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# HOW MANY IS/ARE ZERO?

by Walter P. Allen

In answer to the question "How many pages had Jefferson written?" a student wrote "Zero page."

I reached out my pen to add *-s* to *page*, and then I stopped. Why add *-s*? Why did I feel that plural was correct for a number less than one? What is the number of *zero*? How would I explain that *-s* to the student?

The ultimate reason for the existence of such questions is that the speakers of our proto language who worked out the number system which eventually came into English did not have the concept of *zero*. Their counting system started with *one*. According to the Oxford English Dictionary *zero* did not appear until 1604, via French and Italian from Arabic. This was much too late to affect the English concepts of singular and plural.

Of course the speakers of our proto language understood a lack of *one*, which has been expressed since the time of Old English as some form of the modern *none*. However, this was not conceived as a count unit. Even today, children learn to count starting with *one*. The OED reports that *none* is commonly treated as plural, and the first citation of this usage is from King Ælfred dated 888. Thus the usage of *none* as plural goes back a long way into the early history of the language.

Although *zero* and *none* are rather different concepts, they are related. The literature on the question of number largely ignores *zero*, but it does discuss usage of *none*, so the following comments are perforce concerned with the latter.

## Possible explanations

The Concise Oxford Dictionary states that number agreement with *none* should be according to the sense required, with "none of them" followed by either *is* or *are*. Other examples listed include

none of this concerns me;  
 none but fools have ever believed it;  
 where *this* and *fools* bring out the number

sense intended. Another example in the same list puzzles me as to its sense of number:

are none so fond of him.

Quirk, et al. (1972, p. 360) explain that grammatical concord may not only be affected by notional concord, as above, but also by proximity, which could also apply to the first two examples from the COD above. Quirk, et al. give the example

none of them are . . . (1972, p. 365).

Neither sense nor proximity really explains\* "Zero pages."

Another possible explanation may be found in the theory of marked/unmarked pairs, which has been applied to many aspects of language. Generally stated, the marked member of a pair contains a feature which sets it off from the category more generally included in the unmarked member (Pearson, 1977, p. 205). In tense, the more limited past is considered marked as opposed to unmarked present, which can be used for any time:

present: She is at home;  
 past: The enemy advances;  
 future: We leave tomorrow.

Most writers using the notion of markedness list plural as marked as opposed to singular (one example, Wardhaugh, 1977, p. 164). Although it is true that plurals are marked by the addition of *-s*, notionally singular is far more limited (only one number, whereas plural is infinity only excepting *one*), so that singular can be considered marked. This application of the markedness theory would classify *zero* as plural, since it is not *one*.

The markedness theory has many useful applications, but English is full

\*Number concord with *either/neither* is a related problem. *Explain* (plural) would be chosen by many.

of apparent exceptions to this binary view. For example, *woman* is presented as marked as opposed to unmarked *man*, which (before women's lib) could refer to all humans as well as to only masculine humans. But this general rule does not explain such pairs as *king/queen* and *duke/duchess*. Nor is it possible to establish a similar marked/unmarked relationship with the names of some domestic animals:

horse—mare/stallion;  
pig—sow/boar;  
chicken—hen/rooster.

A recent experiment with recall confusion of five quantifiers indicates that the theory of binary marked/unmarked pairs does not explain the relationships between *all*, *many*, *some*, *a few*, and *none*. One conclusion which Holyoak and Glass came to was that the human brain may have "an internal quantity scale" for the concepts they were testing (1978, p. 262). Other non-binary sequences are found in adjectives:

good/better/best;  
and in the numerical series  
1—A guest arrived;  
2—Both guests arrived;  
3 or more—All guests arrived.

These examples give evidence that the brain has available multiple methods of coding the meanings expressed in language.

### Zero can be plural

The variations in classifying *zero* or *none* as either singular or plural are evidence of conflicting rules governing our language.

A speaker following the rule conceived in the days of *zero-less* math considers *zero* as singular. This idea is reinforced if the speaker thinks of singular as being unmarked (that is, every number that is not plural). However, common usage as attested by the dictionaries supports the definition of plural as all numbers not *one* (that is, plural is unmarked), which permits *zero* to be understood as plural.

My impulse to add *-s* to "Zero page" shows my preference for the definition of plural as all numbers other than *one*. Now I can tell my student that the singular form is based on the definition of plural as more than one, but that common usage, dating back to King Aelfred, supports the definition of plural as numbers other than one, resulting in "Zero pages."

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## New Journal: Cross Currents

*Cross Currents* is a biannual journal of communication, language, and cross-cultural skills published by the Language Institute of Japan. Major emphasis is on practical ideas and suggestions for classroom use with primary focus on Japanese students of

English. Japanese summaries of all articles are provided in each issue. Manuscripts are currently being solicited. Please address correspondence to the Language Institute of Japan, 4-14-1 Shiroyama, Odawara, Japan 250.

# Teaching English Verb-Particle Combinations to Arab ESL Students

by M. Aziz F. Yassin

## Verb-Particle Combinations (V-PCs)

English has a continual need to make up new verbs. One of the most common ways of making up new verbs in the Indo-European languages has been to fuse a verb stem and particle to make a new verb. In Latin, the particle was attached to the beginning of the verb. Here are some examples of verbs made in this way that have come into English:

*compel* Lat *com* "with, together" + *pello* "drive, force"

*devour* Lat *de* "down, from" + *voro* "swallow"

*exceed* Lat *ex* "out" + *cedo* "go away, withdraw"

Many English verbs are made up with particles prefixed in the Latin manner, for example:

by pass, overestimate, downplay, overlook, forget, understand, upset, offset, withdraw, withstand, overcome.

However, most English V-PCs are made with the particle used as a suffix rather than as a prefix, e.g.

go for, bring round, fall for, run down, walk into (food), bear out, get over, give up, keep up with, look up, look up to, make for, make up for, make up to, put off, put up with, stand down, stand for, stand up for, stand up to, turn in, turn on, turn out.

V-PCs are mainly colloquial; that is they appear first as slang or part of a specialized technical jargon. If the combinations withstand the passage of time, they become an unobjectionable part of the English vocabulary.

## Semantic Spreading Out

Bolinger (1971, p. 33) argues that we have to use what he calls "a kind of semantic

spreading out." That is, V-PCs are frequently used in preference to verbs of classical origin which have similar meanings but unsuitable overtones of formality, pomposity or difficulty. Instead of placing a fat bundle of semantic features into one word, matters can be more flexible by packing thinner bundles into two or three or more words. In other words, he would prefer *spreading* rather than *overloading*, for example:

He *discarded* the trash. (overloading)

He *threw out* the trash. (spreading)

He *estimated* the situation and *provided* figures. (overloading)

He *sized up* the situation and *gave in* figures. (spreading)

## Problems of Teaching V-PCs to Arab ESL Students

Arab ESL students are introduced to V-PCs at a later stage of learning English. During the early stages, they are taught that certain recurring segments possess

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unique and constant meanings. They are taught, for instance, that certain monosyllabic verbs such as *go*, *bring*, *come*, *fall*, *run*, *turn*, *walk* are verbs of movement, and that certain other verbs have core meanings attached to them, e.g.

to squeeze = to press on; get (water, juice) out of sth,

to salt = to add salt to food,

to shut = to close,

to act = to do something,

to build = to erect.

