recognition or word calling pointing to each card in any order. It is important to force the students to go a little faster than is comfortable for them.
 - (iii) Associate a few pictures or objects with flash cards. Take the pictures away one at a time until the students are able to call the words without the aid of the pictures. Teach only four or five words at a time and go on to another activity. Then teach four or five more. Finally combine the new group with the previous group. Continue in this manner until all the words are recognized automatically. (The association of picture and card is not necessary after certain phonic principles have been mastered—see number C below).
 - (iv) Combine 10—15 flash cards in the pocket chart. Review the words. Then point to each word in turn and ask the students to read the words aloud in chorus. Mix the pointing sequence to test recognition and not serial memory. Then ask individual students

to read the words aloud. Start slowly and force the students to increase their speed until they call the words a little faster than is comfortable for them. Team and individual competitions can make this a lively activity,

<i>book</i>	<i>table</i>	<i>pen</i>	<i>desk</i>
<i>comb</i>	<i>match</i>	<i>key</i>	<i>watch</i>
<i>spoon</i>	<i>ruler</i>	<i>camera</i>	<i>pencil</i>

Some exercises might use words with upper case letters or with upper and lower case letters mixed. Don't forget the function words that are in many ways the most important group of words to habitualize :

<i>the</i>	<i>that</i>	<i>she</i>	<i>it</i>	
<i>on</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>I</i>	<i>an</i>	<i>(etc).</i>

Don't forget inflected endings and contractions :

<i>books</i>	<i>I'm</i>	<i>wants</i>	<i>isn't</i>
<i>doesn't</i>	<i>pens</i>	<i>asked</i>	<i>climbing (etc).</i>

The above method can be used as words are initially introduced for reading at any time. The faster the student is able to recognize individual words, the faster he will be able to comprehend. It is also wise to have the students read phrases and short sentences in the same manner.

C. Phonics :

To develop skill in the discrimination and identification of symbols (this includes numbers, punctuation marks and the names of the letters as the sound/symbol relationships of the letters).

This part is of the development of visual discrimination. We are not talking about the sounds the students have trouble saying, but the symbols the students have trouble recognizing and relating to the sounds of English that they have already learned to produce. There is one major difficulty and one danger in phonic exercises. English spelling is not regular. It is recommended that in the

phonic exercises the teacher give practice with material that indicates the regularities of the spelling as often as possible and to teach the irregular spellings as separate items. The major danger is that in phonic exercise meaning is not emphasized. Words must be selected which the students may not know.

In most phonic exercises, it is important to select words (or nonsense words) that change in only one element. That is, only the initial letter should change in one group of words or the final or medial letter should change. The students should be informed that in these exercises they are not being asked to learn the meaning of the words. They are only being asked to discriminate between similarities or differences, or to respond or produce according to directions. Again, speed is important.

1. Discrimination Exercises. To recognize the similarities or differences between symbols, the teacher should move from letters having the greatest to the least differences.

- (a) Write a series of letters on the blackboard and ask the students to find that letter that is the closest to the first one and respond by saying the number that is over the letter.

	1	2	3	4	5	
	—	—	—	—	—	
<i>s</i>	<i>r</i>	<i>q</i>	<i>m</i>	<i>c</i>	<i>s</i>	
						<u>or</u>
<i>p</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>d</i>	<i>j</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>q</i>	
						<u>or</u>
<i>n</i>	<i>m</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>u</i>	<i>v</i>	<i>h</i>	

Since you might use the exercise for only a few minutes in each class period, it might facilitate matters by erasing the first letter and substituting one of the others in the same list—or to use letter flash cards.

(b) Words can also be used in the same manner :

	1	2	3	4
	—	—	—	—
pin	<i>bin</i>	<i>pin</i>	<i>nip</i>	<i>din</i>
				<u>or</u>
	<i>pan</i>	<i>pun</i>	<i>pin</i>	<i>pen</i>

2. Production and Response Exercises. To master the sound/symbol relations. The teacher writes a series of words on the blackboard that contrast in only one letter and drills the students on them in chorus or individually as in the word calling drills.

