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Language Teaching Today

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for both the physical world and man. In brief, the Thomistic formula crystallizes for us the humanism of the Greco-Latin world.

A scholar's touch is manifest throughout, especially in the painstaking analysis and evaluation of the over 1,117 quotations on which the conclusions are based.

MIGUEL MA. VARELA

LANGUAGE TEACHING TODAY. By Felix J. Oinas, ed. Publication Fourteen of the Indiana University Research Center: Bloomington, Indiana, 1960. xii, 221 pp.

On January 22 and 23, 1960, a conference on the Language Laboratory was held at Indiana University, in which some 500 language teachers and specialists participated. This book is a report on the topics discussed and the conclusions arrived at by authorities in that in that conference.

Two rather lengthy articles touch on virtually all the problems and points discussed in the conference: the first on methods and techniques by Fernand Marty of Wellesley College; and the second on the language laboratory as a teaching machine by F. Rand Morton of the University of Michigan.

Fernand Marty gives a step-by-step account of the teaching of French to first-year students and the various principles behind his procedures. His principles are for the most part linguistically oriented as, for instance, in his insistence that 1) the analysis of the language must be based on its spoken rather than on its written form; 2) the audio forms must first be acquired before the written forms are studied and learned; 3) the language should be taught in terms of structures and structural segments; 4) native or near-native pronunciation must be insisted on by the use of phonetic and phonemic techniques; 5) the maximum amount taught in the introductory course should be only the forms frequently used in cultured speech.

From his experience in teaching intensive courses for twelve years, Marty made two significant discoveries: first, the spoken language cannot be taught efficiently if the student is allowed to see the written words before he has had time to practice the spoken language, for he trusts his eye more than his ears. The only way to give the audio form a chance is to present it before the visual form with a time lag. But the teacher must constantly relate the spelled word to its audio form so as to forestall errors. The length of the time lag, according to experiments, need not be long.

Second, with our present methods for teaching pronunciation, the students tend to reach a plateau beyond which—no matter how patient the teacher and how hard-working the student—progress diminishes. Experiments indicate that in an audio-oral course, well taught by a teacher with native pronunciation, the students—if they do their best—reach their individual plateaus before the end of the first year.

In the teaching of vocabulary, Marty insists on the principle of “no-choice”, i.e., the students must be able to express a maximum number of ideas while learning a minimum number of words.

There are two accepted principles, however, that Professor Marty challenges. First, the use of the double-channel recording machine; and second, the use of dialogues in the presentation of new material. The double-channel recording machine was widely acclaimed when it first made its appearance three years ago, since it gave the student a means of seeing for himself how his performance compared with that of the native speaker. This machine allowed the student to record his pronunciation immediately after that of the master's voice, and afterwards to compare his work with that of the model. Professor Marty, however, seems to think that this is a mere waste of valuable time, since: 1) many are unable to detect their own deficiencies and continue to think that their pronunciation is good; 2) they hear the wrong pronunciation the second or third time and this influences them for the worse; 3) the person, hearing a recording of his voice for the first time, gets a shock, because he does not recognize his own voice. The difference is caused by the fact that, when speaking, we hear ourselves through bone conduction as well as through air conduction, whereas with the machine, we hear ourselves approximately as others hear us. This difference causes some to blame the machine, instead of themselves, for the wrong pronunciation.

On the basis of his twelve years of experience, Professor Marty suggests instead that: 1) the teacher, the student, and the machine work jointly—the teacher guiding the student and telling him when he is getting closer to the correct pronunciation (immediate reward and correction); 2) when the student is sent to the language laboratory to work by himself with the machine, the teacher be no longer present actively.

