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TEACHING FOREIGN LANGUAGES
TO ADULT LEARNERS

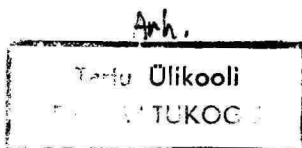
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DEVELOPING SPEAKING SKILLS – SPONTANEOUS SPEECH

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The recent emphasis on communication has focused particular attention on ways of promoting speaking skills. Speaking activities aim to develop the confidence, desire and ability to use the target language (TL) appropriately and effectively. A 'communicative approach' is principally learner-centered, i.e., the learner should show a lot of initiative and work independently. There is, however, a great variety of psychological and linguistic variables (see Altmann, H.B., 1980, 7–8) inhibiting or advancing foreign language learning. Hence there are many demands which speaking activities can make on the learner: she should be motivated, cooperative, confident, able to simultaneously concentrate on form and contents of expression, etc. It takes time to change attitudes and introduce new ideas. It is important to change attitudes in teachers, too, and through them, in learners.

The Counseling-Learning approach (see Veskis, M., 1991, 46–52) outlines a well-founded relationship between the learner and the teacher. The interaction between the two partners is based on a 5-stage structure whereas in the entry stages [1, 2, 3] the teacher's central concern is to create a secure environment for the learner so that she can enter the TL with confidence. In stages 4 and 5, the focus shifts to accuracy and precision in the structure of the TL as well as an appreciation for the culture it communicates (Veskis, M., *ibid.*, 48). From the very beginning the teacher should see to the choice and organization of activities which provide the learner with appropriate learning experiences to build up self-confidence and speaking skills. Spontaneous speech can be combined with an elementary knowledge of the learner. If the questions are similar in structure to the ones' taught previously, the discussion can be in simple TL and the learner will be using the newly learned language about topics that are meaningful. When presenting the material orally, the teacher should follow the requirements: Don't speak too slowly; don't overarticulate; don't speak too loudly; be aware of correct intonation; be aware of incorrect stress and rhythm. The major units in English are in phrases and sentences, not words.

Therefore, phrases and sentences should be used as the basis for instruction. A learner who becomes accustomed to over-articulation or to a speaking rate geared to the lowest level will find it difficult to converse or to understand normal speech. On the other hand, when learners repeat sentences with the proper speed, stress and intonation of the teacher and recognize what has been said, both initial listening and speaking skills are facilitated. The elementary speaking skills which should help to build up the learner's self-confidence might include the so-called "Student Survival Kit" (Colvin, R.J., 1986, 21) which should be a part of every lesson: 1. Student's name, address, phone nr.; 2. Alphabet, letter names; 3. Neighbourhood map, the map of the country; 4. Number cards; 5. Price tags; 6. Money, coins and pay bill; 7. Student sizes; 8. Cardboard clock; 9. Calendar; 10. Menu; 11. Bus, train, plane schedule; 12. Police, service (cafe, restaurant, medical care). Spontaneous conversation is easier when specific topics of conversation have been identified. The learner should be encouraged to share her recent experiences. Spontaneous conversation always involves pair or group work and all types of dialogues should be used. At the elementary stage (or, with reference to the entry stages of the Counseling-Learning approach) all the cooperation between the teacher and the learners should be directed to a more independent expression by the learners. The variety of dialogues facilitating this, should include short phrases, such as apologies, thanking, phrases asking for repetition, fillers to gain time while searching for what to say, or how to express the intended meaning. There should be room for self-corrections, changes of directions, 'beating about the bush', repetitions. At this stage a reasonable approximation which communicates the intended message without much burdening or annoying the listener, can be acceptable in speaking. The types of dialogues, referred to earlier, could involve a variety beginning with restatement drills and winding up with writing creative dialogues: restatement drills with grammatical changes, completion drills, sequential statement drills, creative drills to start with and memorized dialogues, cued dialogues, jumbled dialogues, dialogue completion and discourse chains to follow afterwards.

The described speaking activities help the learner to begin feeling more independent, and to build up her self-confidence. They are on their way to functional independence (stage 3 according to the Counseling-Learning approach), being able to speak about themselves and their whereabouts, coping with simple everyday problems, passing on and receiving new information. Traditionally, this stage of learning and knowledge could be specified as a lower-intermediate or intermediate level. Many people, having reached it, can travel in any English-speaking country and feel perfectly happy about it.

Speaking activities at a still higher level presuppose greater spon-

tancity and fluency. Having acquired basic grammar and vocabulary, being able to discriminate and use different registers with tolerable intonation and pronunciation skills, the learner's motivation changes from instrumental into integrative, she is ready to take on a new identity, willing to know more about the culture and the way of life of the people whose language she is studying. The learner is willing to communicate about real and immediate needs. The methods leading to it involve the following speaking activities: reports, discussions, role play, simulations, personal expressions, interviews, etc.

Short reports on various topics are usually prepared beforehand and should be followed by questions put to the reporter and comments by listeners. Discussions may follow any report, but they may also arise in the course of exchanging or sharing information. The term 'role play' is generally used to refer to a wide range of practice and communicative activities. Role play activities vary in the degree of control over how learners act and speak. The result may be very predictable or an open-ended scenario may allow learners to negotiate the outcome in the course of the activity. They must try to project themselves into an imaginary situation realistic or unrealistic for learners, the aim of the role play, however, is to involve learners in fluent and creative expression in a way which can and should be enjoyable. Simulations are more complex activities, usually requiring greater preparation and more time to carry out, they are often less flexible than role play activities (e.g., prepare a publicity campaign, a radio/TV programme; defend or oppose a proposal before a decision is taken). As to personal expressions, they may include a thank-you speech, a speech on opening an exhibition, etc. An interview as a speech activity needs no comments.

The above-described speech activities are feasible for the learner at stages 4 and 5 by the Counseling-Learning approach, traditionally for the higher-intermediate or advanced learner. She is a confident and enthusiastic speaker who can identify herself with native speakers and appreciates their culture and their way of life.

In teaching speech activities, the skills in grammar, vocabulary, register and intonation are essential for accurate communication. This is a vulnerable point for both the teacher and the learner. Depending on the learner's personality (see Toots, N., 1991, 42-44), she may resent being interrupted and corrected during her flow of speech. The teacher may feel frustrated at hearing a continuous flow of mistakes and not interrupting the speaker to correct them. The teacher should try and retain his presence of mind, jotting down special problems to return to later. The 'error chart' can be of real help in systematizing and explaining errors even in future lessons. There are several errors, however, made by Estonian speakers of English that should be corrected without delay, as they may cause

misunderstanding: ignoring the gender in using he/she, violating proper word order, mispronunciation of sounds (three-free-tree), unnatural pitch.

The viewpoints on error tolerance and correction differ. In oral communication some methodologists recommend teachers to insist on accuracy from the very beginning in order to avoid the risk of fossilization of errors. Most suggest a reasonable degree of tolerance so that the learners are not inhibited or afraid to attempt to communicate even when they are unsure about the correct language forms. For them the fossilization represents a stage in the language learning process and the error(s) will gradually disappear, or they should simply be noted for later remedial work. In the case of spontaneous teacher-learner interaction the teacher, instead of pointing out errors, might indicate where there is a problem in communication by seeking clarification, requesting confirmation, paraphrasing, etc. In the Counseling-Learning approach, however, in the stage 1 conversational experience, learners are given a great deal of freedom to play with the sounds and structures through various activities. In these first two stages, precision of production is not the main concern. While the learner may be slightly off the TL in pronunciation or grammatical usage, having the opportunity to self-invest with all the support of the teacher is what is most important (Veskis, M., 1991, 49).

Positive and constructive approach to errors is required both from the learner and the teacher. They should expect them to occur in spontaneous speech and accept them as a sign that learning is taking place.

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PROMOTING WRITING SKILLS

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The development of good writing skills can be efficient when appropriate methods and activities are used. A communicative approach to promoting writing skills has proved to suit to adult learners with various needs. The present layout of promoting these skills mainly focuses on the materials of the Council of Europe, Project No. 12 (Strasbourg 1988).

Good writing tasks not only provide useful language practice but also stimulate learners to express themselves in a creative and personal manner as they communicate their own ideas, experience and feelings.

Learners do not simply write text so that the teacher can correct their mistakes. Writing is a purposeful and meaningful activity, particularly so with many adult learners who may have grown-up penfriends, may have to write business letters, summaries, reviews, send telegrammes, faxes, thank-you letters, letters of congratulations and condolences. Writing to fulfil a communicative purpose and inviting comment or correspondence from others gives learners feedback on the success or otherwise of their attempts at written communication. The learners should take writing seriously as all attempts remain in black and white and may be referred to as a good communication or otherwise. Besides, writers have no way of checking how they were understood. There is no face-to-face communication and the kinds of digression, rephrasing, repetition, pronunciation or grammar mistakes which are typical of speech but are not acceptable in writing. Grammar mistakes are much more obvious and lack of coherence and cohesion can lead to a failure to communicate or make intolerable demands on the reader. Writing has to be better organised and more precise than speech and namely this is expected of the writer who has time to reflect, restructure and reformulate, unlike the speaker who communicates under the pressure of instant communication in real time.

Good writing is a skill which needs to be developed and supported. Extensive reading and listening are an important source of input. It is only through writing, however, that writing skills are developing. Activities in the target language instruction generally

lead learners gradually from controlled and guided writing practice towards freer, and more creative, production. The difference between these stages depends on the degree of assistance provided in the areas of content, organisation and language material. A typical chain of activities might include study of the model text – practice – writing task – feedback/evaluation – correction. It is also possible to start with the free writing stage where learners use whatever resources they have (their linguistic and strategic competence in particular) to produce a text. This exploratory text is then compared with a model text (or any other suitable text), evaluated by the writer, other learners and the teacher, and finally edited or polished with the possibility of further circulation and comment. Evaluation and feedback are not concerned only with form but also with content and organisation. The stages of this more 'process-oriented' approach might be implemented as follows: writing task – comparison with other text(s) – feedback/evaluation – editing/rewriting.

