

Methods of Teaching Modern Languages

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VI.—*Methods of Teaching Modern Languages.*

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One of the most interesting subjects of study to the conscientious teacher is that of methods of instruction. It is indispensable to his success that he should be familiar with all existing methods, so that he may intelligently choose that one, or that combination, which is best suited to his peculiar conditions. Generally the age of the pupils, the time allotted for instruction in Modern Languages, and the place these occupy in the curriculum—by which I mean the object of studying them—are beyond our control. Modern Languages are studied, for example,

1. As an accomplishment.
2. Because other schools offer them, and with no special ulterior object, or with a vague idea of some intellectual benefit.
3. To serve the purposes of a summer trip abroad.
4. As a means of improvement in the use of one's native tongue.
5. For general culture obtainable by reading foreign literature.
6. For philological research or amusement.
7. For acquiring the ability to consult foreign scientific and technical publications.
8. For business correspondence.
9. Because business, family, or friendly relations bring with them personal intercourse with foreigners.
10. To teach them.

It is evident at once, then, that no teacher can blindly accept the conclusions of another as to the best method of instruction. He must work it out for himself; and, to be able to do so, he must know all there is to be known on the subject. The purpose of the present paper is to lay before the Convention a brief description of various methods which have come under the observation of the writer for the last twenty years—in the hope that it may suggest comments and elicit valuable information from the experience of the members present.—The great multitude of instruction books upon our shelves may be reduced to

very few general modes of procedure that deserve the name of systems or methods.

The Scholastic Method.

When Latin ceased to be a living tongue, some schoolmaster, whose name has not come down to us, conceived the unlucky idea that the proper way to learn Latin was by studying those excellent books of reference, the grammar and the dictionary. In proportion as boys learnt less and less Latin, more and more importance was attached to the study of grammar. Parents of an inquiring turn of mind, who wished to know the reason why their boys did not learn to read Latin very fluently after four to six years of instruction, were consoled or silenced with the plea that the scholars were receiving valuable mental discipline.

The same method naturally came to be applied to modern languages, for it required a minimum of talent and exertion on the part of the teacher. In due time clear-headed men protested against such a process. Among others LOCKE, in England, and D'ALEMBERT in France proposed a different way. LOCKE says, if you cannot get a man to talk Latin to your children, the next best thing is by taking some easy and pleasant book, such as Aesop's Fables, and writing the English translation, made as literal as can be, in one line, and the Latin words, which answer to each of them, just over it, in another. These let them read every day over and over again, till they perfectly understand the Latin. Of the grammar, he recommended only the conjugations and declensions.—In accordance with this plan, HAMILTON prepared a series of Interlinears to Caesar, Cicero, Xenophon, etc. When I went to school, however, it was considered nothing short of moral degradation to use such aids. There is indeed one valid objection to their use and that is the arrangement of Latin words in the English order of thought; but it is an objection that could be easily overcome by a skilful teacher.

The Practical Method.

The text-books of OLLENDORF, which were published about 1846, are a type that has been most extensively imitated by AHN, OTTO, WOODBURY and a great host of followers. They embody another protest against the grammar and dictionary method, which I am happy to say now rests in peace, at least so far as Modern Languages are concerned. Their leading idea is practice before theory, and although they have been subjected to much well deserved ridicule for the puerility of their examples,

they mark an important advance in the art of teaching languages. They contain a very large vocabulary of common words and phrases with their translation, and two kinds of exercises, one to be turned from the foreign language into English and the other for the reverse process. No grammatical aid is given except what may be gathered from an appendix and a few foot notes.—The reaction against grammar was evidently too great. Sound instruction in language cannot be divorced entirely from grammar. The collocation of words, their inflection, agreement and government and the equivalence of different forms of expression must always form the basis of instruction. Technicalities can be dispensed with and there is no use in teaching formally what the pupil can be led to find out for himself. The attitude of the teacher in this respect might be expressed by the following questions: “Of what service is this matter which I am about to teach in the acquisition of the language?” “Can I teach it in some other way than by rule?”

Robertsonian System.