(a)	1	2	3	4	5	6
	—	—	—	—	—	—
	<i>pit</i>	<i>fit</i>	<i>kit</i>	<i>bit</i>	<i>dit</i>	<i>sit</i>
						<u>or</u>
	<i>sut</i>	<i>sup</i>	<i>sun</i>	<i>sub</i>	<i>sum</i>	<i>sud</i>
						<u>or</u>
	<i>ata</i>	<i>ada</i>	<i>apa</i>	<i>ana</i>	<i>ama</i>	<i>ala</i>

Variations of this exercise are to have the teacher call a number and require the students to say the word, or to say the word and the students say the number. It is also possible to change the initial or final consonant with flash cards or write the individual letters on the blackboard and have one (incomplete) word on a flash card that could be quickly moved from one letter to the next.

(b) After most of the consonants have been practiced as many as possible should be combined and practiced in the same manner as word calling :

<i>bit</i>	<i>fit</i>	<i>kit</i>	<i>bit</i>	<i>tlt</i>
<i>hit</i>	<i>lit</i>	<i>mit</i>	<i>nit</i>	<i>rit</i>
<i>tit</i>	<i>vit</i>	<i>yit</i>	<i>yit</i>	<i>zit</i>

It is not necessary to teach all the consonant clusters at the same time. It is wise to wait until they are needed.

- (c) The Names of the letters (upper and lower case), numbers, and punctuation marks can be taught in the same manner as word calling.

D. Oral Reading

To develop oral reading skills. This method is basically diagnostic. We want students to read initially as if they were talking. This means that they must try to react to printed symbols and read them aloud as if they were speaking. We want students to read with appropriate pronunciation, intonation, stress and phrasing. It is diagnostic in the sense that we want to know what kinds of problems the students have in the way of recognition and recall of meanings the students have previously learned orally. We eventually want all of our students to read silently, but a student reads aloud the same way he reads silently. We have no way to knowing what mistakes a student is making if we cannot hear him.

The basic method is for one student to read aloud and for all the other students to read silently. The teacher must be sure to ask questions appropriate to the material read and the level of ability of the students. The questions can be directed to any student in the class not just the one who has read aloud. Without the questions, students might get into the lazy habit of reading for sound rather than meaning.

E Silent Reading

To develop silent reading skills. These skills involve reading without moving one's lips or vocalizing. Only the eyes should move when reading. The teacher should already be familiar with the material and have questions prepared so that he can watch the students and listen and correct students who are moving their lips or vocalizing. One way to break the students' habit is to ask offenders to hold a pencil between their lips or to keep one of their fingers on the lips while reading silently.

PART III

The purpose of reading is to communicate, to gain information or for entertainment. It is the most important skill a student can achieve in school and it is the major long-range objective in any important ESL programme. No reading exercise of any kind (except phonic exercises) should ignore some kind of comprehension activity. All reading activities should involve questions, discussions or related activities instigated by the teacher or the students.

A. Develop the ability to understand units of increasing size from the word to the paragraph: This is the first level, explicit or factual comprehension.

1. For Words

- a. Associated printed words and realia.
- b. Separate the pictures and flash cards and ask the students to replace properly. The students can be asked to do this as a group or the teacher replaces the cards and the students respond by saying "right" or "wrong".
- c. With an aural-oral substitution drill, the students can be asked to respond to the written rather than the oral cue given by the teacher.
- d. The teacher passes out the flash cards to individual students. He points to a picture and asks the student with the flash card to hold it up. Or the student can hold up his card and the teacher can ask other students if he is right or wrong.

2. For Sentences

"This notebook is ~~gray~~"

Q. What is gray?

Q. Is the notebook gray? black?

(With realia) Q. Is my notebook gray?

Q. Who has a gray notebook? pen? shirt / etc.

3. For a Short Paragraph

"Nabi had a bird, One day the bird flew out of the window. Nabi ran out of the door. He looked for the bird and found it in a tree. He caught the bird and took it home."

