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# A Structural Comparison Of English and Tongan

BY ERMEL J. MORTON

This paper presents a few of the most prominent differences between structure of Tongan that cause problems in the teaching of English to Tongans.

Many of the problems encountered by the Tongan in studying English arise from his attempts to transfer the patterns of Tongan structure over to the English, both in speaking and in writing. The result is that wherever the structure of his native language differs from that of English, he has difficulty and makes mistakes.

Since this paper is not designed to present a highly technical discussion of the subject, a minimum of the technical jargon of descriptive linguistics will be used. However, all of the material of the paper has been derived by the research methods of descriptive linguistics. To the linguist desiring a more detailed and technical description of the matters in this paper, the author's doctoral dissertation "A Descriptive Grammar of Tongan" will prove helpful.

At the outset it should be pointed out that the most basic structural difference between English and Tongan is that of the devices used to signal grammatical meaning. Some languages, including the so-called highly synthetic or inflected languages, depend upon modification of the word to indicate grammatical concepts. For example, Spanish hablo "I speak" hablé "I spoke" shows a change of grammatical meaning effected by use of a suffix. In English are found such inflections as see > saw > seen and as walk > walked > walking, etc. In all of these instances, the change in grammatical meaning is signalled by inflection of the word.

Another grammatical device used in many languages is that of allowing context to indicate the precise grammatical meaning with no change in the form of the word. The number of most nouns in Japanese, for example,


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is indicated by context; hako to inkitsubo (hako "box", and to "and" and inkitsubo "inkstand") may mean either "the box and the inkstand" or "the boxes and the inkstand" depending upon the context. The Japanese language, except in a few instances, makes no overt distinction between singular and plural nouns, leaving the meaning to be inferred from context or the situation in which the nouns are used. With regard to English and Tongan, English makes use of context to a greater extent than Tongan, a structural difference that presents a number of problems to the Tongan learning English. Fortunately, however, the number of English nouns having the same form in singular as in plural is not too great and the extent of the problem is limited.

## Function Words Used

Separate words, which may be designated as function words, convey grammatical concepts in a number of languages. Tongan belongs to this group of languages; in fact, the main grammatical device in Tongan is that of using function words to signal grammatical meaning.

The Tongan subject marker specifying subjects of transitive verbs is an instance of such a function word. If Sione "John" is to be used as a subject, it must be preceded by the function word 'e as in the sentence: Na'e ui ia 'e Sione "John called him" (Na'e past tense marker, ui "to call," ia "him," 'e subject marker, and Sione "John"). In Japanese, the function word wa also marks subjects as in Watashi wa hon wo motte imasu "I have the book" (watashi "I", wa subject marker, hon "book," wo direct object or goal marker motte "have," and imasu present tense). As indicated, wa marks the subject and wo the direct object in this sentence. The 'e of Tongan and wa and wo of Japanese are separate words conveying grammatical meaning. The use of separate words is the third major type of grammatical device.

Word order, another type of contextual device, is also used to convey grammatical meaning in a number of languages including English. The well-known example of The dog bit the man as contrasted with The man bit the dog illustrates the use of word order in signalling the subject and object in the sentance. The change of subjects from dog to man and the change of goals or direct objects from man to dog is effected by a change of word order: the subject precedes the verb and the object follows it. Many languages use the device of word order to indicate the relationship of modifier to the word modified. English makes much more use of word order as a grammatical device than does Tongan.

## Three Signalling Devices

Thus, to summarize, there are three major grammatical devices used in signalling grammatical meaning: inflection or changes made in the word, use of separate words or function words and use of context to signal meaning. However, since this paper is in no way an attempt to explain the types of grammatical devices used in languages generally, but is rather an attempt to point out the differences in the use of such grammatical devices by English and Tongan, the examples so far given will suffice to lay the groundwork for the discussion which follows.

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# Controlled, Guided, and Free Writing

BY RICHARD J. PORT

The teaching of writing skills in second language learning is unlikely to improve until greater effort has been made to sequence those skills. At present, the attempt is made to filter out errors through extensive free practice. Some students learn in this way, but the second language teacher needs only to look at his students' papers to see for himself how unsuccessful this method usually is for a majority of his students.

With extensive free practice, students' errors accumulate until these become so numerous and varied that students can not determine which ones require their most immediate attention; reinforcement of correct writing procedures does not take place; students become discouraged because they are unable to see any real improvements in their writing ability and the teacher becomes a machine turning out an infinite variety of red marks on students' themes.

## Ideal Program

Is there an alternative? We need first ask ourselves what an effective writing program should provide for the students. Ideally such a program should:

1) Make it possible for students to write error-free papers.