Particles such as: *for, up, away, down, across, to, out, over, with, on*, etc. are also taught as separate words with core meanings attached to them.

This tendency of learning 'separate' words is reinforced by the fact that ESL activities in many parts of the Arab world are basically text-book centered. Students are, therefore, introduced first to written modes of English characterized by what Bolinger describes as 'overloading.' Arab students learn verbs such as:

*to extinguish, to encounter, to corroborate, to compensate, etc.,*

before they are introduced to simpler synonyms such as:

*put out, run up against, bear out, and make up for.*

When the Arab learner is introduced to a V-PC such as *go for*, he tries to deduce the meaning of the whole from the sum of the meanings of the component parts which he has learnt as separate segments. In an utterance like:

*He went for a walk.*

the Arab learner will find no trouble as the component parts *go* and *for* keep what he has learnt as their 'basic' meanings. But trouble begins when he reads *go for* in the following various linguistic contexts:

-In investing money some people *go for* (=aim at; have an objective) a more or less assured dividend, others for capital increase.

-I let him have his say, and then I *went for him* (=attacked) and told him just what I thought.

-What I've said about this person *goes for* (=applies to) anyone else whom I find trespassing on my land.

The Arab learner will be overwhelmed by the multiplicity of meanings of V-PC *go for*, none of which relates to the meanings of the individual parts. Similar multiple meanings for the 'same' V-PC are suggested by *put up*:

-I'll *put you up* (=accommodate) for the weekend.

-They *put me up* to the situation. (gave me an idea)

-I can't *put up* with (tolerate) his misbehaviour.

-I'll *put up* your name for the football team.

### Classification of V-PCs

The 'neutral' term 'particle' has been adopted to designate both adverbs and prepositions. This approach derives from Mitchell's (1958, p. 103) classification of particle verbs:

Mitchell distinguishes two main categories: 'phrasal' and 'prepositional' to which we may add a third: the 'copula + particle.'

#### 1. Phrasal Verbs

Phrasal verbs have the following features:

a) The particle can be either pre- or post-nominal, e.g.

He put (on) his coat (on).

He called (up) her parents (up).

He made (up) the story (up).

The company turned (down) the offer (down).

It puts (out) a lot of news (out).

The separability of the particle from the verb itself is a purely formal matter, with no effect on meaning. If the object is long, however, it can come only after the particle:

It puts out a lot of news that you don't see anywhere else.

Phrasal verbs with two or more particles must occur in pre-nominal position:

The children *talked back to* their mother.

John *came up with* an idea.

Everyone *looked down on* them.

They *walked out on* us.

b) Pronouns usually precede the particle:

They made *it* up.

The company turned *it* down.

The habitual placing of the pronoun before the particle is explained by Erades (1961) as being generally due to their (i.e. 'the pronouns') weak stress.

c) Adverbs cannot intervene between the verb and particle. We can say:

He *turned up* at seven o'clock, and

We *took off* for Memphis, but not

\*He turned *suddenly* up at seven o'clock, or

\*We took *immediately* off for Memphis.

d) The particle component can be, and generally is, fully stressed:

The pilot flew *in* the plane.

The pilot flew the plane *in*.

She tried *on* the dress.

She tried the dress *on*.

e) When final and not in post-nominal position, the particle is pronounced in a kinetic tone. Strang (1962, p. 159) suggests that one should think in terms of "a complex of related differences (a superfix) part stress, part rhythm, part intonation."

## 2. Prepositional Verbs

Prepositional verbs have the following features:

a) Non-interpolability of (pro) nouns between verb and particle:

He *turned down* the driveway.  
(V + P)

He *turned down* the offer. (Phrasal Verb)

He *turned* the offer *down*. (Phrasal Verb)

This change is impossible with the preposition:

\*He *turned* the driveway *down*.

b) *Expansion*: A verb-preposition combination can be divided by an adverb, but a verb-adverb combination cannot, for example:

He *turned up* (=discovered) a new manuscript. (Phrasal Verb)

He *turned* (sharply) *up* the country road. (V + P)

c) A single verb is often commutable with a prepositional verb. This criterion covers such a wide range of possibilities (*go down* = 'descend', *ask for* = 'request') that it can provide no reliable indication of the degree of V-P linkage.

There are a few criteria not referred to by Mitchell which have been made

use of by other grammarians to distinguish phrasal and non-phrasal verbs. Grammarians note that phrasal verbs, as opposed to prepositional verbs, cannot undergo a relative transformation with the particle detached from the verb and preceding the relative pronoun:

They *came across* the bridge  
(V + P)

The bridge *across* which they *came*.

They *came across* the man. (Phrasal Verb)

but not \*The man *across* whom they *came*.

But compare:

\*Up he turned. \*Off he took.

It appears that some prepositional verbs, and notably those with close V-P linkage, share the restrictions of phrasal verbs in their behaviour under relative transformation.

Another criterion, not mentioned by Mitchell, is that of 'substitution.' A word is an adverbial extension when it forms such a unit with the verb that this unit can be replaced by one single verb without any change occurring in the structural arrangement of the utterance, for example:

bring round = persuade

fall for = love

run down = defame

walk into (food) = eat (heartily)

keep up with = keep level with

look up = verify (by reference to books or documents)

look up to (someone) = admire

make for = be conducive to

make off with = steal

make up for = compensate

make up to = attempt to curry favour with

stand down = withdraw (from a contest)

stand for = represent

stand up for = support (morally or verbally)

However, many other combinations may be replaced by a single verb:

look at = examine

go before = precede

The restriction that 'the structural ar-

rangement of the utterance' should not be changed is semantic—the meaning of the whole utterance will still remain unchanged. The substitution criterion is also used to demonstrate that prepositional verbs are in some cases to be treated as units.

Where the same particle is used both as an adverb and as a preposition, it is often difficult to distinguish between them. Three guidelines are:

a) The adverb can stand alone whereas the preposition cannot, e.g.

Come in! Go out!, etc.

b) Prepositions with an accompanying noun form a phrase which in itself makes sense, e.g. up the road, under the table, through the door, etc. When the particle is used as an adverb the phrase can't make sense by itself, e.g. (put) down his hat, (turn) off the tap, etc.

c) The adverb and the noun accompanying it can change positions, e.g.

He put (on) his coat (on).

