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How Good are the Text-Books?

V RODSETH

Extracts from a draft report on English second language teaching in African Primary Schools.

In 1975 the Institute for the study of English in Africa (Rhodes University, Grahamstown) embarked on a research and development project in African primary schools. Mrs Miriam Dakile (principal, Ekuthuleni Lower Primary School, Soweto) and Mr V Rodseth (senior lecturer, Johannesburg College of Education) were appointed as research fellows. Working full-time and part-time until May 1978, the researchers conducted their inquiries and experiments in Grahamstown, Transkei, Ciskei, Bophuthatswana, Lebowa and Soweto. Their project brief reads as follows:

> An analysis of problems connected with the use of English as medium in African schools, and the recommendation of methods for preparing lower primary children for its use from the fifth year of schooling upwards.
>
> The project will involve:
>
> (a) critical evaluation (i) of the competence of the primary school teacher in using English as medium, and (ii) of existing methods of teaching English to primary school pupils during the four years prior to their using it as medium;
>
> (b) investigation of the feasibility of integrating English as second language with school situations which are connected with the rest of the child's schoolwork during the first four years, rather than with generalised situations from the child's wider experience outside school;
>
> (c) the proposal, based on the findings reached in a and b, of model courses to be used in the classroom and in the Teachers' Training College.

A full project report is due for publication by the Institute later in 1978. The report deals with the topics mentioned in the project brief, but also extends into the areas of: learning readiness; picture perception problems; the need for improving vernacular language skills (particularly early reading); the transference of language skills from one language to another; and the development of reading skills.

In addition to proposed blueprints for "model courses" (which appear in the report), the project produced a "model" mother-tongue enliteration course (an adaptation of "Breakthrough to Literacy") and a "model" Sub B (Grade II) learning-to-read English course (entitled "The Bridge to English Reader").

As the published language course is so important to English language teaching in African schols, the evaluation of published courses has an important place in the project report. This article confines itself to the theoretical requirements (criteria and desiderata) used as one of the bases for evaluation and a brief look at some courses.

The Language Course (Manuals and text books used mainly for the teaching of oral and writing skills. The readers which are tied to the language courses are mentioned later in this article).

REQUIREMENT 1 LANGUAGE MUST BE TAUGHT FOR COMMUNICATION PURPOSES

The oral and written work should lead pupils rapidly towards communication ability, the ability to talk to people and write in communication situations. For this to be possible, the oral and written work should be situation-based and structure-teaching (often seen in appalling excess in "pattern drill" exercises) should be subservient to situational needs. The main aim in oral work is to develop conversation ability and so the choice of structures to be taught should be dictated by conversation-situation needs.

Michael West put it very well when he objected to language books in which a lesson is made to fit a set of words:

"In real life the words have to fit the situation. Words are a form of behaviour arising out of a set of circumstances, as a cry of pain arises from having one's toe trodden on, or a cry for water comes from a thirsty man . . . Words teach themselves in a situation which demands them; they are like water off a duck's back where they are not really needed . . ."

"It is . . . necessary to expose a dangerous fallacy or misunderstanding inherent in the word 'situation.' We have seen it laid down in books of method that words (and other language items) should be taught 'in situation' not as mere lists. (Indeed that is just what this article has been suggesting). But when the methodologists put this doctrine into practice we find the word 'situation' interpreted to mean the artificial situation of the classroom.

"Instead of teaching the bald word-list 'Leg, Knee, Foot, Toe' we find 'Point to your . . .', 'This is my . . .'. Instead of old-fashioned tenses and paradigms we have exercises with moving pens, books, rulers and boxes, the opening and shutting of doors and windows (which do not need opening or shutting), going and coming to and from the blackboard, and so on.

"The following sentences are selected at random from three textbooks which happen to be at hand:

> Am I sitting down?
> Is this my hand?
> What cut?
> This is my nose.
> Is your finger on your nose?
> This is also a toe.
> How many ears have you?
> Is this a door?
> Touch the leg of the chair.
> Breathe and blow with your mouth.

"Such practices may arise in part from the fallacy that a situation is 'real' because the actual thing is present or the action is done here and now.

Words are expressions of relationship with the environment; their reality depends on the vividness and reality of that relationship. In the vacuum of the classroom there are practically no real relationships, save the elementary procedures of normal school routine (calling the roll, giving out papers, etc). The sentence 'This is also a toe' is unrealistic even if the toe is actually present; it has no more teaching value than learning a word in a word list. Whereas, 'He trod on my toe!', 'I must cut my toe-nails', 'There's a hole in the toe of the sock; shall I darn it for you?' — these are expressions of relationship with an environment: they are real, whether the thing or action is in fact present or not. No one ever said, 'Excuse me, is this my hand? — or is it yours? This thing is my nose, and that is your nose; you've got your finger on it. Is this a door? Really? it looks like a window to me. Oblige me by touching the leg of your chair.'

"Merely by inserting the normal words of politeness (such as would be found in any real conversation but are so seldom used in the classroom) we see how very unreal these remarks are, whether the "real" objects are present or not. It is the relationships that are unreal.