Writing in adult groups is thus viewed as a process where learners experiment as they reflect, plan, discuss, draft, write and edit their own texts.

Practice activities may include sentences, short reports and descriptions, linking words, text completion, model texts, flow charts, pictures (Sheils, J., 1988, 220). In sentences the following activities focus learners' attention on word order and spelling: describing plans and intentions (practising 'going to'); the words could be cut out and rearranged physically before being written as sentences; jumbling the sentences and asking learners to re-order them; make a cohesive text of jumbled sentences, paying attention to the reference words; paying attention to the influence of the context on the word order (e.g., whether it is necessary to use the active or passive verb form); expanding a sentence draws attention to word order in a challenging and creative way (e.g., a drawing – a simple sentence – an expanded sentence by way of adding adjectives, adverbs); vertical sentences highlight word order in an amusing way (learners write sentences on rolls of paper word-by-word, vertically, these are unfolded to reveal the text word-by-word, too).

Short reports and descriptions usually follow on from a speaking, listening or reading activity and so lead to an integration of skills, e.g., speak/listen, take notes and use your notes to write a report. It is helpful to provide a model of the writing task. (Learners read the report and transfer the information to the grid, then they carry out their own group interviews and complete a similar grid. Finally they write a report, making use of the model report.)

Learners need linking words to ensure that their texts are not a disjointed series of short sentences. The so-called sequencers (first, next, then, etc.) help joining short sentences to form longer

and more complex sentences. (e.g., several short sentences or short paragraphs are written on slips of paper. Learners place them in chronological order on a sheet which has been prepared with appropriate sequencers.) In the framework of linking words using **and, but, so** also needs specific practice. (E.g., a newspaper article can be simplified and reformulated as a series of short sentences. The aim is to form longer and more complex sentences. Learners make whatever changes are necessary to write it as a cohesive paragraph. Freer writing takes place when learners create a story from key words and link words. (E.g., key words that must be used in any order, at least once: help, wheelbarrow, invitation, drunk, kill, passport. Link words that must be used in the given order: when, first, then, however, so, in spite of, finally. Then the stories of different learners may be compared.)

In text completion the content may be tightly controlled (e.g. cloze passage) or simply guided by key words. In a chain game learners are free to complete the text as they wish within the constraints imposed by the framework. Each learner completes a sentence, folds the sheet and passes it on to his or her neighbour. This should lead to some amusing stories. Learners may also complete a series of sentences about themselves. They are free to choose the content (true to life or imaginary) within certain limits imposed by the structure of the text. Learners may be guided by a series of 'Wh'-question words. They can freely create a meaningful text.

A model text provides guidance on the structure and content of a text. Such a text sharpens learners' awareness of paragraph structure whereas paragraph (a) serves as a model, i.e., the topic is stated in the first sentence and developed in the rest of the paragraph. Learners order the sentences in (b) to produce a similar paragraph. A practice activity 'Writing an autobiography' may come in useful with many adult learners. Again learners study a model and then write a similar text about themselves. Some language material must be provided, cues may provide some guidance about organising the text.

A flow chart provides language material as well as guidance on content and organisation. Writing may be completely controlled or guided: the language is provided, learners simply transform present to past tense and choose different options at various points. Learners may proceed from definite incidents (e.g. a terrorist attack at an airport), reading several newspaper reports on them. Then they sum up what happened, draw a chart showing the order of events. After that, using linkwords that are provided, they produce their own reports, following the sequence of events on the chart.

Pictures can be exploited to develop discussion and information sharing activities leading to collective writing. The work could be

organised as follows: In small groups learners re-order a series of jumbled pictures and write a story. One or two pictures may be missing and they imagine what happened. If there are six pictures, learners work in six groups (or pairs). Each learner in the group writes one or two sentences about the picture in the past tense. Then these sentences are passed on to other groups (pairs) and more sentences are written. Then the learners discuss and order the story correctly, making any necessary changes, as adding cohesive devices, correcting mistakes (tense, grammar, spelling) and each learner writes the story in full. After that all the pictures are studied and the stories are checked with these. Any important facts which were omitted are written in. Such an activity may lead learners to freer writing where the content is not dictated by pictures but left to learners' imagination.

There are a number of practice activities helping learners towards freer writing. Following a matrix provides learners with guidance on the structure of a text. Varying degrees of assistance with content and language material are possible. In letter-writing learners are guided by a series of heading or key words. Some language assistance may be supplied. In longer texts (e.g., a novel, fairy tale, short story) with the aid of a matrix, learners may work in groups or pairs, each group (learner) writing a short chapter of the story at the same time. In order to avoid the risk of incoherence, certain key elements could be agreed upon in advance, e.g., participants, setting, period of time. Writing to/for each other, including exchanging notes obliges learners to pay close attention to what and how they write and provides them with immediate feedback on the success of their communication. By way of illustration (1) learners write anonymous letters about real or imaginary problems to each other. These are jumbled and redistributed so that everyone has to write a reply. (2) The teacher insists on only written communication between learners and between the teacher and learners. Learners pass each other memos which the teacher never sees as these are 'private' correspondence. Correction could be done by the receiver if necessary but the focus is essentially on fluency. (3) Learners write a number of statements about themselves, some true, some false. They pass them round and others try to identify the false (or half-false statements). (5) Learners write instructions for each other which the receivers should try to follow (act out).

Role-writing offers many possibilities for freer writing. Learners may choose a well-known character (contemporary or historical, real or fictional) and write something he or she could have written. Even historically incorrect forms could be used (e.g., a telegramme in the 16th century). There are many other possibilities which could provide a mask for the expression of learners' own thoughts and feelings,

e.g., writing from the perspective of a character who appeared in a story which learners have just read; an old farm horse describing its life, etc.

Advertisements and slogans offer opportunities for entertaining and creative writing as well as providing practice in describing and persuading. In a familiarisation phase, learners' attention is focused on the structure and style of advertisements, and the manner in which they try to seduce and persuade. E.g., learners are given texts advertising something, they try to find a suitable picture to match it with, or learners may be given pictures without the accompanying text, so they are asked to compose a text to accompany them. Their versions can then be compared with the original.

Writing the opposites of key words or expressions can be entertaining and useful for extending vocabulary. Pompous or exaggerated advertisements are a rich source, e.g. "Take Comfort in a Great Tradition" may become "Find Discomfort Where There Is No Tradition".

Reading and writing poetry is a powerful means of getting learners personally involved in creative expression and the realisation that they can express their own thoughts and feelings in writing in the target language provides a boost to their confidence. Learners can be led gradually towards writing their own poems once they are familiar with a number of poems and realise that they do not always have to rhyme. It is useful to follow a model (e.g., in case of 'Limericks'). Creating a chain poem allows learners to work together and is a useful preparation for individual writing. E.g., each learner takes a sheet of paper and writes down the first line that comes into his or her head, starting with Love is... The line is then folded over so that it can no longer be read and the sheet is passed to the next person who writes a line, folds it over, passes it on, and so on. In the end, the chain poem is unfolded and read out.

Other approaches to writing poems might include rearranging a jumbled poem (lines or verses) to show that several orders may be possible; finding a title for a poem; completing a poem (gap filling, imagine the next verse); continuing a poem (add an extra verse), etc.

Writing games is a technique to encourage fluency in writing. E.g., learners are given a set time to write a story incorporating as many words as possible. The focus is on content rather than on complete accuracy of expression. The stories need not be shown to the teacher but are passed to other learners who may write comments on them. 'Snow-ball' technique starts a game where a story is built up beginning with one word, then two words in the second sentence, three in the third and so on. The sentences should be written on the board or on an overhead transparency to help learners to correct their text when the story has been completed.

Joe Sheils offers a series of activities illustrating a structured three-phase approach to writing postcards which could also be adapted to writing other types of text (e.g. messages, letters, diaries). (1) Familiarisation - when do you write postcards? - sensitising learners to the appropriate choice of language forms, - inducing the 'rules' for writing postcards, - focus on useful structures; (2) Transfer and Practice - thinking about the use of tenses to express present, past and future reference, - controlled/closely-guided writing, (3) Consolidation - guided writing assisted by photographs, key language exponents (1988, 253-258).

The short survey presented above helps to prove that writing in the foreign language classroom can be an enjoyable and meaningful activity for learners, meeting certain needs more adequately than some other activities.

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INPUTVARIANTEN UND KOMMUNIKABILITÄTSZUWACHS

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In diesem Aufsatz berichten wir über einen Unterrichtsversuch, den wir 1990 in drei Städten durchgeführt haben: in Liepaja (Lettland), in Tartu und Tallinn (Estland). Wir unterrichteten jeweils 4 bzw. 5 Tage (insgesamt 4 Doppelstunden – 90 Min.) in den 9. und 10. Klassen der Schulen mit erweitertem Deutschunterricht.

Ziel der Untersuchung war es, eine Aussage zu gewinnen über die Wirkung der Grammatik-Methode und der kommunikativen Methode

- auf das Bewußtsein der Lernenden
- auf das produktive Können (mdl. + schr.) der Lernenden.

Zu diesem Zweck teilten wir die Lernenden in jeder Schule und auf jeder Klassenstufe in zwei Gruppen ein:

- Grammatik-Gruppe (Gr) und
- kommunikative Gruppe (K).

An dem Versuch waren 103 Schüler beteiligt.

Tabelle 1

Teilnehmende Schüler am Unterrichtsversuch

Schulort	9. Kl.		10. Kl.		insgesamt
	Gr	K	Gr	K	
Liepaja	10	8	13	10	41
Tartu	–	–	10	13	23
Tallinn	10	12	10	7	39

Unterrichtsgegenstand war die Wiederholung grammatischer Strukturen, die wir in der K-Gruppe als sprachliche Mittel zum Ausdruck von Wünschen markierten. Inhaltlich banden wir die Wiederholung an das Thema 'Deutschland'.