2) Reinforce correct writing procedures.

3) Build students' confidence in their own ability to write.

4) Motivate students to improve their writing ability.

5) Increase the amount of students' practice.

6) Enable students to proceed at their own rate.

7) Develop students' ability to use skillfully the complex English structures so evident in the writing of educated adults.

Writing techniques which control students' practice, as well as guide and channel progress, show considerable promise in meeting the criteria just mentioned. By programming and isolating various structures of study and by combining these in such a way as to enable students to use the complex structures found in the writing of educated adults, we can provide a tool for writing practice which is so controlled that students are ensured success at every attempt.

## Substitution Is First Step

A student can begin by making simple substitutions on existing models. He can work his way through a series of graduated steps involving modifications and transformations unitl finally he begins to expand upon the model and create original models of his own. As difficulties arise, the student can be branched for further practice. Only in the last stages of this technique, only after the student has proven he can do so successfully, is he required to work with the steps which ask him to write freely and creatively. One of the most encouraging aspects of this technique is that it can provide students with practice which will allow them to proceed according to their own abilities and at their own rate of speed.

Early in 1964, an experimental set of materials was developed using this technique. These materials were used with a number of groups of foreign students at Teachers College, Columbia University, with second language students in Nigeria, Japan, and elsewhere around the world as well as with younger first-

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# Church College of Western Samoa Plans Revised TESL Curriculum

A major curriculum revision to meet the English language needs of both native and non-native speakers English attending the Church College of Western Samoa (sponsored by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints) has been started according to Ronald F. Malan, Language Arts Department Chairman.

Mr. Malan pointed out that the curriculum has, in past years, been greatly influenced by a number of factors: 1) the inexperience of the faculty in teaching English as a second language, 2)the frequent changes of personnel, particularly Mainland teachers, have often caused fluctuations in curriculum philosophy, 3) a basic conflict of need in attempting to provide classes for both native and non-native speakers of English, 4) the need for students to pass examinations required as a feature of the New Zealand syllabus after which Western Samoa patterns its school system.

A committee was formed to study the problems and write a new curriculum. Members of the committee were first charged to become better acquainted with current methods of TESL which was accomplished via extensive reading, a visit to the educational TV facilities in American Samoa, and by Mr. Malan's trip to the 1967 NCTE Convention in Honolulu.

## Curriculum Designed

As a result of their efforts, the committee proposed a one year temporary curriculum for the beginning of the present school year which, according to the New Zealand schedule, started immediately after Christmas Vacation. Mr. Malan reports, "With considerable effort we were able to present a temporary, one year curriculum scheme, for all grade levels which was definitely more ESL-oriented, though far from the efficiency we seek; it was coupled with a skeletal outline of regular and systematic in-service training sessions to support and supplement it.

## Programs Implemented

The problem of a curriculum that is efficient for both Samoan and "palagi" students is beginning to be solved through the use of programmed and individualized, continuous progress materials for the palagi. For the Samoans, we are currently establishing a hierarchy of individual concepts to be taught. Once identified, the concepts will be stated as instructional objectives. This painstaking process will take a long time. But when it is finally accomplished, we intend to work toward developing programmed and invidualized, continuous progress materials for the Samoan students."

## Composition—

language students in Massachusetts. In every tryout the results indicated that students were consistently able to write both simple and complex structures of the language correctly and gain confidence in their writing ability.

It is encouraging to discover that we may, at last, have a tool that will provide extensive writing practice and will develop writing skills systematically and without discouraging the student or overburdening the teacher with successive corrections. Other approaches have not met with very great success. At the very least, this technique deserves our attention and consideration.

1 Ananse Tales, A Course in Controlled Composition. Gerald Dykstra, Richard Port and Antonette Port, Teachers College Press, Teachers College, Columbia University, New York, 1966.

# Teaching the "th" of English

BY ALICE C. PACK

Lesson Two is aimed at teaching the recognition and production of [θ] and [ð] (see International Phonetic Alphabet) which are used extensively in English (both are usually spelled "th" in English). Because these sounds are new to many non-native speakers of English, including Tongan and Samoan speakers, they might be confused with sounds which are produced in a slightly different position or manner.

As was mentioned in lesson one, it is well to present new sounds in contrast — from the known to the unkown. When neither [θ] or [ð] is known previously, one or the other should be taught first in contrast with a known sound. Then, after the student can both recognize and produce one of these sounds in a speech segment, he is ready to learn the second sound in contrast with the one he has just mastered.