"The moral of this is that the story or playlet about things which are not present in the classroom, even about fairies or ghosts or other things which have no 'real' existence at all, may be functionally more real than visible and tangible 'realities.' The more vivid, dramatic, amusing a situation is, the greater is its reality and effectiveness as a teaching vehicle." (1)

Although West does not use the word in the above extract, he is calling for a better understanding of 'communication', of the need to teach what is directly useful in communication situations. His insightful definition of the word 'situation' is a pointer to his belief that language teachers (and text book writers) should be more aware of the social nature of language and cease working with classroom 'non-English.'

That there is often a gap between classroom English and the English of communication in the real world; that a lot of time is spent on the former; that the former does not lead automatically to the latter, is suggested in the arguments which follow. Henry Widdowson in an article, "The teaching of English as Communication" restates West's viewpoint in helpful terms. He sees the traditional approach of combining situational presentation with structural practice as a means to the composition of "correct sentences." This process he sees as one which teaches "signification" but which fails to "provide for the communicative function of language." A taught sentence like 'I am walking to the door' demonstrates "what the present continuous tense signifies," but it does not have any "communicative functions."

Widdowson goes on to reject the contention that value cannot be taught in the classroom, and "that the teaching of . . . signification provides learners with a basic knowledge of the essentials of the language, and that it is a simple enough matter for the learner to put this to use when it comes to communicating" . . . "As I have already implied, it seems to me that it is a radical mistake to suppose that a knowledge of how sentences are put to use in communication follows automatically from a knowledge of how sentences are composed and what signification they have as linguistic units. . . . There is no simple equation between linguistic forms and communicative functions. . . .

What I should like to suggest is that we should consider ways of adapting the present approach to the teaching of English so as to incorporate the systematic teaching of communicative value. I would propose that in the process of limitation, grading, and presentation, we should think not only in terms of linguistic structures and situational settings, but also in terms of communicative acts." (2).

Part of what West and Widdowson are driving at is captured in J B Carroll's neat phrase; "Conditions of elicitation". Under what conditions might an utterance be elicited? If one cannot think of a situation in which an utterance might be elicited, then do not teach it. It might be of some value in teaching certain vocabulary and structures, but it is of small use for communication purposes. A "condition of elicitation" requirement would therefore reject such text-book statements as "We are walking backwards", "I am stamping my feet myself", "I am putting my left finger on my right ear". No-one is ever going to use such language outside the 'English' lesson.

Selecting language for teaching according to "conditions of elicitation" principles raises the question of frequency. Both vocabulary and structures must obviously be looked at in terms of frequency. A word like "cupboard" is tempting to teach because the object is in the classroom and can be pointed at, touched, stood in front of and so on. But is it not as valuable (because of its lower frequency) as higher-frequency words like "went", "home", "house" which are far more useful in the real world of human communication. Similarly, while the present progressive tense in "I am/You are/He is walking" might be tempting to teach because teachers and pupils can enter into a "walking situation" in a classroom, it is not nearly as important (because of its lower frequency) as the much higher-frequency continuous structure used as future tense ("I am going to town tomorrow").

REQUIREMENT 2 NORMAL USE SHOULD NOT WAIT UPON MASTERY OF INDIVIDUAL ITEMS

In an article, "Myth and Reality", Mary Finocchiaro attacks the "manipulation phase" myth.

Her argument reinforces West's when she writes of "the new language items (used) in normal relevant activities." Her call for the teaching of language which can be used for communication "at the present moment" endorses the statements of Widdowson. Her criticism of an overdone "manipulation phase" (which demands "automatic responses" and "habit formation") is a suggestion that early, faulty attempts to engage in natural acts of communication are satisfying to and necessary for students and that teachers should increase their toleration of error — especially in the early stages. Though teachers should structure the lessons, they should not endeavour to get the pieces of language perfect before students are

allowed to put them together in communication wholes.

"Another myth is related to pattern practice. Some texts and some teachers spend an inordinate amount of time on the manipulation phase of language activities. While pattern-practice drills are necessary and helpful, they should not be used exclusively even on the first day of a beginning-level class. The teacher should ask the students questions such as 'What would you say?' as, through pictures and situations created in the classroom, he encourages them to use the new language items in normal relevant activities. Only if this is done will students believe that the manipulation and repetition phase of learning has merit. They need to feel that what they are learning is valuable to them not only in a forseeable future when they can 'communicate' but also at the present moment.