### 3. Copula Verbs + Particles

The distinction between lexical verbs and copula verbs has led to a great deal of the discussion about the function of *be* when followed by particles or prepositional phrases. Jespersen writes (1949, III, 17) that "some verbs when connected with predicatives tend to lose their full meaning and approach the function of an empty link." Among his examples of predicatives he includes:

he is in good health,  
the rain is over.

On the other hand, particles and prepositional phrases are adverbial after *be* "when the verb has a full meaning" (III, 18), for example:

—I mean they're *after* the news. (be + P + N)

—The red one *was for* scrambling.

—The joke's *over* now. (be + preposition)

—...we'd thrown our hands in without telling one another we knew the game *was up*.

—...and a man said, "What's *up*?"

—The dividend *is up* by 3 percent to 18 percent.

—Next morning, John *was up* early.

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—They *are in for* pretty poor service. (be + preposition + preposition + noun)

—He *was off to* sea again.

—We *are out to better* ourselves. (be + P + to-infinitive)

Jespersen often compares predicative P and P-N with adjectives, and regards them as subject modifiers rather than verb modifiers.

Compare:

But all the articles are *of great value*,

But all the articles are *beautiful and of great value*.

Also, the copula *seem* can replace *be*:

But all the articles *seem of great value*.

*Be + P + N* can be premodified by *very*, *more* or *most*:

—Conservative supporters *were more in favour* of the retention of public schools than Labour supporters.

*Be + P*: Examples belonging to this group are of the same structure as phrasal verbs; that is they are made up of a verb followed by a particle:

—*There were few people about* in the wet windy night and little traffic.

—*There were few people about the town*.

Compare with:

—*So after all was over*, I . . . , in which the particle cannot be expanded.

### Grammatical vs. Lexical Restrictions on the Particle Component:

The verbal component cannot function without the particle:

—Mme. Nhu came to the US . . . complaining that US aid had *petered out*.

—... if your own conscience is clear, then the village or city can *gossip its head off*.

The particles *out* and *off* in the immediately preceding examples cannot under any consideration be left out. If they are omitted, the resulting sentences will be grammatically deviant. The restrictions on *peter out* and *gossip its head off* are, therefore, 'grammatical restrictions,' op-



posed to 'lexical restrictions' on *shot (down)* in:

They *shot (down)* the prisoner.

### Meaning of the Particle Component:

It is sometimes possible to assign some kind of meaning to the particle in a phrasal verb. In the utterances:

—I'm *typing it up* now, *typing up* the final copy,

—The theatre is *booked up*.

the particle *up* has the function of 'specifying,' 'finalizing' or suggesting 'completeness.'

Similarly, the particles *out* and *off* have a meaning of their own when they occur with certain kinds of verbs. *Out* is used with verbs dealing with the interior of something; *off* is related to the exterior:

The car needs to be cleaned

*out* (Use a vacuum)

*off* (Use a hose)

### Figurative vs. Literal V-PCs

One way of differentiating:

—the light *went out* from

—John *went out*

is by comparing the contrasting subject exponents; in the first case the subject is inanimate, in the second it is animate.

It is usually easy to isolate the point of contrast between the two V-PCs made up of the same words, one of which is regarded as 'figurative,' the other as 'literal.' Compare, for example:

The light *went out*.

John *went out*.

\*The light *went*.

John *went*.

It seems that in this case one can equate 'figurative' with no potentiality for expansion, contraction, or commutation—that is, with grammatical fixity. In general terms, this is true of most of the figurative phrasal verbs (Yassin, 1978).

While it has been possible to demonstrate the formal differences between the examples above, there are cases in which an intuitive figurative labeling is not supported by formal features:

—Outside the dusk was creeping up on us.

—Outside John was creeping up on us.

But, generally, when 'the same verb' is used literally and figuratively, one must distinguish two lexical items. This distinction can be formally demonstrated, either by grammatical differences or by differences of exponence.

### Concluding Remarks

This minute analysis reflects a complexity which would be overwhelming to an Arab ESL student. But it is a needed stock-in-trade for the language teacher. The important thing here is that V-PCs are patterns of lexis and must be taught as individual items, not via their class properties but via their own uniqueness. Rather than teaching separate words with dictionary core meanings attached to them, we are here interested in relating the internal patterning of V-PCs to a wider patterning, both linguistic and situational. As frequent and systematic applications are practiced, the Arab ESL learner becomes progressively aware of the distribution of V-PCs, phrasal, prepositional, and copula, as particular unique lexical items different from all other lexical items.

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# SLANT

## A Newsletter For Researchers and Teachers

SLANT is a newsletter for researchers and teachers working in the field of second language acquisition. Its goal is to inform its readers of the most recent developments in the field of second language research around the world. To encourage researchers and teachers to share their work, SLANT publishes resumes of research in progress. All second language researchers are invited to submit resumes of their research in progress describing their subjects, data collection procedures, analysis and language involved—200 words maximum. Please include your complete mailing address so that others interested in your work can contact you directly. Send resumes to:

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# The Identification of Irrelevant Lexical Distracters: An Apology

"The Identification of Irrelevant Lexical Distraction: An Editing Task" by J. Donald Bowen (TESL Reporter, Fall 1978) was printed with a number of errors for which the editors apologize. Please make the following corrections in any filed copies:

The title should read, "The Identification of Irrelevant Lexical Distracters: An Editing Task."

In addition, several typographical errors were not corrected before the issue was printed:

- p. 2, col. 1, line 35, "trees" should read "trees"
- p. 2, col. 2, line 42, "over" should read "overt"
- p. 2, col. 2, line 49, "on" should read "of"
- p. 3, col. 2, line 9, "GC" should read "GR"
- p. 3, col. 2, between lines 13 and 14 insert "total for the subtest scores. AC is the equated"
- p. 3, Table 1, line 2, "13.48" should read "13.48\*"
- p. 14, line 1, "Distraction" should read "Distracters"
- p. 15, The following words should be italicized (line numbers are indicated in parentheses): represented (6), expected (8), considered (10), imitate (12), mention (13), interesting (14), flew (17), number (19), Above (22), Find (23), presence (24).

A significant portion of the article—an appendix which contained a copy of the Editing Test—was also inadvertently omitted. It is reproduced below:

## Appendix A

### Editing Test\*

**INSTRUCTIONS:** In the following passage, unnecessary words have been added to the text. Find them and cross them out. For example:

Have you eaten ~~trees~~ your dinner yet?

The word 'trees' is unnecessary (and incorrect) and is therefore crossed out. There are forty unnecessary words to be crossed out. The test will be timed, so work fast. Stop when you are told to stop.

It was probably around 3,000 years ago that people first began *through* making things to help them measure the passage of time. Having observed that shadows move *medial* around trees as the sun moves across the *continued* sky, someone drew a circle and put a stick *next* in the center. As the sun passed overhead, he *flew* marked even divisions on the circle as the shadow of the stick crossed it *presence*. Then people could tell which part of the day *represented* it was by noticing which mark on the circle the *after* shadow fell across. These circles were called "sundials." Later, they were made *referred* of stone and metal to last longer.