Zwei Faktoren erwiesen sich während des Unterrichtsversuchs als bedeutsam für die Schüler:

- erstmalig unterrichtete sie eine deutsche Lehrerin, d.h. erstmalig mußten sie die Fremdsprache Deutsch als Mittel der direkten Kommunikation mit einem Muttersprachler verwenden;

- zum ersten Mal war Gesamtdeutschland Thema des Deutschunterrichts.

Tabelle 2

Lerngegenstände und Lernziele

Zeit	Stoff: Landeskunde	Grammatik	Könnensziel
1. Tag	Sehenswürdigkeiten von Leipzig (Heimatstadt der Schüler)	Modalverb + Infinitiv	Stadtführung; Stadtbeschreibung
2. Tag	W Leipzig Alte und neue Bundesländer (Namen, Hauptstädte, geogr. Lage, Nachbarländer Deutschlands)	Modalverb + Infinitiv Hauptsatz + Infinitivkonstr. mit 'zu'	Einladung nach Leipzig schriftl. beantworten. Wünsche äußern (mdl. + schr. (Dialog + Brief)
3. Tag	W Bundesländer Sehenswertes in den deutschen Ländern (Städte, Landschaften)	Konditionalsatz mit Konjunktiv	Wünsche äußern Dialog, Monolog, Reise planen
4. Tag	W Deutschland Aufsatz "Meine Traumreise"	alle Strukturen 1.-3.	Dialog; schriftl. Erzählen

Zum Zeitpunkt des Unterrichtsversuchs war die Mauer in Berlin bereits durchbrochen und die Neubildung der Länder auf dem Territorium der DDR im Gespräch. Die Vereinigung der beiden Teile Deutschlands stand unmittelbar bevor. Über Westdeutschland hatten die Schüler im Deutschunterricht bis dahin kaum etwas gehört. Keiner von den Schülern war in einem der beiden Teile Deutschlands gewesen. Der Wunsch, dieses Land kennenzulernen, dessen Sprache sie ca. 10 Jahre lang lernten, erschien dabei natürlich motiviert. Ihn variantenreich ausdrücken zu können, das sollte das Resultat der Versuchsstundenreihe sein.

Theoretisch folgten wir dem Ansatz von W. Reinicke zur Erforschung von Kommunikabilitätswachst:

- Kommunikabilität wird definiert als Fähigkeit des Menschen, sich eines Sprachkodes zum Zwecke der Kommunikation bedienen zu können.

- Kommunikabilitätswachst entsteht durch eine Folge von zunehmend komplexer werdenden Sprachhandlungen, bei denen die Lernenden situativ und kommunikativ möglichst direkt Betroffene sind.

Letztere Bedingung war im Unterrichtsversuch optimal gegeben. Der Kern der Untersuchung bestand nun darin, empirische Belege über die Effizienz der Grammatik-Methode und der kommunikativen Methode auf den Kommunikabilitätswachst der Lernenden zu gewinnen.

Wir organisierten den Unterrichtsverlauf folgendermaßen: In beiden Gruppen stand jeweils das Thema 'Deutschland' im Vordergrund. Der Unterschied im methodischen Vorgehen bestand in der Art und Weise der Heranführung der Schüler an die zu wiederholenden sprachlichen Strukturen.

In der K-Gruppe verzichteten wir auf die Bewußtmachung der Wiederholungsabsicht und des Wiederholungsprozesses. Das Gespräch über Deutschland verbunden mit vielerlei Anschauungsmaterial war das zentrale Unterrichtsgeschehen. Zur Bewältigung von Kommunikationsaufgaben, die sich im Laufe der Stunde im Zusammenhang mit der Präsentation des landeskundlichen Stoffes ergaben, stellten wir kommentarlos per Overhead-Projektor die notwendigen sprachlichen Mittel zur Verfügung, und zwar unter der Markierung 'sich etwas wünschen'. Hier einige Beispiele der Aufgaben:

- Was möchtet ihr in Leipzig sehen?
- Was möchtest/würdest du einem Gast in deiner Stadt zeigen?
- Wohin würdet ihr/würdest du gern mal fahren? Nach Bayern?
- Welches Bundesland möchtest du mal kennenlernen?
- Was würdest du dir denn in Schleswig-Holstein ansehen?

In der Gr-Gruppe akzentuierten wir im Zusammenhang mit den Kommunikationsaufgaben, daß wir dazu einige grammatische Strukturen wiederholen müssen und verwiesen demonstrativ auf die jeweilige Folie, auf der unter den o.g. grammatischen Termini (vgl. Tab. 2) die entsprechenden Strukturen präsentiert wurden.

Beispiele der Inputvarianten stellen wir an dieser Stelle zur Veranschaulichung für den Leser gegenüber:

Tabelle 3

Unterschiedliche Foliengestaltung für die Versuchsgruppen. Inputvarianten

<u>Variante für die Gr-Gruppe</u>	<u>Variante für die K-Gruppe</u>
<u>Wiederholung</u>	
<u>1. Modalverb + Infinitiv</u>	<u>sich etwas wünschen (1)</u>
(an) sehen	
Ich möchte ... vorstellen	1. Ich möchte (gern) ... sehen
zeigen	(auch) ... in ... gehen.
kann...an/zu/in...führen	2. Ich habe den Wunsch,... zu sehen
	/hören.
will	
muß ... bekannt	
machen mit...	
<u>2. Hauptsatz + Inf.mit 'zu'</u>	
Ich habe den Wunsch,... zu sehen	3. Ich habe auch Lust,
	... anzusehen.
Ich habe auch Lust, in... zu gehen	4. Mein größter Wunsch ist,
... zu zeigen	... kennenzulernen.
Mein größter Wunsch ist,	...zu erleben
...zu hören	
...kennenzulernen	
lernen	

Die Projektion blieb ca. während der Hälfte der Unterrichtszeit präsent, so daß die Schüler sie zeitweise bewußt, zeitweise unbewußt und nebenbei wahrnahmen. Wir beabsichtigten eine intensive Einwirkung der Inputvarianten 'grammatische Termini' und 'Sprachhandlungstypen' als Metabegriffe bzw. chunk-marker auf Bewußtsein, Gefühlslage der Schüler, auf Rezeption und Speicherung des Lernstoffes.

Die Kontrolle erfolgte mehrfach:

Am Ende jeder Doppelstunde hatten die Schüler schriftlich kurz auf die Frage zu antworten:

Was hast du heute gelernt?

Uns interessierte, ob die Schüler den Eindruck hatten, eine Grammatikstunde hinter sich gebracht zu haben, oder ob das Bewußtsein dominierte, sich mit dem Lehrer über Deutschland unterhalten zu haben. Tabelle 4 gibt einen Überblick darüber, wie die Schüler sich zu der genannten Frage äußerten. Die obere Zahlenreihe der Klassenstufe repräsentiert den Prozentsatz von Schülern, in deren Bewußtsein jeweils das Thema der Stunde dominierte. Die zweite Reihe der Zahlen beinhaltet den Prozentsatz der Schüler, die neben

dem Unterrichtsgespräch über Deutschland auch den wiederholten Grammatikstoff bzw. Wünsche äußern oder Gespräche führen angaben. In den Fällen, in denen die beiden Zahlen zusammen keine 100 % ergeben, gab es Schüler, die auf die Kontrollfrage nur mit dem grammatischen Stoff geantwortet haben.

Tabelle 4

Grad der bewußten Rezeption der Unterrichts-/
Lerngegenstände durch die Schüler (in Prozenten)

Schulen:	Gr-Gruppe			K-Gruppe		
	L	T	Tan	L	T	Tan
1. Tag (9)	100	-	90	62,5	-	100
	-	-	10	12,5	-	-
(10)	92,3	90	88,9	50	84,6	100
	7,7	-	11,1	30	-	-
2. Tag (9)	75	-	100	62,5	-	100
	25	-	-	37,5	-	-
(10)	27,3	66,7	100	100	100	83,4
	72,7	22,2	-	-	-	16,6
3. Tag (9)	-	-	88,9	-	-	100
	-	-	11,1	-	-	-
(10)	-	60	70	-	100	100
	-	40	30	-	-	-
	3x100 % Thema			8x100 % Thema		

Die Befragungsergebnisse weisen aus, daß die Schüler nur in ganz wenigen Fällen (1. Tag, L, 10, K; 2. Tag, T, 10 Gr.) den Eindruck hatten, daß die Grammatik Hauptlerngegenstand war. Fast alle Schüler antworteten auf die Testfrage 'Was hast du heute gelernt?' zuerst mit dem landeskundlichen Stoff 'etwas über Leipzig/die deutschen Länder/Deutschland'. An zweiter Stelle stand z.T. der grammatische Stoff oder Tätigkeiten (Stadtführung, Wünsche ausdrücken, Dialoge/Gespräche führen).

Vergleicht man die Anzahl der Fälle von 100 %igem Eindruck eines thematischen Unterrichtsgesprächs, so stehen sich 3 x 100 % in der Gr-Gruppe und 8 x 100 % in der K-Gruppe gegenüber. Dieses Ergebnis bestätigt in der Tendenz Übereinstimmung zwischen unserer Absicht und dem Eindruck der Schüler vom Charakter der Unterrichtsstunden. Interessanterweise ist in beiden Gruppen vom 1. bis zum 4. Tag eine Intensivierung der Bewußtheit der Schüler entsprechend unserer Unterrichtsstrategie zu beobachten. In der Grammatikgruppe nimmt das Bewußtsein zu, daß außer Landeskunde auch Sprachliches Lerngegenstand war. In der K-Gruppe

verdichtet sich der Eindruck, daß in den Unterrichtsstunden hauptsächlich das Gespräch gepflegt wurde. Desweiteren interessierte uns natürlich, in welchem Maße unter dem einen und dem anderen Eindruck der Schüler der Sprachstoff, der aktiviert werden sollte, zur produktiven Verwendung bereitstand. Dazu bedienten wir uns ebenfalls schriftlicher Kontrollformen:

Am 2. Tag legten wir den Schülern eine Einladung nach Leipzig vor (Brief auf Folie). Sie sollten sich in einem Antwortbrief dafür bedanken und einige Wünsche für den Aufenthalt in Leipzig äußern.