"Automatic responses and habit formation need not necessarily *precede* communication; *both* should be written into the daily lesson plans. Indeed, the teaching of any grammatical item or skill-listening, speaking, reading, or writing — should generally proceed in two parallel streams. In order to engender and sustain motivation, the teacher should, for example, help his students understand and read natural, stimulating, interesting material that they can use immediately. At the same time, of course, the individual sounds, grammatical items or sound-symbol relationships needed for reading should be presented systematically. It is imperative, however, that the normal use of language should not 'wait on' the mastery of any individual item." (3)

REQUIREMENT 3 A COURSE BOOK MUST USE RECOMBINATION AND RE-ENTRY

There must in a language book be a high degree of recombination and re-entry of language items. Every individual exercise should serve as material for subsequent exercises and/or be a consolidation of previous exercises. Learners must very soon be rewarded for doing an exercise by finding the newly-acquired knowledge of obvious help in a subsequent task. A language book needs to spiral forward in cyclical movements — and not be a series of tottering edifices of sentences piled one on top of the other, with later sentences bearing little relation to the earlier, and one pile bearing little relation to others. L A Hill touches on this point when he writes:

"You can't teach pupils (language) skills just by piling up a mass of vocabulary and idioms and structures in their brains, however neat the piling may be. It is like providing a boy with a carefully graded series of carpenter's tools (the structures) and a load of carefully selected wood (the vocabulary and idioms) and then thinking that you have trained him as a carpenter . . .

"I think that, by focusing more sharply on our goal (ie on communication), we shall be able to cover more useful ground in the time at present available than is now possible. I also believe that in this way it will be possible to prepare teaching material which is more interesting for the pupils, which has a higher surrender value at any given stage, and which gives the pupils a greater sense of learning things that are directly useful to them. In the course itself, the emphasis on contextualization (ie on using language for meaningful communication) would lead to the avoidance of exercises consisting of strings of unrelated sentences, each torn out of its context — things like:

1. If I (have) a pen yesterday, I (write) a letter.
2. If the wind (be) strong, the ship (not sink).
3. If Napoleon (win) the Battle of Waterloo, the history of Europe (be) very different, etc. etc.

Also such useless and unnatural exercises as conversion of isolated sentences from direct to indirect speech and from active to passive would disappear, leaving time for activities more directly aimed at training in real communication." (4)
The above requirements are very well discussed in a seminal book, *Notional Syllabuses*, by D A Wilkins (5)

REQUIREMENT 4 CAREFULLY CONSTRUCTED GUIDED ORAL AND WRITTEN COMPOSITION EXERCISES SHOULD BE PROVIDED

Guidelines or controls must be progressively weakened as the pupil moves towards the goal of free (but reasonably accurate) composition, but a student must never be asked to compose language in a situation for which he has not the linguistic ability. In an interview in *SYMPOSIUM* 1975/6, Prof L Lanham dealt with the need for structuring and guiding writing assignments within a clearer context of writer and audience. The traditional creative essay for second language students he sees as unproductive as, in writing for the teacher who will be marking, the pupil is not involved in writing what he really wants to say due to his language inabilities. Prof Lanham's suggestions should not be read as a call for an extended "manipulation phase" or a contradiction of earlier arguments; he does speak of "compelling, meaningful communication," "communication to an audience," and Finocchiaro does write of the need to include manipulation phase activities ("automatic responses and habit formation") in the "daily lesson plans."

"Again I say that the type of material used for writing exercises must be related to real needs. A pupil who writes on 'My Mother' or 'The happiest day of my life' can get away with murder; you really don't know what he wants to say. Conceptually you have given him the whole world and he has picked his way through it like a mine field.

He knows what he can't say correctly and so avoids the problems. Why not rather put him in a corner where he has to communicate something far more definite and train him so he can communicate in such a situation?

"Communication to an audience should be the basis of writing exercises; the essay on 'My dog Spot' is not communication as I see it, as it is not really directed to anybody. For a talented writer such a subject can become a meaningful piece of communication, but it is fatuous to expect a second language pupil with poor linguistic skills to gain anything from having to write in this way.

Compelling, meaningful communication is what teachers must aim at. What I want to see involves a high degree of structuring. And the structuring must take into account the language problems of the pupil — the tenses for Black pupils for instance. This sort of structuring for remedial work can't be done successfully in so-called 'Free Writing' exercises. I know that grammar teaching is often dreadful, due mainly to the grammar books which are used. But the systematic teaching of grammar is absolutely essential. The grammar of the paragraph, for example, must be taught; pupils must learn to join sentences with logical connectors (hence, as, while etc.) and learn to develop concepts logically. Relative clauses, indirect questions — these must be taught, not by giving labels but by making them work. Giving rules and occasionally going over to explanations in the mother tongue are essential." (6)

REQUIREMENT 5 THE DIALOGUE METHOD SHOULD BE FEATURED

If one thinks of oral communication in real situations, one naturally thinks of conversing or dialogue (though this isn't the only form of oral communication — there is the oral exposition of the mini-lecture, for example). And thinking of dialogues one naturally thinks of the dialogue method. Should the dialogue method be used in an oral course, what criteria can be established for assessing the quality of dialogue-method instruction?

