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Spare the Rod and Spoil the Child: An Approach to the Teaching of English the Silent Way

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School for International Training
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SPARE THE ROD AND SPOIL THE CHILD:

An Approach to the Teaching of English the Silent Way

Betty J. Stone
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To John D. Kirkland

...who first awakened my own sense of critical learning
years before I fully understood....

PREFACE

This paper is intended to open to those intrigued by the Silent Way approach to teaching languages the personal experiences of one enthusiast of the approach. No attempt has been made to define the Silent Way as a methodology, nor to prescribe teaching practices. Rather, what I expose to my readers are the triumphs and failures, the joys and frustrations, the doubts and the hopes of my challenge as I see them. Hopefully, to explore my thoughts will both open and inspire others to explore the rich worlds of their minds as students, teachers, and human beings.

I owe the original inspiration for this project to Dr. Caleb Gattegno, the creative educator who first developed the Silent Way approach to teaching. I am grateful as well to my fellow MAT's who through experiments of their own throughout our year together have contributed to the wealth of ideas I have collected together on the subject. And my thanks go to the members of my Advisory Committee, Mrs. Janet Bing, Mr. Tom Todd, and Mr. Jack Millett, who have understood and assisted me in countless ways.

INTRODUCTION

I was one of five teachers of the Master of Arts in Teaching Program who, from 10 July to 28 July, 1972, taught a three-week course in English at the School for International Training of the Experiment in International Living in Brattleboro, Vermont. My students were eight Japanese and one Frenchman, members of two independent groups who planned to study English at the Brattleboro campus for three weeks (twelve days in class) before living with American families in four-week homestays. The Japanese varied in age from nineteen to the mid-twenties; the solitary French student was a thirty-three-year-old professional. Of the Japanese, about half were still students in Japan; the others were young working people, one a teacher at a technical college. The group represented the lowest level of English ability in the three-week program.

While at S.I.T. they attended classes five hours per day, five days a week, and met for an hour-long Comparative Culture class twice weekly. Classes were not compulsory and attendance varied. With the exception of language laboratory hours and special assignments, English class was held regularly in one of the basement classrooms of Ellsworth Dormitory. The physical atmosphere of the room was pleasant and allowed us the alternative arrangements of working in round table fashion or from individual armchair desks.

The focus of this report is the morning session of each day, varying in length from three to four hours and including two or three breaks of ten to fifteen minutes each. This portion of the lesson was presented almost entirely via the Silent Way approach to the teaching of languages and constitutes the principal data of the project.

CONTENTS

PART I

With a view towards contrastive analysis, the learning of English by speakers of Japanese must be founded upon a careful and concentrated presentation of those elements of difference most important for the structural understanding of the new language (English). I propose that the unique nature of the Silent Way best focuses the efforts of both students and teacher to this end within the framework of a limited three-week program. I will justify my choice of this teaching approach in the descriptive discussion to follow and thus relate the idea of contrastive analysis with the teaching of English to Japanese using the Silent Way.

A SHORT HISTORY AND DESCRIPTION OF THE SILENT WAY

The Silent Way approach to teaching

> ...was first developed and presented ten years ago (1960) for all educators concerned with teaching mathematics. Soon after it was extended to the tasks of those concerned with teaching reading, and in 1963 to teachers of foreign languages. In a number of seminars and workshops it has been extended to the fields of science, social science, literary studies, art, music, and physical education. In all areas, it led to an acceleration of learning and a greater yield in schools. The people who have used it know it is the only way of teaching that makes sense, and soon from new converts have come committed expounders. Such allegiance explains how this approach to education, without any official backing from anyone in a position of authority, has reached so many teachers all over the world.*

The approach was conceived by Caleb Gattegno as a creative alternative to the traditional methods of language teaching. Thirty-five years of teaching experiences all over the world have come together to express the spirit of the "subordination of teaching to learning."** The design of the approach is to focus the attention of the learner upon himself: to make him aware of using all his senses in a concentrated effort to learn the new language. The approach is an attitude on the part of the teacher which gives credit to the student for having successfully completed the most creative human task, learning one's own native tongue. It asks the student to use the criteria of experience already developed in learning the first language and once again supervise his own language learning. In a totally artificial setting, the teacher directs the student to the peculiarities of the new language and facilitates the student's rediscovery and use of learning abilities he possessed (and still does)

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* Caleb Gattegno, What We Owe Children, (New York: Outerbridge & Dienstfrey, 1970), pp. 9-10.

** Ibid., Chapter I, pp. 15-33.

as a child.

What we as teachers must recognize in our students is their powers as already experienced learners. Individuals are sensitive to the sound patterns of language: they are keen to the intonation and rhythm of a new language much before they discriminate either word or grammatical relations. They are able to perceive and naturally consider categories within a relational context. This idea follows logically from Ausubel's distinction between meaningful learning which is retained and the rote-learning of words in a contextual vacuum.* Children learn their mother tongue by capitalizing on the skill of organizing new input into an existent integrated system. In order to acquire the language, children soon develop a sense of critical learning. They are thrown upon themselves in the prescribed task and they learn to accept or reject information on the basis of their experience. The strength of this developing inner criterion springs from the child's continual progress. In this way, the learning process is self-reinforcing.

Central to the child's learning system is his attitude of suspended judgment: the ability to perceive the workings of the language as a code which will eventually be understood after a certain amount of watching, waiting, and practicing. Each new discovery is unconsciously and perhaps automatically weighed in light of all known information before it is accepted and assimilated. It is the reawakening of this attitude in the second language learner which enables him to free his mind to attack the new language with a freshness of approach. The will to learn is self-motivating and the openness of attitude allows the student to successfully supervise his own language acquisition.

Most striking for the uninitiated enthousiast of the Silent Way is the increasing silence of the language teacher. By throwing the students onto

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* Raymond G. Kuhlen, editor, Studies in Educational Psychology, (Waltham, Massachusetts: Blaisdell Publishing Company, 1968), adapted and abridged from David P. Ausubel, "A Subsumption Theory of Meaningful Verbal Learning and Retention," p. 169.

themselves, the teacher can speak less and yet stimulate the students to explore with the aid of a concerned resource person. Accompanying the silence is the gesture conventions which characterize the personal style of each Silent Way teacher. By expression of the eyes and entire face, hands and overall posture, a teacher can encourage a warm and personal atmosphere in a class regardless of his few words.

As a Silent Way teacher I found the emphasis of the approach to be epitomized in an attitude of careful and attentive response to the abilities of the students. To assist them in their task, I concentrated on trying to make their time in class worth the experience of learning. With little accent on vocabulary and much on developing a sense of the English language as contrasted to Japanese, the students hopefully acquired a functional understanding and control of English.

In the specific case of Japanese learning English, I selected the Silent Way as the teaching approach based upon the strengths of the attitude in treating the peculiarities of the English language for the Japanese student. The differences between the two languages indicate an enormous task. Especially notable are the contrasts in use of prepositions, articles, plurals, tenses, word order, and intonation. In addition the phonological challenge for the speaker of Japanese is considerable. Further complications derive from the necessity to learn a new writing system. The linguistic challenge posed is then no small matter and I here express my admiration for those Japanese who arrive at mastery of English.

The transfer from Japanese to English is significant in that most of the problem areas for the student require that he discover and understand new distinctions which do not exist in his own tongue. The transfer then is not merely a question of replacement of one item for another, but involves the recognition of an entirely new category which possibly has two variants, each

used in a restricted kind of structure. This "split-category" situation is far more difficult to master than the case of the new category.*

To illustrate, consider in the latter instance the complete absence of plural inflections in the Japanese language. Once the student becomes aware of this difference he can deal with it as a formerly unknown feature of linguistic expression. He will accept it as a natural element of English and can concentrate on practicing it. He has, however, no conflicting system of pluralization with which he can confuse the English one. In the case of the split-category, the Japanese student must learn to discriminate more finely between two elements he sees as a unity in Japanese. Therefore, the problem of preposition usage (further complicated by the fact that in Japanese prepositions are in fact post-positions) manifests itself when students freely alternate between "from" and "by," having habitually considered them equivalents (as they are found in the context of given English sentences). Numerous other examples might be included indicating the frequency of this type of error.

