

Can Language Teachers Be Open-Minded?



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A friend of mine who was present at a TESOL meeting and heard a request for articles for the Quarterly which might generate discussion, called me to suggest that I should write one. It did not seem to me that I would have more impact today than when, a quarter of a century ago, I called attention to language acquisition in L_1 and L_2 . This is now examined by many but with very little connection with what I had been doing then and since.

Still, who am I to decide that times do not change; and after a few days of reflection I decided to write this contribution as a set of questions for those who would read them.

Some of these questions extend beyond the field of language and have served in other areas of human endeavor.

News items close this issue, the last of Volume XV.

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1 Questions About “My” Thinking

Do I know:

that our time is neither the beginning nor the end of times?

that there have been epochs in which what occupies me had never been considered by anybody? and that it may be of no interest to anybody now or even later?

that I may be convinced easily in some areas and not touched at all in others?

that in the areas where I know what is true, no one can fool me, but where I have little experience, I am easily shaken and am ready to yield to “authority,” even if this is only in the way statements are made? In particular, that a priori I endow with authority published material in all areas where I have no or little experience?

that I can be critical in three ways —

- 1 when I *know* better,
- 2 when I *believe* in what impressed me about the matter concerned, and
- 3 when I *do not like* what I hear or read and that goes against my preconception and prejudices?

that I prefer writers or speakers who adopt my prejudices with respect to how truth is found, is established and stated?

that, on the whole, I do not care about many things, even in the areas of my predilection, particularly if they challenge my positions, my beliefs, my loyalties? hence, that I prefer my tranquility to the search for truth?

that my limitations impose boundaries on what I can connect with in my field of studies? in particular, my inability to read more than one language and be acquainted with research in my field presented by investigators who do not offer it in my language?

that I expect these investigators or other people, to do the work of making their findings available to me?

that I adhere to certain “standards” of presentation of material, and

- 1 that I distrust those who do not follow the same procedures, and
- 2 that I never ask whether Aristotle or Descartes or the greatest thinkers, adhered to such standards, which may have become widespread only recently and mainly in my own culture?

that if procedures are datable, it may mean they are not necessary, only convenient in some circumstances? and hence may be replaced by others if these are found more fruitful?

that I am not sure that “my” thinking is my own or to which extent it is? This is so because I have stressed a collective approach to things and, in my education, it was stressed that one begins not with one’s own thinking but with the content of the literature, in order to find a niche for oneself.

that I share the view that it is *not* the challenges or the problems which educate investigators, but what other researchers have done and

written about? that by criticizing what I learn from them I find that which can be my contribution to the field?

that I am not aware that there are several *logics* and that I myself use them now and have used them extensively during my years of growth?

- 1 appearances may be true, and hence I trust my perception;
- 2 when I doubt, I invent an act which separates appearance from reality and I trust my action;
- 3 one of these acts is an intellectual construct called a theory, which satisfies my emotions and my predilections, and as an embracing whole includes what I am studying and other studies transforming the intellectual model into a social instrument.

that being aware is essential and that I can be aware of my awareness and also that sometimes I am not aware or am unaware, and need to do something about this?

that my being Homo Sapiens has endowed me with a capacity of becoming aware of my awareness? which in the intellectual realm means: thinking my own thoughts?

that I did teach myself in so many areas and created so many automatic functionings that I find myself free to tackle with their help, many new challenges? some imposed on me and some I select to give myself.

that, although there are many areas of which I am unaware, I can become more easily aware of myself and how I can use myself, than manipulate the numerous variables encountered on complex situations both natural and social into which life forces me.

* * *

These questions among many more, concern each of us in a very general manner. They represent a framework for some of the more special ones forming the contents of the next sets of questions.

2 Questions About Language

Every linguist has a batch of questions to entertain. To avoid treading on their turf and to propose questions which perhaps they do not consider part of their field of study, workable by the methods they have developed over the years, I will offer the following ones but not as part of the next sets we shall involve ourselves in, separately, below.

Often, Man has been defined as an animal endowed with language. Since there are more than ten thousand languages and dialects, all spoken (and fewer written) it seems obvious that a number of principles could be used to transmute experience into speech.

Do we know what these principles are? and what inspired people a long time ago to select those they used?

Since it is known in physiology that “functions create their organs,” is there need to biologists to learn whether the making of the organs of speech had to precede the utterance of speech? or begin with awareness of one’s sound uttering system and affect it at will, always finding what was possible in the circumstances?

Can we see that if we make no headway in our studies of the origins and evolution of speech it may be because we want to reduce the challenge to something we can work on rather than let the challenge itself guide us in its understanding?

Can

we see that we may have to renew ourselves altogether in order to let this challenge have a chance to be met properly by us? and that that renewal by itself can be very beneficial for us as investigators and for the field we are engaged in? This would make it worthwhile for us to watch the numerous conditionings we have allowed to set in and which prevent us from having a true and effective open mind as is required for the solution of real and hard problems.