In addition to the above requirements which do obtain in general terms, the following more specific (though in some ways similar) requirements are suggested:

i) Dialogue-learning can degenerate into eisted-fodd-practice with the resultant dialogues sounding most unnatural. There must be some toleration of error if the aim is to stimulate real and natural-sounding dialogues.

ii) Teachers must be provided with assistance in setting the scene for the dialogue, and mother-tongue explanation (especially in the early stages) is certainly permissible where second language skills amongst pupils are inadequate.

iii) The improvisation stage must be introduced as soon as pupils are linguistically ready. Without improvisation there is a real danger of lessons degenerating into parroting sessions, and, furthermore, pupils are denied the essential opportunity to exercise their creativity. Well-planned dialogue-method instruction would result in "creative imitation."

iv) In the early stages when improvisation is beyond the linguistic capabilities of pupils, there should be guidance for the teacher in the matter of incorporating the dramatic aspect in dialogue-learning. A pupil's individuality and creativity can be catered for (even without improvisation) if he can (through tone, facial expression and gesture) be allowed to feel: "Even though this statement isn't really mine, I have got a part of me in it and it does feel rather like mine."

REQUIREMENT 6: ENGLISH ACROSS THE CURRICULUM STUDIES SHOULD BE FEATURED

"Language across the curriculum" has recently become a phrase much in vogue. Essentially, the concept refers to the fact that language ability is essential in every facet of scholastic life. A pupil can fail in history, geography, science etc if he lacks the ability to read and listen efficiently, and, more obviously, if he cannot express himself in writing (or orally, if oral evaluation is used).

Proponents of across - the - curriculum language studies see two essential requirements.

(a) The language teacher should consider the language needs of pupils studying content subjects in his planning and teaching. For example, the language ability required of a pupil explaining a scientific process should be the concern of the language teacher.

(b) The content-subject teacher should accept his role as a language teacher; he must be involved in improving the receptive and productive language skills, even in such "lowly" areas as spelling, traditionally regarded as the language teacher's domain.

That language development can take place outside the language lesson is strongly suggested by the two following observations:

Michael West is reported to have stated after a tour of West African schools that there would be no drop in the standard of English should English be dropped from the curriculum. For West, the communication situations in the English-medium content-subject lessons were clearly more productive than the I-am-closing-and-opening-the-window 'situations' of the English lessons.

Anthony Adams, the British educationist, mentioned during a discussion at the University of the Witwatersrand recently that, for him, some of the finest language teaching in Britain is taking place in the crafts lessons. The demand in these lessons for clear and efficient language usage leads to significant language development.

The argument is thus that the medium of instruction (the language) is of central importance in education. In African education where English medium of instruction is introduced in the fifth year of school (Standard 3) Requirement 6 is of particular importance. Pre-Standard 3 English courses should feature across-the-curriculum work and prepare pupils for English - medium study of the content subjects.

REQUIREMENT 7: EARLY ORAL WORK SHOULD PREPARE PUPILS FOR THE FIRST READING TASKS

Oral work must prepare pupils for the vocabulary and sentence structures of the first reading material. In the early stages of second-language reading pupils must have at least a substantial listening vocabulary; the meanings of the words and structures once they have been de-coded in the mechanical reading process must be known to the pupils.

As will be seen shortly in a look at some prescribed courses, the first reading material in these examples faithfully reflects the preceding oral

work. This is as it should be. However, tying the reading material to oral work which is designed to teach "signification" instead of communication does create problems. A first reader which consists almost entirely of sentences like, "I am/He is/We are walking; This is/That is a cupboard" does not make for reading interest. And catering for the interests of pupils is a very important requirement (dealt with next).

If there is a change in the type of early oral instruction given and communication needs are better satisfied, then the early reading material (if it reflects the oral work) should be of greater interest.

REQUIREMENT 8: PUPILS' NEEDS FOR CREATIVITY AND ENJOYMENT MUST BE CATERED FOR

A general point relating to the needs of pupils is the requirement in a course of pupil-centred creativity and enjoyment. Guided composition can be over-controlled and result in echoic language exercises (Re-write this paragraph. Rewrite this paragraph, changing the tense to the future etc). Such activity is just not cognitive or creative enough and will lead to boredom. More than imitation is required; what is required is a form of creative imitation.

Enjoyment in learning can be catered for by allowing and exploiting creativity; by including aspects of the dramatic (pupils' emotions must not be forgotten) and by exploiting pupils' competitiveness. The need to provide competition and fun motivated W R Lee to write *Language Teaching Games and Contests* and say in the dedication: "To all teachers who believe that in foreign-language learning enjoyment and success go together." (7)

There is a strong tendency in many second-language courses to regard pupils as different creatures from the pupils in a mother-tongue class. There is the erroneous assumption that pupils in a second-language class will tolerate endless, mindless drills; that they have no fantasy, sense of humour or need for excitement. Some examples given shortly will illustrate the point.

REQUIREMENT 9: A COURSE SHOULD OFFER BOTH EASY AND ENJOYABLE USE FOR TEACHERS

A general point relating to the needs of teachers: a course book should be so designed that teachers can —

> use it reasonably well without instruction
> use it excellently well with college or in-service training.

This requirement calls for clear and imaginative typographical lay-out.

In addition, the course-book should also cater for the teacher's need to be creative and to enjoy him or herself. An over-programmed course will remove the personality of the teacher (who will always be the most important variable in the spectrum of language-teaching devices). A pupil-centred book will provide for the teacher a degree of variety in responses essential to the combating of teacher-boredom. Robot-teaching is an extreme to be avoided.