The structural item causing the most difficulty is articles. This represents both a new category and a split-category. There are no similar functional words in Japanese which serve as a root for positive transfer from Japanese to English. With the knowledge of the existence of such an element, the student must then move to the knowledge of how to distinguish correct usage of definite and indefinite articles, plus understanding those instances when no article is required. One can understand how the Japanese student would be painstakingly conscious of a problem he realizes he must face, and thus be guilty of incorrect omission and unnecessary addition of articles, as well as

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* S. Kimizuka, Teaching English to Japanese, (Los Angeles: Anchor Enterprises, 1968), pp. 39-40, taken from Robert P. Stockwell, A Contrastive Analysis of English and Tagalog, Part I. The degree of differences between two languages is determined by a "three-way categorization of differences:" Overdifferentiation

purely using them incorrectly.

The complementary natures of the Silent Way as the approach and the teaching of English to Japanese as the task now express a valid thesis. The flexibility and precision of the teaching approach allows the teacher to effectively and efficiently guide the students to both an understanding of the spirit of English and a functional control of the language as it is used. Taking the most striking contrasts as the cues with which to begin study, the students can advance in their understanding as they gain control over the most troublesome elements of English. They will encounter a language learning task in which there is, in fact, little opportunity for successful transfer of habits. The Silent Way will demonstrate to them the benefits of the direct rapport between that which is perceived and the language used to describe it. Both visual and aural perception will provide a direct route to the comprehension of meaning. In the learning situation, they will reciprocally support each other, further assisting the student in his questioning.

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in the new language (New,2, and Split,1, categories), Underdifferentiation (Absent, 5, and Coalesced, or unified, 4, categories),and Parallelism (Reinterpreted,3, and Transferred, 6, categories). The underlying assumption of the relative difficulty scale (1 is most difficult) is that it is more difficult to change an established habit than to learn a new one.

The complete set of materials is at present intended to include:---

* a set of colored wooden rods**, (beginning with whites, 1X1X1 cm.; including reds, 1X1X2 cm.; light greens, 1X1X3 cm.; purples, yellows, dark greens, blacks, browns, blues, and finally oranges, 1X1X10 cm.)

* a set of wall charts containing words of a "functional" vocabulary and some additional ones; a ... pointer for use with the charts

* a Fidel chart (series, showing by color code, all the possible spellings of each sound in the English language in one color. The wall charts are likewise color-coded and co-ordinated with the Fidel charts)

tapes or discs as required

* drawings and pictures, and a set of accompanying worksheets

transparencies and a second set of worksheets

three texts: sentences to be read separately; to be read consecutively; a Book of Stories

worksheets on the whole language

three anthologies

films ***

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* These materials I had at my disposal and used throughout the program.

** The rods described here are manufactured and distributed by the Cuisenaire Company of America, New Rochelle, New York. They differ from those of the Silent Way set of materials (Educational Solutions, Inc., New York) only in the choice of color for some of the sizes, and the replacement of the pink rod of the Silent Way set by a purple in the Cuisenaire set. The decision to use the latter set was arbitrarily arrived at and was simply due to the convenience of the availability of larger numbers of that variety.

*** Caleb Gattegno, Teaching Foreign Languages in Schools, (Reading: Educational Explorers Limited, 1963), p. 15.

PART II

PART III

All students who study at the School for International Training are obliged to take the Michigan Test of English Language Proficiency upon arrival at the school. The results of the test are used in part to arrange the students in homogeneous classes by ability. Students take a second form of the test immediately prior to leaving campus to record progress made during their study.

On the basis of an item analysis of the Test of Aural Comprehension and the Test of (written) Proficiency I hope to measure as accurately as possible, within the limitation of referring to a standardized exam, the success of the three-week program as evidenced by the performance of the students. Attention will be called only to those items of structural content which were treated in class. A graphic comparison of pre-test scores (Form B) and post-test scores (Form A) will be presented to indicate areas of improvement or lack of the same. In this way, a relatively objective view of progress made will be provided.

The Proficiency Test consists of one hundred items in three parts: Grammar, Vocabulary, and Reading Comprehension. The raw number of correct responses for the three sections is converted to a standardized final score indicating percentile rank based on a nationally applied Conversion Chart. In the case of the Aural Test, the scores represent the exact percentage of correct answers on the sixty item test. The individual scores represent the students' individual ranking on a national average.

INDIVIDUAL SCORES

Michigan Test of Language Proficiency

	10 July 1972 Pre-test FORM B		28 July 1972 Post-test FORM A	
	Prof.	Aural	Prof.	Aural
Amemiya, Sonoko	49	48	52	55
Fujimoto, Midori	49	38	66	60
Fukuhara, Minoru	30	43	48	38
Miyamoto, Harumi	48	40	42	57
Murai, Yumiko	46	45	48	52
Nakagawa, Toshio	42	37	55	62
Takai, Shigeyoshi	32	40	31	35
Yamada, Akiko	24	40	33	38
	11 July 1972		31 July 1972	
Fumagalli, Pierre	0	38	34	48

		B	A	
Mean Averages:	Proficiency	35.5	45.5	+10
	Aural	41	49.4	+8.4

PERCENTAGE * OF CORRECT RESPONSES

on Individual Items of the Michigan Test of Language Proficiency

Structural Content:	Form B Percentages:	Form A
Agreement (Subject-Verb)	11.1	
Article (Indefinite)	88.8	
Comparison		
Differential	22.2	33.3
		55.5
Equality	44.4	44.4
		66.6
Conjunction		66.6
		66.6
Possessives (adjectives and of nouns)	55.5	66.6
Pronouns (relative)	0	66.6
(subject)	66.6	
Tense		
Conditional		66.6
Future (going to)		88.8
Past (irregular)		66.6
Word Order	88.8	

* Each percentage refers to the percentage of correct answers for a particular item characterized by its structural content. Where two percentages are given, two items judged to test like structural elements were in the test.

PERCENTAGE OF CORRECT RESPONSES

on Individual Items of the Michigan Test of Aural Comprehension

Structural Content:	Form B Percentages:	Form A
Adverbs of frequency		44.
"too" to express excess		66.
Comparison		
Differential (regular)		44.
Equality (regular)		22.
Negative (with contraction)	33.3	55.
Possessives		
Adjectives		44.
Noun	33.3	
Prepositions	55.5	
Pronouns		
"it"	44.4	
Relative: that		88.
who	22.2	
Subject-object distinction		55.
Pronunciation		
he/she distinction	100.	44.
/z/ /s/ distinction in final		33.
Question forms: How many?	44.4	11.
When?		77.
Where?	22.2	
Who?		77.
		77.
Why?	88.8	
Tenses: Future (going to)	11.1	44.
		77.
Past (irregular)	33.3	
Past (regular)		44.
Word Order	0	88.

Briefly summarized, the individual scores show improvement on the proficiency section is all but two instances, and on the aural portion in all but three cases. With few exceptions the item analysis seems not to show any significant trends.

However objective these figures may seem, they clearly reflect the potential inconsistencies of performance on standardized tests. For our purposes, they indicate perhaps a certain amount of progress, or that after one testing the students had learned to pass the test with significantly better results three weeks later. I prefer to let my readers judge the data as they present themselves and draw conlusions as they may.