The challenges involved in the field of language are never what can be solved by reducing the unknown to the known. On the contrary they are those which by their magnitude and complexity defy our primitive expectations that all should be clear and simple. We may have to discard this naive attitude first and, thus renewed, to develop a battery of questions akin to the challenges (and not to our desires and hopes) respecting complexity and magnitude.

Do we know the meaning of a Copernican revolution in the field of language? Do we know that one is urgently needed? Essentially, Copernicus only proposed to look at the solar system from the sun as the center when for millennia it had been looked at from the earth as the center. The system itself had not been changed, for it could not be changed, but the viewpoint could and was. Here too, we cannot change the reality of languages, their specificities and demands, but we can attempt to take ourselves altogether outside the trodden paths and make new proposals.

For example: if Man is essentially defined as aware of awareness and only partially as a conditioned system, how much more light will be shed on the challenge of the origins and evolution of languages if we use awareness as our instrument?

Would this not allow us

- 1 to recognize that we do not need to consider a ready-made thing called the whole language before others can use it, which may be the state of affairs centuries or millennia after the beginning?

- 2 to enter the double movement of partial growth followed by its maintenance as is, followed by further growth and so on?
- 3 to test the viability of what is offered to find out its adequacy to the project and its compatibility with the present state of affairs?
- 4 to discard items while adding others, because different individuals and generations follow each other?
- 5 to see language development in a community as a lively specific, unique and hence as a variable idiosyncratic to that community and not as an adaptation of a general human property to special geographic sets of conditions?
- 6 to allocate to the individual what belongs to him or her, in one life, and to the collectivity what belongs to it, over its history?

Don't we begin with lots of preconceptions when we start doing any one of our studies of language? and in particular that the ordinary methods of study of some other area of learning — say, in the natural sciences — must be adequate for these challenges too? and does not this bent of ours mortgage the field?

For instance, on what basis shall we choose to believe that there has been a unique source for all languages on earth? or even a few rather than many? or as many as we need in order to understand the state of the facts gathered by those engaged in understanding this challenge?

Does not an attack on that problem make more sense if we do not want it to be structured a priori by our desires, preconceptions and prejudices?

How could we, for example, account for such fundamental distinctions as the existence of a certain number of tones in a few languages, and a certain number of declensions in some other few, as well as their absence in many?

How could we, again for example, account for the stress on some particles and their specificities and for the existence of special items as pivot items in some languages and not in others? Perhaps human groups in certain valleys were free to experiment with individual proposals created in order to meet challenges perceived by those groups and not others in the conditions they were situated and had to live. Perhaps there exists a subtle reality, I call the spirit of a language, which overlaps with the awareness of the state of being of people in certain circumstances and conditions? Perhaps that spirit is best rendered by the choices we find concretized in those languages? and, by them, characterize that spirit?

We shall not pursue this line of questions, however important it seems to me, mainly because of the interests of the readers which may lie somewhere else, and pass on to

3 Questions About Language Learning

Why is it that, because almost everybody learns to speak his or her native language, we have been so little involved in understanding how this most remarkable phenomenon occurs?

Even now, when the fashion is to be concerned with language acquisition (mainly as an offshoot of improving language teaching) there is no real attempt at being scientific (or serious) on the matter? It seems that people are satisfied with uttering the words of acquisition and learning and making theories a priori satisfying some stands taken by their expounders, and that the wisdom of being educated by the challenges, passes them by.

Still, it is obvious that we must allow ourselves to be stirred by the facts, and made to move towards understanding:

that most of us in their first year after birth, know what we have to do to make our speech apparatus utter voluntarily the sounds of our system and can emit them knowingly and on command. Because it is voluntary our system cannot be conditioned, from outside and it is not. Do we know that?

that imitation cannot be operative until we have mastered the organizations of the various parts of our speech apparatus (including

the parts of our brain which give us the somatic memory capable of producing automatisms). Do we know that? Hence, that imitation is to be left out as an explanation of our learning process until its place is clear and functional?

in particular, how is it that we all use our own voice to produce our speech and do not try to take on the pitch of those who address us, since we hear voices and sounds and not abstract words? Using our own voice means that we must give individual learners a central place in the process and give the environment its legitimate place, far less important than is usually assumed.

that babies need between 9 to 24 months to ensure that what they utter is conformal to the environmental language? This means that for all of us, for quite some time, words are not assimilated by one's awareness. That we need to consider the pre-speaking period when we teach ourselves to use ourselves as voluntary utterers knowing what we want to utter. This puts uttering well ahead of listening in the temporal hierarchy and forces us to acknowledge that babies know themselves as uttering systems with all the complexities of specific sound productions and of the orderings of the voluntary commands for specific purposes. To be lived at the muscular level before the results are transferred to one's hearing. Each baby educates his hearing in intimate connection with his own utterings until the transfer of criteria to the ear makes hearing functional. Do we know that?