Of course, a sundial *as* did not work at night or on cloudy days, so men *expected* kept inventing other ways to keep track of time. One *point* invention was a striped candle. Each *weak* stripe melted in about an hour; about three hours would have passed *drill* when three stripes melted.

A water clock was another *of* way to tell time. A container had a line with a number beside it for every *case* hour. It also had a tiny hole in the bottom. The container was *meaningful* filled with water that dripped through the hole. When *dot* the water level reached the first line, people knew that an hour had passed. Each time *column* the water level fell to another line, one more hour passed.

Candles and water *opposites* clocks helped people know how much time had gone by, but *after* candles had to be remade, and water clocks had *number* to be refilled. So after glass blowing was invented, the hourglass *elements* came into use. Glass bulbs were joined by a narrow tunnel of

(continued on page 16)

\*In this illustrative form, items for deletion are marked to facilitate discussion.

In an actual test form they are of course not italicized.

# ORDER OF MODIFIERS IN THE

by Alice C. Pack and Lynn E. Henrichsen

The chart below illustrates the normal order of modifiers in the English noun phrase. (columns I through VIII) precede the noun nucleus in the order indicated. If the plural type is used, the order followed is that indicated by the arabic numerals.

| SINGLE WORD MODIFIERS |                                                                            |                                       |                                     |                                                                      |                                                                                |
|-----------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| I                     | II                                                                         | III                                   | IV                                  | V                                                                    | VI                                                                             |
| Pre-articles          | 1. Articles & Indefinite adjectives<br>2. Demonstratives<br>3. Possessives | Numerals<br>1. Ordinal<br>2. Cardinal | Superlative and Comparative Markers | 1. General Size<br>2. Quality or Characteristic<br>3. General Weight | 1. Specific Size<br>2. Shape<br>3. Age<br>4. Temperature<br>5. Specific Weight |
| Both                  | the                                                                        |                                       |                                     | tired                                                                | old                                                                            |
| Only                  | the                                                                        |                                       | least                               | difficult                                                            |                                                                                |
|                       | The                                                                        | first two                             |                                     |                                                                      |                                                                                |
|                       | These                                                                      | four                                  |                                     | little                                                               | little                                                                         |
|                       | Her                                                                        | first                                 |                                     |                                                                      |                                                                                |
|                       | John's                                                                     |                                       |                                     | surprising                                                           | new                                                                            |
|                       | The man's                                                                  |                                       | less                                | impressive                                                           |                                                                                |
|                       | My brother's                                                               |                                       |                                     | big                                                                  | six-foot                                                                       |
|                       | Many                                                                       |                                       | more                                | expensive                                                            | rectangular                                                                    |
|                       | A                                                                          |                                       |                                     |                                                                      | cold                                                                           |
|                       |                                                                            | Six                                   |                                     | rich                                                                 |                                                                                |
|                       | Those                                                                      |                                       |                                     |                                                                      |                                                                                |
| All                   | the                                                                        | twenty                                | most                                | beautiful                                                            | new                                                                            |

NOTE: Only one modifier from column II can be used at a time.

If the nucleus is singular, then a modifier from column II must be used.

If the nucleus is plural, the a modifier from column II may or may not be used.

For charts on noun phrase construction previously printed in the *TESL Reporter* see:

Fries, Peter H., "English Noun Phrase Construction," Vol. VI, No. 1, p. 8.

Pack, Alice C., "Normal Word Order in the English Noun Phrase," Vol. V, No. 1, p. 6

# E ENGLISH NOUN PHRASE

English noun phrase. The various types of single word modifiers indicated. When more than one single word modifier of one general merals beneath each column head (e.g., "first two" in column III).

|                                                                |                          | NOUN           | PHRASES AND CLAUSES |                   |
|----------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|----------------|---------------------|-------------------|
| VII                                                            | VIII                     |                | IX                  | X                 |
| 1. Time<br>2. Color<br>3. Location<br>4. Origin or Nationality | Nouns used as Adjectives | <b>NUCLEUS</b> | Modifying Phrases   | Modifying Clauses |
| Indian                                                         |                          | men            | sitting there       |                   |
|                                                                | algebra                  | problem        |                     | that we did       |
|                                                                |                          | chapters       | in the book         |                   |
| brown                                                          |                          | rocks          |                     |                   |
|                                                                |                          | job            |                     |                   |
|                                                                |                          | attitude       |                     |                   |
|                                                                | application              | form           |                     |                   |
| blue                                                           | plastic                  | chair          |                     | that you saw      |
| black                                                          | picture                  | frames         | from New York       |                   |
| Alaskan                                                        | winter                   | day            |                     |                   |
| American                                                       |                          | tourists       | carrying cameras    | who talk loudly   |
| weekly                                                         | news                     | magazines      |                     | which came today  |
| red                                                            | water                    | beds           | with leaks          | that I fixed      |

# BACK TO THE BARRIER

by Fred J. Edamatsu

In their article "The Psycho-Social Barrier' Revisited" (Winter, 1979), written in response to my article "The Japanese Psycho-Social Barrier in Learning English" (Fall, 1978), Drew and Debbie Dillon make statements that could cause readers to misunderstand my paper.

The Dillons begin by accusing me of saying that the Japanese have difficulty in learning English because "Western culture and Japanese culture are irredeemably alien to one another." That accusation is false. I stated that the difficulty is caused by another difficulty which the Japanese have—"To think like a foreigner." In other words, the problem that the Japanese learner of English has is caused not by cultural differences but by a psycho-social trait. The Dillons missed the thesis of my paper. They presented views which, they declared, were opposed to mine, but they were actually refuting a statement which I did not make. Hence, their arguments were aimed at a nonexistent target.

They then proceed to present certain advantages which, they contend, the Japanese learner (whom they call Mr. Tanaka) has, implying that I denied such a fact. I certainly did not. The subject of advantages was not within the scope of my paper; in short, it was irrelevant. That is why that topic was not taken up in my paper. I am aware of the fact that the Japanese learner does have certain advantages, although I do not subscribe to those the Dillons listed. It is doubtful that any intelligent reader would, for the arguments the Dillons put forth in pointing out the advantages are marred by superficiality and lack of logic. For instance, they list literacy as the first advantage. They state that "Japan's a highly literate society." Do they mean what others might mean by this statement—that Japan has comparatively a small number of illiterate people? When we talk about the literacy of a nation, we usually refer to numbers (not degree)—the portion of the population which is literate or illiterate.