Q. Who found the bird in the tree?

Q. Did the bird fly out of the door?

Q. Did Nabi walk after the bird?

- B. Develop the ability to understand the order of sentences and paragraphs. This is second level, syntactic, organizational and implicit comprehensions.

1 For Sentences

Karim kicked Abdul or Karim got 100 on the test,

Q. Was Karim kicked? Q. Is Karim a good student?

2. For a Short Paragraph.

Nabi had a bird. One day the bird flew out of the window. Nabi ran out of the door. He looked for the bird and found it in a tree. He caught the bird and took it home.

Q. Did the bird run to a tree?

Q. Who has the bird now?

Q. Did the bird take Nabi home?

- C. Relation of Details. It is important here for students to realise that some details or facts are more important than others in a paragraph. An English paragraph is usually organized around one main idea. This main idea, the most important fact, is usually given in one sentence, a topic sentence. The other sentences usually say something about the topic sentence. The students should develop the ability to locate the main idea of a sentence - the topic sentence - and the relation of other facts in the paragraph to it.

1. *This is a briefcase. It is new. It is on the table*

- Q. Is this paragraph about a table?
- Q. What is the paragraph about?
- Q. Which sentence introduces the briefcase?
- Q. What do the other sentences do?

2. *Musa is in trouble. He was absent yesterday and he is absent again today. He didn't study his homework last week and he got a bad grade. Last Tuesday he copied Raziq's homework.*

- Q. Is this paragraph about Raziq?
- Q. Is it about not coming to school?
- Q. Does Musa do good things or bad things?
- Q. What are the bad (good) things?
- Q. What do the bad things tell you about Musa?
- Q. Is this story about Musa. or about Musa and his troubles?
- Q. Which sentence is the topic sentence?

The questions used in the sample exercises are only limited examples. Frequently, the teacher will use more than one type of question for each sentence or paragraph read. But in the early stages of teaching a new skill, the students should become successful and confident with each level of questions before the teacher introduces and combines it with the second so that eventually it is possible to ask four types of questions concerning a paragraph-factual, syntactic, inferential and relational.

In summary, it is important to point out that these suggestions are concerned with beginning students who have no familiarity with the graphemic system of English and whose training in their native language is limited so that little transfer of skill or concept is possible. More advanced techniques are available but it is hoped that these simple techniques will help those teachers who lacked the awareness of how to get started.

A Reading Comprehension Lesson-A Self-Activity or Surrender!

—K. P. Verma

*Senior Teacher in English,
Shri Gandhi Higher Sec. School,
Gulabpura (Bhilwara)*

A comprehension Lesson has two interrelated areas : thematic and linguistic. Thematic content of a comprehension lesson is composed of the ideas expressed in the linguistic fabric of the lesson. The linguistic area covers the lexical items and structures which go to constitute the linguistic body of the lesson.

The objectives of teaching a comprehension lesson are :

1. to enable the pupils to understand the ideas inherent in the linguistic fabric of the lesson (a piece of writing or passage) :
2. to enable them to recall; analyse and classify the ideas expressed in the passage :
8. to enable them to understand contextual meanings of lexical items and structures fitted into the build-up of the passage :

*This paper is based on the talk delivered by the author in a seminar of the English teachers held at Shri Hanuman Girls Higher Secondary School, Ratangarh at the time of the Inaugural Function of the experimental project "Teaching Reading with comprehension", sponsored by the National Council of Educational Research and Training, Delhi.

4. to enable them to understand the usage of lexicals and structures involved :

to develop their penchant for reading with understanding.

A comprehension lesson is an important language lesson. In the field of English teaching, it has its radical value for it is rootedly related to the skill of reading which, being one of the language skills, is greatly valuable for a language-learner. Here it is useful for us to understand how reading comprehension lesson is basically related to the language-skills. The inter-relationship between language-skills and the teaching-items of language becomes explicit to us when we see the table given below :

While teaching a comprehension lesson, the English teacher wants to develop in his pupils, skill of reading a comprehension passage with understanding. A comprehension passage has lexis and structures employed in a contextual way : it has a system of writing and spelling. Hence it is rootedly an embodiment of almost all the language-components except phonology.