(TOUSSAINT-LANGENSCHIEDT)

The Robertsonian system practised by PROF. T. ROBERTSON for over thirty years in Paris, appeared about 1852. It is a modification of the interlinear plan with notable improvements. A continuous story is given in forty short sections, each accompanied by an interlinear translation and also an idiomatic translation into correct English. The teacher is directed to read the first lesson five or six times to the pupil, who then familiarizes himself with the spelling and the meaning of the words until he can write them correctly from dictation and from memory. Each lesson of this kind is followed by a set of questions and answers made up of the words and phrases already learned and by a series of sentences to translate from French into English and back again. These also contain nothing that has not been explained. The learner may then go on through the book in this way, skipping the second or theoretical part of each lesson and come back to it on the review, or he may take it at once. Under the heading of “lexicology,” lists of words are given from time to time which are easily remembered by reason of their similarity to English. The whole is followed by twenty lessons more, in parallel columns for translation from and into French, and by a short synopsis of Grammar.

This system is represented in Germany by what is called the

'Toussaint-Langenscheidt' method which appeared in Berlin about 1860, in the form of thirty-six letters, each containing two lessons. The basis of the French is CHATEAUBRIAND'S '*Atala*' and of the English, DICKENS' '*Christmas Carol*.' Each section is accompanied not only by two translations but by the pronunciation denoted in a most excellent manner. Besides the features of ROBERTSON'S book above mentioned, conversations on practical subjects, correction of Germanisms, forms of letter writing, lists of idioms, war terms and an outline of literature are given. DR. CARL SACHS' '*Encyclop. Wörterbuch der franz. u. deutsch. Sprache*' contains the same system of pronunciation and is one of the best dictionaries in existence.

Gaillard's Modern French Method.

PROF. J. D. GAILLARD, now of New York City, has published a method which possesses considerable originality. Like ROBERTSON he uses a continuous story as its basis; but, unlike him, he first teaches his pupils the pronunciation and the elementary principles of grammar including the verb and then gives a section of his story without the connecting words; thus: s'appeler—George d'Estainville—issu—famille—huguenots—exilés—au temps—persécution—protestants—Louis quatorze. The words are all in one column and the translation is given opposite. The teacher supplies the intermediate words making a connected narrative and the pupils repeat after him, first without sight of the books and then with the books open. They next prepare these lessons at home, by committing the different connected groups to memory so that they can speak and write them. When they come to class again, a dialogue of the following nature ensues between teacher and pupil:

Teacher—Notre héros, *Pupil*—s'appelait George d'Estainville, *Teacher*—Il était, *Pupil*—issu, *Teacher*—de l'une de ces nombreuses et honorables, *Pupil*—familles de huguenots exilées au temps de la persécution, *Teacher*—de la persécution, *Pupil*—des protestants.

The next step is conversation by question and answer. For this purpose a series of questions is given with interlinear translation and to these the pupils reply by using the material just acquired. Conversation is also practised between pupils, one asking, the other answering. After some time they are required to give a continuous narrative of portions of the story and also to write them out from memory. After the twentieth lesson, a

mere sketch of suggestive words is given which are to be worked freely into a narrative. The features upon which most stress is laid are, that the words and phrases of the fundamental story are grouped according to the law of the association of ideas and that the subjects treated impart knowledge and excite interest by appealing to human feelings. It is claimed very justly that these features are of great service in helping the learner to remember.—It remains to be added that the interlinear translation is idiomatic and does not give the meaning word for word, and that many of the subjects treated require a somewhat matured intellect. Too much must not be expected from the claim that the law of association has been followed. In our own language where we have to deal with familiar words, this law applies, and we can remember a series of words connected in sense like fire, bells, excited crowd, distracted mother, brave fireman, ladder, rescued child—better than a series of disconnected ones like barrel, sky, to waltz, rooster, windy day. But in a foreign language where the words are still unfamiliar, the law of association is of little assistance at first.

Marcel's 'Rational Method.'