A course compiler who is catering for second-language teachers whose own second language is weak (very often the case in African education) has a difficult task in achieving a balance. Observation and discussion during the research project has revealed that while teachers need a lot of support from a course, they do start reacting to a feeling that they are puppets.

The courses evaluated do not, in general, achieve a satisfactory balance in this regard. They tend to be over-programmed and lead to teacher boredom.

EVALUATION

The three English language courses in most common use in African primary schools were evaluated (in part) by measuring them against the above requirements. Some excerpts from the report now follow: they give some ideas of how the courses measure up. It should be noted that the criticisms below are not made in the context of the full report; the report itself would have to be seen in order to get a more balanced view.

DAY-BY-DAY ENGLISH COURSE FOR SOUTH AFRICA (Longman Penguin SA) SUB A TEACHER'S GUIDE

The introduction is sound. The emphasis on the need for praise is commendable — psychologists in the field of language teaching (like Wilga Rivers) have often demonstrated and called for the need for positive reinforcement through praise. Instructions on the organization of small groups for group work are clear and sensible. The introduction promises that Requirements 8 and 9 will be at least partly satisfied.

Lessons for week 1 and 2 start promisingly: the teaching of salutations ("Good morning teacher"), of names ("My name is . . ."), of necessary commands and responses ("Thank you, Joseph. Go back to your place". "In groups". "All together") result in 'English for communication' and Requirement 1 is satisfied. Real situations are involved here and there is an "intensity of relationship."

The lessons from week 3 onward fall into the familiar pattern of teaching vocabulary (visible nouns predominating) and structures (simple present and present continuous tenses predominating). Correct sentences are piled one on top of the other until the end of the book. The sentence-piling does not lead to regular consolidation in larger meaning-units; there is certainly revision of earlier vocabulary and structure, but the "forward spiral" (Requirement 3) is lacking.

There is much building of separate piles of sentences (each pile is built on a separate "situation", but there is very little deliberate building towards clearly-defined communication objectives. There is a great number of sentences and questions which fail the "conditions of elicitation" requirement, e.g. "This is my nose/head"

> "Touch your head/neck" etc.
> "Look up, look down, look at my chin/nose/neck" etc.
> "Shut and open your eyes"
> "Jump. Jump again"
> "I am touching my ears/legs/toes" etc.
> "I have one head/two eyes/one nose"
> "He has a head/nose/fingers" etc.

There is much description of action cast in the "He/She is, We/They are doing" form, actions which very rarely call for vocal comment in normal human communication. Clearly, what is being taught is signification, and not value (Widdowson).

That the course goes on and on building separate (and only remotely related) piles of correct sentences is indicated in the following rough summary of the sequence of "situations" from week 3 to week 12:

Week 3: Parts of the body ("This is my . . ." and "Touch your . . .")

Week 4 Parts of the body ("Look at my . . .")
Writing equipment ("This is/That is a book/ruler")

Week 5: Actions without context ("Turn round: Turn round again")

Week 6: Parts of the body ("What is this?")

Week 7: Writing equipment ("What is this?")
Other objects (cup, bottle, box)
Parts of the body ("Is this my . . .?")
Bottles and rulers ("Is this a . . .")

Week 8: Parts of the body
Additional objects (stone and stick, door and blackboard)

Week 9: Revision (the same exercise again)

Week 10: Objects in classroom ("Point to . . ."
Additional objects (tin, pin, pencil)

Week 11: Parts of the body and classroom objects ("Look at . . .")
Actions without context ("shut and open eyes/books", "Touch . . ." "Point to . . ."

Week 12: Actions without context ("Jump" "open/shut . . ." "Turn around")
Common nouns ("You are a boy/girl")

The course features some integration of content subjects; sizes, numbers, colours and elementary health practices are taught, but the emphasis again is on structure and not "situation" in West's definition of the term.

Day-By-Day Sub A is basically a "Manipulation phase" course, and the normal use of language has to wait on the mastery of individual items. And so it fails to meet Finocchiaro's requirement.

It certainly is thorough and systematic in what it sets out to do, but the objectives do not pass the 'selected-requirements test'. Although it is sensibly pupil-centred and involves much pupil-activity, there is virtually no opening for productive language and pupil creativity, and not nearly enough learning-through-games-and-fun (Requirement 8). The day-by-day lesson-plan approach is sensible and provides the systematic teacher-guidance which is essential (Requirement 9). But the absence of "fun and games" for pupils and the extremely workmanlike approach could result in monotony for the teacher; this could be an explanation of the unwillingness of teachers to use the manual (according to a Longman salesman and classroom observation).

ENGLISH THROUGH ACTIVITY
(Shuter and Shooter)
FIRST YEAR TEACHER'S MANUAL

. . . . As in Day-by-Day, a weekly (and daily) programme follows.