that because Man is, by definition, aware of awareness, we can now understand in detail what every one of us must have done to acquire any L_1 , and then the specific L_1 of the environment. The first is exclusively part of self-education and forms the foundation of the acquisition of what is singular in one's L_1 , the first foreign language each of us has to acquire or learn. Do we know that?

that because words have no meaning in themselves (since one and the same meaning can be rendered by thousands of words that can all be different from each other), access to meaning must precede retention of any word. Hence, early childhood is also devoted to acquiring meanings through perceptions, feelings, acts and actions, experiments

to know and observations of involvements. For that, all that is needed is a property of humans they bring with themselves at birth and called watchfulness. Do we know that?

that those meanings which are accessible with ease and are steadily associated with sounds people make regularly, are understood first and can be responded to, even non-verbally. Among them the equivalents in all languages of “eat,” “come,” “sit down,” etc.

They may not be those needed to be uttered and thus a hiatus can be created between comprehension of some of the language of the environment and the spontaneous utterance of these same words by the young infant. Do we know that?

but, that meanings which are not verbalized and are carried by the voice in what is called intonation can be perceived and decoded long before the babies enter into the phase of attempting to produce their own sounds for them. This is so because energy is a reality immediately accessible or rather impinging on us whether we want it or not, and leading the young learner to *know* the various energy contents of language long before they approach the lexical side of language. Those we can name as the energies of the various vowels and their combinations among themselves and with consonants to produce syllables, the energy of stresses and the energy distributions which are associated with phrases and orations (or sentences) and which form the melody of a language. Do we know that?

that all this learning requires time and forms the phase of pre-speech over a number of months preceding entry into speaking one's environment's language and makes clear why none of us speaks before one has experienced many months of intensive study of the environment minus its language. Do we know that?

that the active mind of a baby selects his first word or words and that there is none which is the absolute first for all, so that every baby creates his own sequence of words, often starting with “no,” the protective word, rather than “yes,” far less useful when looking for one's personal place in the social setup. Do we know that?

that babies know that their voice production apparatus is voluntary, i.e. can be affected by their will, while their ears are passive and affectable by the energy from outside. This includes their own voice and all its willed variations. Do we know that?

hence, that language acquisition of L_1 is a highly structured activity entirely under the baby's control, varying from one to the next but leading all the non-deaf to the mastery at a tender age, of so much language as to be independent, autonomous and responsible in its production. Do we know that?

Finally, let us put together all this in one statement: language learning could easily become one of the most profound, enthralling, engaging and important study of human creativity connected to the selves of individuals being themselves while acquiring the means of being with others. While proposing any number of themes of research for skilled and steadfast investigators, this study will force us to acknowledge the reality of early childhood permitting such a feat of intellectual achievement.

4 Questions About Language Teaching

In this short section of this paper, all we can do is ask a few questions concerning teaching languages although many more are needed to make a difference in the practice of those who earn their living teaching adults or children.

Do we know that —

we have a tendency to do to others what was done to ourselves?

that generally we do not associate teaching with learning except that we expect our students to learn what we teach them?

that we do not suspect that the learning of anything requires special attitudes on the part of the learners and therefore of the teachers, because of the particular demands of the tasks involved? and that the study of learning foreign languages, as a special scientific challenge, is almost totally ignored by those who need it most? including ourselves, teachers of languages?

instead, we believe that “bags of tricks” or methods, count mainly on luck to succeed in the arenas of the classroom, and generally do not succeed, as is normal with gambling, at least as much as we are made to expect;

we believe that, that learning language is to acquire vocabulary and grammar rules and hence is based on memorization, hence requires drill and repetition?

we believe that, learning a language requires effort and is not easy?

we believe that the role of the teacher is to offer exercises which seem to make the tasks easier and might help remembering?

that because the students do not own the language and the teacher is supposed to, the teacher's role as a model is inevitable? therefore that teachers must be at the source of all sounds heard the first time in the classroom? that students might know them when they repeat them? and not otherwise?

we believe that learning to speak a new language must follow a specific path: first, the teacher says something, then the students say what they heard, then the teacher "corrects" by saying things once more, then students try again, this a number of times until the teacher believes the utterances are retained? to a certain level of proficiency and correcting can be stopped?

we believe that listening is basic for language learning if speaking is the aim? even though listening is a very difficult field of study about which so little is known;

we believe that vocabulary is the most important part and as many words as possible should be memorized with their meaning given in the languages the students can use fluently; that some structures too must be memorized and variations on them dictated by grammar rules, that this logic is unassailable and therefore must serve as the basis of all foreign language teaching.