CLAUDE MARCEL (about 1868) considers the ability to understand spoken language and to read of more importance than speaking and writing. He would have us begin the study of a language by reading at once without any previous preparation. His arguments and directions are as follows: To prevent mistakes, do not pronounce the foreign language at all either aloud or mentally, but let the information enter through the eye alone. Pronounce instead the English equivalents of the passages under consideration. The book should be very easy and should contain a close English translation on the opposite page. The learner compares the two pages, sentence by sentence, and infers the meaning of as many words as he can. The use of grammar and dictionary is forbidden. To use the latter would be to substitute the thumb and finger for the intellect. Read in this way five or six volumes two or three times over in three months. At first all is confusion, but light will gradually dawn because the most useful words occur the most frequently. On seeing them in different positions, we receive successive additions to our first impression and thus our knowledge of their meaning is gradually built up. By continuing to read we become more and more independent of the translation and finally discard it al-

together. The art of reading in this way can be acquired without the teacher. The next step consists in training the ear to the art of understanding the spoken language. The teacher now reads aloud what his pupils have translated and they follow him without looking at the text and translate by ear. At first he reads slowly and by phrases and then gradually faster and more connectedly. After some time they will understand him when he reads what they have not prepared beforehand and when he speaks so rapidly that they have no time to translate. The art of speaking, adds MARCEL, will then follow as a necessary consequence.

MARCEL considers narration better than conversation and asks "What conversation can there be between a master and his pupils?" Accordingly he recommends relating anecdotes, historical facts and noteworthy events. His remarks are intended principally for the study of French, which he thinks a pupil of suitable age should be able to read with pleasure and speak with ease in eighteen months or two years.—It will occur at once to an experienced teacher that his pupils will generally violate MARCEL'S directions as regards pronunciation. They will pronounce mentally according to the analogy of English and thus render it more difficult for themselves to acquire the correct sounds afterwards. Again, the spoken language corresponds so little to its conventional representation on paper, that the pupils previous silent reading will be of little service to him when he comes to hear the same text read by the teacher. As the time must come sooner or later when the sounds are associated with the letters, syllables, words and phrases it is difficult to see the advantage of postponing. Besides, if the sounds were taught first they would assist in remembering words. The combined memories of the eye and the ear would serve better than either alone.

The excellences in MARCEL'S method are his substitution of the intellectual processes of comparison and reflection for the use of grammar and dictionary, and his recognition of the importance of the conjunctions, prepositions, pronouns and short adverbs which constantly recur on every page. There are hardly three hundred of them and yet they are used more than all the remaining hundred thousand words of the dictionary. For languages like Greek, Latin and German, in which the collocation of words differs widely from English, an interlinear trans-

lation would be necessary to carry out MARCEL'S ideas ; but the words of these languages should not be taken out of their natural order and arranged after the English sequence as is done in the Interlinears of HAMILTON. Students should be led to understand them as they stand in the original, *i. e.*, to take in the full meaning of each word or phrase as it comes without mentally re-arranging. My 'First German Reader' and 'Die Anna-Lise' are arranged on this plan for German. In French a number of books have been published besides MARCEL'S own. Among them may be mentioned MME. BARBAULD'S 'Lessons for Children,' 'French Children at Home,' 'Comment on Parle à Paris,' 'Le Voyage à Paris' by WILLIAMS, and ROEMER'S 'Polyglot Readers.' The latter are also intended for double translation. Books of this character are of especial value to those who study without a teacher. My experience does not incline me to agree with the idea that reading leads directly to speaking. If any teacher desires to discover why reading usually contributes so little to this end, let him ask a student to repeat from memory some simple idiomatic sentence of very moderate length which the latter has just read. He will rarely be able to do so ; because, in fact, he has not performed any mental operation analogous to speaking. He may have perfectly understood the sense of the passage, but he has not transferred the words to his mind, nor treasured them in his memory, nor combined them with those already there.

The Mastery System.

THOMAS PRENDERGAST, an English writer of decided originality, found about 1867 that lads who had been carefully drilled for three or four years in translating English into French and German grammatically, were incapable of putting ten words together idiomatically until they went abroad and learned by imitation ; also that in the examinations one who had the power of speaking a foreign language idiomatically was considered inferior in merit to those who had a thorough knowledge of grammar without that power. Children, he says, instinctively imitate and repeat chance combinations of unfamiliar sounds. Only after some weeks they begin to speak a few sentences, which they multiply by transferring words and phrases from one to another. The mastery system substitutes skilfully constructed sentences for these chance combinations but conforms otherwise to the procedure of children.—There are two hundred

or three hundred common words in every language, some of which necessarily occur in every sentence. The profusion of speech which we observe in children springs from their power of wielding these two hundred or three hundred words with a gradually increasing stock of nouns and verbs interspersed. To these words the learner should, therefore, devote himself at once. They should be arranged for him in a sufficient number of lengthy and complicated sentences to illustrate all the constructions in use. Each sentence, moreover, should be accompanied by a number of variations in which the same words are re-combined to form new idiomatic sentences.