Am letzten Tag ließen wir einen Aufsatz zum Thema "Meine Traumreise" (durch Deutschland) schreiben.

Bei der Auswertung der Arbeiten interessierte uns lediglich die Variationsbreite des Ausdrucks von Wünschen.

Folgende Strukturen sind geübt worden:

1. Ich möchte/muß/will ... sehen
2. Ich wollte schon immer (mal) ... kennenlernen
3. Ich würde (mir) gern ... ansehen
4. Ich habe den Wunsch ... kennenzulernen
5. Ich habe Lust, nach ... zu fahren
6. Mein größter Wunsch ist, ... zu hören
7. Wenn ich die Gelegenheit/Möglichkeit/Zeit/Geld hätte, würde ich (gern) nach ... fahren und mir ... ansehen
8. Wenn es möglich wäre/ich schon erwachsen wäre, würde ich gern...
9. Ich wünsche mir...
10. Hoffentlich...

Die folgende Tabelle erlaubt einen Überblick über die wachsende Ausdrucksvarianz der Schüler im Versuchszeitraum.

Die Ergebnisse lassen die Feststellung zu, daß das Ausdrucksvermögen hinsichtlich von Wünschen im Laufe der Versuchstage gewachsen ist. Gezählt wurde in den Schülerarbeiten nicht das absolute Auftreten von Wunschformen, sondern nur die durchschnittliche Anzahl von Varianten, von präsenten Strukturen. Vergleicht man die Ergebnisse der beiden Gruppen, so wird offenbar, daß die durchschnittliche Frequenz der geübten Strukturen in den Arbeiten der Gr-Gruppen (mit einer Ausnahme: Tartu Gr 1,9:4,1) höher ist als in der K-Gruppe.

Am ersten Tag hatten wir in allen Gruppen ein Diktat geschrieben, um eine Orientierung über das Leistungsniveau der insgesamt 10 Gruppen zu gewinnen. Auf den ersten Blick scheint die niedrigste Fehlerzahl im Diktat (O 1,4, Kl. 10 Gr Liepaja und Tallinn) mit der höchsten Variationsbreite von Versuchsformen im Aufsatz zu korrelieren. Die Ergebnisse der neunten Klassen scheinen auf niedrigerem Niveau ebenso proportional im Verhältnis zu stehen. Die Ergebnisse der Tartuer Schüler weisen jedoch diese Tendenz nicht auf. In Gruppe 10 K fällt die höchste durchschnittliche Fehlerzahl mit der höchsten durchschnittlichen Variationsbreite von Wunschformen zusammen. Interessanterweise ist in dieser Gruppe auch der höchste Lernzuwachs zu verzeichnen: von 1,7 Wunschformen durchschnittlich in der ersten Kontrolle auf durchschnittlich 4,1 Varianten

Tabelle 5

Durchschnittliche Variationsbreite des Ausdrucks
von Wünschen bei der Textproduktion

		1. Tag Diktat	2. Tag Brief	4. Tag Aufsatz
		Zahl der Fehler	Anzahl der geübten Varianten v. Wunschformen pro 1 DIN A 5 Seite Text	
Liepaja	9 Gr	2,8	3,4	3,7
	9 K	2,4	2,4	3,4
	10 Gr	1,4	2,6	4,0
	10 K	1,5	2,4	3,3
Tartu	10 Gr	2,6	2,0	1,9
	10 K	3,6	1,7	4,1
Tallinn	9 Gr	2,8	3,4	3,7
	9 K	2,4	2,4	3,4
	10 Gr	1,4	2,6	4,0
	10 K	1,5	2,4	3,3

in der Kontrolle am letzten Tag, ohne daß in dieser Gruppe die Grammatik akzentuiert wurde. Bei der Mehrheit der Schüler hat jedoch die Inputvariante 'Bewußtmachung des Wiederholungsprozesses, Markierung der zu lernenden Strukturen mit grammatischen Termini' zu einer höheren Ausdrucksvarianz bei Wünschen geführt als in der K-Gruppe.

Die Ergebnisse bestätigen, wie berechtigt die Forderung vieler Lehrer ist, bei Beibehaltung der kommunikativen Methode und der kommunikativen Ziele im Fremdsprachenunterricht insgesamt, die bewußte Arbeit an den grammatischen Kenntnissen der Schüler nicht zu vernachlässigen.

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THE PROBLEM OF THE AUTONOMY OF INTENSIONS: AN EXPERIMENTAL STUDY

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Some evidence is now available that all children follow a similar course, an "internal syllabus" (Corder, S. Pit, 1977, p. 268), in the acquisition of their mother tongue. It is possible that for learners of a foreign language there might also exist a built-in syllabus which represents the psychologically natural route between mother tongue and the target language, determined by the inherent cognitive properties of the human mind (*ibid*). If such a route could be described in linguistic terms, this would clearly have a major impact on foreign language teaching methodology. Hence the interest for methodologists of psycholinguistic studies of human cognitive properties.

A particular issue that deserves attention in this context is that of the psychological reality of linguistic units. Given the great number of different linguistic theories, it is clear that not all of their constructs represent psychologically real processes actually learnt by children acquiring their mother tongue. Any linguistic construct can of course in principle be mentally represented, but this would mostly happen on an explicit metalinguistic plane. It is, however, logical to assume that it is the processes actually acquired by children first that are part of the psychologically optimal route of foreign language learning. It is these that should come first in the foreign language class and that exercises should concentrate upon.

The distinction between psychologically real (autonomous) and essentially metalinguistic linguistic relations is by no means self-evident. To cite a case in point, the question arises whether the semantic relationship of synonymy and antonymy are autonomous. The question can be formulated in more general terms as the problem of the autonomy of intensions. The term *intensions* stands for the various fixed relations between linguistic entities, in particular between meanings (senses), e.g., synonymy, antonymy, transitivity, etc., as opposed to extensions - relations between linguistic entities and the objects referred to (the external world).

The issue of the autonomy of intensions is a controversial one in present-day psycholinguistics. Intensions are considered autonomous

in a number of influential psycholinguistic theories of word meanings such as the lexical decomposition theory, the meaning postulates theory, the semantic networks theory (see, e.g., Smith, E.E., 1978). In fact the very essence of the theories can be described as elaboration(s) of the basic assumption of the autonomy of intensions.

However, this approach soon leads to insoluble problems (Johnson-Laird, P.N., 1983, pp. 237-241).

Firstly, a word does not always have a single meaning. In fact, a striking feature of natural language is that, grammatical function words apart, the more frequently used a word is, the more likely it is to be ambiguous (Miller, G.A., 1951). Plainly, if one were to design a language on a rational basis, it would be sensible to eliminate ambiguity, or at least relegate it to the least frequently used words, but evidently, the mind prefers to deal with a relatively small set of short, highly frequent, and ambiguous words, rather than with a relatively large set of long, less frequent, and unambiguous ones.

Now, words in their different meanings have different synonyms, activated in different contexts. For example, the word "model" has two different meanings, and, accordingly, at least two different synonyms:

- 1) model = representation
- 2) model = mannequin (a person who poses for painters, sculptors, photographers etc.).

In such cases we could say that words do not have a few qualitatively distinct meanings but rather a whole family of potential meanings and the occurrence of a word in a specific linguistic context activates a specific sense which is a member of the family (see Weinreich, U., 1966 and Putnam, H., 1975). This line of thought is consistent with the autonomy of intensions, but there is reason to believe that it will not do. Suppose we have a sentence:

It attacked the swimmer.

There arises the problem - what is "it" a synonym of? Looking at the sentence it seems obvious that "it" denotes a "shark", yet no one would make the egregious error of arguing that "it" has indefinitely many meanings of which one is "shark" (Johnson-Laird, P.N., 1983, p. 238). In other words, we could not possibly say that "it" is a synonym of the word "shark". "It" has a single meaning, but it can refer to indefinitely many entities at the level of significance. Thus, synonymy relations can, by no means, be regarded as autonomous.

Secondly, there is the interesting case of intensional relations concerning transitivity and making inferences. Transitivity means that if a relation holds between X and Y, and the same relation between Y and Z, then the relation automatically holds also between X and Z. In more general terms, the transitivity of a relation R

guarantees the validity of an inference of the form: xRy and yRz
· xRz . The relation is called a transitive relation*. For example:

If the tiger runs faster than the elephant and the elephant runs faster than the turtle, then it follows that the tiger also runs faster than the turtle.

A relation such as "father of" is intransitive because it leads to the negation of such a conclusion:

xRy and yRz · · not (xRz),

while the relation such as "next to" is neither transitive nor intransitive.

To analyze a typical attempt to uphold the autonomy of transitivity by capturing it in a meaning postulate, let us take the argument "For any X, if X is on Y's right and Y is on Z's right, then X is on Z's right", and give it a specified content:

Matthew is on Mark's right.

Mark is on Luke's right.

Therefore, Matthew is on Luke's right.

Granted the truth of the premises, the truth of the conclusion in this example depends on how the individuals are seated. In the case of, say, Leonardo's painting of the Last Supper, where the disciples are seated down one side of a long rectangular table, the conclusion is plainly true, i.e. the linear seating arrangement renders the valid conclusion.

But if we consider another possible seating arrangement with a round table (like that of King Arthur and his knights), we are bound to come face to face with a problem.

Arthur is on Lancelot's right.
Lancelot is on Merlin's right.
Therefore, Arthur is on Merlin's right.

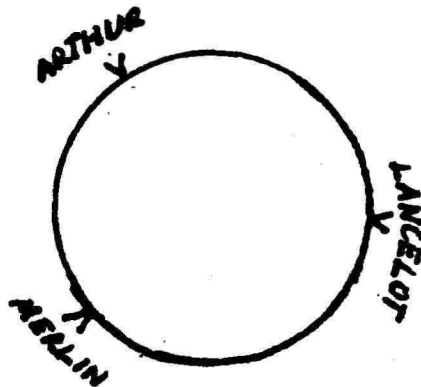


Figure 1.