"Japan's a highly literate society" because a small in comparison with most other nations'. Does the fact that the Japanese society has many literate people prove that any Japanese person can learn foreign languages better than other people? Or are the Dillons saying that the typical literate Japanese is more literate than the literate people of other nations? If so, where are their supporting data? Aren't the literate people of France, Canada, China and other countries just as literate as the highly literate Japanese? Even if the literate Japanese were more literate than literate non-Japanese, where is the proof that this fact gives the Japanese advantages over others in learning foreign languages? Can't illiterate people be adept in learning foreign languages, that is, orally? Surely, they can master the morphology, phonology and vocabulary of foreign languages well enough, so that they can speak the languages articulately. As a matter of fact, some English teachers in Japan believe that one of the causes of the difficulty the Japanese have in learning English is that they are too bookish; they try to learn English the way they learned other subjects in school such as history, by reading about it, by memorizing facts, by poring over rules of grammar and pronunciation in textbooks (the way dead languages like Latin are studied), instead of using "live" practice the way a living language should be learned. The Dillons claim that, because Mr. Tanaka "knows what it means to own books, to study them, to listen to lectures, to take notes," he has an advantage over "students from many other countries." Does learning a modern foreign language consist of such methods as owning books? Where are the data of research studies that testify that the methods so unquestioningly touted by the Dillons and rejected by many are effective in learning foreign languages?

The Dillons go on to say that another advantage Mr. Tanaka has is the wealth of modern technology in his life. What is the

correlation between modern technology and the study of English? Here again, there is no data to support their assertion that knowing how to ride elevators and owning electrical appliances are advantages in learning English. There's more to learning English than knowing how to operate or utilize mechanical devices. One needs to grasp the mechanical structure of the language. One needs to learn many other things. Besides, many English teachers in Japan would declare that the Dillons' Mr. Tanaka does not answer to the description of a typical student of English. For instance, the Dillons say "Mr. Tanaka lives in a large and modern Japanese city." So many students do not. The Dillons' Mr. Tanaka answers more accurately to the description of the stereotype Japanese that so many foreigners have created ever since Japan became a great economic power. I believe that the small-town Japanese who is not blessed with such bourgeois sophistication as Mr. Tanaka can make as much progress in learning English as the Dillons' phantom.

Other advantages, the Dillons say, are the motivation, industriousness, and perseverance of the Japanese. Legions will agree that the Japanese possess these time-honored virtues, but does possession of these virtues assure that no psycho-social barrier can exist alongside them?

The Dillons conclude their paper by proclaiming the *true* reasons why the Japanese "may fail to achieve dazzling proficiency in the English language." (It was startling to read this quoted passage in view of their ardent declarations of the advantages the Japanese have.) They state, cynically, that the educational establishment is the culprit, like "teaching methods" and "incompetent teachers." (This, mind you, after praising the "rigorous Japanese education system," page 15. I was startled again!) This discussion is also full of superficial statements. What do they mean by "a lack of trained native-speaker instructors?" "Trained" in what way? The way the Dillons themselves are? Or do they mean awarded with teaching credentials or degrees in teaching of foreign languages? People with and without teaching credentials are found in the teaching profession and competent professionals are found in both groups. In Japan today, there are many native-speakers of English. Some have degrees in foreign

language education and some do not. In any event, competent teachers are found in both groups. Or do the Dillons mean teachers who have studied the Japanese language and culture? Again, competent teachers are counted among those who have and those who haven't. Another question. Can the Dillons establish that native-speakers are better English instructors than the Japanese English instructors? Many Japanese pupils say they learn more from their Japanese instructors, because they understand their pupils' problems (their psycho-social problems, perhaps); they respect the goals of their pupils. The presence of a foreign teacher in the classroom may be thrilling; the sound of English spoken by a native may be ravishing. But, the pupils don't necessarily learn more from native-speakers. The Japanese instructors may have imperfect mastery of English, but, as it is well known, great music teachers are not always great musicians themselves, and great musicians have not always demonstrated that they are great music teachers. The Japanese instructors need not be abandoned because they lack native skills in English. There is another recourse; they can be sent to English-speaking countries to improve their English (despite their psycho-social barrier).

One more thing. The Dillons accuse me of condemning Japanese "language learners to unending despair" by suggesting that "their difficulties are not really their fault." As a matter of fact, it's the Dillons themselves who commit this misdeed. They put the blame on the educational establishment. Wouldn't they induce the Japanese learners to think, "It's not my fault; it's not because I'm incapable. It's because the educators are incompetent." I, on the contrary, put the blame on the patterns of thought and behavior (psycho) formed by the traditions of society (social). In short, the barrier is within the pupils. The awareness of this intrinsic barrier should (and, perhaps, would) incite the pupils to overcome it.

Moreover, the Dillons avoid confronting the psycho-social problem which I undertook to expound. Instead, they fly off on a tangent and flourish the advantages of the Japanese—their laudable literacy, perseverance, etc. It's like telling a child who has difficulty in learning the three R's that he needn't worry about his non-achievement because his artistic talents will see him

through in life. It's better to encourage students to confront their handicaps so as to overcome them and thus make learning easier, rather than lull them into complaisance with consoling praises.

I have pointed out only some of the statements made by the Dillons which are superficial and illogical. There are others, but if I continue, this paper will be longer than my original paper. I believe I have demonstrated that the criticisms the Dillons directed against my paper do not serve the readers. They do not offer additional information on the thesis of my paper. The reader is not enlightened further on the subject. They simply reject my thesis, then present arguments that are wide of the mark. If they have ideas of their own, why not organize them so that they enlighten rather than raise doubts and questions. Their ideas, as presented, need development, extensive investigation, and deep analysis. Moreover, the Dillons should observe the principles of logic to convince the reader.

### THE IDENTIFICATION OF IRRELEVANT LEXICAL DISTRACTERS: AN APOLOGY

(continued from page 11)

one glass, and fine, dry sand *given* was placed in the top bulb. The hourglass was easy *these* to use, but it had to be turned over every hour so the sand could flow again.

Above it was about 600 years ago that the first *and* clock with a face and an hour hand was *imitate* made. One of the first such clocks was *which* built for a king of France and placed in a tower of the royal palace. The *mention* clock did not show minutes or seconds. Usually it *considered* did not even show the correct hour! Since there were no planes or trains to *interesting* catch, however, people were not concerned about knowing the *easily* exact time. Gradually, clocks began to be popular. Find they still did not keep correct time, but they were unusual, and the *common* could be beautifully decorated. One clock was in the shape *before* of the a cart with a horse and driver. One of the wheels *longer* was the face of the clock.

Watches came into use as soon as *shortening* clocks were made small enough to be carried. These did not tell the correct *follow* time, either.

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## TESOL Convention Preparations

The Teaching English Abroad/Special Interest Group (TEA/SIG) of TESOL, in preparing for the March, 1980 TESOL Convention in San Francisco, seeks information from researchers and teachers outside the United States. Researchers overseas are asked to submit abstracts of their research to TEA/SIG even if they do not plan to attend the convention. Teachers overseas needing ideas to improve their teaching in

difficult circumstances may submit to TEA/SIG their pedagogical problems with a description of their teaching situation (materials used; number, level, and age of students, type and purpose of instruction, etc.) Correspondence should be addressed to Dr. Lin Lougheed, Education Development Center, 55 Chapel Street, Newton, Massachusetts, 02160 U.S.A.