A comprehension lesson is, by nature, an auto-learning lesson. It requires a concentratedly goal-oriented silent reading on the part of pupils. It requires of them to read the passage with an undivided attention ; it requires of them to digest and interpret the information contained in the passage. The process of comprehension is the process of auto-communication. This auto-communicating activities requires of the learners :

- a) to see and recognise the printed or written symbols [i. e. words] :
- b) to interpret them and grasp the meanings conveyed:
- c) to interlink or organise the meanings into an understandable organic gestalt built out of the contextual implications of the printed or written symbols:
- d) to analyse the meaning and classify the ideas generated out of their symphony :

(A Table showing interrelationships between language skills and Teaching items of language)

language skills	Teaching—items of language				
	Grammar 'Structures'	Lexis	Context	Phonology	Graphology
1. Understanding speech	(rigid grammatical patterns having unchangeable meanings.)	(Vocabulary items having changeable meanings in their contexts)	(Situational gestalt related to specifics of time, place and conditions)	(patterns of sounds)	(systems of writing and spelling)
2. Speaking					
3. Reading					
4. Writing					

and e) to understand the contextual uses of lexicals and structures woven into the linguistic texture of the comprehension passage.

Factors Influencing Reading Comprehension

In words of Robert Lado, "Efficient reading for information occurs when the written symbols trigger the language patterns in the reader, who then grasps the stream of total meaning". This process of reading comprehension is influenced by a variety of factors linguistic and non-linguistic. These factors are given :

1. Linguistic

Comprehensibility of the passage

- a. written or printed words
- b. sentences
- c. organisation
- d. meanings
- e. contexts

2. Non-linguistic

1. The reader's mental equipment
2. reading situation
3. the reader's attitude
4. length-time-relationship

The linguistic component is of as much importance in developing the ability of reading comprehension of language as the non-linguistic component. If the comprehension passage has a fine accentuation of experience and expression marked by a tincture of comprehensibility it will be easily comprehended by the reader. If words are suitably welded together into sentences and sentences are fittingly organised into paragraphs and the piece of writing has a contextual depth out of which an acceptable and understandable symphony of meanings surges up the reader will be able to read it with understanding provided that he has enough intelligence and a suitable reading situation. Coincidentally it is necessary that the reader should have a readiness to read the passage singlemindedly. There should not be any disturbance in or around the classroom or room or the library reading section where he reads. It will be a desirable reading situation. For a reading comprehension lesson a tri-polar coordination is an indispensable need.

Success of a comprehension lesson depends on this coordination. Among those factors which hinder comprehension of written or printed piece of language and exert their devastating influence on the teaching of a comprehension lesson, we should take into account [a] lack of the knowledge of lexis and structures involved, [b] awareness of the sounds or words, [c] knowledge of the native language and its writing systems, and [d] noises and disturbances. The English teacher should be cognizant of them; and he should try to safe-guard himself against their jeopardy.

How to teach a comprehension lesson ?

The English teacher who wants to teach a comprehension lesson should act in accord with the undermentioned action-steps :

1. He should select out a passage suitable for the learning-ability of his learners. The lexical-items and structures figuring in the passage should be taught to them in relation to the situations created by him in the classroom.
2. He should provide his pupils with the papers containing the passage.
3. He should write down the comprehension testing items on the blackboard ; he should ask them to read and understand the testing-items. At this stage, he is free to help his pupils understand them.
4. The pupils should be asked to read the passage silently with understanding ; they should be instructed not to move their lips.
5. When silent reading is over, the teacher should ask them to answer the questions posited on the blackboard. They should be asked to tell the paragraph numbers. and line numbers, The teacher should go on writing the answers on the blackboard. If necessary, the teacher should help them find out answers. He should not be satisfied with the answers offered by one or two or three students. Almost

all the pupils should be enabled to find out the answers in the passage on the basis of goalful reading.