Let me stress the difficulty of realistically measuring the growth of the students as reflected in the percentages cited. One can never truly know how and to what extent a student may have benefited from a language class. Certainly a standardized test cannot faultlessly indicate all progress made toward understanding in a creative learning task. In a similar fashion, it is absurd to claim that all progress achieved as shown by increased percentages is accounted for by time spent in class. As for the Michigan Test itself, the item analysis indicates that a lack of total parallelism in the contents of the two forms adds yet another variable in the reliability of the results. Those items specifically treated in class often appear in only one of the forms, or in only one example of either or both forms. Therefore, comparison of pre- and post-test scores is often impossible or to say the least unprofessional.

Insofar as these statistics can represent a valid measure of progress, I present them for the consideration of the reader. I caution, however, that in my estimation, biased as it may be, they are of minimal value.

PART IV

12 July 1972

Knowing that as a Silent Way teacher there would be minimal verbal exchange between my students and myself, at least during the initial several hours of the program, I felt it necessary to introduce myself and chat informally with each student before the actual introduction of the rods and silence. As I worked on getting all the names of my students, I realized that they did not know each other either. Therefore, our chatting served as an ice-breaker activity, and secondly for me, a way to assess the levels of ability in the class. Finally, I could observe the already dominant and less aggressive personalities in the group. The latter point would present a true key to the reaction of the group as a unit to the Silent Way of learning.

After the completion of the brief ten minutes of preliminary exchange I launched directly into the introduction of the rods to my eight Japanese:

A Rod

Colors: all ten

Two rods

Conjunction "and"

Take a ___rod. Take two___rods. (optional "and")

Color and number comprehension test: The teacher commands each student to take one or two rods of particular colors. The speed and single command both offer the student an additional native model and test his comprehension.

Take a rod. (Group command to take one rod).

Have: I have ____. You have _____.

Drilling by situation of verb forms, colors,and numbers.

He, she addition of two more pronouns and third person singular of"have"

Give: imperative

Object pronouns: direct, it/them
indirect , to me, to him, to her

Take a red rod and give it to me, to her, etc.
Take two yellow rods and give them to me, to him, etc.

Cardinal numbers: introduced speedily and not in consecutive order

Number-color relation*
White is one and one is white.
Red is two and two is red., etc.

General Review of morning's lesson

Preparation for use of Campus Map

Question form: What color is 9?
Nine (9) is blue.
(Response follows from color-number relation)

Application to Map
What is 9?
Nine(9) is the _____. or The ____is 9.

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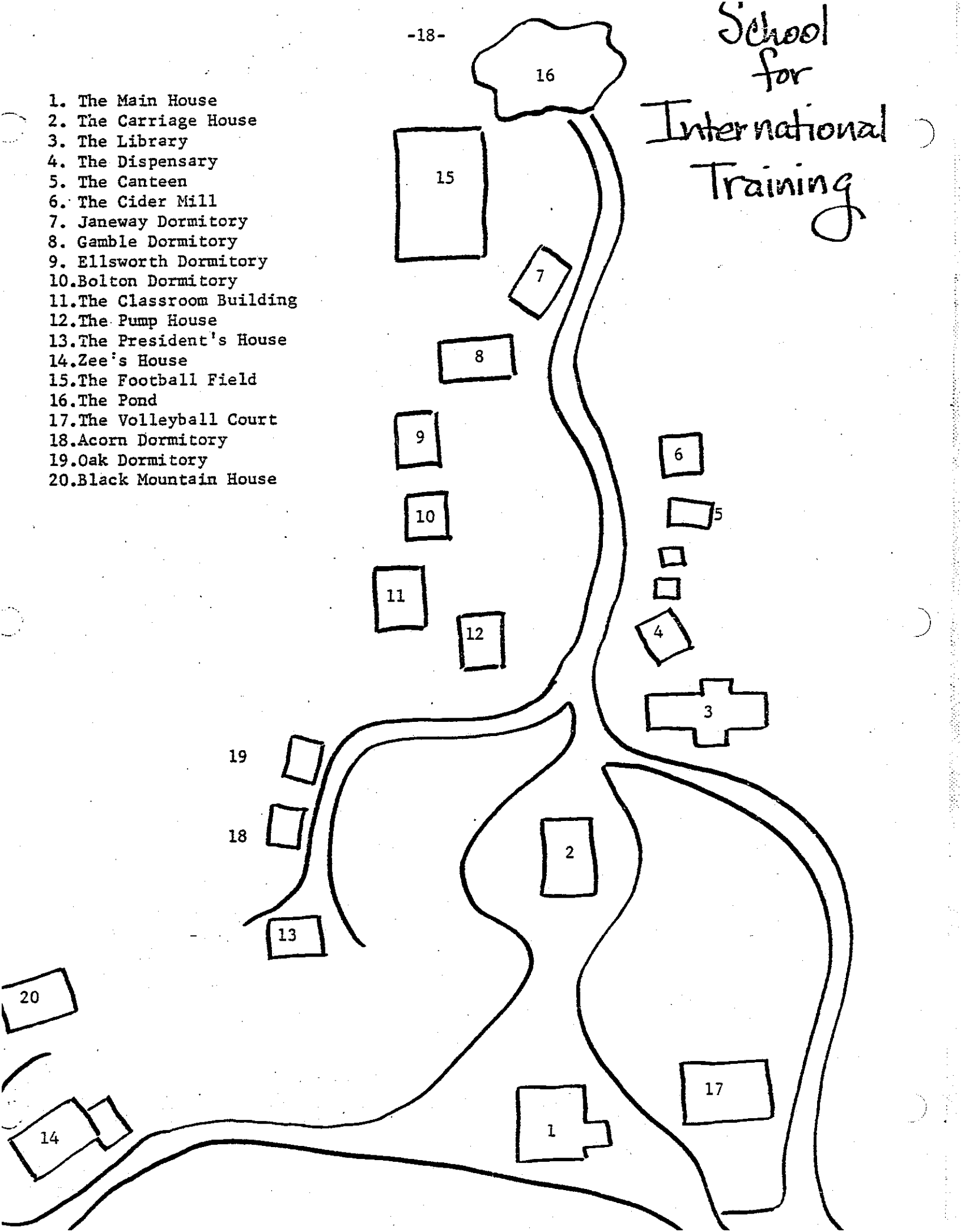
* This relation is based on the use of the rods in mathematics. The number-color relation is a correspondence determined by the size of the rods as described earlier.

School for International Training

1. The Main House
2. The Carriage House
3. The Library
4. The Dispensary
5. The Canteen
6. The Cider Mill
7. Janeway Dormitory
8. Gamble Dormitory
9. Ellsworth Dormitory
10. Bolton Dormitory
11. The Classroom Building
12. The Pump House
13. The President's House
14. Zee's House
15. The Football Field
16. The Pond
17. The Volleyball Court
18. Acorn Dormitory
19. Oak Dormitory
20. Black Mountain House



COMMENTS from the teacher:

This first lesson of the Silent Way has the advantage of novelty for most students. I felt the lesson went well; at a balanced pace considering the different student levels. The material covered was clearly presented as evidenced by the students'ability to respond to both the teacher and each other. The use of gestures to indicate instructions and correction was successfully introduced and comprehended. Very quickly, the students began to use them with one another when they wanted to indicate information non-verbally. One student in particular became both the creative initiator and potential dominator of the class through his great enthousiasm for the rods and his generally aggressive personality. It might be added here that for this reason, Toshio both put the most effort into his experience with the Silent Way and reaped the most benefits from it. His tendancy to always respond first and loudest, however, did often pose a problem as far as having a stifling effect on some of the others. As the teacher, I felt called upon to find the delicate balance between using Toshio as the student-example for the others when he deserved that honor, and silencing him deliberately in order to encourage and allow less aggressive students to speak. This first day I appreciated and capitalized on his eagerness.