* Note that transitivity in this sense is not the same as the transitivity of verbs.

Figure 1 plainly tells us that the conclusion is false. Arthur is rather on Merlin's left than on Merlin's right, and (substituting the disciples back for the knights), Matthew may well be opposite Luke, according to these seating arrangements (Johnson-Laird, P.N., 1983, p. 241).

One might argue that "on X's right" is ambiguous and has both a transitive and an intransitive meaning (sense). Unfortunately, this manoeuvre leads to a need for an infinite number of alternative meanings. Suppose that there is a slightly larger number of individuals seated round a circular table. For instance, if John has appeared and the others have had to move to make room for him, we would state:

Matthew is on Mark's right.
 Mark is on Luke's right.
 Luke is on John's right.
 Therefore, Matthew is on John's right.

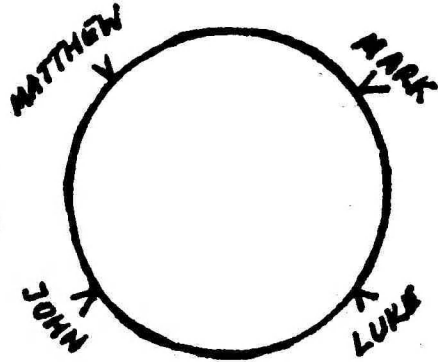


Figure 2.

The conclusion (see Figure 2) is plainly false. Matthew is not on John's right but rather on John's left. On X's right would have a limited transitivity extending over the three individuals in this case. In fact, according to Philip Johnson-Laird (1988a, p. 342), the extent of the transitivity of the relation varies as a function of the seating arrangements up to any arbitrary number of individuals, and would accordingly require an infinite number of different meanings in order to cope with each possible extent from zero upwards. The only way in which to accommodate this requirement within a meaning postulate theory is to propose higher-order postulates that generate specific meaning postulates as a function of information about seating arrangements, or whatever feature of the world is relevant. But such an assumption clearly violates the psychological autonomy of intensions.

The alternative approach (Johnson-Laird, 1983, 1988a, b) proceeds from a three-stage model of speech comprehension, according to which the phonemic/graphemic representation of an utterance leads to a propositional representation, close to the surface form

of the utterance, and this in turn triggers the stage of constructing a mental model. The latter determines the truth conditions of the utterance. Once these are specified, intensions, i.e. independent autonomous semantic properties and relations, become completely superfluous, since their consequences emerge naturally from the truth conditions.

Since mental models can take many forms and serve many purposes, their contents are very varied. They can contain nothing but tokens that represent individuals and identities between them, as in the sort of models that are required for syllogistic reasoning. They can represent spatial relations between entries, and the temporal or causal relations between events. A rich imaginary model of the world can be used to compute the projective relations required for an image. "Models have a content and form that fits them to their purpose... Their structure corresponds to the perceived or conceived structure of the world, and is accordingly more constrained than their contents. The possible contents, of course, constitute an ontology" (Johnson-Laird, P.N., 1983, p. 410).

Intuitively, the theory of mental models and, in particular, the solution it offers to the problem of intensions, has a great degree of plausibility. Nevertheless, certain experimental results appear to contradict it. Thus, Kuczaj and Donaldson (1982) report a study in which transitivity relations were supposedly overgeneralized by children of eight. A relation, however, cannot be overgeneralized unless it is psychologically real, i.e. is acquired as an autonomous principle. (An example is the "-ed" - ending which is overgeneralized by almost all English-speaking children to irregular verbs like "see" in the past: "seed").

Thus, there seems to be experimental support to the intuitively dubious notion of the autonomy of intensions. To solve the conflict, we subjected the experimental procedures used by Kuczaj and Donaldson to closer scrutiny. In their study, each child, tested individually, was read 8 pairs of sentences expressing transitive and intransitive relations. The relations were the following:

- 1) X runs faster than Y. Y runs faster than Z.
- 2) X eats more than Y. Y eats more than Z.
- 3) X is bigger than Y. Y is bigger than Z.
- 4) X jumps higher than Y. Y jumps higher than Z.
- 5) X loves Y. Y loves Z.
- 6) X hit Y. Y hit Z.
- 7) X jumped on Y. Y jumped on Z.
- 8) X shot Y. Y shot Z.

Next the child was asked to show the experimenter which object or objects on the table would make up his response to a question

like, "Who runs faster than Z?". It should be pointed out that the experiment was carried out orally and in a randomized order.

The outcome (see Table 1) is dubious even for the authors themselves. The overgeneralization seems to be there all right, making sense with the 8-year-olds. However, the 4-year-olds seem to have almost the same score as the 7- or 8-year-olds. Here the authors have a ready solution - for the case of the 4-year-olds, response strategy is to blame. In other words, the 4-year-olds simply followed a strategy, i.e. pointed out two toys, whereas the 8-year-olds had already acquired the principle.

Table 1

Results of the experiment of Kucsaj and Donaldson

Age	Response type		
	Correct transitive	Correct intransitive	Overgeneralised transitive
4	1.5	2.2	1.2
5	1.4	2.5	1.0
6	1.7	3.0	.7
7	1.5	2.9	1.3
8	2.1	2.3	1.7

(=incorrect intransitive)

This is where we began to suspect the existence of experimental artefacts. The authors had adhered to a dry, rigidly fixed procedure which, though seemingly more scientific, may psychologically have produced anxiety, frustration and random answers on the part of the children. So we decided to replicate the experiment trying to eliminate its flaws. Both the atmosphere and the strategy of the experiment needed changing, as we tried to create the most favourable conditions for the children. The beginning was one big "sounding the ground" and alterations had to be introduced even when experiments were already under way.

Subjects

36 children aged 4 to 11 were tested in the kindergartens of Tartu and the school at Kolga. All experiments were recorded.

Set-up and materials

We started out orally and mostly in Estonian. Already from the very first it was evident that the main cause for a question being

left unanswered or answered incorrectly was a restricted auditory working memory,

As our first concern was ascertaining the extent of the children's reasoning ability and not strict adherence to the experimental build-up, we tried to encourage the children to seek hard for the right answer. If a child needed more time to think, he was welcome to have it, or the sentence pairs were repeated several times to help the child overcome his short memory span. With some children (those more nervous or helpless), writing down was used or toys were resorted to.

On the whole the number and nature of transitive and intransitive relations in our experiment coincided with those used by Kuczaj and Donaldson, but we tended to present intransitive relations first. We argued as follows: if transitive relations are presented first, children might start to give transitive answers to intransitive questions through inertia. The result would constitute an artefact of the experiment.

We read out to the child a pair of sentences with a transitive or intransitive relation (is bigger, runs faster, loves, bites, etc.). For example,

The tiger runs faster than the dog.

The dog runs faster than the turtle.

There would follow a question, e.g.

WHO runs faster than the turtle? or

Who is the FASTEST/ the SLOWEST? or

HOW MANY animals run faster than the turtle? etc.

We also asked check questions with a different wording to make sure that the child had not given a random answer.

Results

The results showed that individual differences among children are fairly striking. There are kindergarten children, though few in number, who were completely unable to answer the questions, or answered at random. Their problem seemed to be a lack of ability to concentrate enough to construct anything like a mental model at all. To bring a more remarkable example, a 4-year-old boy, answering our questions:

Experimenter: Listen to me carefully. I will tell you that
**THE ELEPHANT RUNS FASTER THAN THE DOG,
THE DOG RUNS FASTER THAN THE TURTLE.**

Who runs faster than the TURTLE?

Boy: The dog.

Experimenter: Which runs fastest?

Boy: The dog.

Experimenter: Listen to what I say, the cue is there. **THE ELEPHANT RUNS FASTER THAN THE DOG.** Which runs faster, the elephant or the dog?

Boy (fingering the edge of his pants): I have another pair underneath.

But except for those few children, we did receive correct answers, although some subjects needed more time or information. The following is an example of an average question-answer session:

Experimenter: If I tell you that **KATI LOVES MADIS. MADIS LOVES MARIA.** What conclusion can you draw from it?

Girl (aged 6): I will draw the following conclusion that when there are two girls and one boy, we must add another boy.

Experimenter: But *who* loves Maria?

Girl: **MADIS.**

...

Experimenter: But do you think animals can love one another?

Girl: The fatherbear and the motherbear do love each other, or else they wouldn't have babies.

At the same time we completely failed to get examples of overgeneralization. The only seeming exceptions were two cases which, on closer analysis, prove the hypothesis about artefact in Kuczaj's experiment. At Kolga school we experimented with some 6th form children their ability to make transitive and intransitive inferences when the sentence pairs were given in English. They had the right to ask the meaning of unknown words and could answer in Estonian. In this case we used written sentences expressing similarly different relations. But as the sentence order was randomized, it so happened that the 2nd, 3rd and 4th sentence pairs in a row were transitive, and here indeed, as speed was rather high, two boys out of inertia transferred the transitive relations also to the 5th sentence pair, which was intransitive. However, they noticed their mistake immediately and corrected themselves, laughing at their error.

THE TIGER BITES THE DOG. THE DOG BITES THE BOY.

Experimenter: How many animals bite the boy?

Jaen: **TWO.**

Experimenter: Who are they?

Jaen: the dog and the tiger, oh no, of course only one.

(Laughs at his slip)

Experimenter: Who?

Jaen: The dog.

The experiment had an additional aim, viz. to find out if overgeneralization would appear in relations on the abstract level.

For example, we used sentences about three beings, about whom nothing was known except that they were named YIN, YANG and KUN. The intransitive relation "loves" was used as the relation between them. No overgeneralization was found.

At the same time the subjects were asked whether they had imagined anything while solving the problems. As already stated, the mental models theory postulates various types of models (in order of increasing complexity) – simplified token models, spatial models, kinematic models, dynamic models, images etc.