If someone suggests a totally different approach to language teaching, and particularly, if it claims to be more effective and perhaps even effortless, teachers are full of resistance and disbelief.

To give a chance to something utterly new costs us a great deal affectively and is better avoided.

We want to be convinced by others who would burn their fingers rather than ourselves; working things out and have first-hand evidence of the value of what we try and is being offered us.

We do not see that working traditionally may mean working blindly and more so than when we experiment with suggestions based on some kind of “scientific” research that we risk more for our students continuing on sterile paths only because they are held to be traditional.

If there are many different suggestions for replacing traditional teaching, each should be scrutinized fairly with ourselves taking part in the scrutiny so as to hasten the adoption of some more valid approach if it exists, from which our students may benefit.

Irrationally, we do not believe there may be a way of teaching which can succeed much better than any other and we allow all sorts of objections to occupy our minds first, with the result that we dismiss this thought rather than give it a chance.

We are insensitive to the possibility of our loss if such an approach actually exists.

We are prepared to work on anything which agrees with our prejudices but not at all with that which goes counter to them. In particular, if we sense things as able to become burdens for us; for example, that we shall have to alter ourselves radically in order to understand the challenges we face in our functions as teachers of language.

By our attitudes, we contribute to the stagnation of our field and we may have to share responsibility for its state

that there may be a price to pay by everyone for the improvement of teaching and teacher preparation; a price we can only know if we receive the proper information.

* * *

As we hinted earlier, there may be many more questions of significance than those above for those who really want to know whether we can be open-minded and alter positively and definitely our career as language teacher, to the benefit of those who are our charges and secure our living. Here we gathered a sufficient number to justify devoting a whole issue to this topic.

News Items

1 *Infused Reading*

Five years ago, we announced the adaptation to the microcomputer of the approach to the first steps to literacy we were talking about at Educational Solutions since the Fall of 1972. Occasionally, we mentioned the completion of a courseware on *Apple II + or e* for a certain language, starting in 1982 with Spanish. In 1983, we produced the French course, and in 1984, the one for Iñupiaq, commissioned by the people of northwest Alaska, who the year before involved us in making the Silent Way materials for that Alaskan language. During 1985, we produced the Ojibwe courseware in addition to the Silent Way materials. This Infused Reading project challenged us much more than the previous, and the next two languages on which we worked mainly at the end of '84 and the beginning of '85. Now, we therefore have a fifth and sixth language in the format of Infused Reading for Lakota and for Italian.

Since we have also been at various stages of work on English and Japanese, and are contemplating work on German and Portuguese or Brazilian, when these are completed we would have a good sample of the uses of the microcomputer to combat illiteracy in various areas or to serve young natives entering the written form of their language at or even before, school. All our tests or trials have been positive and encouraged us to widen that line while it is still possible.

In passing, we found that non-natives can benefit from the existence of these coursewares, essentially in obtaining very quickly an excellent pronunciation in this or that, for them, new language. When we say very quickly we mean a small number of hours, sometimes, only one.

There are Teacher's Notes available for the first six languages, four of them written only in English for the moment.

For those readers who never played with one of these coursewares, we can give an idea of how they are structured. We did not change the structure when passing from one language to the next although we needed to make many changes to serve users better. For instance, by treating the challenge both in Upper Case and Lower Case from the third language on, and planning to do likewise for the first two produced originally only in Upper Case.

The bright idea of 1972, was to force natives to learn to read effortlessly, by simply watching a screen on which the vowels, in a specially designed text, were isolated and reproduced at the exact location they occupied in that text. Going through all the vowels was a job which took from 14 minutes in Spanish, Japanese and Iñupiaq, to 30 in Italian, Lakota and Ojibwe, and required several programs for languages like French and English where their number exceeds 14, and cannot be met properly in one text.

The insertion of the consonants in turn on a screen where all the vowels are displayed in their allotted places, and in an order selected because it yields the swiftest results, takes a very short time indeed, shorter or equal to that taken by the vowels.

So, that for Spanish, the whole job of going through the text as composed, to produce the Infused Reading effect, would take less than half an hour. Unbelievable but true! (Japanese is treated differently and we shall say nothing about it here, except that the saving in the time for literacy is as spectacular.)

In all these languages the label for that section leading to literacy is “Infused Reading” and is actually the core of the courseware. But whether the mastery of reading in that language is done in one level of a few, each Infused Reading program is followed by two Tests (called Test 1 and Test 2) and after that by two other texts called Further Reading I and II.

Test 1 treats the original text in such a way that it forces “phrasing reading” leading to fluency which was not attempted in the previous exercises aiming at making viewers find a second code for the language they already speak: the written one. In asking the computer to select at random the presentation of the phrases of the original text, we make sure that only true reading of its content and not a triggering of remembered words has taken place. Thus, Test 1, if read well, guarantees that the text of Infused Reading has done its job as we suggested it would.