Weeks one and two are allocated for settling in and developing the feeling that English is going to be enjoyable. The necessary salutations and commands are taught ("Good morning" "Come here" "Go back to your place") and personal name cards are introduced. A solid start for "English as Communication" is made. However, the injunction to create name-cards for many objects in the classroom does suggest that the course might be heading for the artificial classroom 'reality' of nouns and observable actions warned against by West and Widdowson.

Week 3 introduces the outside walk for the purpose of learning the names of objects outside the classroom; a potentially useful exercise if this activity will lead to the teaching of communicative value. In addition to teaching nouns, the walks are designed to teach the language which describes actions. The walk activities immediately become lessons in signification, and sentences which are unlikely to be elicited are taught, e.g. "I am sitting down", "I am walking quickly".

The walks are certainly enjoyed and they are lively, but they are of very limited teaching value. Signification is emphasised at the cost of communicative value, and the chorusing of "what we are/I am doing" is an *invitation* to yell and chant. Normal speech rhythms and pronunciation usually go by the board during these walks . . . .

The discussion in the above paragraph leads to what the writer sees as a false premise upon which the course is (in part) based. The false premise is that pupils should be involved *physically* in language-learning activities. Physical involvement is no guarantee that there will be mental involvement. Many "chanting-and-doing" exercises are echoic and involve only a small percentage of mental concentration.

A sound premise is that pupils should be involved *mentally* in language-learning activities. The activities may or may not involve physical activity —which should always be a secondary consideration. The total involvement of Sub A pupils in a "Breakthrough to Literacy" course makes the point very effectively. There is little physical activity (pupils sit at their desks mentally busy at composing their sentences), but there is no restlessness or boredom to be seen. And the activity is cognitive and productive, not echoic . . .

. . . In Week 4 the necessary "My/Your name is . . ." is introduced, and the language of signification begins through drill in the "I am/You are doing" form. This action — chain format, popular with "Direct Method" enthusiasts since the days of Gouin, and built upon by the audio-lingual and structuralist proponents, is used extensively throughout the ETA courses. The result is extensive sentence-piling on several different and poorly-integrated 'situation' piles. Many correct sentences are taught, but (as with Day-By-Day) the course over-emphasises the manipulation phase; there is a lack of a forward-spiralling movement (Requirement 3); and the conditions of elicitation requirement is very often not met.

A lot of language-learning is started which does not lead anywhere useful (unless one considers the teaching of vocabulary and structures divorced from real communication situations as useful). This is because clear communication tar-

gets have not been set; teaching the language of signification has a tendency to force one down a cul-de-sac with no real social communication at the end of the road.

This point was well illustrated at a demonstration lesson in Umtata, Transkei, where a teacher asked pupils from a well-drilled ETA class to answer questions about pictures in a new reader:

Teacher: What is this? (Pointing to a picture of a leg)

Pupil: I am showing you my leg.

Teacher: And this? (A picture of a pen)

Class: We are writing.

There is very little across-the-curriculum work.

To sum up, ETA has its strength (in addition to the in-service training offered) in the thoroughly programmed daily activities (Requirement 9) in the pupil-centred and learning-by-doing activities and in the enjoyment offered to pupils in the activities (Requirement 8 partly satisfied) and in the (too small) component of dialogue teaching (Requirement 5 partly satisfied).

Its weaknesses lie in its emphasis on signification at the expense of communicative value; its teaching of unusable sentences; its over-emphasis on the manipulation phase and consequent delay in teaching normal language usage; its sentence-piling and lack of the forward-spiral movement with the consequent lack of adequate guidelines for oral composition. Most requirements are not satisfied and the objective stated in the foreword ("Pupils should *have practice in using the language in real life situations* or at least situations that simulate real life as much as possible") is attained in only very small measure.

SECOND YEAR TEACHER'S MANUAL

. . . Towards the end of the course (in weeks 26, 29 and 31) a song ("The Baby of Bethlehem") and two stories ("The Three Billy Goats Gruff" and "Chicken Licken") are introduced. The following comments are based on several observations of all three lessons:

The lack of adequate preparation for all three (very long) lessons resulted in an extremely low level of comprehension. Especially with "The Three Billy Goats Gruff" there was in evidence much parroting and considerable boredom. The inordinate amount of time spent on these long lessons could have been used to far greater effect on shorter, cognitive and productive-language exercises.

English-across-the curriculum work is barely touched on (Requirement 6), and guided written composition (Requirement 4) is not featured.

Again oral preparation for reading (Requirement 7) is thorough.

To sum up, the writer feels that ETA has done some important ground-preparation, especially with regard to in-service training; getting pupil-centred group-work functioning; and catering for pupils' need for enjoyment in learning. But it falls far short of satisfying the nine selected requirements sufficiently for it to merit consideration as "a model course".

MODERN GRADED ENGLISH (Via Afrika)
STANDARD I

This book is divided into four parts . . .