6. The pupils should be asked to note down the questions and answers in the notebooks.
7. He should ask a few other questions with a view to judging the yield of teaching-learning efforts.
8. In the end, he should ask his pupils to write down a summary of the passage in their own words at home.

If comprehension-teaching is regulated in accord with these action-steps on a psycho-linguistic footing, the English teacher will be able to achieve the objectives of teaching a comprehension lesson. The so-planned comprehension teaching programme will demand maximum self-activity on the part of learners. It will be a self-activity lesson much akin to one based on the programmed learning technique; it will not be a lesson requiring a learner's surrender to what is taught to him by the teacher.

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Some Hints on Preparing Instructional Materials in English

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With the increasing innovation in education, and the need for new techniques to achieve quick and effective results, the class reader on which nearly all language work is based in schools today, is proving inadequate. There is a great necessity therefore for supplementary material to fill the gaps left by the prescribed reader. An important advantage of supplementary material is that it can be written to suit specific needs or to highlight certain areas that pose problems to a particular set of pupils.

A vast body of Instructional Material is readily available, prepared by both native and non-native speakers of English, but if the Indian teacher in his classroom wants a set of materials that he can use with profit, he should either [ideally speaking], write it himself, as he knows best the needs of his class, or [more practically], select, modify, reorganize, material already available, to suit his particular teaching situation. The latter would entail the choice of the right kind of items, whether they be prose passages, objective type exercises, language drills etc., and then adaptation of the items chosen to develop particular skills.

Whether the teacher decides to compile a set of instructional material from what has already been prepared, or is more enterprising and tries to write it himself, there are certain general principles or criteria that could be borne in mind.

He should first of all, be clear about the exact purpose of his material. In other words, he should determine for himself, the *specific objective* he hopes to achieve through it. This is fundamental to the writing of any supplementary material, for the very necessity of such material arises from the 'general' nature of the formal text which cannot always be used to develop different kinds of language skills or rectify incorrect language habits. For example, if the teacher wants to write material for helping pupils in auditory discrimination in English, he should decide for himself whether he wants to train them in the discrimination of all the English sounds or problematic sounds. If the latter, his material will have to be organized differently from the former, as the focus would be on particular sounds, which have to be highlighted and carefully presented through a series of contrasts with both English and mother tongue sounds. In other words the nature of emphasis in the teaching of a particular skill should determine the nature of the material written. A point to be remembered is, wherever possible, it is better not to use the same material for teaching contrastive skills. For example, if a passage is meant to test aural comprehension, it should not be used again for reading comprehension or material meant for detailed reading should not be used for rapid silent reading, because of the special implications of each skill. Similarly, one should not as far as possible develop too many skills, at the same time; through the same material. While testing aural comprehension of content, for example, the pupil should not be required to make auditory discrimination of sounds.

Monotony is a nemesis that most teachers have to fight against. If the teacher can capture and retain the interest of pupils, half the task of promoting effective learning can be achieved. So too in the preparation of material, an important criteria is *variety*. Different kinds of exercises, material, can be used to teach the same item, thus providing practice in the same skill in a varied way. If for example, material has to be devised to give practice in differentiating confusing sounds, say the English short and long vowels /i/ and /i:/, (which is a problem for many Indian pupils, especially in the Eastern region), the teacher need not confine himself to one type of exercise but can think of devising various kinds of exercises to teach the same item. To give a few samples.

1. *Minimal pairs*

A	B
/i/	/i:/
chit	cheat
pit	peat
bit	beat
grin	green
shin	sheen

(The pupil is first given ear-training by contrasting the sounds by reading them alternatively-then the words are read at random, and the pupil is required to say from which column, (A or B), they are taken).

2. **Word sets in isolation**

The pupil hears :

On hearing, he says which word in each group is different.