Any diversions from the lesson as outlined previously came from cues perceptively picked up from the students in the form of correct material they introduced in their learning process, or particular errors they made as part of an anticipated transfer from the native tongue. (I did research rather extensively the problems of Japanese learning English, and although not an expert, I felt confident and competent in the task of detecting those errors particular to the Japanese. When Pierre, the only French student, entered the class the following morning, I still felt in control of the linguistic situation. French is my second language)

Pronunciation inaccuracies were expected and were likewise realized. The lesson at this point was totally oral, and even the singular noun, "rod," posed enormous problems for the Japanese. These errors were not strenuously dwelt upon at this time. Rather, the structural distinctions as presented were of importance. The elimination of all the successive "ands" except for the final one in series was not specifically presented by the teacher on the basis that it seemed a rather fine point of grammar and not an economically sound focus for learning time. In spite of all, several students did effect this deletion without direction or reinforcement.

Neither did I introduce the plural direct object pronoun, "them," as thanks to Toshio's inventive spirit, the class was encouraged to surface this bit of structure with which they were already familiar. The simple imperative "give" was charmingly expanded to "Please, would you give me_____?" a refreshingly polite addition from Minoru. Courtesy, so characteristic of Japanese behavior, seemed to be a slight obstacle when in the case of the subject pronouns, the students were clearly reluctant to practice pronouns when they could use their friends' names. "He has a blue rod," was consistently replaced by "Mr. Shige has a blue rod."

The testing technique of quickly giving commands to the students to force them to listen and respond was a good pace changer and an effective way to test their aural ability. Also, they became accustomed to the speed of the teacher's speech as a typical native speaker. When presenting material for the first time I naturally slowed the rate of speech somewhat, but in later repetitions of similar structures, I was conscious of using a normal or even accelerated rate of speech. My students responded to this technique by learning to listen well to what I said when I chose to speak and confirming in their own minds the fact that they could understand language when spoken at normal speed.

Other additional structures prompted by the class included the use of another imperative, "keep." In distributing the rods by choice, each student had at his command the sequence,"Take___,___,____. Give____,____. Keep____,___." Finally, "Keep the others," simplified the final concept. These ideas were introduced because they were relevant at the time, needed by the students for communication and economical within the realm of the concepts already treated and those to follow. They were, therefore, well retained. The most troublesome feature to this point was the have-has differentiation.

My original idea of introducing and reinforcing the concept of a communitive principle via the cardinal numbers and the corresponding colors of the rods altered itself during the lesson when it became clear that the manipulative order switch was easily made, but the meaning was not understood. "One is white and white is one," was mastered, but not fully grasped as a concept of communitivity of meaning which offered exciting possibilities for future simple syllogisms. The variation in sentence pattern was the valuable aspect of this presentation, plus the successful establishment of gesture conventions.

From the initial introduction of numbers followed rather elaborate ramifications in the area of mathematics: equalities and inequalities, the latter being the pretext for use of the negative, and the synonomous use of"is/are the same as" for "is/are equal to," which later progressed to the idea of comparison. The idea of the equal sign made of rods came directly from the students, several of whom were extremely competent in math. This sort of diversion had been anticipated as a possible direction to take once the idea of numerical concepts had been introduced. Its realization served as a key to the strong point of one particular student, enthousiastic about math, but otherwise noticeably timid.

The question form, "What color is 9? 7?, etc." yielded all the expected response structures, plus the form, "The color of the rod is___." When correct

the students were allowed to freely alternate between the introduced structures and whatever they might have brought to the class. In the case of errors, the students were directed by student example back to the introduced structure. This question form also developed through student initiative into "What color is/are this/that these/those?" This material was generally familiar to the students, but clarified somewhat by the unambiguous positioning of the rods. In this case, the students did briefly resort to Japanese to confirm their correctness.

As a Silent Way teacher, after this first three and a half hour lesson, I felt a sense of self-control which enabled me to direct the students sequentially toward the use of their own knowledge in the task of learning English. From preparatory research I was aware of fine errors of pronunciation and noted the rough ones for later correction, but corrected the easier ones on the spot. My overall impression at the conclusion of this session was one of enthusiasm. I felt I had clearly and effectively introduced sufficient and relevant material to enable us to progress quickly to the problem spots, while at the same time, I had reinforced a certain body of knowledge for the sake of the confidence and the continual reference of the learners. I was pleased with the degree of concentration around the table and the silent lips moving as each student seemed to mouth all the responsesand consider the response possibilities for himself. The occasional "enlightenments" were refreshing and rewarding both for me as teacher and for the students as reinforcement for their hard work.

STUDENT FEEDBACK:

Immediately following the lesson I conducted a short feedback session during which I encouraged the students to give me their thoughts, positive and negative, on what they had learned, confirmed, confused, and generally experienced that morning. The results were for me a pleasant surprise, considering the difficulties of actually collecting information of this sort without jeopardizing a somewhat culturally determined teacher-student relation. One student, Toshio, remarked to my delight that he had learned to listen, hopefully I thought , to both his peers and me. It is this kind of reaction that I would imagine every Silent Way teacher dreams of when he imposes the sometimes heavy feeling of silence upon the class. Others had learned new words; "purple" seemed to pole the most votes for "new word." One girl did not know quite what to think. They agreed overall that they had understood what was wanted and expected, except in a few cases which they could not recall specifically. They had noticed that they had co-operated with one another, and that "helping" was of major importance. The curious novelty of the rods fascinated them, yet they felt compelled to ask, "What is a ___?" at which point they still had no real control of the word in question. Finally after some gentle persuasion, a few students were brave enough to voice their expectations and hopes for the class. Conversation as a skill was on the tip of most tongues, although they agreed that sentence structures were more clear now as a result of the class. Instant conversation skill often plays a large role in student expectations of a language class.

Most telling of the student reactions to the Silent Way was the confusion created when the teacher does not impose and enforce the "laws of the language" by constant interruption to correct. One student felt strongly that all correction should flow from the mouth of the teacher, because the other students speak

less well. Further, right and wrong should always be clearly given teacher, in addition to being clearly apparent from the situation. comment served to indicate and underline the very important influenc positive, negative and non-reinforcement might have, and that the cl was already sensitive to the initial lack of dictating by the teache

13 July 1972

Class began with a quick review of the colors, imperative verb forms, the subject pronouns in the singular and the verb forms they require. The object was to indicate to the studnets just how much of the previous day's lesson they had actually learned. For the slower students the purpose was a second native model, and in the special case of this class, the review introduced Pierre to his first Silent Way lesson. Pierre's initial bewilderment and gradual adjustment could dramatically illustrate just how close the class could grow in an effort to help each other in their common learning situation.

The diagram on Page 26 illustrates how in this lesson the rods were used to symbolically represent a situation: A Family Tree. Beginning with my immediate family, I progressively added the maternal and paternal branches of my family tree. For the students' reference I put all names on the board. Introduction of the family was made via a narrative description of the tree I was simultaneously creating.