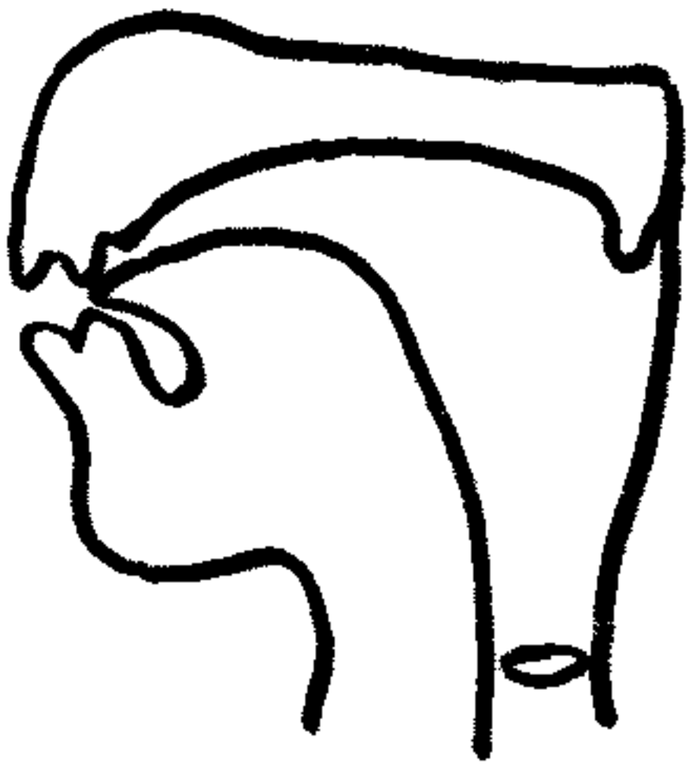
## No Voiced Velars

Since neither Tongan nor Samoan have the voiced velar sounds [z] nor [d] but do have the unvoiced velars [s] and [t] it would be best to start by teaching the unvoiced [θ] in relation to one of these sounds. If [s] is chosen for contrast, the teacher might start the lesson by pronouncing two words which have as their only difference the two sounds [s] and [θ] such as "thumb" and "sum" or "some". (Note that spelling and pronunciation in English are not necessarily related and students should not confuse pronunciation with spelling.) As they are pronounced the teacher might put a simple addition problem (1+1=2) on the board to represent sum and hold up her thumb to emphasize the contrast in meaning between these two words.

Several pairs of words might then be introduced to show the same contrast. These may be placed on the board or simply a sign for each sound might be put on the board. The class indicates sound 1 "θ" or sound 2 "s" as the teacher says the words. Included might be minimal pairs like:

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| stick | thick | miss | myth |
| sum | thumb | pass | path |
| mass | math | moss | moth |

At this time the teacher should avoid any detailed definition of the words used. It is sufficient to let the students know that there is a difference in meaning and one cannot be substituted for the other. A description of the difference in these sounds should be given, demonstrating that the tongue moves forward from the "s" position—where it is against the ridge behind the upper teeth—until it is between the teeth. This is what makes the contrast between these sounds. Sketching this on the blackboard or showing a previously prepared diagram might prove helpful.



Recognition exercises similar to those given in Lesson 1 should be tried so that the teacher may see whether the students can distinguish the difference in sound.

Exercise 1) A minimal pair is used with the teacher repeating the same word twice or pronouncing the two different words. As this is done - the students say "same" or "different," indicating their ability to dis-

tinguish the sounds. Examples: earth, earth = same lass, lath = different.

Exercise 2 ) Instead of two words the teacher repeats three words, with two alike and one in contrast. The position of the contrasting word is indicated by the students who say 1, 2, or 3. Example: sum, thumb, some 2; math, math, mass 3.

The teacher should move around the room so that she can listen to different student responses and so that the students do not depend on seeing this difference in tongue position as the teacher produces the sound. If the students recognize the difference in sounds, production training may begin. If not, earlier steps should be repeated until recognition is effected, as a student must recognize a sound before he can produce it.

## Tongue Placement

Producing [θ] involves unfamiliar tongue placement — that is, between the teeth. Students should be taught to exaggerate this position in the beginning because only the most experienced speaker can produce the [θ] by placing the tongue against the back of the teeth and forcing air between the small opening between the teeth. (The symbol might suggest the mouth with the tongue out between the teeth).

If students produce a [t] instead of [θ] , the teacher should point out the difference between the stop [t] and the continuent produced by friction. At this point the articulatory diagrams can again be used to good advantage by the instructor. If a mirror is available, students might watch themselves make the sounds (they could then practice outside of class using this same device.)