- | | |
|---------------------|------|
| i. hit, hit, heat | i. |
| ii. sip, seep, sip | ii. |
| iii. bit, bit, beat | iii. |
| iv. fit, feet, fit | iv. |

3. The teacher says the following :

	A	B
i. The <i>pill</i> is on the table.		
ii. The <i>peal</i> is on the table.	pill	peal
i. The <i>pit</i> is dark.		
ii. The <i>peat</i> is dark.	pit	peat
i. This is a big <i>ship</i> .		
ii. This is a big <i>sheep</i> .	ship	sheep

(The Contrastive sounds are written on the blackboard in two columns, pupils hear and point out from which column each sound is taken.

E. g. T. The pill is on the table

P. A

T. The peal is on the table

P. B

T. [repeats] The pili is on the table, etc.

4. The teacher says the following :

	A	B
i. The <i>chip</i> is <i>cheap</i>	short vowel	long vowel
ii. give me the <i>cheap chip</i> .	/i/	/i :/
iii. the <i>bean</i> is in the <i>bin</i>		
iv. the <i>cheat</i> threw the <i>chit</i>		
v. the <i>seal</i> is on the <i>sill</i>		
vi. don't <i>seal</i> the <i>sill</i>		
vii. <i>sit</i> on the <i>seat</i>		
viii. <i>seat</i> him on the <i>seat</i>		

[On hearing each sentence, pupils have to say in which column the two words with similar yet contrastive sounds have to be placed.]

The above will illustrate the great number of possibilities in the preparation of varied material to teach even one minor item. The major skills like reading and writing offer infinite scope. What the writer of material has to ask himself in this context, is, what are the different ways of presenting the same thing so that pupils get practice in a particular aspect of language, without it being repetitious.

In the production of material, another significant criteria is the *level of difficulty* of the group of pupils for which it is written. This level of difficulty depends upon the chronological and mental age of the class. It goes without saying that material which is below or above the standard of a particular group of pupils, no matter how carefully written will have no effect ; if it is below the level of difficulty it will not produce any definite learning outcomes as it will not be challenging enough and stimulate interest, while if it is too difficult, it is self-defeating as an 'aid' to learning. To illustrate my point, let us think of a passage for developing reading comprehension. If it is above the difficulty level of the average pupil in a particular class, it does not serve any purpose as 'instructional' material, on the other hand if it is below the average standard, once again, the main objective of using the

passage. to teach pupils to read and comprehend written material of their level, will not be realized.

On remarkable aspect of language is that any linguistic item can be dealt with at any level of difficulty with suitable adjustments. To quote Earl W. Stenick, [from *Evaluating and Adapting language materials*], 'any topic may be treated at any degree of linguistic difficulty'. This being so, the producer of material can present the same type of exercise in varying degrees of difficulty to suit the standard of a particular set of pupils. For example, if material is to be written to help pupils organize their ideas in proper sequence, [as part of the teaching of written skills], and an exercise consisting of arranging sentences in sequence is thought of, the same can be modified to suit different levels. At the upper primary this would consist of a few simple sentences which pupils have to rewrite in proper order :

1. The cat broke the milk-jug.
2. Mother laid the table for tea.
3. It ran away.
4. She went to call Usha and Mohan.

At the std. VII and VIII level a similar exercise can be based on a familiar passage from the Intensive or Supplementary Reader, where the passage is broken into different sentences arranged out of sequence, and pupils asked to rearrange them. At a higher level, (Std. IX and X), the exercise could be based on an unseen passage, where the sentences have to be arranged in proper progression of thought.

It would be a good idea, before producing material, to divide language in terms of broad skills and then subdivide each skill in terms of specific objectives. In the teaching of English this would mean, the skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing, which in turn will have to be defined more specifically. To cite an example, the skill of listening would involve the following subsidiary skills :—

- a. ability to listen with understanding
- b. ability to respond appropriately/intelligently,

The material prepared therefore, for developing the skill of listening will have to keep the above two objectives in view, and exercises produced accordingly. So too with the other skills. This ensures that the writing of material is more systematic, and more *goal oriented*, and hence more effective.