The technique of only presenting phrases to newcomers to reading rather than words in isolation, is very effective and is adopted in the following three new texts which of course are all tests even if only one of them is labeled thus.

Test 2 presents new material mingled with some old one. For some languages, the sounds and spellings remain restricted to those met in the original text. For others, there is no need for such restrictions and both the original text and Test 2 are complete in what they bring to the students and ask of them.

Both Test 1 and Test 2 can be run at three speeds, a slow one, a less slow one, and one right for good readers. In this way, we can ensure that those who need more practice get it and those who learn fast receive a feedback from their own performance that they are as good as other readers around.

For the two texts of Further Reading, the intention is to ensure that a transfer to reading any printed text offered them can be done with ease and a sense that, by letting the words tell you what to say, one is safe

from now on; provided one has the experience demanded by the contents on the text.

So, the Infused Reading courseware takes care of many of the demands teachers associate with fluent reading, comprehension and the preparation for learning new material through the printed word. Elsewhere, we called the levels of reading covered by this courseware as *R0* through *R3* preparing for *R4*.

Of course, they do not claim to have handled all the problems of spelling and writing. But we can say that they may help mightily once students get engaged in these additional language arts tasks.

2 *Who Cares About Health?*

A volume produced in 1979, and out of print for more than 5 years, has been reissued, again as a Restricted Printing edition (signed copies). These copies are available now from Educational Solutions in New York, in Reading (U.K.), and Osaka (Japan). In the United States, the price is \$14.95 plus shipping (and tax for New York State purchasers).

3 *Video Versions* of films in the following areas are now available for purchase —

- 1 *Folklore of Math*, the trigonometry series VHS $\frac{1}{2}$ " 10 minutes;
- 2 *Pop ups* for English literacy VHS $\frac{1}{2}$ " 18 minutes;
- 3 *Absolute Visual Reading* teaching English reading to the deaf, VHS $\frac{1}{2}$ " 23 $\frac{1}{2}$ minutes;
- 4 for rental only *Speaking Freely*, a 1-hour interview of Dr. Gattegno on NBC by Edwin Newman (1970) on VHS or Betamax $\frac{1}{2}$ ".

4 Since the last issue of this Newsletter, two volumes appeared which may interest some of our readers. One (in French) “*La Génération des Richesses*” and one (in Italian) “*Economia di Energie e di Risorse nell’ insegnamento*.” They are transcripts of seminars by Dr. Gattegno, the first in August ‘85, near Bordeaux, and the second at the end of November ‘85 in Trento.

5 On the evening of April 7th in Manhattan, Dr. Gattegno gave his first public lecture in many years, as distinct from seminar leadership. The host was the “Institute for the Advancement of Health” and the title was: “The Reconciliation of Body and Mind.” In the very short time available, Dr. Gattegno introduced the topic by referring to challenges which can only be met through a total alteration of viewpoint, as was the case for example, when Copernicus looked at planetary motions from the viewpoint of the sun rather than the earth. The duality, mind-body imposed by the phenomenon of death, can be avoided, if the “I” that all living people use all the time is taken as a guiding light and made present (as it is) from conception. Through the three aspects of energy involved, that of the “I” or self, (very small and mainly used to direct and to evolve) that of the “soma” (locked-up in structures and restituted to the cosmos at death) and the one which maintains the dynamism in the locked-up energies or “psyche” — we can account more correctly, though very differently, for so many living phenomena. There was not really time to make all this explicit and the questions at the end only allowed consideration of what some members of the audience selected to ask.

6 *Five meetings with educators in Japan.*

1 The Tokyo Silent Way Workshop (April 18-20, 1986)

Twenty-five participants, sixteen Japanese and nine Americans came in response to Professor Ogasawara of Waseda University’s announcement that there would be a course on the Silent Way in Tokyo that weekend. A number of them never heard of it and came because of the sponsor’s reputation and connection with the Ministry of Education, but there were a few who had worked with Dr. Gattegno earlier, some at his 1978 visit.

On this occasion, the title of the seminar was *The Awareness Model* (borrowed from Cliff de Cordorba's Ph.D. dissertation) *and language teaching*. It offered a chance to put a different lighting on the challenge of language teaching and learning which served everyone in the group whether new to or already acquainted with, the approach.

As usual, awareness seemed to be a strange entity and, even at the end, did not become familiar to quite a number of those who spent 20 hours considering aspects of it. Nevertheless what happened during these hours did not fail to produce the usual shaking effect on those who are exposed to it. In particular, the lessons in a new language and the display of the technology of the Silent Way, convinced everyone that the Silent Way is superior by far to all the ways of teaching based on modeling and memorization and used by the participants in their own classrooms or heard about at conferences or through written texts.