# READING AND "FA'A SAMOA"

## Teaching in a Bilingual Culture

by Jeannette Veatch

As a Title III professor emeritus at the American Samoa Community College at Pago Pago last spring, I was asked to improve the teaching of English to native Samoans. The thrust in the island towards a bi-lingual society is probably irreversible as use of English in school and in daily life has been sufficient to set this in motion. A Samoan, however, rarely speaks English outside of the classroom, where he has been taught in English from first grade up. But that is another story. Not surprisingly the greatest motivation towards bi-lingualism is the strong desire to come to the USA mainland or get a bi-lingual job on the island.

Through a set of circumstances too long to go into at this time, we began a testing program for incoming students at the college level for summer session 1977. We found only 38% of them, on Stanford and CELT, had an English competency at about the 6th grade level. Approximately 30% were below the 3.5 level and the rest were in between.

At the beginning of the semester in January a program called English Language Institute (E.L.I.) was added to the usual traditional "bonehead" English courses. Both E.L.I. and the English classes were typically and totally based upon textbook lessons, xeroxed, teacher-made exercises and grammar drill. There was no element of language experience, no original writing of any kind, nor any free reading of library books. In fact, the drop-out rate of 30% to 40% says it all. Those who did not drop out were bitterly disappointed as revealed in an evaluation by the students. This writer was a visiting fireman, so to speak, and thus was asked to help improve these offerings. She had little success in spite of the support of the Director. In short, the situation, insofar as learning the English language was concerned, was so dismal that the head of the English Department, separate from the E.L.I. program, admitted

that nothing was working and so was willing to try anything new and different. The president of the college set up a task force, chaired by this writer, to make specific suggestions for an improved curriculum. The result was a set of recommendations based upon the use of library reading, creative writing, and spontaneous oral activities. The report specifically recommended the elimination of all text book materials and printed workbook drills based upon grammar and usage. In short, as you will recognize, the recommendations were in line with what is known to be psycholinguistic practice. Yet the term psycholinguistics, as well as the term individualized reading, and the language experience approach were unknown and unused on the island.

It is in this connection that the term "fa'a Samoa" comes into focus. It can be variously translated, although its direct meaning is "the Samoan way." But "the Samoan way" can be pejorative, analogous to *mañana*, meaning inefficient, lazy, non-operative. But it can also denote the positive elements of pride in culture, in tradition, in self, in the *aiga* (i.e. the family) and in love of ancient ways, including language.

The reason this phrase is included in the title is because it became the basis of all our teaching. We used the love of family, the pride in the *aiga*, the respect of self as a Samoan to promote the development of the English language in these students. If the term language experience means anything, it means "fa'a Samoa." For that is what we did.

To make a long story short, this writer offered to teach a summer session class of as many students as possible, provided there were no restrictions as to how it was taught. The College had nowhere else to go and the offer was accepted.

Thus 42 young adults with a competency level of 4th and 5th grade enrolled in a six week session. The writer was alone for the first week with minimal help from a native Samoan (to help translate ideas not language). The second week three contract teachers joined the staff as trainees. They continued after the writer left at the end of the fourth week. Thus the class was a staff training project as well as, for the American Samoa Community College, an experimental activity in teaching English to native Samoan speakers.

The results were spectacular. After six weeks, the last two of which, you remember, were conducted without the presence of the writer, the mean gain of the students was six months. That is, a month a week. The drop out rate was 7%, or 3 out of 42, and the attendance was at acceptable levels. While morale cannot easily be measured, it is interesting to note that the demands for fall term enrollment in "that reading and writing class" surprised advisors.

In addition, during the summer, the pressure for enrollment was so great that a second class in the afternoon was set up the second week along the same lines and taught by one of the three staff being trained in the morning. Even though this class met for only five weeks, the testing revealed their gains only slightly less than the full six week morning class.

Earlier, when the task force was discussed, the faculty of the college agreed, unanimously (to show how bad the situation was as far as English competency was concerned), to accept the enrollment of any student testing above the 6.2 level on Stanford and CELT. When individual scores of our class were examined, it was found that over half, that is 51%, had lifted themselves above the magic 6.2 figure. Among that group, at least four had gained dramatically a year or more in the six week session. On the other hand, a full one quarter of the student showed little or no gain. The statistician wondered if the activities used were more suitable for the more able as their gains were so sharp. This writer tends to believe that those at the less able level simply need more time. Six weeks is not very long, even if spent in a most pleasant fashion.

Surely we were doing something right, and a detailed description of the daily sessions should be useful to those interested. We met three hours each morning, in what was called the Music Room. There were no windows and only one very decrepit air conditioner. However, although called the "summer" session, it was "winter time." (Samoa is 14 degrees south of the Equator.) The room size dictated the class size. Forty-two and eventually 39, were all that could fit into the space, although 150 students were eligible. More than 42 would not have been possible, as far as comfort was concerned, at any other time of the year.

We met from nine to twelve each morning, with about a twenty minute break. The class was about equal as to men and women. Among the men there were at least six, thoroughly macho ex-service men. But no one read above the fifth grade level. A few had been in the

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traditional English classes, and two had immigrated from Korea the previous year. Although they were highly motivated ladies, their English was barely at the acceptable level for our class.

In general the teaching was directed in three different modes: 1) individualized reading using six hundred paperback books, 2) the use of oral English in some fashion, and 3) writing originally, spontaneously, creatively, as well as practically. All text books were eliminated. No drills on printed exercises other than needs *specifically* arising from the writing were allowed. Grammar, as such, divorced from actual writing, was avoided. At no time during the six weeks were words like "subjects," "predicates," "prepositions," "nouns and verbs" mentioned. Knowledge of such parts of speech are not helpful to promote communication and were avoided. Perhaps

these quotes from "Notes to the Staff" might help in the understanding of what went on:

### Teaching When Necessary

... when you have clear evidence that a student needs to learn something important (like periods, or capital letters) **TEACH HIM!** Importance is defined by something that improves communication. Nouns and verbs do not. Under no condition are such useless items to be taught. Only when a student needs to say something he wants to say is he taught how to spell . . . . etc.

### Time For Drill

... There might be a time when drill might be useful. Say "You aren't making your K's right. Why don't you practice more so that they look like K's?" In this way the student is practicing on something he knows he must do to send that letter, or write that story . . . .

However, the most important contribution this paper might make is detailed description of the various activities carried on.

### Writing Activities

Perhaps the most successful of all activities was that of creative writing. It was surely the more important as it was central to the development of language. The writing was the juice, the power, the electricity that drove the wheels of learning for each member of the class. In order to have it as a major part of the class, a set of procedures was followed. These were designed to convince each student that his head was full of ideas, and that the ideas were worthy of writing. Put another way, the writing activity was structured as to its process, but not as to the content of what was written.