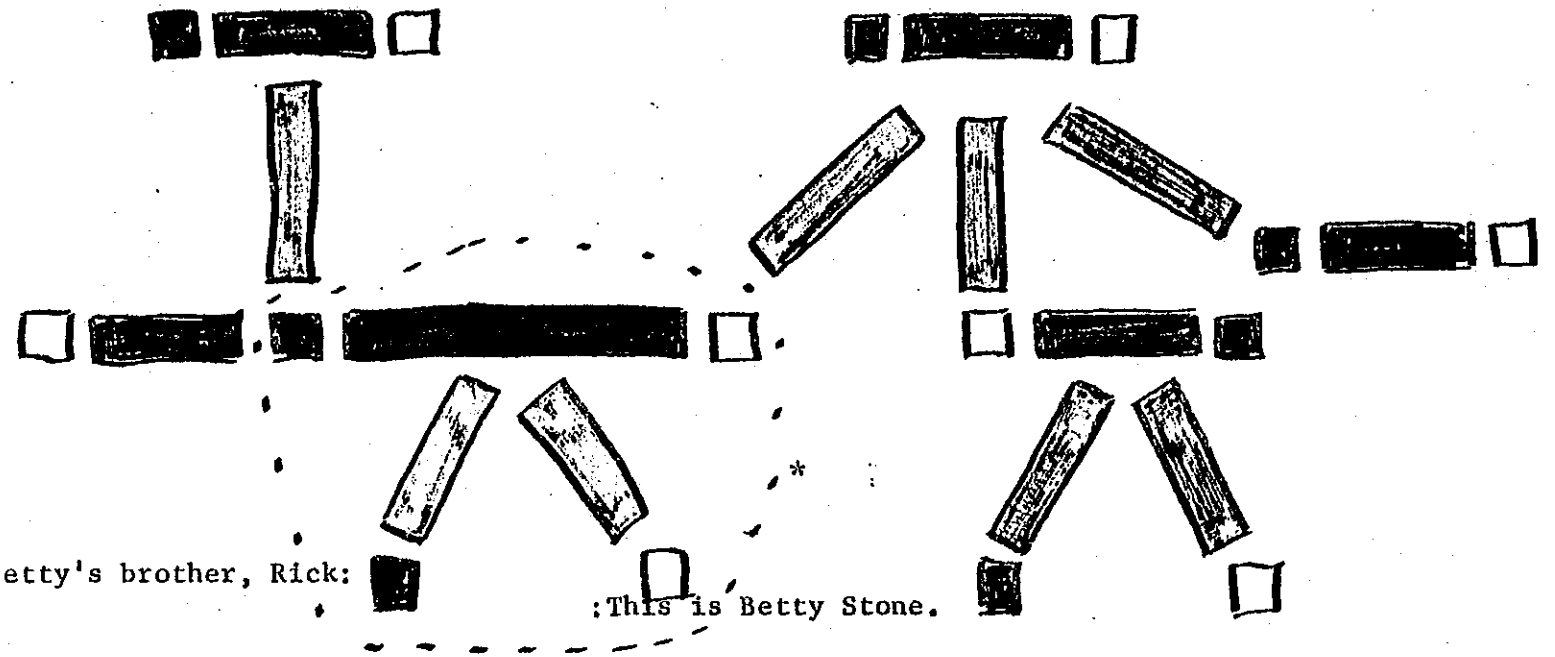
The grammatical points introduced and stressed included possessives formed from names (Example: Max's___), and possessive adjectives in the singular. Central to the lesson were words describing the social relations of members of a family, mother, father, son, daughter, aunt, uncle, cousin, etc., and the verbs "to be married to someone" and "to be divorced from someone."

The procedure allowed the students to ask questions when they were unclear on a relation. Answers were offered by other students or indicated silently for the most part by pointing to parts of the tree already mastered and similar to the one which contained the trouble spot. Considerable drilling took place in order to assure that the general structures were secure in the students' minds.

As a pace-changer, a ritual dialogue for breaks was presented:

A FAMILY TREE:

This is Betty Stone's family.



This is Betty's brother, Rick:

:This is Betty Stone.

Rick is Betty's brother.

Betty is Rick's sister.

* The dotted line indicates the immediate family, the point of departure for the description.

"Would you like to have a break?

Yes.

Would you like to have it now?

Yes.

OK. See you later. See you later."

Immediately after the break, the students worked on building their own family trees and presenting them to the class. Questions and comments on each family arrangement were encouraged and suggestions for how to more clearly show particular relations were gratefully accepted. This activity expanded slightly into an introduction of comparative sizes of families, but the latter activity remained subordinate and was not stressed.

We briefly played the game of creating sentences by having each person in the group add one word as his turn came. Little challenge and smaller vocabularies forced us to move on to another sort of listening comprehension exercise. I read sentences we had spoken many times in class to the students and asked them to remain seated if the sentence was correct and to stand if there was a mistake. As a team competition, those who stood up lost the point for their team if they could not right the sentence they had criticized.

As another exercise in listening and speaking, we played "Telephone" once again in two teams. The head of each line was shown the same sentence on a slip of paper which he then whispered to the next person in line. The "message" was passed down the line until the last person had received it, at which point both "tails" repeated the sentence as they had just heard it. Often humorous, the challenge increased to a great,proud sigh of satisfaction when, just before the feedback session, the class had succeeded in passing a message around the entire circle of the class without any mistakes!

COMMENTS from the teacher:

The review which opened the class was originally conceived of as a speedy run-through of what was well-secured material for most of the class, confirmation of achievement and therefore a stable base from which to build more elaborate structures. The addition of Pierre and the realization that one student was painfully shy and therefore would require special attention or drown---these two factors extended the morning review and seemed to slow it down more than I had wished. The phenomenon of student-to-student communication in an effort to catch Pierre up was, however, valuable and worth the more comprehensive review session.

That I would actually explain to them my true family tree was both impressive and fascinating for my students. The non-typical nature of the divorce in the immediate family was sympathetically acknowledged and served to open the door of frankness to other non-perfect circumstances (deaths, separations, etc.) The interest level was high and the grammatical information of a practical complexity. The students were all able to show who was in their Family Trees, and explain the relations, often with cue word assistance from others. Specific words to describe social relations which I had not mentionned in order to keep the vocabulary at a minimum were now needed, asked for, and offered by either other students or me. Pierre and I struggled with the Japanese names and the Japanese plodded along with the names of the members of Pierre's French family of part Italian origin. As a cross-cultural experience, the introduction of families was extremely interesting, prompting such things as apologies from the Japanese for families with no sons or no children at all. A final comment on this exercise refers to the amount of time needed for each student to introduce his or her family. More control might have been exercised by the teacher through grouping, rather than allowing description of eight or nine families

to pause and work a problem out alone, and to be aware of the right moment to move on or correct a misunderstanding. I still felt at this point a very strong notion present in the students that I was the symbol of final approval and authority. This tendancy is in opposition to the idea of the development of the independent inner criterion of each individual to judge correctness for himself on the basis of his experience. It became a special goal of mine to help the students to look inside instead of to me for approval. Toward this goal I unconsciously or semi-consciously adopted a very particular style of little or non-reinforcement teaching.

to avoid offending any one student.

The ritual dialogue effort was weak, and consequently dropped for the moment. It became a goal for the next day.

The games went variously: the root of the problem lay often in poor explanation of the instructions, or poor comprehension, or both. The one word sentence building activity failed due to lack of vocabulary and lack of creative use of known words. Perhaps, too, the goal was not clear. The listening exercise demonstrated unquestionably that without the situational cues of the rods, many of the finer distinctions of singular and plural were not fully grasped. This indicated more work in this area, and a need for the students to understand that the work of transposition of structures learned with rods work is their responsibility. "Telephone" was an enjoyable and amusing success, possibly because it offered a more immediate challenge and reward that both of the others lacked.

The slowness of pacing, due in part to the number of family trees which were shown, was the most bothersome portion of the formal Silent Way lesson. Experience might now indicate that following the model, questions and drilling on the model, would come a limited number of student examples, three at the most. Following this might come a brief introduction of differential comparatives of size, depending on the examples and the creative energy of the class. Such extensions were a part of my written lesson plan and yet were overlooked as the student examples were presented one after another. This latter activity, though definitely less challenging and more repetitious did, however, serve the purpose of drilling the initially introduced material on possessives and family relations. Numbers of brothers and sisters were also informally discussed.

The amount of control the Silent Way teacher can and must exercise began to become more apparent after the second day. The order and pace of the class is still very much dependent upon the teacher's ability to both help the students

14 July 1972

The Silent Way lesson this day introduced several pairs of opposed prepositions of place and others which in the course of the class work seemed to introduce themselves naturally. The plan for the morning involved presentation of the new material, practice of the structures, and subsequent division into two groups for further, more individualized drill.

