

PAPER 8

NINE TYPES OF SPOKEN DRILLS

The oral approach to language teaching can be made more effective if certain misconception and misunderstanding regarding it are cleared and if one or two technical hints are available.

Oral work often yields poor results since many teachers giving oral lessons tend to ask questions all the time giving the pupil practices in answering. Some teachers insist on pupil giving the appropriate short answers in which case the pupils get plenty of practice in naturally answering questions but none at all is opening up topics themselves. Other teachers insist on the pupil answering in complete sentence in which case they do not learn the short natural answer.

In the first case the pupil will tend when they become more fluent to use short forms derived from their own languages. Furthermore, their intonation will inevitably suffer.

The solution is that the teacher must not ask questions all the time. When he asks questions, he must show the pupil how to give sensible answer, short and appropriate. But he also must give them plenty of opportunity for making original statements of their own, for asking questions, and giving orders themselves.

Some practical suggestions that will help to manifest certain features are:

- (a) At the beginning the pupils are directly imitating the teacher: even in the later stages, they are taking their clue from the teacher. Truly original conversation comes still later.
- (b) At every stage, they are expected to make natural irrepetitive short form responses where these are called for both answers to questions and short comments.
- (c) At every stage, too, they are guided by action or by means of 'call-words' to make complete unambiguous opening utterance.
- (d) An essential part of this approach is that pupil should talk as much possible to each other rather to the teacher. All foreign language teachers can see the virtue of this.

Some typical drills, nine of them specially illustrate comprehensively the technique of practical language teaching.

1. The basis of the oral method is imitation of correct modes. So there must be much time devoted to drill like this:

Teacher: "There is a handbag on the table."

Chorus: "There is a handbag on the table."

Teacher: "There is not a basket on the table."

Chorus: "There is not a basket on the table."

2. Once the pattern is established, the teacher tries to speak as little as possible. He uses a visible situation as his subject matter and uses all words:

Teacher: "Handbag".

Chorus: "There is a handbag on the table."

Teacher: "Basket".

Chorus: "There is not a basket on the table." And so on.

3. In the early stages of teaching short answers, the teacher has to give models for imitation.

Teacher: "Is there a pencil in my hand? Yes, there is.

Is there a pencil in my hand? say, yes there is."

Chorus: "Yes, there is."

4. It is perfectly easy to shift the burden of asking such questions to the pupil themselves like this:

Teacher: "Handbag".

Demichorus A: "Is there a handbag on the table?"

Demichorus B: "Yes, there is."

Teacher: "Basket".

Demichorus A: "Is there a basket on the table?"

Demichorus B: "No, there is not." And so on.

5. Look and say drills may be used again as soon as the learners get the new point. The teacher takes a number of objects and does a number of actions, while the class do the talking:

(He holds up a key)

Class: "That's a key."

(He puts it in a lock)

Class: "You are putting it in the lock."

(He holds up a hat)

Class: "That's a hat."

(He puts it on a hook)

Class: "You are putting it on a hook...etc."

6. After some chorus work, the teacher goes on to rapid and rhythmical drilling:

Teacher: (Pointing to the picture, such as one of the general services, English wall picture) "Is the waiter carrying a tray?"

Pupil A: "Yes, he is."

Teacher: "Is he carrying a table?"

Pupil B: "No, he is not."

Teacher: "What is he carrying then?"

Pupil C: "A tray." And so on.

7. Individual pupil may be guided to make opening remarks:

Teacher: "Is the waiter carrying a tray?"

Pupil A: "Yes, he is."

Teacher: "Tell B about the waiter."

Pupil A: "Look B, the waiter is carrying a tray."

Pupil B: "Yes, I can see he is."

Teacher: "Is there the girl going down the steps?"

Pupil B: "Yes, she is."

Teacher: "Tell C about the girl."

Pupil B: "Look C, the girl is going down the steps."

Pupil C: "Yes, I can see she is." And so on.

8. Approaching genuine conversation, the teacher can leave it all to the pupil, so long he sets clear patterns to be followed clearly what the pupil have to do and gives guided practice first:

Teacher: "Can you see an airplane in the picture?"

_____ Yes, I can. _____

Where is it?

_____ Over the sea. _____

"That's right. I want to ask you these questions. You begin A."

Pupil A: "Can you see a boat in the picture?"

Pupil B: "Yes, I can."

Pupil A: "Where is it?"

Pupil B: "Near the teacher."

Pupil A: "That's right. Now you ask C."

Pupil B: "Can you see a hotel in the picture, C?"

Pupil C: "Yes, I can." And so on.

9. The same technique applied to opening statements may be written on the board:

There is a waiter carrying a tray.

There is a _____ ing _____.

Pupil A: "There is an airplane flying in the sky."

Pupil B: "There is a dog crossing the road."

Pupil C: "There is a woman drinking lemon." And so on.

Each of these nine drills can usefully be done in small groups -- dividing a class, say 42 children in seven groups of six each having one child who acts as drill master. It is best to stick to one pattern or two in each drill so that the pupil can soon learn to respond quickly and automatically, no time for drinking.

Teachers who drill systematically along these lines move three times as fast as those who merely ask questions and six times as fast as those who keep the children in the text-books.