Now, for the manner of studying. Suppose, for example, that the first sentence is: "Unless we send word to the hotel immediately, we shall have no chance of obtaining horses, because there is a great demand for them." From this sentence about twenty-five sentences of various lengths would be given in which no other words are used. The original fundamental sentence is accompanied by an interlinear translation and the variations are accompanied by free translations.—Each of these sentences must be learnt in the most perfect manner until they can be spoken with the utmost fluency, accuracy and promptitude. If a mistake is permitted in a single word or even in a single sound the system has been virtually abandoned. To insure this accuracy, the learner is advised to learn very short lessons, never to continue more than ten minutes at one time and to make from three to six such efforts a day. The most common error is to furnish the beginner with more material than he can retain. Perfect retention must be aimed at and the power of retention is much smaller than is generally supposed. The mastery of ten new words daily is far beyond the power of a person of average capacity and industry. Those who doubt this statement are invited to try the experiment fairly for thirty days.—The beginner is not allowed to compose any sentences for himself. He is merely the recipient of a stock of practical sentences which in due time become models for other sentences.

The reason for beginning with complicated sentences is that children do not discriminate between what we call simple and difficult constructions but employ the latter as readily as the former. So the learner must not disdain to commit them to memory and to reserve the solution of difficulties for future experience. During the first fortnight the beginner is not

allowed to trust his memory. In order that mistakes may be avoided, he must rehearse with the teacher before reciting and the teacher should prompt him at the slightest hesitation.

When the first sentence and its variations are perfectly mastered, the second is taken up and the variations then contain the words of both.—When two hundred words have been mastered in this way, the learner is permitted to use a table of terminations of the variable parts of speech and to vary the sentences given by changing the tense, person, and number of verbs, the case and number of nouns and pronouns, etc. He may also exchange congruous words as 'before' for 'after,' 'came' for 'went,' 'his' for 'her,' 'to-day' for 'yesterday.' From two sentences of ten congruous words each we can thus make 1024 and from three 59049 variations. The thorough mastery of a few of these gives the command of all. During this course no reading must be done and no grammar or dictionary used.

It will be seen that the acquisition of colloquial fluency is here considered as a purely mechanical process dependent upon the memory and not the intellect, and that composition is regarded as putting together idiomatic phrases by an intelligent effort of the memory and not as compounding sentences according to the prescription of the grammar. The great merit of PRENDERGAST, whose system has just been described largely by condensing his own phraseology, consists in formulating so exactly the problem to be solved in learning to speak a language. His solution of the problem, however, is one that involves mere drudgery unrelieved by any interesting exercise.

The Meisterschaft System.

The so called Meisterschaft System, by DR. S. ROSENTHAL, is directly based upon PRENDERGAST'S Mastery System of which its very title is a translation. The author claims that he has greatly improved upon the original by confining himself strictly to the necessary phraseology of every-day life and adding only so much grammar as must be known for all practical purposes. This claim is well founded, so far as some of his model-sentences are concerned; for they are certainly more useful than those given by PRENDERGAST while others have been but slightly altered. His directions for pronunciation (of French for example) are simply abominable, however; and his means of imparting the vocabulary of two thousand or three thousand

words, which he considers necessary, is by giving them in long lists.—COLLAR'S EYSENBACH'S 'German Lessons,' which I have just received seems to be an attempt to graft the PRENDERGAST idea of beginning with sentences and their variation upon a grammatical course. It has the appearance of a very useful book.

The Natural Method.

Although there have been teachers probably ever since the time of PESTALOZZI and perhaps before, who availed themselves of object lessons to some extent in teaching languages, the merit of originating the so called Natural Method is due to GOTTLIEB HENESS in the same sense that the discovery of America is due to COLUMBUS rather than to the Norsemen. In 1865, while HENESS was explaining to a friend the advantage of object teaching as used in Southern Germany to help children in overcoming their dialects, the thought occurred to him that this means might be made of service in teaching German or any other language. About six months after he promised to teach the sons of several Yale College professors to speak German fluently in one school year of forty weeks, five days per week and four hours per day. In this undertaking he was so successful that he opened a school, taught his method to DR. L. SAUVEUR and engaged him to assist in French. The method has since become widely known especially through Dr. SAUVEUR'S publications and summer schools.