. . . Each part consists of six units, and each unit begins with a scene-setting prose passage followed by comprehension questions. The authors claim in the introduction to have taken care "to start with objects and activities with which the pupil is well acquainted and then, gradually, to proceed from the known to the unknown". This objective is largely attained as the comprehension pieces deal with the school, the home and (towards the end) with farming. But the passages (with the exception of "Baboons in the mealie field" — (unit 21) are pedestrian; they are prosaic descriptions of prosaic scenes and in no way cater for the child's imagination, curiosity, sense of wonder or love of excitement. The comprehension questions do test comprehension (every point made in the passage is methodically comprehension-tested) and so some learning must obviously take place. But a simple description of the familiar (getting up, getting dressed, going to school, sitting in school, going home, cooking supper etc) is not going to stimulate much nor whet the appetite for learning; reading passages should (at least in part) show some artistry and exploit the pupil's desire to read for enjoyment.

A little humour, a little danger or excitement, something of the unexpected, an element of surprise here and there, would have done much to improve the readability of the passages. A child in Standard I has a wealth of imagination and wonderment; valuable commodities which should be exploited in a course-book. The almost hysterical excitement of children playing the ETA "Daddy Long Legs" game is proof enough of how imagination and excitement can be catered for in Lower Primary work.

A good feature in the comprehension question is the introduction of questions designed to get each pupil talking about his or her own environment.

The rest of the course (the exercises following the comprehension section) is a mechanical process of:

(i) teaching signification in the oral work, eg:
"I am/You are/He/she is . . .
Touching (your) cheek with (your) thumb
Opening or shutting the door
Showing (your) teeth
Jumping up and down on one leg
Scratching your right leg" etc. (pp 3-4).

In the above type of exercise the meaning is made clear through "Do and say", but in the following (typical) oral exercise the list of sentences are torn out of context, there is no guarantee of comprehension, there is no link between meaning and the thoughts of the individual child, and many of the sentences do not make sense:

Say aloud and learn

Every Day	*Yesterday*
His father beats him	His father beat him
It begins to rain	It began to rain.
He breaks a window	He broke a window
The child falls down	The child fell down
He finds his book	He found his book
He tears his shirt	He tore his shirt

Many of the "Everyday" sentences look positively silly when the condition of elicitation test is applied. Basically, the oral work is in a pattern-drill, structure rut; sentence-piling towards no communication objective is the pattern.

(ii) drilling in the manipulation phase of written work. Lists of sentences torn out of context are provided for unscrambling, filling in the missing words and substitution.

Very often an exercise can be completed without necessarily understanding the sentences. There are no openings for productive language or creativity. The emphasis is on the echoic, and cognitive activity is at an unacceptably low level. Pupils are never placed in a position in which they actually want to communicate something (for which task they have been taught the necessary basic elements). Eg:

Put the words in each sentence in the right order:

(a) (has, ties, four, David).

(b) at, uncle, Fochville, lives, My). etc (p 4)

A wit once wrote: "This type of exercise (particularly, activity, is, useless, a)". He was obviously implying that language work should be built on the desire or need to communicate something meaningful, and not be an exercise in code-breaking.

At the end of a sentence we write a full stop. (.) Now write down each of the following sentences correctly:

(a) His name is David

(b) Mother has ten hens

(c) She often goes to town etc. (p 12)

Now use HIS, HER or ITS instead of the word(s) in big letters in each sentence:

(a) Mother is washing MOTHER'S hands

(b) The cow and THE COW'S calf are in the kraal

(c) The dog is wagging THE DOG'S tail. etc (p 13)

Pupils not understanding the sentences in the latter two exercises could nevertheless score 100 percent . . .

. . . An analysis of the substitution tables reveals that they are most unsatisfactory. Many sentences can be parroted (with no "errors") and some do not pass a condition of elicitation test. One typical example will suffice:

Am	I	before the fire	
	you	at school	
	me not	in the field	now?
Are	they	near the river	today?
(Aren't)	the boys	on the farm	
Is (Isn't)	he		
	James		

"Am I not before the fire today?" is a clear example of a useless non-sentence which should not be taught.

The Reading Components of the Three Prescribed Language Courses

Space forbids discussion of the selected requirements which were used as a part of the evaluation of the readers attached to language courses. The following headings give some indication of the requirements used:

1. *Learned oral work* should form a basis for early reading.
2. *Phonic Grading* is required for the early stages.
3. *Systematic Phonics Teaching* should be built into the course and guidance for the teacher provided in a manual.
4. *Writing Reinforcement* to the reading process should be provided.
5. *Guidance for teachers* on general reading-teaching methodology relates to the need for a system of evaluation of pupils' reading performance.
6. *The content* should be interesting to pupils.
7. *Grading* should be carefully controlled.
8. *Illustrations, Typography and Lay-Out* must be of a high standard.
9. *Higher-order reading skills* should be developed progressively in the readers which follow on from the basal readers.

Measured (in part) against the above requirements, the readers of the evaluated courses were also found to be wanting — particularly the early readers.