The teacher might evaluate students' production by asking simple questions like the following:

Who do you play with?
I play with _____.
Who do you eat with?
I eat with _____.
What do you see with?
I see with my eyes.
What do you hear with?
I hear with my ears.
Who do you go with?
I go with _____.

Students may practice in pairs or groups with one asking the question and another answering.

After the voiceless [θ] has been studied, its voiceless counterpart [ð] may be introduced. Mouth and tongue position remain the same; the difference is in voicing. This is done by vibrating the vocal bands. Students can, by placing their hands over their ear or upon their throats, feel this difference quite effectively.

# Comparison

(Continued from Page 2)

As has been previously stated, Tongan depends, for the most part, on function words to carry the grammatical concepts of the language. English, on the other hand, relies upon a mixture of grammatical devices and in this respect differs from Tongan in a number of ways. The devices used by Tongan include function words, inflection and, to a limited extent, word order. English uses function words, inflection, word order and context. The differences between Tongan and English with regard to types of grammatical devices used is best illustrated with a chart showing the type or types of device used in each language in conveying some of the major grammatical concepts. The chart is in no way intended to be exhaustive in treatment; it merely indicates the major types of grammatical device used in signalling some of the major grammatical concepts.

(See Chart Bottom Page 7)

It will be seen from the above chart that Tongan makes much more extensive use of function words in signalling grammatical concepts than does English. Of the nine grammatical concepts listed, three use function words exclusively in Tongan and three

# Of English and Tongan

others make fairly prominent use of function words. In no grammatical category of English are function words the sole device used and in only four of them do function words play a part.

To be sure, both Tongan and English make use of conjunctions and and prepositions of the traditional sort; however, English has a greater variety of such prepositions. Among the Tongan traditional prepositions may be listed ki "to," mei "from" and 'i "in or at". The possessive preposition 'o "of" with its allomorphic form 'a "of" also follows the traditional pattern of prepositions and parallels English in its usage. Many features of Tongan conjunctions and their use are similar to those of English although there are some differences too. The Tongan conjunctions pea "and", mo "and" and 'o "and" all may be followed directly by a pronoun subject in a number of situations where the pronoun would be omitted in English. For example, the English sentence H e stood up and left may be expressed in Tongan as Na'a ne tu'u 'o ne 'alu (Na'a past tense, ne "he," tu'u "stand up," 'o "and," ne "he," and 'alu "go"). Although we can say in English He stood up and he left such a usage is rare; in Tongan, however, Na'a ne tu'u 'p ne 'alu is quite common. Consequently, a Tongan will be inclined to repeat the pronoun subject where it is unnecessary and perhaps even a bit awkward in English.

**(To be continued in Volume 2, No. 1)**

**Dr. Morton's dissertation is available from: University Microfilms, Inc. P.O. Box 1346, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48106**

| Grammatical Concept | Tongan | English |
|---|---|---|
| Tense | Function words | Inflection and Function words |
| Voice | Presence or absence of subject (i.e., context) | Inflection and Function Words |
| Verbal aspect | Use of verbs as nominals with possessive pronouns and use of function words | Inflection and Function Words |
| Comparison (Adjectives and adverbs) | Function words | Inflection and function words |
| Noun subjects and objects (function) | Function words | Word order |
| Pronoun subjects and objects | Function words and inflection | Inflection and word order |
| Possessive case of nouns | Prepositional phrase modifier | Inflection |
| Possessive case of pronouns | Inflection | Inflection |
| Modification | Function words, postion and one inflectional suffix | Position (context) |

# An Invitation to Publish

Manuscripts for consideration for inclusion in the Fall and Winter numbers (Vol. 2) of the TESL Reporter may now be submitted to the editor. The basic format of forthcoming issues will require at least four major articles for each issue, two of an immediately practical nature and two on a more theoretical level, with occasional book reviews and news of TESL in Hawaii and across the Pacific.

The TESL Reporter has grown from its early circulation of 500 to nearly 1,000 for this issue. Future editions will also include an expansion in size to a full twelve pages. Some indication of the range of the present circulation is given in the following statistics: the Reporter reaches 24 states, 12 foreign countries, eight professional journals, and is widely circulated to libraries, principals, English Department chairmen, and many individual teachers here in Hawaii.

Wide publicity for the Reporter has resulted from short notices or reviews published in the Modern Language Journal and the NEA's 1968 Source Materials for Teachers of Foreign Languages. Requests for subscription average at least two a week.

Manuscripts should be typed, double spaced, and generally should not exceed 3-4 pages in length. We invite articles from University level sources, both professors and graduate students, from the public schools, both elementary and secondary. Articles from teachers in the classroom with problems and/or successes in TESL are particularly needed. Deadline for the fall issue in August 25, 1968.

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