The first writing session was different than those that followed. The teacher made sure everyone had a good pen or pencil. Then the class was casually asked "to write

something". As expected, these writings were short, mundane and uninteresting in the extreme. "Draw a line now," the teacher continued. "When I say a word, I want you to write the first thing that pops into your mind very fast. Write without stopping until your hand hurts. Write whatever comes into your mind. Don't stop until I tell you to. I will give you three minutes. Ready? "GREEN!"

In this way the students were put in a pressurized writing situation where they were urged to write anything fast and furiously. After three minutes they were stopped and asked to read back silently what they wrote. Next they were asked to underline only those words that referred to "green". In all cases the students had written many other things, not in the slightest related to 'green'. This the teacher picked up on:

See how much you had in your mind compared to what you wrote first. Perhaps there was something you started that you would like to finish. Maybe there was an idea you had that you didn't have time to write about. I will let you write now for as long as you wish about those ideas you liked but didn't get a chance to put down.

Thus the students were set on their way as far as writing was concerned. Pressurized writing was not used again. Only encouragement, suggestions, and support were necessary. For whatever reason these Samoans seemed not to write as freely as I've seen, yet the class loved to write. As the days went by, the teacher made generalized suggestions designed to trigger recollections, experiences, emotions and memories. It worked. Not a day went by but this kind of free and spontaneous writing occurred. They wrote pages to the astonishment and pleasure of the faculty. Once in a while one student would not have an idea, but more often each had clearly been thinking about what might be written and would even ask "Are we going to write about our memories today?" They loved it and many an hour was passed as they wrote.

Mechanics were handled in various ways. Usually in one-to-one conferences on a piece of writing chosen by the student

every sixth day. The recognition of the role of periods to express thought units produced an interesting lesson to the staff. The teacher asked six people to come up front and read their stories to the class. This is a highly successful activity on the mainland, but Samoans do not "show off" in this way. It embarrasses them. Sensing that this oral reading of personal writing was not working, the teacher had to use other material. She read from a story and asked the class to click their tongues when they heard her voice drop at the end of the sentence. Then, as a whole class, she asked that they read their own writings and see where the "clicks", i.e. the periods, belonged on their own papers. Note that this was an activity in which the whole class was able to work individually.

Students were asked, but not required, to let the staff read their writing each day. Often a casual perusal *without grading or correction*, would reveal several of the group needed teaching on some specific item, usually having to do with a tense or number. These students were asked to meet with a teacher who gave a brief lesson to correct the errors. In this way teachers did not need to spend time on actual corrections of papers, but still were able to spot the problem among the students who actually had *that* problem and help them recognize their mistakes for future reference.

Along with these whole class and small group sessions, students were asked individually to choose *one* piece of writing from the preceding five days and bring it to one of the staff to read aloud and learn how to make it better. One significant occurrence in these individual conferences was that most of the students were able to correct most of their errors when they *heard* themselves reading their writing. If there were some things that were missed the teacher would explain and demonstrate, even ask the student to do a drill on whatever it was that was needed.

Thus the writing mechanics were covered in three types of sessions, whole class, group, and individual. The reward that proved very desirable to most was, when they had corrected their writing,

to have it typed. Work-study typists in the office would copy the story for posting on the wall. The desire to have their writing typed was considerable and many an individual labored hard to make legible copies so that the typists could read them.

Other writing activities were developed. A huge and greatly admired wall newspaper took a whole wall and a whole morning to complete, but the results were worth it. Maybe these Samoans did not want to read their stories aloud, but they certainly admired their efforts posted on the wall.

Writing on acetate for the overhead projector worked well also. Darkening the room and reading silently and aloud what was written—jokes, sayings, what have you, were enjoyable. Suggestions as to improvement or correction were not resented, and many an error was spotted.

Letter writing appealed to some, and promises of stamps got others going. A longer time might have allowed for setting up a pen pal project to friends across the ocean.

The class members were asked to fill out an evaluation form daily in which they listed what they had done, something they had thought about, and how they felt about the day's events. These were thoroughly perused by the staff, returned with written comments, (NOT corrections) each morning. They seemed to enjoy getting these evaluations back, reading them with absorption and filing them in their folders. Here is one example:

While I was walking along the way to the forest, I heard the birds sweetly singing in the shade trees. I was very happy for my hunting because that day was a shiney day. When I arrived under the big tree, I had a little rest.

Later on a far more accurately written piece came to us:

As I strolled on the beach one day, I imagined the sea water had been swallowed up from nowhere. In that time I think I was walking into the empty space and sea creatures were dying.

Although I was very afraid I became

curious of what stands beyond. While I was walking along the beach, I saw the cruel unkind waves crushing at me. Suddenly a roaring sound interrupts my dreams. I ran and ran faster, but I can't make it, not very long (after) I feel free like a bird in the sky. I was on an unknown planet so dark and cold."

While this is indeed awkward to the native English speaker it is a fine example of how ideas provide the driving force for writing. The absorption of the class in their daily writing was unprecedented, and occasioned many visitors to come and see for themselves. We worked away at the main problems which were tense and number. These seemed to be insoluble, even for clerks in the bank who had to be bi-lingual to hold a job. I felt justified in not insisting on absolute correctness in our class when I received my final bank statement from Pago Pago with the following message:

On your Saving Account the balance was xxxx dollars . . . we lessed our charge xxxx dollars. Hopefully, you enjoy our services . . .

They loved to write and wrote copiously. It was rewarding to us all.

### Oral English Activities

The second major activity was centered around many ideas that required the use of spoken English. As there were three native English speaking staff, the *palagis*, we took turns reading a story in English to the whole class. There was a problem in finding materials that were adult enough and yet not so obtuse as to be unintelligible to the listeners. I thought the *Telltale Heart* by Edgar Allan Poe would be a dandy. They couldn't follow it and I had to do a simplification of the language as I read along. I am sure Poe spun in HIS grave. Over and over we tried to find suitable stories with very little luck. This seemed to me, then and now, that this is a great void for those who teach bilingual students. They should hear good literature read by native speakers that they can understand at their level, as was stated earlier, easy fifth grade. Stories at that grade level too often were juvenile and had little appeal

to most of the class, especially for our macho ex-marines.

Along with this oral reading by *palagis* of stories in English, we xeroxed simple plays in sufficient quantities so that the class could be divided up in casts and the plays read in turn. This was whoopingly successful, and much in demand. In each case the *palagi* staff would close the activity by reading the play aloud as the students would follow along in their copies.

Another activity was improvisation. One staff typed up short situations and asked for volunteers. For example:

"Your boss has just caught you asleep on your job."

or

"The wife has been playing bingo all afternoon. She has not had time to make the supper. The husband comes home hungry."