DAY BY DAY READERS (Longman Penguin S.A.)
"Benny and Betty" Sub Standard B

. . . The content is very prosaic. Characters are first introduced ("This is"; "Look at"; "I can see"; "can you see"; "I can see") and then shown in various activities (in the garden; in the house; playing with a ball; digging; sitting; reading; walking). "Open and shut" is then taught with accompanying illustrations and a "good morning, how are you?" dialogue. Then follows going to school and various reading, running and jumping activities. Counting exercises are followed by revision and phonic drill, and then comes gardening, cooking and eating. The book concludes with "Rhymes For Fun".

That the reader reflects the preceding oral work is both its strength and its weakness. To its advantage is the fact that the words are known orally, but to its disadvantage are the limitations imposed on the content. If the oral work does not deal with particularly interesting material (eg standing up, sitting down and walking), then, consequently, the reading material cannot be very interesting (Requirement 6). There is no humour, excitement or fantasy in the reader at all.

The proponents of phonic-graded readers have always admitted that phonic limitations restrict content (the "interesting" phonic word "bicycle" should be introduced later) and result in unnatural style ("can Dan fan Nan"). But attempts have been made to compromise by using some heavy-duty irregular carrier-words (eg in the *Royal Road Readers*). And the argument has always been that the pleasure and power which comes from learning to unlock words through systematic phonics makes up for restricted content. The pupil is prepared to plod through relatively uninteresting content *if he is at the same time experiencing success in learning how to de-code the written symbol* . . . .

ENGLISH THROUGH ACTIVITY (Shuter & Shooter)
I Can Read (Second Year, Sub B, Reader)

A vowel analysis of Lesson 1 page 1 reveals again the lack of phonic system in vocabulary selection; the reader presents the child with a very difficult task.

letter "a"=/ə/ in "a"; /a/ in "That"; /oh/ in "wall"; /əi/ in "table", /oh/ in blackboard"; /eh/ in "chair"; /ə/ in "cupboard".

letter "o" = /əu/ in "window"; /ə/ in "cupboard"; /oh/ in "blackboard"; /u/ in "book"; /oh/ in "floor" and "door".

The first 10 lessons (14 pages) faithfully reflect the oral work done. This means that the words read will be in the oral vocabulary (Requirement 1), but it also means that the reading material is of no reading interest (Sit Down. What are you doing? They are sitting down.); lessons 1-8 could be 'read' by using picture cues and remembering the sentences which have been so thoroughly drilled in oral classes; and many subsequent lessons could be learnt off by heart by following the teacher and those better pupils who have managed to learn how to read.

The remaining lessons are (as in so many first reading books) very prosaic; there is little to fire the interest.

In the "Extra Reading" section there are some more interesting and readable stories.

MY FIRST STORY BOOK (Third Year, Std I, Reader)

As with the "Benny and Betty" readers, the ETA readers become more interesting as the authors get beyond the difficult first stage. The stories make pleasant reading (entertaining animal stories are the main feature) and cover a wide range of subjects likely to interest pupils.

Writing reinforcement (Requirement 4) is not featured.

Teaching methodology for higher-level readers is not featured.

Typography and lay-out is good.

ENGLISH READERS FOR SOUTHERN AFRICA (Via Afrika) *Primer for Sub-Standard B*

The "Preface" and "suggestions for the teacher" reveal that the approach is going to be look-and-say and the "whole-word" and "whole-sentence" methods are advocated. The extremely brief introduction (and there is no reading-teaching guidance in the manual) does not promise well. The scene is set for "look and guess" and by-passing the reading act by learning the reader off by heart and responding to picture cues. That the first reader will be uninteresting is suggested by the statement: "In conformity with the findings of modern scientific investigations, only a limited Vocabulary-burden has been adopted. New words, which have been selected mainly from the Sub A English language syllabus and which have been repeated as often as possible, are given at the beginning of each lesson," A vowel analysis of the first three pages reveals that no attention has been payed to phonic regularity (Requirement 2): letter "a"=/əi/ in "table" p1; /eh/ in "chair" p1; /oh/ in "wall" p2; /ee/ in "teacher" p1; /a/ and /oh/ in "blackboard" p1; /ah/ in "calf" p2; /a/ in "blanket" p2; /əi/ in "plate" p2; /o/ in "what" p3; /ə/ in "a" pp2 and 3; /e/ in "head" p3.

letter "o"=/əu/ in "window" p1; /oo/ in "broom" p1; /oh/ in "blackboard" p1; /o/ in "dog" p2; /u/ in "book" p3; /ʌ/ in "mother" p3; /u/ in "woman" p3; /oi/ in "boy" p3.

The reading passages throughout the book deal with familiar objects and activities — and they are all very prosaic. The lack of interest cannot be justified on the grounds that phonic skills are being taught. There are no comprehension questions and no systems for evaluation. There is no writing reinforcement. There is no methodology for teachers.

The grading is satisfactory and the typography and lay-out is of good quality.

To sum up, the Sub B reader has virtually nothing to recommend it. Pupils and teachers getting anywhere with this book must take most of the credit.

CONCLUSION

As second-language teachers base their teaching largely on a published course (at present this is necessary for most teachers in African education), the course book must be good. From the above evaluation it would seem that new, better courses are required.

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