The method consists in speaking only the foreign language in the class room, as though English were not in existence. The teacher begins with short sentences about some object in sight in such a way that the pupils cannot fail to understand him. He holds out a book, for example, and says: "Here is a book," a pencil and says: "Here is a pencil." Then, perhaps he puts the pencil in the book and says: "The pencil is in the book." Thus he continues by going through ordinary motions of everyday life, suiting the action to the words. By judicious questioning, the pupils are led to reproduce the phraseology they have heard. It is like living in a foreign country under favorable conditions.—Taking care to introduce but one new word or phrase at a time, the teacher continually combines in new ways the words already acquired by the pupils, and soon reaches a point at which it is rarely necessary for him to have recourse to pantomime or even to visible objects. His next step is to lead up to

some easy reading by preparing his pupils beforehand for the new things and the difficulties to be encountered. His object in doing so is to enable them to read the piece as a native does, without the necessity of translating. When they have read the piece, he drills them conversationally on the phraseology until he has reason to believe that they have transferred it to their working vocabulary. Perhaps he finishes by making them learn the piece by heart.—Grammar is taught in instalments as soon as it can be understood when explained in the new language—in my own practice about the tenth or fifteenth lesson. Translation is postponed as long as possible. When the learner's vocabulary is sufficiently extensive, he is required to relate anecdotes, to condense stories he has read, to convert poetry into prose, etc. This is done both orally and in writing. At this stage it is claimed that he will enjoy all the beauties of literature as a native does. There is now no further objection to his translating from one language into the other for the purpose of improving his style in both and of acquiring that nicety of discrimination which we admire so much in scholarly writers.

Let us now examine the objections which have been made to this system. It cannot be denied, we are told, that the most natural process for learning a language is that through which little children pass. They listen to their mothers and companions, watch their facial expressions, gestures and actions and then imitate both the action and the accompanying words. But in this way ten or twelve years are consumed in acquiring a commonplace colloquial vocabulary. To this the child adds constantly with its increasing experience derived from intercourse, reading and study. The acquisition of knowledge goes hand in hand with the acquisition of terms expressed it, and the process never stops. Now, when a young man enters college at the average age of eighteen, it is manifestly too late for this lengthy and wasteful process with any other language. Besides the conditions will never again be the same as those under which he learnt his mother tongue. His own mental organism has changed. He has lost much of the spontaneous receptivity and plasticity of mind peculiar to childhood and has developed in exchange the faculties of comparison, reasoning and generalization. He is now, moreover, already in possession of the means for expressing his thoughts. The words of his vernacular have become thoroughly connected with the ideas they represent and

have linked themselves to form a vast number of inseparable chains of phraseology. A new language must displace all this. His mind now runs in deeply worn grooves. Consequently the new language has not the same chance of success as the first. It has a habit to overcome. The older the student, the more firmly established the habit and the more extensive the vocabulary to be displaced. An adult will not be content with the commonplaces of children; hence he must work much harder to attain fluency.

Reasoning similar to that which has just been given has led some writers who are imperfectly acquainted with the capabilities of the natural method to decide that it might be suitable to children but not to adults. As in so many controversies, the difficulty here is in a name. The 'natural method' is not the process by which children learn from their mothers. It is, or ought to be, a great deal better than that, though based upon it. It is natural in its basis; but highly artificial in its development and hence the name by which it has become known is to a certain extent a misnomer. But we cannot change that now. We can only point out that the arguments just formulated do not apply to the natural method as it is, but only as it is supposed to be.—It has been objected that the teacher is required to do a disproportionate share of the work; that he must labor excessively to supply the place of dictionary, grammar and foreign surroundings to his pupils; and that his memory must be under a continual strain to retain the exact vocabulary of all his different classes at every stage of their progress. A skillful teacher, however, will find means of lightening his labors and overcoming these difficulties. Another objection that has been made is that the conversation necessarily turns upon trivial subjects; but my own experience has convinced me that this is true only at the outset and since many of my adult pupils even find great difficulties in these very commonplaces, I must conclude that these are a necessary evil. Fortunately it is only a brief one.—It must not be supposed that the teacher is required to lower himself in any way in order to amuse his listeners by converting his illustrations into a farce. He must possess a thorough command of his language; he must combine and recombine the vocabulary of his class ingeniously and skilfully so as always to be understood; and he must have at his beck and call a wealth of illustrations, such as

proverbs, winged words, anecdotes and poetry that will not permit the attention of his hearers to flag for an instant. He wields over them the power of an orator and may use it for their highest mental and moral good.