Finally, the average teacher feels the writing of supplementary material in English is the job of the specialist and that it is beyond his capacity. Though there is a grain of truth in the first part of the statement, I do not think he should think it a Herculean task, 'beyond his capacity', for, he need not 'create' material, of his own like the specialist, but can, instead, adapt what is there or prepare material based on models. Instead of 'writing' a passage to teach different aspects of reading comprehension he can use one from the Reader or from any other source and prepare the exercises on it himself. Similarly, instead of using a ready-made substitution table to teach a given structure he can make one his own to teach a particular structure his pupils find difficult. He can devise different exercises to give his pupils practice in written expression modelled on those written by experts, with modifications in content and vocabulary to suit his classroom situation. Here the term 'instructional' needs to be clarified; to my way of thinking, it includes any material that is used as an *aid to instruction*, this means passages, stories dialogues, drills, different kinds of exercises for practice and testing, even the class reader, but more specifically, any material that is supplementary. As there is no rigid categorizing, the teacher can feel free to combine, add, delete, modify different kinds of material prepared by him, and every year improve upon it in the light of his experience, so that it becomes a valuable supplement to the formal class text.

Thus the preparation of Instructional Material is not an esoteric art, but something well within the reach of the practising teacher. If he is a little resourceful and imaginative, he can reap the rich rewards of producing material that will benefit his own classroom pupils, and at the same time give him confidence as a teacher—It is a challenging task no doubt, but it is worth meeting the challenge,

Let Them Listen!

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We give so much importance to speech that we tend to ignore the importance of listening in the English class room. Listening needs to be granted its rightful place as a learning skill. Teachers of English, especially those in the primary schools, must develop new techniques and improve upon any methods they have formerly used to teach the listening skills.

A child's facility in his first language can be attributed to his constant exposure to that language in a number of situations. The world of a child is really a linguistic world. There are a myriad items in it, untold situations, illimitable experiences and emotions, which insistently clamour for expression. The expression naturally follows listening. When the child is learning a second language, it is all the more essential that he is made to listen to it.

We can only make listening to the spoken language a pleasant activity for a learner if what he hears is worth listening to. The first requirement is that the teacher speaks the target language well enough and uses it in class as much as possible. As listening is a pre-requisite, for speaking the learner cannot pronounce the sounds of the new language correctly if he has not first heard them, clearly and more than once. He must hear the language used in meaningful sentences, often and regularly, in and if possible outside the class room: for active listening is the basis of all language control in the spoken form.

Listening is usually referred to as the receptive side of language learning. But this receptive side need not be dubbed as

passive. One can receive language with all its details in an active-manner. Listening, for that matter, is a learned receptive skill.

The most fundamental problem in English teaching is that an inadequate appeal is made to the ear, and it is only through an appeal to the ear that a language can be taught. The best aid, of course, is the human voice, particularly the voice of someone who has a mastery of language. Listening is naturally the first step because the learner must be able to recognise the sounds of the language and understand their meanings.

In the initial stages, the teacher must constantly try to help the learner listen to good English. The listening habit must be inculcated in him. Specific practice has to be provided also in grasping what is being said. Correct understanding of what is heard, must be made as easy as possible. French (1963—Teaching English as an International Language) says that it is easy to understand objects which can be seen, touched and moved, actions which can be seen and performed, qualities which are visible and subject to personal examination when these are associated with sound.

Listening connotes attention, discrimination and an intellectual attempt to comprehend. But these are some times absent in the English class room. The learner seems to hear, but he does not listen. This may be due to a number of reasons. The learner may be finding the new words 'unpalatable'. There may be some prejudices on his part. The teacher may be presenting the language in a dull manner. So what is required of the teacher is a slow-paced and clear presentations of the language. Then it is possible to have good listening comprehension.

Newmark and Diller (The Modern Language Journal, 48. 18-20) say that most language programmes neglect listening comprehension. It is generally treated as incidental to speaking, rather than as a foundation for it. Class room exercises are mainly speaking exercises in which the learner hears an audio stimulus and then immediately imitates it or makes some other oral response. When learners listen to and participate in exre-