

# Classroom Use of Language Records

By Ernst Peutl

It may appear somewhat anachronistic in the age of the language laboratory to write on the classroom use of language records, and it is even superfluous when a native speaker of the language is at hand. But teaching conditions are not always as favorable as we would like them to be and more often than not a native speaker is not available. Indeed, in developing countries even a good language record and a record player may be something of a luxury.

In the following article the attempt will be made to show how grammophone records were used as surprisingly effective teaching aids with German-speaking students, both teen-age and adult, at an intermediate stage of proficiency.

Students had already acquired a good knowledge of basic grammar and vocabulary. The objective was (a) to introduce them to listening to and understanding a native speaker of English, (b) to enable them to reproduce orally and in writing what they had heard, and (c) to make them use it in a slightly changed context so that eventually they would be able to understand English-language broadcasts and discuss them.

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Dr. Ernst Peutl received Foreign Language Teaching Degrees and his Ph.D. from the University of Vienna, Austria. He spent one year at the University of Arkansas as an exchange student and in 1965/66 was a Visiting Fulbright Lecturer on German at Clemson University, South Carolina.

He is currently professor at the Institute of Higher Adult Education, Vienna, Austria, teaching English as a second language and Latin.

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The texts recorded were mostly taken from American and British magazines for teen-agers, such as "My Weekly Reader Young Citizen", and dealt with concrete topics.

Before being presented, the material of the records was divided into relatively short sections, the sentences of which were split up into semantic units each containing a limited number of words and expressions.

At first the entire section to be covered

in a period was played to the class to enable them to adjust to the speaker and his pace. The first reaction of the listeners was usually perplexion. Upon re-play this attitude changed to curiosity in the text presented.

The next step was to turn the students from purely receptive listeners into active recipients of what they had heard. To accomplish this a small sub-section was played and re-played until some of the students were able to reproduce it. The teacher explained in English whatever new vocabulary had occurred, and had it written on the blackboard. Then the next unit was tackled and dealt with similarly, until the whole section was covered. When it was then re-played most of the students were usually able to follow the speaker— which gave them a not inconsiderable psychological boost. During the rest of the period the class members were asked to re-tell what they had heard with the teacher filling in whenever gaps occurred.

Provided with the new vocabulary and having a fairly good idea of the contents of the text, the students were then required to write down what they remembered at home and hand in their work prior to the next lesson. Thus the teacher could easily see what had given the students the greatest difficulty. As they had no recourse to either text or record this was a fairly reliable test.

In the next lesson the section covered the preceding time was played again and, by means of carefully prepared questions, the students were questioned on details. Whenever there was native language interference or a lack of clarity the particular unit was played and re-played until students were quite sure of its meaning and could reproduce it without fault. Through this repeated presentation the class had their attention focussed on specific problems and eventually they were able to reproduce the text independently and without attempting to translate from their native language.

This procedure was repeated with other sections of the record, and when finally the

text was mastered by the majority of the class they were given the original in print for further work and exercises.

It goes without saying that there can be no hard and fast orthodox rule to the method outlined above as the needs of each class have to be taken into consideration but, basically, the same approach is applicable in most situations. A tape recorder with a counter is a considerable advantage as it eliminates the difficulty in properly handling the pick-up. It is also handy in recording original radio broadcasts in case suitable language records are not available.

What then are the main features of this approach?

- (1) Very intensive monolingual practice,
- (2) aural-oral methodics combined with writing practice,
- (3) improved pronunciation through intensive exposure to a native speaker and
- (4) gradual training to follow a native speaker at a natural pace.



The English Language Institute of The Church College of Hawaii has added a new member to its faculty. She is Juanita N. Benioni, shown above with her husband, Patoa, and son, Terangi.

Mrs. Benioni attended the Kamehameha Schools, Honolulu, Hawaii and Venice High School, Los Angeles, California. She is a recent graduate of The Church College and received her degree in BATESL.

Please send answers to the textbook questionnaires to the editor immediately. The summer issue will carry a preliminary survey of TESL materials currently in use.

## TESL REPORTER

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