It has been objected that this method fails to bring into play the higher faculties; and that it is folly to reject any philosophical aids to the study of language, such as grammar and bilingual dictionaries.—The first portion of this objection will never be made by any one who has successfully used the method even to a very limited extent. Such a teacher knows that his pupils are vigorously comparing and reasoning all the time and he leads them to make their own generalization as soon as they can do it in the language taught. I cannot conceive of any philosophical aid to the study of languages that the “Sprechlehrer” cannot avail himself of. He certainly can and does teach grammar as thoroughly as it can be done by the old way. It would be inconsistent to permit beginners to use a bilingual dictionary for several reasons. It promotes mental inertia, because it is easier to look up a word than to reason out its meaning from the context; it is misleading because it makes the learner believe that words exactly coincide in two languages, whereas they may only touch each other at one or two points and then each may have its own distinct figurative ramifications, which are all natural enough provided we do not mix them, and lastly the very existence of English must be ignored during the lessons for reasons which will presently appear. Yet notwithstanding all these reasons, it would sometimes seem as though we had rejected a valuable aid by dispensing with a bilingual dictionary, especially when we consider that beginners have no other means of pursuing their studies out of the class room. They cannot of course use a unilingual dictionary until they have made considerable progress. But perhaps they had better not pursue their studies out of the class room at that stage. There is some room for a difference of opinion on this point.—The advantage of the ‘Natural Method’ over that which is based upon reading is obvious. It is hardly possible to hear a recitation of more than six moderate octavo pages in one hour if nothing else is done than “hear the lesson.” If there are explanations and comments, the lesson must be shorter. Now it is not difficult to calculate that the conversation heard by the students in one lively lesson by this method would fill at least

forty pages, as a fluent speaker uses about two hundred and fifty words per minute and a medium sized octavo page contains about three hundred words.

The basis of all language whether literary or scientific is the phraseology of every-day life, and this can be learned only by imitation. In actual conversation there is no time to reason about the arrangement of words or to translate them from one language into another. We must think directly in the language we are speaking. Now, I am not acquainted with any other system than the natural method that has provided the means of doing so. Its great merit, in my opinion, consists in the fact that it leads the learner *to associate the new vocabulary directly with objects and actions instead of their English names.* The natural tendency of the learner is to translate the foreign phrases he hears and sees, but by this method he is soon convinced that he is wasting his time and only practising English by so doing because he can raise his hand, and say, "I raise my hand" in any language without the necessity of first thinking it in English. By means of these preliminary object lessons the habit of direct association is soon formed and this I consider their chief value. The student, moreover, on seeing before his eyes objects and actions and hearing them described, must receive more vivid impressions and is, therefore, more likely to remember than where words only are associated together as in translation. After a foreign language has been studied for a while as a living tongue, that is to say, after a limited number of words and phrases, learned as described, have become grouped together in a great variety of ways and thoroughly incorporated with our brain fibre, reading will increase our command of the language just as it does in English and for the same physiological reason. Nothing is now so novel and strange as not to find something kindred in the brain to which it can attach itself according to the laws which govern the action of the memory. The proper time for systematically comparing two languages is when the student possesses a moderately good knowledge of both. I do not mean that all comparison should be postponed until then, only that such comparisons should not be made the basis of instruction. The student will unavoidably institute some for himself: but he will never know a language as a native does unless he has learned to utilize its power of explaining itself.