ORDER OF PRESENTATION:

on/under

to the left of/to the right of

between

beside (student initiated)

At this time I felt it was also necessary to emphasize the difference between the definite and indefinite articles, both known to my students, but freely alternated arbitrarily. The distinction was introduced via a simplified illustration of "a red rod" and "the red rod" in group arrangements.

"a red rod" - one of a group of many reds

"the red rod" - the only red in a group of blues

Group Division:

As an observer in each group, I interrupted only when the group seemed ready for additional expansion of the material:

Example: (introduction of) Where is the ___rod? to cue the practice of the prepositions.

This question was introduced individually to each of the two groups in order to encourage a Question-Response exchange in the group work. It was an alternative to the conventional practice to this point of illustrating a linguistic situation and then prompting a descriptive statement non-verbally.

Also introduced in the groups was the command:

"Put the ___rod___,"

resulting in a lengthening of the exchange sequence if desired.

STUDENT FEEDBACK:

The most noteworthy commentary from the students was the general division in opinion on the rods in the class. Too, I found it more difficult to encourage and obtain fresh feedback the second time around. Culturally the tendancy was to agree to most of what I said, although I did have a few students who volunteered candid remarks on the lacks of the lesson from their standpoint. My one timid student seemed tongue-tied per usual: his actual comprehension is extremely limited and production likewise. Toshio pointed out the practice he got in English sentence patterns and the value he saw in using the rods to create situations which could be described and practiced. Midori, another of the top students, agreed. Finally, Pierre stated rather wistfully that he felt resigned to the use of the rods and the silence in order to achieve mastery of structures. He found the rods uninteresting, but nonetheless valuable, and added that he was, of course, learning something each day.

Teacher P.S.

The overall tone of the session did not carry the enthusiasm of the previous day, and without lengthy additions, its effect was somewhat demoralizing. I began to consider more closely what I would have expected of a similar course as a student, and how I would have reacted to the Silent Way. As with trying anything new, I felt some creeping doubts, but was convinced of the value of what I was doing and determined to continue, taking care to be sensitive to the class, the material, and myself.

Unified Class Work then resumed.

The concept of relative position was further drilled by a review of "to the left of/right of" in the Question-Response exchange:

"Where are you sitting?"
is he
is she
am I

"I am sitting _____."
He is
She is
You are

Student initiation gave us "in front of" and "behind" as new descriptive terms. Directional description moved logically to the map of the United States, adding the expressions north, south, east, and west, and derivitive terms naming the regions of the United States.

To conclude, we played a quick game of numbers, involving the practice of intonation and word grouping in the pronunciation of large numbers. To start I put one digit on the board and the students read its value. I progressively added figures to the left and to the right, continually changing the value and grouping of the digits. As the students read, both individually and in unison, I made a game of insisting on speed as well as accuracy. A few moments of this drill at an unrelenting pace and we were all ready to break.

COMMENTS from the teacher:

General comment on this day centers around the lessening of rigidit the already established pattern of the Silent Way presentation and classw I felt myself tending to condone more repetition, although by this time t heavy silent pauses, which had come to characterize my class not infrequen did not give me reason to panic. I felt I was giving the students suffic new material to work with and opportunity to experiment in class. The pr areas I aimed at unfortunately did not carry the interest level of other topics, and yet for the speaker of English, the foundation of the language lies in the ability to properly use such structures as prepositions, varic question forms, possessives, and articles.

Let me state that I was naturally sensitive to the somewhat negativ attitude of my students to what might have appeared to them as the yoke of the Silent Way. My feedback had indicated that their expectations were a odds with my conception of the class as a potentially fertile learning sit The artificiality of the rods I accepted as a characteristic of the approa reflecting an interest in language and not purely vocabulary. Most certain the ideological skism made an impression on both my students and me, thus ing our classroom reactions to one another and the material presented.

This day underlined the absolute necessity of understanding the very variations of expressions used in English. For me, as a materials writer f the course, the weight of well sequencing the information I was feeding my determined classroom performance and often altered it in mid-stream. I occ ally experienced the same kind of enlightenment my students did when all of sudden I realized that my heretofore untested program was going to fall to because of a blaring contradiction which had not occurred to me in the plann stages. The nature of the Silent Way calls for this sort of extemporaneous execution of a lesson one has spent hours analysing beforehand. As a teache

I see this as both a tremendous advantage and a disadvantage. It allows the lesson to be tailored to the students; the cues come from the class and therefore the work centers around the particular problems of the class in learning a particular foreign language. But one also runs the always present risk of forging ahead only to find a misunderstanding in the making. On this day, such confusion existed between the two expressions, "to the right/left" and "on the right/left." With further examples and practice, the haziness was cleared up in the student feedback session.

Additional revision of the lesson plan included the introduction of and use of the relative pronoun "which" to describe a series of rods, all piled on/under others. (Example: "The red rod is on the blue rod. The blue rod is on the yellow rod." = "The red rod is on the blue rod which is on the yellow rod.") Expansion of the ideas of relative position and direction led to the use of the map, allowing the students a concrete tool other than the rods. From here, we worked into what might be considered a real conversational interaction in a discussion of homestay locations.

The numbers exercise was successful for several reasons. First it was both a learning and reviewing drill, there being various levels of competence in the class . By my silence I was able to pass the responsibility of teaching and learning to the students themselves. The speed of the game was refreshing and encouraged the slower ones to try to keep up. The work on intonation put a new focus on the language work, and the idea of acquiring the rhythm of the numbers was challenging. Finally, the game served the purpose of sustaining the interest of Shige, my timid student. Here lay his strong point.

A disappointing characteristic of the class was my students' insistence on looking to me for the final reinforcement of the nod or the shake. To ask that they learn in three quick days to completely alter their sense of the

student-teacher relationship is nothing less than pure idealism, but let me say that I felt deeply the need for them to trust each other, to co-operate as a group, to experiment and to push for the knowledge which I believed was somewhere waiting to be organized within each one of them. It is here that I saw the complexity of the Silent Way: the key lay in revolutionizing the entire concept of the traditional classroom. Unfortunately, the students I was working with came from two cultures where the student-teacher, and student-student roles are well-established by formal tradition, and somewhat contrary to what I had hoped to create in our class. Learning from one another seemed in some sense opposed to all that is natural and to be desired. It posed special difficulty for Pierre, the only member of his nationality, and very often unable to understand his Japanese classmates.

17 July 1972

Because it seemed a good quick-paced warm-up, a review of listening to and reading numbers opened Monday's class. The add-a-digit exercise changed slightly as it became a two-man competition in which each person was required to compute correctly on the board the successive additions and subtractions as they were called off orally. From the introductory game, we moved into differential comparisons, using the numbers as the units compared. The double slot skeleton,"____is bigger/smaller than____," soon grew to be a linear series of numerals which could be described according to their relative sizes. Both "bigger/smaller" and "greater/less" were used. The latter alternatives were introduced by the students and footnoted for them by the teacher as the proper mathematical terms in this instance. The final expansion of the exercise resulted in sufficient numbers for work on the superlative forms of the comparisons. Also stressed was the question form ,"Which (number) is the ___?"

As a review in a new context and as a means of introducing additional prepositions and some functional vocabulary, I turned to Picture #2, the scene in the bedroom. As a narrative, I described the arrangement of the room:

> This is a picture of Bill's bedroom. In the picture the bed is in the corner.
> The night-table is beside the bed.
> The rug is on the floor next to the bed.
> There is a picture on the wall(and) over the night-table.
> The chair is in front of the window and to the right of the bed.
> There are curtains on the window and an ashtray is on the top shelf of the night-table.