The answers we got confirmed the existence of those various types. For example, in the experiment, in which "Yin loves Yang and Yang loves Kun", the only information the child was given were the names. We placed before the child three rectangular pieces of white paper with the names written on them and, after the task had been performed, asked the child whether or not he had seen anything in his mind's eye while fulfilling the task. There were those who had operated with white columns, which would speak in favour of the token form of representations. In another case a girl had imagined black boys (the image representation). We also came upon very definite three-dimensional mental models, like the following:

"That this YANG is then as if a boy and then KUN is as if a girl, and YIN is as if a girl and helps YANG, with homework and so on, and YANG accepts her help but looks on her as if on an ordinary girl. And then, with KUN, he helps to carry her bag and... wants her to like him".

(A 6th form boy, answering our question about whether or not he had imagined any concrete things)

Thus, while psychologically real autonomous principles can undoubtedly be overgeneralized, our experiment showed that under normal conditions children do not overgeneralize transitivity relations. There is therefore every reason to claim that transitivity relations are not autonomous.

Further, children do seem to use various degrees of mental models in their reasoning.

To sum up, the present study supports the mental models theory and, in particular, the solution offered in the theory to the problem of the autonomy of intensions. Apart from the metalinguistic level, intensions appear to have no psychological reality. A consequence of this for language teaching methodology concerns exercises on synonyms and antonyms, extensive use of which seems to be of questionable value. This applies particularly to crash courses for adults where time is limited and adherence to a psychologically natural course of learning is of crucial importance.

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TRY EXTENSIVE READING

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During my IREX summer courses of 1991 in the USA, extensive reading was the method advocated by our American colleague, faculty member at Georgetown University Maryann Kearny-Datesman. She had been using it successfully in teaching English to her overseas low-level students. Maryann taught one- or two-month intensive courses, with one or two contact hours a day, and her method was to make her students read: the more the better. What they read didn't really matter, important was how much they read. Such an intensive course plus the language environment provided the necessary basis for the student's further studies in business management, law, medicine, etc.

When Mrs. Datesman was explaining to us the details of her method (she is currently writing a book on it), my colleagues from the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences joined in the discussion: they had been using principally the same method! And so had I, though I had never treated extensive reading as a method in itself.

A very large number if not most of my adult learners are lower-intermediate students of English. They have learned English at school and they remember a lot of words and catchphrases but their grammar is rather chaotic, and more often than not they have an even worse opinion of their own English than they really deserve.

The problem facing the teacher is: Where to start? How to use best the little or not-so-little that everybody has, and how to make the fastest progress? One answer to this is: try extensive reading!

By extensive (ant. intensive) reading for lower-intermediate students I mean their reading as much as possible, starting with 5-10 pages a week in the case of students who are busy with other subjects as well, and with 5-10 pages a day for professional people who often have but 2-3 months before they have to be able to communicate in English more or less freely. 'Extensive' here also means looking up in the dictionary only these words which are absolutely necessary for understanding the story while all the rest are left to be guessed at or simply ignored. Whenever possible, the reading material is authentic; heavily adapted texts often lose so

much of their English-linguageness that they are of little help in learning to grasp the original written sentence.

How are lower-intermediate students able to read authentic English books? To start, they need to brush up (or learn) a bit of basic grammar and some elementary vocabulary. The key problem seems to be the Tenses of the Active Voice. These can be explained and drilled together with the revision of the irregular verbs. The method I use is translation: the Estonian tense system is generally comparable with that of English, and Estonian sentences like "Kas see koer hammustab?" and "Vaata, üks maja põleb!" distinguish clearly between the Present Simple and the Present Continuous Tenses. It is also an easy and time-saving way for learning/revising the negative and interrogative forms.

Next, some attention must be paid to the modal verb. When the usual confusion with "mustn't" and "needn't" has been cleared up, one shouldn't forget to touch upon the modal meaning of "to be" and "would". Once the Active Voice is mastered, the Passive Voice becomes a minor problem. If the teacher relies heavily enough on students' independent work, after only eight or ten hours the students can plunge into reading.

There is, however, one group of students whose starting level is very low indeed, both from the point of view of grammar and of vocabulary, and who don't seem to be able to follow the simplest logic of the written sentence. If this is the case, the only way out is adapted reading material, the simpler the better for the student to gain confidence, understand some elementary grammar and learn words. The number of pages per day or per week should be increased if any results are expected.

During recent years, working with students of computer science, I have found extensive reading a very reliable way in learning and teaching English. The word-order here is deliberate: learning does come first in extensive reading, and teaching after that. Varying slightly with the baseline level in each group, our minimal reading norms have been: 100, 150, 100 + 50 (special literature), 100 + 100 pages per I, II, III and IV term, respectively. A number of students are willing to read more, and the books usually don't number exactly 100 pages, either. By the end of their second year, most students have been able to read their computer literature (terminology is no problem: computer specialists use English-language terms also when speaking Estonian) and their general knowledge of English is not bad at all.

There is one problem, however, that I haven't been able to solve and that makes extensive reading difficult to use in all of my six or seven student groups: the teacher's time. It isn't enough for the student just to read and to understand, it is absolutely imperative

to reproduce what one has read. In order to talk, you have to remember a lot of words on the subject, you have to arrange the words into meaningful sentences and the sentences into a logical and grammatically coherent narrative. Also, your pronunciation has to be intelligible for the listener, i.e. the teacher. The latter has to be an ever-interested hearer, trying to follow the narrative he/she has (hopefully) never read, helping with the vocabulary and the grammar, and making a "diagnosis" in order to point out which aspects of the language need further polishing in each individual case. A rough estimate of the time spent in listening to each student's (I have about 100-120 of them each term) 100-150 pages, plus some accompanying conversation, would make somewhere around 250 hours. For this reason, I have not used extensive reading in other groups except computer students and, this year, students of classical philology. These hours of work are not reflected in any weekly or yearly load, they go unnoticed and unpaid while they are probably the most fruitful and productive for the student. Does it follow from this that it is time to introduce the tutorial system in the newly-born Language Centre?

TESTING ENGLISH PROFICIENCY OF POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS OF AGRICULTURE

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As the opportunities for our postgraduate students to continue their studies in foreign countries have been extended, some changes in our foreign language programme and materials must be made. Every postgraduate who wants to continue his or her studies in the American universities or those of Western Europe in order to take a Bachelor's, Master's or Doctor's degree must pass the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL). The objective of the test is to evaluate the English proficiency of postgraduates whose native language is not English.

For that reason, in 1991, the Estonian University of Agriculture introduced a pilot scheme to prepare postgraduate students for this test.

The TOEFL itself consists of three parts.

1. **Listening Comprehension.** In this section of the test the postgraduates must demonstrate their ability to understand the spoken language. This section consists of three parts: a) short sentences, b) short conversations between two speakers, c) either a long conversation, or a short talk, or a lecture. The candidates will be asked some questions, and they will have to complete a multiple choice test.

2. **Structure and Written Expression.** This section measures the ability of postgraduates to comprehend standard written English, i.e. their knowledge of important areas of the basic grammar of written English. This section in turn consists of two parts: a) completion of sentences and b) correction of sentences where the one underlined word or phrase must be changed in such a way that the corrected sentence makes sense.

3. **Vocabulary and Reading Comprehension.** This section measures the postgraduates' comprehension of standard written English. It also consists of two parts: a) vocabulary test of different kinds of

words and b) answering the questions by reading and understanding the printed texts. (See: Understanding TOEFL).

The test carried out at the Estonian University of Agriculture was designed to measure the postgraduates' level of preparation for taking the TOEFL. The test consisted of 7 items:

1. Understanding a printed text. This section consisted of four parts: a) understanding a text – the text was about farm and ranch management, b) answering the questions – the postgraduates had to answer 10 questions, c) vocabulary – this section evaluated the postgraduates' knowledge of different kinds of words, i.e. they had to find out the words that corresponded to the definitions given, words having the same or opposite meaning, explanation of words, etc., d) grammar – this section measured the knowledge of basic English grammar, e.g. the postgraduates had to make sentences using the infinitive or the present participle after the verbs, to make nouns from the adjectives, etc.

2. Understanding a lecture. The postgraduates heard a lecture, which was divided into short sections to help them understand it. As they listened to it, they had to answer the questions in their books, complete the sentences with words from the lecture, state whether the statements were correct or incorrect, etc. Secondly, the postgraduates listened to the lecture again and then were asked to provide a summary of it, to make sure they had understood the important points of the lecture.

3. Understanding discourse. The postgraduates had to listen to the lecturer making an announcement. They were asked to note down what was requested of them.

The items included in the test were intended for practice at a fairly advanced level since these word combinations and phrases are of great use in research. Some items, e.g. understanding a lecture (90.96 %) and answering the questions (89.02 %), were not difficult for our postgraduates. Expressions and phrases (84.54 %) had also been acquired by the postgraduates without great effort. Understanding a printed text (79.72 %) appeared to be also rather easy for the candidates. Errors were more common in grammar (75.98 %), and understanding a discourse (60.97 %) was the most difficult item for them.

The average test difficulty was 80.13 per cent. Now let us compare our result with that needed for the TOEFL. The score record of TOEFL includes four different scores: three section scores and a total one. The maximum total score is 677. A total score of 600 (88.6 %) or above is considered excellent, a total score of 550 (81.2 %) will be accepted by the majority of the universities in

Percentage of correct answers of the proficiency test carried out in 1991

Specialized area	Number of post-graduates	A Printed Text				A Lecture		A Discourse	Mean
		Under-standing	Answering questions	Voca-bulary	Grammar	Under-standing	Ex-pressions	Under-standing	
1. Agronomy	3	93.33	96.66	83.95	77.77	91.66	85.51	73.33	86.03
2. Animal Husbandry	4	85	87.5	74.07	78.12	91.66	78.26	77.5	81.73
3. Economics	2	90	100	81.48	87.5	91.66	84.78	60	85.06
4. Land Reclamation	2	70	80	94.44	83.33	87.5	89.13	55	79.91
5. Veterinary Surgery	1	100	90	92.59	75	83.33	86.96	20	78.27
6. Farm Mechanization	1	40	80	51.85	54.16	100	82.61	80	69.8
Total:	13	79.72	89.02	79.73	75.98	90.96	84.54	60.97	80.13

America and West Europe, but that of below 400 (59 %) is regarded as unsatisfactory. Thus, an acceptable TOEFL score totals 81.2 %, but our result was a little below that (80.13 %). At the same time the results of the test directed attention the weakest points in teaching of the English language.