These were acted out by successive casts. Comments were made as to the different ways certain phrases might be said. As we stated earlier, these Samoans rarely spoke English outside of class, thus to volunteer to act out such a situation indicated they were willing to expose their English weaknesses for the sake of the fun of the activity. The staff felt that this might have been the most productive activity for spontaneous English, as we noticed a marked increase of the use of that language during class hours.

Spelling proved to be of little concern. Perhaps because the Samoan language is so phonetic and alphabetic (i.e. many letter names can be heard as a word is pronounced) and no letters are silent.

But the main problem of the entire student body was their confusion on tense and number, as you could see from my quote from the bank clerk. To get at this we conducted a whole class activity in which the teacher performed certain actions and the students wrote down what they saw. This is a familiar strategy to teachers of bi-lingual students.

The class was asked to write down what they saw the teacher doing. For example, the teacher would drop a book

on the floor. The student would write "Jeannette dropped a book on the floor," or "The book was dropped on the floor," or "The book fell to the floor from Jeannette's hands." Anything that was in correct English was allowed.

Another action might be on going such as jumping up and down. The student was to write "Jeannette is jumping up and down." This form proved to be the hardest English of all for them.

This activity was carried out frequently and entailed about ten actions. It must be emphasized that papers were *never* graded. On the contrary they were usually asked to swap papers with a partner and see if they agreed on what they wrote. Or sometimes they chose partners and one would do the writing. That meant that they would have to talk it over to see if they agreed on what to write. All of this was using English and testing out without fear of punishment—beyond their own shame, which was sometimes considerable, even if private—or embarrassment. We all felt that these sessions were fun and highly instructive.

Vena, our one Samoan staff member, was a gifted teacher as well as a ham at heart. One of his most popular and effective activities was beginning a story and then asking various class members to continue it to some logical, or illogical, conclusion. He was able, more than the rest of us, to break through the cultural shyness of the Samoan personality.

The morale of the situation was high and often produced activity that was not required, as when Repeka fell in love with words. Each morning she would come rushing in all aglow and want to know what "acquisition" was—or "performance" or some other long word. Her only requirement was that the word be a long one! Repeka gained two years in those six weeks. Probably her daily search for long words, anywhere she could find them, had much to do with her dramatic gain.

Other less frequent but interesting activities involved the use of telephones scrounged from heaven knows where. We used the tape recorder in several ways, but 40 people and one tape recorder that kept breaking down did not lend to much of a

taped language activity.

### Individualized Reading

While everything I believed in worked, the most comforting of all was self-selection in reading. Nothing worked so dramatically as reading books, and having individual teacher-pupil conferences with staff.

We began with about six hundred paper back books from the "Reader's Choice" Catalog of Scholastic Press. These were daily spread out, face up, on two or three tables. While the College faculty had long laughed about the fact that they could always leave books around without fear of them being taken, in this case our books disappeared by the dozens. Frequent pleadings would bring some returns as the supply dwindled, but we were frankly delighted that they seemed so worthwhile to the students. They were permanently "borrowed." Many remarked on the unprecedented sight of our class members sitting, standing, belly flopping on the grass, **READING**. It was a most heartening sight indeed.

This free reading was begun with a training session of the Rule of Thumb. Each student was asked to demonstrate that this rule was understood and followed. The following quote from "Staff Material" illustrated how our reading period proceeded.

1. Make sure they use the Rule of Thumb.
2. Make sure they list the book in their notebooks.
3. Make sure they are ready for your attention. Never confer with an unprepared student.
4. Follow these four steps:
  - a. Explore their personal interest in the book.
  - b. Does he "get it"? If not, explain.
  - c. Work on the hard words in profitable ways.
  - d. Hear him read aloud. Help guide. Give him a proper model for oral reading.

Each student was asked to have a conference with one of the staff as often as possible. This turned out to be a problem

as there were too many pupils and too few staff. No different than most they LOVED the individual conference, and some had to be watched that others not be deprived of the opportunity. The delight of this activity was universal. The still room. The giggles over good stories. The vying for a certain staff conference all led to a most productive reading period.

In short, it can be seen that our mornings never dragged. Three hours flew. The morale was such that attendance was good. Even on mornings following some celebration, they came in. They might have been a bit hung over, but they came in. The look on Lei's face as he struggled to say in English how he enjoyed coming to class. It turned out he had a bleeding ulcer, but he was there. It should be stated that we never took roll, and we never gave grades on anything. We knew them and they knew us. Joyita might write about the girl who moved in with him and would not go home, but he wrote.

I was less well known on the island than the other staff, not having lived there as long. But I was frequently startled on campus and in the stores to be met with the warmest of greetings by total strangers. They were young and had to have heard about me from class members.

As to the out-of-class time that was spent by the staff, it was barely 30 minutes a day. The demands of the writings and the comments to be made thereon were shifted from one to the other. But rather than a chore we soon found it more of a privilege to be asked for. Why? Because the writings were fun to read! And the gains were so obvious they were sometimes quite an ego trip for the one doing the reading.

Each day ended with a staff planning time. One staff member was terrified to teach in front of the rest of us, but she found an activity she so enjoyed doing that her fears did not materialize, and her teaching performance was charming. Thus activities were set and the one to "run" them decided upon. I can recall that at no time was there any reluctance. We all enjoyed being there and teaching our class.

Along with our satisfying statistical

gains, I cannot close without mentioning the profound personal satisfactions. Over a career of several decades I have taught in many situations, but never in a markedly different culture. This was new territory to me in every way. Yet, while trying to throttle a continual feeling of isolation, (it is 5000 miles from my home), and discomfort, (the climate is NOT idyllic, *Time* magazine notwithstanding), I was continually exhilarated by the evidence that everything I believed in *worked*. I used their own speech and they learned. I respected their choices of topics to write about, their own choices of what books to read and they grew intellectually. I taught them the skills they need to know from within their own cultural patterns and personality. "Fa'a Samoa" was the bottom line. We all came out better people and smarter people, and most certainly happier people. It was a magnificent exercise in how learning takes place. I can only hope that the lesson is not lost in the future years to come. But who knows? "Fa'a Samoa" has other connotations, too.

## POSTSCRIPT

Much more could be written about American Samoa and the South Pacific. It is not Bali Hai by any matter of means, with political corruption wasting much of the 44,000,000 dollars sent there by Uncle Sam each year. But the purpose of this paper was to present some of methodology that this writer used to improve the English competence of a group of incoming college students. Those who might wish to know more about the cultural and political situation are referred to the July and August issues of *Gourmet Magazine*, 1977, Part VII of the *Los Angeles Times*, Sunday, October 23, 1977; Nicholas von Hoffman, *Tales From The Margaret Mead Tap Room* (Kansas City: Sheed and Ward 1976) an amazingly accurate description allegedly done without leaving the bar in the Rainmaker Hotel; *Time Magazine*, January 16, 1978, p. 21; and last but not least by any means, Margaret Meads's *Coming of Age in Samoa*. This last, for some reason, seems to infuriate most Samoans. But that is another story.



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