I repeated the description and then asked the students to reconstruct the description as best they could. After the break, the possible question cues "What color is___" and "What is (indication of location or relative direction)?" were added to the more straightforward question, "Where is___?" Finally, we transposed the room situation to the classroom and played the game, "I'm thinking of something in this room... ." To discover the object students were required to

STUDENT FEEDBACK:

This feedback session was notable in that it represented the first time that one of the students confessed publically that a particular part of the lesson had been unclear. My reaction to this was one of pleasure, for we were able to immediately re-work the problem area and clarify the structure. Toshio once again confirmed his liking for the rods and was out-voted when a count was taken, all the others finding them an unattractive part of the lessons. (In my further planning and occasional inclusion of the rods in the class, I began to seriouly counter my conviction that they served a valuable and valid purpose with the simple query: "Am I with them(my students) or against them?")

The overall impression of the morning was that it was better than the preceding day's because there had been more conversation.

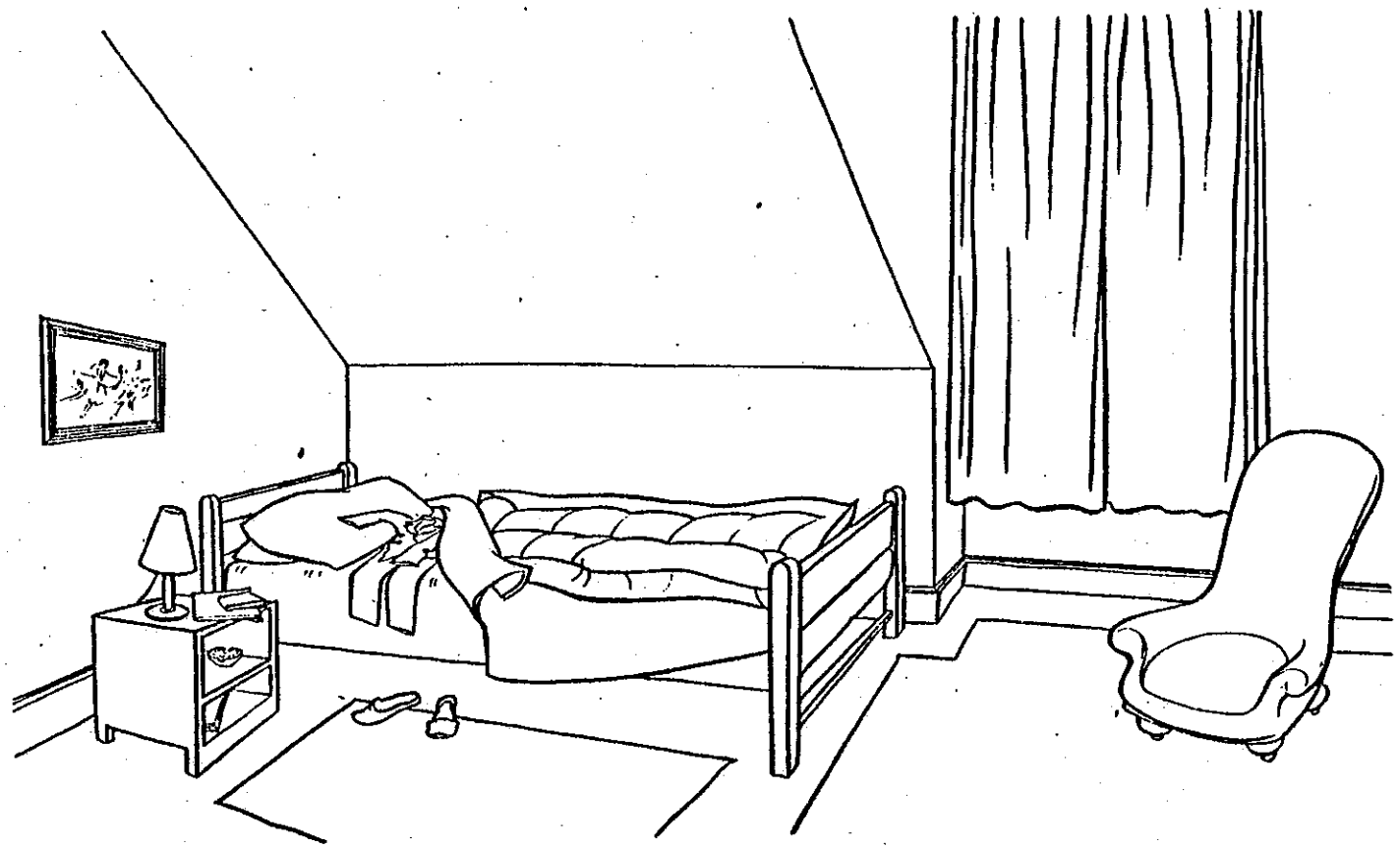
There were no comments made on the group arrangement for practice of new material; I would add that I found it an effective means to involve several students simultaneously. Especially encouraging was the patience Midori showed in working with quiet Shige in order to draw him out and help as a private tutor, yet still permitting the functioning of an entirely different session across the room.

pose yes/no questions in the manner of "Is it in front of/behind/ to the left of___?" etc.

Free and individual review of the morning activities came in the hour of language laboratory which ended the morning. For the reference of the students who had requested work in the lab, I "live recorded" exercises to follow up the themes which had been introduced in class. The tape in no way requested the students to mechanically repete, but rather aimed at giving them one more opportunity to respond to the various uses of the prepositions they were learning. Part I of the tape consisted of the narrative introduced in class. Part II was a series of questions about the location of particular items in the room. For each , the student was free to answer in any way which represented the true situation in the picture. Part III simply listed names of items in the room and the students once again located them. Finally, the students were directed to describe the room arrangement by linking the objects however they pleased. The concluding section focused on comprehension of numbers read aloud and required the students to do simple calculations in order to respond.

THE SILENT WAY

Ten Worksheets *No. 2*



COMMENTS from the teacher:

Insofar as the approach is concerned, the most novel part of the lesson was the descriptive narrative introduction of the bedroom picture. Because it represented such a change from the routine to this point, it was well followed and served as a good review of old material. At the same time it introduced enough which was new to be interesting. The students succeeded in helping one another in order to reconstruct the entire narrative as a group project. I was quite pleased with their group co-operation in the task and in their emerging level of competence with prepositions in general.

Each student had a dittoed copy of the room for his own reference, as well as a copy of the vocabulary sheet which accompanies the miniature drawing on the worksheet. In addition to explaining all the vocabulary on the sheet, further related vocabulary was discussed. This was done in the spirit that requested vocabulary is needed and will therefore be retained.

I found today that by visually cueing the students with the pointer and the phonic (Fidel) charts I was able to guide them to their need for paying attention to the phonemic (and therefore more critical) and non-phonemic distinctions of the English language in the realm of the lesson. My hesitancy about using these none too simple looking wall charts must by this time have occurred to my students. There they hung in all their glory on the wall of our classroom cubicle, not terribly frequently alluded to. After my initial discovery that my students responded remarkably to the simplest efforts to indicate the correct sounds, I began to experiment more confidently with spelling and pronunciation correction with this very rich part of the established Silent Way material. L's and r's, s's and z's especially improved. Difficulty in distinguishing aurally new or confusing sounds now had a check-point which appealed to the sharpness of the visual sense for confirmation.

Quite noticeable to me was my Silent Way teaching style of non-reinforcement. I did not necessarily consider it a problem to be corrected, but rather an undeniable factor in my classroom. I often wondered if it were the style I would be most comfortable with, or that through which I could be most effective as a teacher. While in class, it became extremely easy for me to follow the style of approach which called for the introduction of the material, the giving of the indications for the students' participation, and then the wait for the student response---a wait which varied in length and which was calmly and not at all nervously anticipated. I developed a confidence in both myself as a relatively competent teacher of the Silent Way and in my students as being able to concentrate and arrive at learning via this language approach. At those times when I experienced doubts about the effectiveness of the class, I slipped into a modified"repetition and verbal cue" syndrome in order to help my students speedily over a problem whichseemed momentarily, a huge and insurmountable obstacle. Usually, post facto reflection revealed dissatisfaction with this variety of teaching and learning situation and a renewal of determination and energy to create interesting and effective Silent Way classes.