Readers of this Newsletter don't have to be told once more what a remarkable pronunciation can be elicited from learners through the Sound/Color Chart. But, perhaps, they can hear with amazement that the French pronunciation obtained from all the Japanese in the lesson was so much better than their English one, acquired over many years, and which they use in their own teaching of their Japanese students in schools or colleges. This discovery, which happened on the second day of the course, was electrifying and made everyone into a more attentive student of that which was offered in those 3 days. There was no doubt that everyone knew that such ways of working based on awareness would have been beneficial in their personal case had they learned English the Silent Way.

When the materials and the techniques (what we call the Silent Way technology) were presented as contributing to awareness, bypassing drill and repetition, not requiring that students memorize or think; the many shocks involved maintained the participants on their toes. They volunteered on a number of occasions and mainly at the final feedback, that all their beliefs were shaken and a new professional life was opening for them. The chief adviser to the Ministry of Education was shocked to find that the earlier reports on the Silent Way that he had

received over the years were so distorted and so partial. He suggested he might try to do something to right things up.

As usual, when the awareness of the participants is re-awakened, their behavior alters considerably making of them active members of the seminar instead of docile note-taking students totally dependent on the speaker. They continued to use words as “lecture” or “teaching,” but they knew they had witnessed something quite different in themselves and in others. They could clearly see that one’s responsibility in the classroom is for every moment of the unfolding of the dialogues of two awarenesses engaged in different jobs when one is a student and one is a teacher. They knew clearly that with the event of the Silent Way the language teaching scene has changed radically and they all said so.

2 Sixteen Hours of Mathematics for Anxious Adult Learners

The small class who decided to take this course declared itself made of people who have always feared mathematics and never sought to remedy that situation. Intelligent and successful in their profession (teaching) they only had an occasional desire to have some insight into that field, prestigious in the industrialized countries.

The reason for reporting on this course in this Newsletter is that what happened to these few people could happen to masses of others if given the opportunity of meeting mathematics as they did.

Mathematics is a universe which has been inhabited by millions of people all over the world on a large number of successive generations. Today hundreds of thousands contribute to its advances. This alone could intimidate anybody and more so those who failed in it from their early grades at school.

The course followed an entirely different track from what might be remembered. What was submitted to the participants was to be concerned with the contents of some games and of playing according to the rules offered. There was no need for an unfolding curriculum only that the selection of the topics required immediate entry into each of them and was based on perception and the use of common sense.

A number of studies were chosen on that basis.

1 The study of combinatorial calculus on a set of fingers to illustrate Descartes' Theorem

$$C_n^P = C_n^{n-P}$$

which was deduced and proved by the students.

2 Complementarity as the source of both addition and subtraction (the Visible & Tangible Math program was available and used).

3 A study of fractions as equivalent operators, and the two essential equivalences, was done with Algebricks.

4 Algebraic awareness for the improvement of one's rapid calculations. The set of Algebricks provided here too all the needed background. It gave the various relations of squares and these were used to obtain rapidly products far beyond the experience of those participants.

5 A study of doubling as —

- a substitute for acquiring multiplication skills (the Disk 11 of Visible & Tangible Math II was used for a little while, showing a number of presentations of the same challenge);
- an example of one of Cantor's Theorems concerning the equivalence of a countable set and its various decompositions in countable sets. This led to asking questions on infinity.

6 A study of the foundations of trigonometry generated by the various languages which can be associated with the description of a circumference by one of its points going over all its points. (The film Folklore of Math was available on VHS tape and gave all the needed images.)

What made things really easy was the constant reference that algebra is easier than arithmetic and that it is used all the time to generate new awarenesses from which mathematicians extracted the chapters of what is called mathematics.

7 A session was given to the irrationality of $\sqrt{2}$ and Euclid's proof of it and all seemed so natural to everyone, though so much significant mathematics is associated with it. Excursions in the history of that science in terms of awareness had the effect of humanizing a science generally considered in awe.

A priori it is unbelievable that ordinary people who give themselves the label of mathematical illiterates could be involved in all these matters over only 16 hours and it would seem absurd to try it. But in the serious study of the subordination of teaching to learning, how is one to find what is possible with particular groups of students, if one does not try?

What this workshop tells us is indeed that if language, perception, common sense, imagery and an algebraic foundation for thinking, are systematically used

- math anxiety disappears, and
- much mathematics can be encountered, enjoyed and to a certain extent become immediately second-nature.

Perhaps it is because we did not know how to meet the powers of the minds of illiterates that they remained for so long in the dark about themselves and their true gifts. Once more we have empirical proof that mathematics is for everyone, provided we make everyone live the experience of creating some mathematical mental structures and do it again and again.