To sum up it must be pointed out that:

- 1) the test paper corresponded to the postgraduates' abilities.
- 2) 5 postgraduates were prepared for taking the TOEFL, but in the case of 4 postgraduates their knowledge of English was insufficient and they must continue their studies in this area. The knowledge of English of the remaining postgraduates has enabled them to try to take the test.
- 3) The teacher is informed about the efficiency of the teaching of English to postgraduates - more attention should be paid to their knowledge of grammar (75.9 %), vocabulary (79.7 %) and understanding of discourse (60 %).
- 4) The performance of the test items is of obvious importance to compiling future test papers.

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TEACHING PROCESS-ORIENTED WRITING

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Due to increased contacts with other countries, it has become necessary to develop writing skills in English. Language courses for adults are usually aimed only at oral proficiency and little attention is paid to written language. The traditional methodology of teaching writing is mainly concerned with school compositions and cannot be used very effectively for teaching adults how to write in English. This article introduces an alternative way of teaching writing skills by means of process-oriented writing methodology.

The process-oriented writing methodology originates from the University of California, Berkeley, where the Bay Area Writing Project was of spectacular success in the 80s. Since then it has become quite popular in Western countries, especially in Sweden.

As adults, we should be able to write about many subjects and for many different kinds of readers. Yet we all know how difficult it is to write. Many of us are so concerned with the final product of writing that the thoughts become blocked. The process-oriented writing method sees writing from the writer's standpoint and helps him overcome the difficulties he may encounter.

In the current writing methodology, writing is seen as communication. If the writer is a communicator, the text will be important for him and for those who read it. Therefore, writing is reader-focused. The writer's aim must be clear communication to his reader at the level of the reader's ability to understand. Putting oneself in another's place is crucial to writing effectively. When one writes for many readers, it is advisable to visualize a single, typical member of that group and write for that reader. The style and tone should also be suitable to the reader's needs and understanding.

The process-oriented writing method sees writing as a process that can be roughly divided into 8 steps. The emphasis is on the various stages all writers go through before arriving at their final version. The following description of these steps is generally valid for all kinds of writing (narrative, description, report, etc.), but it is especially helpful in cases where adult learners feel a lack of ideas and inability to express them.

Stages of Writing

1. Pre-writing

Pre-writing encompasses collecting and generating ideas, deciding upon audience and focus. It is the activity the writer engages in before beginning to write. He must think about the topic and explore all the possible things one might say on the topic. There are several forms of pre-writing.

1.1 Listing

The simplest form of prewriting is making a list of the things one knows about the subject. The list should be written rapidly, without arranging the items in any particular order. This technique is particularly useful for collecting the details.

1.2. Brainstorming

Brainstorming is a way of using a short burst of writing to find ideas to write about. It is similar to listing, but its purpose is to generate ideas rather than a list of objects or details. With this method, one writes down any words that come into his head in response to a cue. At this stage, nothing should be ruled out, because even a weak idea may lead to other ideas.

1.3. Clustering

Clustering is a graphic method of brainstorming. The writer lets his associations fan out from a central, beginning idea, which functions as a cue. For many people this visual mode of thinking frees the mind from the logic that even sentence fragments impose, with the result that their ideas fly quickly from one thought to another. Most people find that one chain of ideas becomes so strong and leads to so many associations that in the end they do not know what to write about.

1.4. Questioning

The writer puts down any questions that come to his mind in connection with the subject. Answering these questions may help one to realize that he has a great deal to say about the subject.

1.5. Interviewing

Interviewing is a live method of prewriting. In this case, there is communication between the writer as an interviewer and the interviewee. It is useful when there is somebody who may be able to give expert knowledge.

The pre-writing stage is considered very important in the process-oriented writing methodology. This technique provides the writer with abundance of ideas about a given subject.

2. The First Draft

The first draft of the piece of writing is where ideas are developed and joined up with new ideas. It is necessary to focus on the central ideas and leave out those irrelevant to the subject matter. At this stage, the writer should not worry about language correctness and may even insert some words in his mother tongue that can be later substituted for English equivalents. According to the methodology, obsession with correctness at first stages makes it difficult for the writer to work out what he wants to say. The first draft is nothing final; there is a great difference between the first draft and the final version.

3. Peer Response

The process-oriented writing methodology emphasizes the role of intercommunication between the writer and the reader. This can be achieved by response work in pairs or groups. Thus, after writing the first draft, it should be read out to a friend or other members of a group. Each member of the response group comments on the draft. These comments should not consist of general value judgements or of criticism, since general judgements are not very useful and negative comments are depressing and counter-productive. Next, the group member asks some questions which will help the writer see the weaknesses in his writing. The questions should be specific and deal with the content rather than the language of the text. The writer should not answer these questions but should note down the questions and other ideas gathered from the discussion, which can be used in his second draft. Confusion in the early stages is a natural part of the process of creative writing.

4. The Second Draft

Once the writer has thought through the ideas of the first draft with the help of his response partners, he will write a second draft. Some writers may not need to change much of their text, only adding some examples, moving a sentence up or down or solving the problems which came up in the discussion. On the other hand, very many writers need to rework the entire piece of writing. The writer should make sure that his main points are clearly stated, that every idea included is relevant to the argument, and that the examples really illustrate the relevant points. The text should be revised to increase comprehension and readability. A piece of writing goes through several revisions before it is ready for editing.

5. Teacher's Response

In the process-oriented writing methodology, the teacher should adopt a new role, that of a consultant-adviser. He should be the writing expert and be able to give specific advice. The teacher's job is more of asking questions and suggesting alternatives than marking mistakes. Marking must be constructive, so that learners can use it in their revision, and selective i.e. students should be treated individually. The teacher should be able to help both the talented and the less able learners.

6. Editing

Editing involves checking correctness of facts, grammar, spelling, usage, punctuation, and mechanics. The writer should go through his second draft, polishing the language. It may be necessary to make a fair copy, but if the second draft is legible and well laid out, there is no need for it. However, the writer will certainly be able to improve the text by changing, adding or taking away a phrase or a word here and there.

7. Proof-reading

Proof-reading includes reading final copy for typing errors, handwriting readability, and words left out.

8. Evaluation

There should not be very much marking at the end, since the teacher has been helping the learners all the time. The teacher reads the text through very quickly to get a first impression. Then he evaluates the content, language and spelling. The teacher should concentrate on positive qualities and consider the content most important.

The process-oriented writing methodology can be best used when writing assignments are carried out on computers. The advantages of a computer are that one can use a spelling checker and a synonym finder, move sentences easily up or down and have a neat printed copy of the text. However, this methodology can be successfully used also with the "PP-computer", i.e. with pen and paper.

Writing in the process-oriented methodology is collective. Even if the text is written individually, peer response gives a feeling of unity. Texts can also be written together, so that different learners are responsible for various parts of texts. If the learners feel that their job is a part of a whole, they usually feel that their assignment is important.

In this methodology, learners are taught both theory and practice since they are inseparable parts of the writing process. Writing is seen as a cyclic process; the writer can solve his problems by looking at them from different angles. Thus, the process and product of writing correspond.

To sum up, classroom experiences have shown that process-oriented writing results in richer and more detailed texts, better planning, more correct language, focusing on the main theme and a tidy presentation. This methodology will hopefully become widespread in Estonia as well.

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AN INTENSIVE ADULT BEGINNERS' READING COURSE OF ESTONIAN FOR NATIVE SPEAKERS OF ENGLISH

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In 1990, the author spent eleven months as Estonian lector at the School of Slavonic and East European Studies, University of London. The learners of Estonian included both students and lecturers, mostly specialists of history and political science.

In many respects, pioneering work had to be done, not only because learners were adult native speakers of English but also because Estonian was undertaken for specific narrowly defined purposes. The task was formulated as learning to read Estonian, notably the Estonian press. (That this was prompted by Estonia's unprecedented role in developments in the then Soviet Union goes without saying). Rapid progress in the area was expected while other kinds of language skills could be relatively neglected.

Although the language taught was Estonian, there is reason to believe that an analysis of the experience might have wider significance. In some respect, an English learner of Estonian is in a position similar to that of an Estonian learner of English or, say, German: in both cases the target is a member of another language family*. True, distance/difference from the mother tongue is not the sole determinant of the difficulty of learning a language (cf. Corder S. Pit 1977, p. 229), yet there is undoubtedly a correlation between the two.

Since rapid progress was expected in a narrow area, it seemed expedient to

1) concentrate on the area almost to the exclusion of all other activities and

* For most of the London students, Estonian provided the first contact with a non-Indo-European language. Their idea of learning a foreign language had predominantly been moulded upon languages closely related to English. In a sense, therefore, Estonian clashed with their expectations of what their task would involve, which created a certain psychological barrier. In Estonia, this particular problem does not seem to arise, since all major foreign languages learnt here – with the exception of Finnish – are unrelated to Estonian.

2) set relatively difficult tasks to the learners from the start.

The two principles ruled out the use of existing textbooks of Estonian (by A. Haman, F. Oinas, T. Salasoo). The following build-up of the course was arrived at. To begin with, there was a brief introductory session on pronunciation. This was succeeded by a simple text exemplifying the present tense forms of the verb. In the fourth session, an authentic unadapted text was introduced for reading and translation: a newspaper editorial on the then topical issue of the Estonian Congress.

The choice of the text was prompted by several considerations. Firstly, the inherent interest of the subject-matter was intended to compensate for the relative monotony of the classes from which many variety-producing exercises such as role-playing, pairwork, etc., were of necessity excluded. Secondly, an authentic text was expected to be enough of a challenge for the learners to ensure their rapid progress.