I conclude from these considerations that the 'Natural Method'

furnishes the most philosophical introduction to the study of languages which has ever been proposed for the class room. For study without a teacher, where reading is the sole object, the Interlinear System is recommendable for languages differing widely in construction from our own, and the MARCEL System for those which do not. The 'Natural Method' is, of course, interminable. Probably no teacher can pursue it to the point at which his pupils are able to express themselves in the new tongue as perfectly on all subjects within their range as they can in the vernacular. In my own course, I can go no further than to lay the foundation which has been so well formulated by PRENDERGAST. Then we must read as much as possible and push forward to the ultimate object of our course, the easy comprehension of scientific and technological literature. The greatest difficulty I have to encounter is the imperfect training or total absence of training of the ear in our schools. The education of our young people is still conducted almost exclusively through the eye, by means of books. There is so little oral instruction that the pupils not only do not hear accurately, but have to learn the art of paying attention. To meet this difficulty I have prepared drill books on the pronunciation of German, Spanish and French for training the ear by systematic practice. By placing these books in the hands of students and giving them at least fifteen lessons in phonetics, I find when I begin conversation that my labor is very much lightened.

Self-Instruction and The Class Room.

Permit me in conclusion to describe how I should avail myself of various aids in acquiring a language myself. I should undoubtedly begin by taking a course of lessons by the 'Natural Method' until I was sure that my pronunciation was accurate and until I had mastered all the constructions. Then I should read a short grammar written in the language I was studying and thoroughly drill myself on the declensions and conjugations, especially the irregular ones, rejecting, of course, all that are likely to occur but rarely. The next step would be to read several thousand pages without consulting a dictionary, or at least without consulting it very often. This first reading must not be too difficult. It should consist of popular tales and even riddles, nursery rhymes and songs—everything in fact that a native learns first in his own language. All the literature of a nation is full of allusions to these outgrowths of popular life and

many of them have enough intrinsic value to repay the trouble of storing them in the memory. Then I should ascertain what are the best contemporary novels and plays and read all the works of one good author first, because a man necessarily has a limited vocabulary and is obliged to repeat himself. I should select a writer of the realistic school whose realism confined itself to minute descriptions of the ordinary events of life; for my object would now be to surround myself artificially with the advantages which can be derived otherwise only from a residence among the people whose language I desire to master.—In all this reading, my constant endeavor is to avoid translating. Whenever I reach a good colloquial sentence, likely to be of service to me because it contains either phraseology that must be used in daily intercourse, or connectives, constructions or idioms peculiar to the language, I impress it upon my memory by repeating it once or twice without looking at the book and as though I were actually speaking to some one. Then I mark the sentence; and on finishing the volume, I renew my acquaintance with the marked passages by copying them in a note book. It is astonishing how naturally the material thus stored in the mind becomes available for the purposes of actual conversation. Not the identical sentences, but their peculiar turns come up as occasion arises to apply them. If no such occasion arises, we must create one artificially, or else all our labor is in vain. We must think in the new language daily; that is, we must hold mental conversations with ourselves about familiar objects, about scenes and persons, and about our occupations; we must recall anecdotes and stories we have read; in short, we must entertain ourselves as best we can in the foreign language during our walks, rides and moments of leisure and solitude.

While we can do all this for ourselves, it is not so easy to carry out the principle of it in the class room. We may convince our students of the desirability of such a method of self-instruction and hold out to them the certainty of success; but few, if any, will put it in practice, unless we make it impossible for them to avoid following our instructions. It is the nature of the youthful mind to study all lessons in precisely the same manner—a lesson in language just like a lesson in geometry. To them, studying means reading a task until they understand it. The idea of *practising* has to be enforced. It will be desirable, therefore, in hearing a reading lesson to direct

students to mark and commit to memory certain sentences in such a way that they can repeat them the next day fluently and naturally after reading them over once. Any hesitation or false emphasis should be considered a failure. Then questions might be prepared which would compel students to combine their newly acquired vocabulary in various ways. By judicious selection, they will soon accumulate enough material to enable them to narrate in their own phraseology simple stories and anecdotes and eventually to condense longer narratives, to paraphrase poetry and to write compositions.

I consider it very important to begin with the literature of the present day and not to meddle with classical writers until the daily newspaper no longer presents any difficulties. Then the student may approach the classics on a footing of equality with a native. Those who imagine that they are enjoying a foreign classic while they have to dig out the meaning laboriously are only deluding themselves. What they enjoy, if they honestly get any pleasure in the process, is the thought of the writer as it is conveyed in their own rendering and perhaps also the satisfaction of overcoming difficulty. They certainly cannot enjoy the intrinsic beauties of the original. Finally, I would earnestly recommend all teachers not to become wedded to any one system, however good or congenial, but to avail themselves of the excellences of all.