That only known mathematics is created, and not a new theorem, is no objection to the fact that for the students it was all new and was not threatening, rather, exciting and beautiful.

3 French I, The Silent Way in Osaka

The 3 days at the end of April brought together twenty-two people mostly from around that area, though one came from Tokyo, one from Hiroshima and one from Nagasaki; mostly teachers, more than half Japanese. As usual, the Sound/Color Chart produced remarkable results in terms of pronunciation even though — also as usual — some people complained that they couldn't remember which sound is to be triggered by each color.

What was specially remarkable in a setup like this one, was that most of these Japanese who are teachers of English managed in a very small number of hours to acquire a pronunciation in French far superior to the one they have achieved in English after years and years of contact with it. Not being able to judge their own feats they are not made to think about the difference and what causes it, ending by placing side by side two uses of their vocal system beyond their native language, which does not attract their attention. When told that fact, they do not lend it any credence.

They do not either notice that they are on their toes for hours on end and do not experience much fatigue after a 7-hour day. This kind of learning taken in their stride does not seem to affect their reflection on language learning and teaching.

Of course, only those who studied French for some time can measure the extent of the language they met in those few hours as compared to what had been their progress over years. Occasionally some are clear about it and state their amazement that so few hours can do what had *not* been done over years.

To be able to achieve all this requires the powers placed in the materials and techniques of the Silent Way, but also that the teacher be free to generate opportunities by the choices of exercises presented. Not all language teachers are as free in a second language they are allowed to teach as they are in their native one. The energies of their minds are mobilized to counter the feelings of inadequacy they experience and the actual meeting of the demands of the moment.

Because of this, the Silent Way approach demands courage and a keen desire to experiment with it, two major blocks in the propagation of the Silent Way among ordinary teachers.

The ground covered during the 3 days is no longer surprising even if it cannot be called but unbelievable. Large chunks of the language are available without drill, retained functionally and brought out by so many with oral attributes of correct sounds, correct stresses, correct phrasing and melody. That a flow of words which resemble closely French can be heard in the room where only the learners ever uttered it (who have never heard it in their environment neither in this classroom from the teacher) would be considered miraculous by those who do not know that the foundation given to it in the Silent Way exercises is in the voluntariness of the vocal apparatus. This is capable of molding any sounds into words and phrases to make them sound as the genuine product.

Staying long enough on each choice of an area, to learn it thoroughly and then moving further to use the acquired forms so as to conquer another area in which the previous learning is integrated, gives students both the confidence provided by continuity and the variety which bans boredom and fatigue. A joy to watch as much as to live through, most students who are not inveterate complainers leave the course enthusiastic and very serious to continue to learn that language further. Particularly, if it can be offered in the same way.

4 My Health, My Responsibility

A 20-hour course in Osaka, attended by fifteen men and six women, it proved not easy to assess in detail, but good as an effective charge so that participants will have work to do for a long time.

One lady said she expected recipes to keep in good health and all she got is a lot of work and no assurance that it can be helpful. The others did not speak of expectations but expressed different degrees of satisfaction for what they received and could never have forecasted to be the content of the seminar they registered for.

Since in order to think we all need to have a model, a constant theme of these hours was, “can we provide ourselves with a valid and workable model for health which would help us think of it with any chance of not being paralyzed and of feeling that we are somehow making sense of what happens in this field?”

Progress was made as follows: the first day was used to get acquainted with two venerable and current models, the one the Western world produced since Ancient Greece and over centuries of work in Europe and America; the other, the Chinese which over at least as long, had served the populations of the so-called Far East. But also to produce the foundations of a synthetic model in which the essential findings of both systems (if not their premises) were preserved and honored though transformed in appearance. Because it was a lay audience, much exposition was needed to make sense of the first two models, but everyone seemed to find agreement between what was met now and what lingered in them from readings and earlier studies as well as from personal experience as patients treated by practitioners of either school. The new model had to be constructed slowly and carefully as it was totally new to everyone.

The second day was dedicated to making the synthetic model gain reality by making explicit how the three terms (introduced earlier as the quantum, the soma and the psyche) more articulate and more substantial in content. The main problems encountered were concerned with the seeming irrationality of the minuteness of the energy of the quantum and energy systems which could do as much as a living soma and a growing psyche with greater and greater reaches, do. In time things looked pretty well integrated and working.

The time spent on affectivity was particularly demanding. On that day even if less than when the self with its quantum of energy was to be seen as only needing little energy to do all the work in the prenatal stages with the available energy in the environment — affectivity as a residual energy available to the self (as much as that of the psyche) was seen as mainly directed towards meeting the present demands while they open the future. From the start the psyche was concerned with the past and everyone knew that the present and the future have to be

accounted for as well, since they exist in our lives. A study of sleep and wakefulness found its place in all that though no one expected to find that study so fruitful. So many half-baked ideas about so many important areas of living had to be taken care of and disposed of, that the minds gained strength and confidence.