Earlier in the book, there is an article by William N. Locke, of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, which defends the use of the record-playback method and argues directly against the position of Professor Marty. He says that the student, by definition, must work to bring his performance up to the norm. He makes mistakes, deviates from the standard pattern. To correct his mistakes, he must become aware of them. He must therefore compare his production with his model, analyze and note the discrepancies, then try again. Speech is

a physical act involving the mobilization of the many nerves and muscles which must put the speech organs in exactly the right position to produce a perfect imitation of the native speaker. Marty suggested the use of the audio-active earphone, which would give the student the advantages of the record-playback machine without its disadvantages; for the earphone would allow the student to hear himself *objectively*. Lock counters by asking whether the student, while talking, can hear himself accurately and objectively enough to analyze discrepancies between himself and the model. He answers that this is not possible, because the student cannot simultaneously think about what he is supposed to say, how he must say it, how he is saying it, and how he ought to have said it.

The second principle which Professor Marty challenges is the use of the dialogue in teaching new material. The object of such a method is to present the language to the student in the context of the living situation—the method by which we learn our native languages. Mr. Marty, however, is inclined to doubt the advisability of using this method in the early stages of language learning: 1) because the dialogue method is incompatible with the structural approach. Too many grammatical points have to be used in order to preserve the naturalness of the situation; 2) although the dialogue method is similar to the natural method, yet it is not intensive enough. The slowness of the natural method is not important, since as babies we have plenty of time on our hands; but it is unacceptable in our schools, where we are asked to do in 150 hours what normally takes 5,000 hours to accomplish; 3) it leads to errors because it is not systematic; 4) it leads to a plateau because it is not intensive enough. The dialogue should rather be employed later on, when the structures have been mastered. Each chapter should end with a dialogue which will be a synthesis of the structures already practised.

In opposition to this view there is an article at the end of the book by LaVelle Rossetot of Otterbein College which capitalizes on the dialogue in its so-called "audio-visual Film-Text method". This method uses the scenario method in the filmed presentation of the lesson. This is based on the theory that the quickest way for the student to learn is to experience the foreign language in its real-life and meaningful situation, since communication involves not just an oral or written language but also the non-oral visual signals, such as gestures, emotions and other factors of the situation in which one experiences the speech itself.

The second major article in the book is that of F. Rand Morton of the University of Michigan on the Language Laboratory as a Teaching Machine (LLTM). Here Professor Morton gives the theoretical presuppositions involved in the use of the machine in the teaching of languages, a detailed program of a course in Spanish, and finally

a description of the ideal machine and its place in the teaching of foreign languages. The teaching machine itself is no longer a novelty. Many sciences have already made use of it. But here Morton describes its use in the learning of a foreign language.

The concept of the teaching machine is based on a modern theory of the psychology of learning, that the learning process is the accumulation and amalgamation of specific segments of behavior. According to this approach, learning is making a habit of an infinite number of basic, mechanical or electrical patterns of behavior, and the means to this end are practice and repetition. The student is given the opportunity to form these new habits at his own speed by the machine in the laboratory. There he can teach himself to form linguistic habits, with guaranteed results of achievement.

This method, as proposed by B. F. Skinner of Harvard, aims at getting the student to arrive at the right answers by a series of responses to questions. The material is broken up into a very large number of small steps and auxiliary devices are provided, so that the student is led to the right answers. The machine guarantees a complete mastery of each step and thus makes the next step as easy as possible. It is also accommodated to the student's capabilities, so that he is able to proceed at his own pace.

There are two interesting facts connected with the teaching machine. The first is that the program for the machine can be constructed along either the structural or the traditional method, according to the preference of the author of the program. The second is that, once the pre-suppositions behind the use of the teaching machine are granted, i.e., that the purely mechanical operations involved in the teaching and learning of languages can be relegated to the language laboratory, then the teacher can be freed to function in those areas where he is most needed as a human teacher, namely, imagination, spontaneity, sensitivity, understanding, sympathy, humility and feeling. The machine is an aid, not a substitute for the teacher.

TEODORO A. LLAMZON

MANUAL FOR RETREAT MASTERS. By Fr. William (Mc-Namara), O.C.D. Milwaukee: Bruce, 1960. ix, 94 pp.

The retreat movement is certainly gaining adherents with each succeeding year. More and more priests are needed to fill the demand for retreat masters. All priests admit that retreat time is the flood-