The considerations proved to be justified. As opinions volunteered by the learners – subsequently backed up by answers to a questionnaire – showed, they appreciated the topicality of the material. Indeed, interest in the classes never lagged and attendance was good. Also, it was pointed out by the learners that the fact that they were dealing with an authentic text paradoxically had an encouraging effect on them, proving as it did the attainability of the ultimate goal, i.e. the feasibility of reading a dreaded non-Indo-European language.

Meanwhile, presenting authentic material at such an early stage was admittedly a risky step to take. It was evident from the start that the learners would encounter a great number of problems simultaneously and would need special help in solving them. To elucidate the nature of the difficulties involved and the ways of overcoming them, a brief outline of the processes of text comprehension is in order here.

One of the most convincing theories of discourse comprehension available at the moment (see Johnson-Laird P.N., 1983, 1988a, b) distinguishes three principal levels of representation in the comprehension process: "... first, there is a phonemic (or graphemic) representation that encodes the sounds (or letters) of an utterance; second, there is a propositional representation, which is close to the surface form of the utterance; third, there is a mental model" (Johnson-Laird P.N., 1983, p. 407). The latter may be 'physical' (relational, spatial, temporal, kinematic, dynamic or image-like) or 'conceptual' (op. cit., pp. 422–425). For texts on abstract topics, conceptual models are constructed in the readers mind. The exact nature of these is problematic (see Johnson-Laird P.N., 1988a, p. 59) but it is supposed that to-

kens are used to represent abstract notions and relations between them.

For experimental support to the distinction of the three levels of representation, see, e.g., Glushko R.J., Cooper L.A., 1978, Mani K., Johnson-Laird P.N., 1982. The mental model is constructed on the basis of the truth conditions of the propositions expressed by the sentences in the discourse. The truth conditions depend not only on the meaning of the sentence (where 'meaning' is an abstract notion that reflects only what is determined by a knowledge of the language), but also on its context of utterance as represented in the current mental model and the implicit inferences that it triggers from background knowledge (Johnson-Laird P.N., 1988b, pp. 340-341).

A similar approach has been proposed by Barwise and Perry (1983, p. 14ff.) who use the term 'described situation' to denote an entity essentially the same as a mental model. Meaning is then defined as a relation between utterances and described situations while the described situation makes up the interpretation (reference) of a statement on a specific occasion.

N.E. Enkvist describes the meaning-reference dichotomy with the help of two distinct stages, viz. those of comprehension and contextualization. A text is comprehensible to those who can assign basic, canonical meanings to its structures, and contextualizable to those who can assign to it a situation-bound, communicative meaning. Comprehension in this sense involves relating the text to semantic universes of discourse and contextualization means surrounding it with a specific text world where specific states of affairs appear (Enkvist N.E., 1992). Preceding the two stages is that of intelligibility: discourse is intelligible to those who can successfully segment it into morphemes, clauses and sentences (ibid.).

In spite of the absence of one-to-one correspondence between the stages distinguished by Johnson-Laird and Enkvist, the overall picture that emerges from their descriptions is essentially the same. For applied purposes, the following combination of the two can be considered sufficiently precise. To begin with, the reader forms a graphemic representation of the text in his mind. This he segments into morphemes which he then groups into phrases and sentences (morphemic and syntactic analysis). On the basis of the latter, a propositional representation is constructed, to which canonical meanings are attached. Finally, interaction of the meanings with the context of utterance and background knowledge leads to contextualization, i.e. construction of a specific mental model of the state of affairs depicted in the text together with the writer's intentions.

For beginners who embark on an authentic text in a foreign language, substantial difficulties can be expected in all links of the chain. It goes without saying that too many obstacles met with

simultaneously would lead to frustration and a check in the language-learning process. To avoid this, it is imperative that difficulties should be anticipated and eliminated in time. For the purpose, the following techniques were used.

The stage of intelligibility

The text was accompanied by a detailed list of commentaries, in which every word was given as a separate entry. The words were segmented into morphemes and the meaning and function of each morpheme were provided.

For verbs, nouns and adjectives, basic forms were supplied alongside the forms in the text. Special emphasis was laid on verbal and case endings, which in Estonian carry considerable syntactic information. Since the commentaries were compiled on a PC, various graphic devices could be used to bring out the grammatical morphemes (bold print, italics, etc.). In the questionnaire these were pointed out by the learners as a factor facilitating memorization.

In compiling the commentaries, attempts were made to build where possible on the learners' previous linguistic experience. The latter turned out to be extensive, covering languages such as Latin, German, French and, specifically, Russian. Importantly, a conscious, grammar-based approach had generally been applied in learning the languages, with the result that the learners were at home with most grammatical notions and terms. The whole apparatus of grammatical terminology could accordingly be resorted to in the commentaries.

Throughout the commentaries, the principle of excluding all grammatical material not essential for purposes of recognition was adhered to. For instance, both *-de-* and *-te-* were introduced as markers of the plural, with no attempt at distinguishing their respective areas of use. Similarly, all vowel case endings were grouped together and a table of correspondences between the vowels of the genitive singular and partitive plural endings given for reference purposes. In other words, the learners were taught what to do upon coming across a certain verbal or nominal form in the text rather than how to produce the forms. A considerable amount of material given in standard Estonian grammars proved superfluous in this approach.

A factor conducive to rapid learning of grammatical morphemes was their high frequency of occurrence in an authentic text which ensured a rate of repetition sufficient for purposes of memorization. In fact, the frequency proved high enough for statistical tendencies to establish themselves within the boundaries of an editorial. For example, the frequent occurrence of the partitive plural in socio-political texts, manifest half-way through the article, was confirmed in the texts used later in the course.

This brings us to a general advantage of using authentic texts

instead of ones specially compiled for teaching purposes: an authentic text can be relied on to give a cross-section of the style in question and thus provide statistical information on the use of linguistic units in it. A case in point was the Estonian subject-predicate inversion – a phenomenon not likely to abound in a specially compiled or adapted text yet extremely common in the socio-political style.

It must be admitted that commentaries to the text, though made maximally informative, did not suffice for successful syntactic analysis. Numerous syntactic features of Estonian, manifest in an authentic text, present nearly insuperable problems to Indo-European learners (*mutatis mutandis* this applies, of course, to Estonian learners of Indo-European languages). For instance, the learners found it exceedingly difficult to spot the head word of a noun phrase with a long string of genitival premodifiers. Special supporting exercises were needed to practise recognition of such constructions. Also, the learners got, from the first, a number of grammatical tables for reference purposes (e.g., full nominal and verbal paradigms). Both the exercises and the tables were highly rated by the learners in the questionnaire.

The propositional representation (comprehension) stage

The main problem here were stem-morphemes. It is in this area that the difference between the language families makes itself felt most forcibly. Numerous roots in Estonian (including abstract words such as 'justice', 'love', 'law', etc.) are Finno-Ugrian and do not bear the remotest resemblance to their Indo-European counterparts. At the same time, in an authentic text most stems do not occur frequently enough to ensure repetition sufficient for their memorization.

At this point, the need for specially compiled texts arose. These took the form of dialogues on political subjects. While every effort was made to keep the language of the texts natural, recurrence of the vocabulary was the leading consideration in their compilation. For one article, there were, in all, eight supporting texts of 700–1000 words each, in which new words were repeated up to twelve times.

Since the supporting texts were, likewise, compiled on a PC, various graphic devices were used to bring out stems as well as grammatical morphemes. This, however, did not prove particularly expedient. Typically, the learners showed every sign of surprise when told, upon finishing a text, that, e.g., the case endings or certain stems had been printed in italics: their attention had been held by other matters. The cost effectiveness of the work that went into the use of graphic devices was clearly too low, as was also borne out

by answers to the questionnaire. The practice was dropped for later texts.

Though many key words in an Estonian socio-political text are Finno-Ugrian, this does not of course mean that Indo-European loans are missing. The facilitating effect on comprehension of late loans goes without saying. Of special interest, however, are earlier loans where the origin is not immediately obvious, e.g. 'pilt', 'adel' (cf. 'Bild', 'Edel'). The origin of such words was always pointed out in the commentaries, which, as witnessed by answers to the questionnaire, invariably proved helpful to learning. Attention was, likewise, always drawn to translation loans such as 'järelle mõtlema' (cf. German 'nachdenken'), as well as Indo-European (predominantly Russian) influence on Estonian phraseology and socio-political clichés. Owing to the fact that the learners were conversant in major Indo-European languages, such information turned out extremely valuable for the learning process.

Finally, function words appeared the most difficult for the learners to attach basic meanings to. To ease the burden on their memory, they were provided with a list of the most frequent Estonian function words together with their English equivalents. In the questionnaire, most learners specifically mentioned the list as conducive to learning.

The contextualization (model) stage

The question may arise how far this stage is relevant to foreign language learning. It might be argued that reading in a foreign language should concentrate on meanings rather than reference (interpretation) (the more so as the model stage is to some extent optional in reading the mother tongue, cf. Johnson-Laird P.N., 1983, p. 158ff.). However, in the process of native language acquisition the direction is clearly from reference to meaning. "What children have to acquire is the truth conditions of expressions - more accurately, the contribution that expressions make to the truth conditions of sentences. Once they have a working knowledge of this aspect of a word, they will have implicitly mastered its logical properties" (op. cit., p. 263). Construction of the mental model of a foreign-language text therefore seems the natural way of building up and refining a knowledge of the meanings of the words and expressions, especially as there is no one-to-one correspondence between words and expressions in the native and foreign languages.

As already mentioned, application of background knowledge is an integral part of the contextualization of a text. With beginners confronted with an authentic text in a foreign language, it seems advisable to cut back on difficulties connected with this. In that respect, a newspaper editorial was well suited to historians and political scientists: familiarity of the subject area was pointed out

by several learners as a factor fostering comprehension and learning. Even with a familiar subject area, explanations were often necessary to shed light on the context of utterance.

* * *

To sum up, for highly motivated, painstaking and gifted learners, the assets of presenting challenging material generally outweigh the dangers. The use of an authentic text almost from the start can prove rewarding provided that abundant supporting material is made available to the learners.

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