The last day was devoted first to a study of attributes of the self which are not acquired by experience and experiencing, although they can be developed and become powers of our minds; and second to the happening of illnesses as encroachments on our health defined as the job of the self remaining at its place of integrator and subordinator of all psychic and somatic functionings. Hence, the first responsibility of Man in maintaining his health is in keeping the self at its peak, in the present all the time. The attributes of the self called: watchfulness, awareness, sensitivity, will, discrimination, intelligence, suspension of judgment and others, available to all humans, make the task possible and, with practice, easy. That is why it is reasonable to say: "My health, my responsibility."

Simply by letting the role of the self be denied by the aggressions of an unenlightened environment ignoring our reality, we contribute to the cascade of dysfunctions which may end in an organic violation of what had been properly integrated in the beginning and over one's life: our soma. Therefore diseases can now be understood within the framework of health.

5 Two Half-day Presentations in Nagasaki (May 10) & Osaka (May 11)

In Nagasaki the JALT (Japan Association of Language Teachers) chapter arranged a 4-hour presentation of the Silent Way by Dr. Caleb Gattegno. Forty-two people came and participated in looking at how the technology of the Silent Way could help them improve their teaching of English in their region. The first session was devoted to the examination of the effects of working with the Sound/Color Chart, new to all but one or two. The second session examined how the teaching of spelling can be improved, thanks to the 8 charts of the English Fidel. The last session was devoted to the word charts introduced via examples worked out with the rods. It seemed to those present that

learning had been joyful, easy and purposeful and that most likely if well trained, teachers and their students would benefit a great deal from what had been revealed to them as already existing in the field where they earned their living.

In Osaka, the three chapters of Kobe, Kyoto and Osaka of JALT joined forces to offer an opportunity to their members to work from 1:30 to 5:00 p.m. with Dr. Gattegno, on Computers in Education. Dr. Gattegno told them that for him the value of the microcomputer resides in that it makes easy the forcing of awareness and the providing of practice needed by students without pressure, interference and distractions. To illustrate this the first 80 minutes were given to Italian Infused Reading which was to show how good a pronunciation of a new language can be acquired in a very short time indeed never hearing a native voice producing the words of that language.

In exactly 40 minutes the class of 70+ people had been brought by the programs of that disk, to the point of seeing how if such technology is used a profound difference in the struggle against illiteracy can be made. The second session of a little more than an hour, was devoted to the teaching of numeration in English using Disks 1 and 2 of Visible & Tangible Math. Here too, the aim was to illustrate to the ESL teachers present, that the microcomputer can be used elegantly to guarantee mastery of the English numeration by all newcomers to that language. As far as one could judge, by the slow, restrained and shy feedbacks, an audience, sensitive to threats to its position in society, was realizing that the microcomputer, when properly programmed, can assist teachers and students beyond what seemed out of reach and can create opportunities all should welcome.

Although a number of people were involved in the preparation of these 25 days of Dr. Gattegno in Japan and in ensuring their successes, one person needs to be mentioned specially: Fusako Allard, the director of "The Center" in Osaka. Not only did she take upon herself and The Center all the risks involved in this costly adventure, but she added to her burdens new ones which were not necessary, only in order to share with her colleagues in the field and with her countrymen, the benefits she believes exist in the educational work of Dr. Gattegno.

News Items

There was talk of attempting soon another tour of Dr. Gattegno's in Japan to reach more people and not delay what can be lost forever.

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Since this is the last issue of Volume XV of this Newsletter, if you wish to subscribe to Volume XVI starting next September, let us know. There is no change in the price of the subscription.



About Caleb Gattegno

Caleb Gattegno is the teacher every student dreams of; he doesn't require his students to memorize anything, he doesn't shout or at times even say a word, and his students learn at an accelerated rate because they are truly interested. In a world where memorization, recitation, and standardized tests are still the norm, Gattegno was truly ahead of his time.

Born in Alexandria, Egypt in 1911, Gattegno was a scholar of many fields. He held a doctorate of mathematics, a doctorate of arts in psychology, a master of arts in education, and a bachelor of science in physics and chemistry. He held a scientific view of education, and believed illiteracy was a problem that could be solved. He questioned the role of time and algebra in the process of learning to read, and, most importantly, questioned the role of the teacher. The focus in all subjects, he insisted, should always be placed on learning, not on teaching. He called this principle the Subordination of Teaching to Learning.

Gattegno travelled around the world 10 times conducting seminars on his teaching methods, and had himself learned about 40 languages. He wrote more than 120 books during his career, and from 1971 until his death in 1988 he published the Educational Solutions newsletter five times a year. He was survived by his second wife Shakti Gattegno and his four children.