I support the non-reinforcement technique as a tool to force the students to look first to their own resources and sense of correctness in learning. If the teacher has allotted good and sufficient material, then the students must learn to see the situation as uniquely theirs: open to and for them to depart from a given starting point and work from within to advance. More than ever, I feel the absurdity of first teaching the Silent Way, rather than first learning as a student of the approach and then teaching. Certainly one would gain considerably more understanding of the student attitude.

To sum up, from my vantage point, as biased as it might have been, I saw enough encouraging signs to continue.

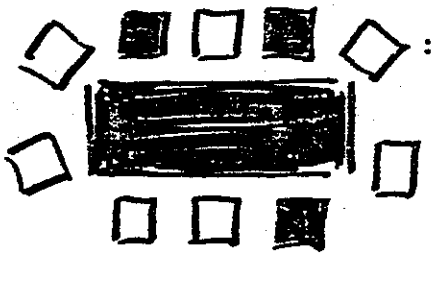
18 July 1972

The operation of how to prepare a letter was the first activity of the morning. Following the descriptive technique of the day before, I introduced the operation and performed it for the students. I then repeated it, using the impersonal "you" form as I had initially:

First you write a letter.
Then you fold it.
Then you put it in the envelope.
You lick the flap and seal the envelope.
Then you turn the envelope over and write the address in the center-front.
You put the return address in the upper left-hand corner of the envelope.
Finally, you lick the stamp and put it in the upper right-hand corner.
Now you can mail the letter.

A little less silently than on previous occasions, I then prompted the students to tell me how one prepares a letter for mailing. Letter paper, envelopes, and stamps were distributed and the students then individually, and with the help of others more able, prepared a letter for mailing and described the process involved.

Next, the rods were quickly arranged to approximate the seating of the class at the time:



I began by stating, "I am sitting here (indicating my place and the rod which was me) and you are sitting there"(once again indicating the place of the student to whom I was speaking). By using the gesture of the index and middle fingers in a "V" and switching them in the direction of the second party included in the statement, I could indicate that what I wanted was a description of the seating from his or her perspective. The order of the students' contributions is unimportant as long as the idea of the person switch is communicated and the description offered is true to fact. Once the person changes were mastered,

we moved into the past continuous and briefly recalled the arrangement of the day before.

To review the newly acquired vocabulary of the bedroom, we played the game of Categories. In a short period of time each student must arrange a given number of words in three or four different categories depending on the relationships he can see among them. There are no correct or incorrect answers; the only limitation is that a student must be able to justify the links that he has claimed. The words for the game were taken from the list on the work-sheet the students had received the day previous.

To conclude the class, we told a story which I recorded. I began the intrigue with one sentence, and then tossed the tennis ball I had been holding to the person I thought would be able to best catch both the ball and the idea that she was to continue by adding a sentence of her own. Midori added her sentence and the story ran itself happily out, ending the class.

COMMENTS from the teacher:

The general response to the letter operation was good. Although the task was common and none too exciting, the students found the lesson practical and fun to learn. Evidence of the latter was indicated by the approach to learning the sequence; the students were eager to correct themselves and each other in an effort to perfect the operation. In the afternoon, we reviewed the letter preparation in the past tense on the pretext of explaining to a student who had been absent during the morning exactly how to prepare a letter. Here we approached real communication.

Unlike the earlier exercise with the family trees, the operation represented an activity which each student could actually perform as he described it. It was briefer and thus less weighty as the entire class took turns waiting for each member. Too, the element of reality entered; there was a real envelope, letter, and stamp to be assembled in proper order. Because of the mechanical nature of the task, all seemed especially motivated to become linguistically proficient and match their manual skill.

The students were imaginative in their responses to the "switch" gesture in the rod exercise. Although they not infrequently used the present continuous incorrectly, they quickly expanded upon the locative expressions to add more interest. During this simple exercise I was alert to the students' relative comfort with various structures---favorite expressions were heard continually, others avoided completely.

As we shared our thoughts on the categories on the worksheet, I found it disappointing to discover just how many of the students had not truly followed the idea of arranging the words in conceptual groups. This skill was imperative if the students were to learn to acquire new vocabulary and retain it. A few of the group did, however, come up with defensible classifications. Student challenges did not take place; perhaps the words were not sufficiently provocative.

None of the students felt at all compelled to argue for his arrangement over one proposed by another student. I could not help but see this phenomenon, or rather lack of one, as a somewhat culturally determined politeness which discouraged disagreement in this instance. Three solid and different approaches were Harumi's creation of a story to link as many of the words as she could, Toshio's discovery of the commonality of a root in several of the words, and Pierre's conception of the objects named as made of various distinct materials. For the class as a whole, the idea of the matter of objects seemed the most stimulating and useful. It was this idea which became the focal point of the questioning in the game, "I'm thinking of something in the room... ." Both hints about the material of the objects and their locations moved the game.

During the play of the game it became apparent that the /θ/ versus /s/ distinction in initial position needed some work. Extemporaneously I sketched a person sinking and another thinking, and we all gestured to the minimal pair contrast a la calisthenics. The hands reached to the ceiling to indicate sinking (drowning) and on the head in thinking position became established signs. At times, to the amusement and bewilderment of observers, Toshio would speak and correct himself first by gesture and then verbally , flailing his arms to remind himself of the two sounds. I found that like Toshio, all were able to physically make the sounds but needed constant attention to arrive at correct production.

STUDENT FEEDBACK:

Once again I asked my students to articulate their feelings about the course so far. I found the responses not encouraging, not so much because of the content, but rather because of the brevity and general lack of specifics. Most of the group remarked that they had learned new vocabulary words, especially those particular to the letter operation. Pierre made an interesting observation when he mentionned that he was beginning to recall English which he had learned years ago. This remark encouraged me to allow at least this student to fully explore what he noticed he was reconstructing in his mind. The others were to my knowledge also working from within to varying degrees. Toshio in particular was very intent upon practicing and rehearsing responses even when another student was speaking. As a teacher I had initially welcomed his eagerness to speak first and loudest, but now as a personality and as a teacher of eight other students, I felt strongly the need to silence him more than he would have wished certainly. I was, however, aware of his attitude in class most of the time, and I was pleased with his performance and his growing development of an inner check on his language acquisition.

19 July 1972

The main focus of the beginning of the lesson was the story we had written the previous day:

> I am an old grandmother and I live in the woods with a cat and a dog. She likes talking about her children. I like to catch ball. And she likes a cat only. But her dog likes her and other animals live with her, snails and snakes.
>
> She likes to listen to music. The kind of music is classical. She likes Mozart. Sometimes she has a husband. They listen to music and enjoy it all night. Sometimes she takes a bath with her children and sometimes she travels with her family. Her brother lives in Boston. They enjoyed everything.

After first reading the story aloud, by starting with the first sentence which I had composed and spoken the day before, I waited for the others to either individually or in unison continue the story until we had heard it all. Then with the "WH-" Question Words (who, what, where, when, why, which, how) on the board, I began to pose comprehension questions about the story. I then excluded myself except as a promptor, and simply indicated a cue WH- word in order to encourage a particular question. At the conclusion of this exercise, several students had had the opportunity to re-tell the entire story in their own words.

After we had worked with the story in this form, we turned our attention to correcting the inconsistencies of verb and subject forms. Taking a cue from the first sentence, we enjoyed dramatizing the narrative by reading it as if we actually were the old grandmother who lived in the woods. Now,in two groups, the students illustrated the story with the rods. My object had been to review the idea of the family tree, and to practice possessive adjectives. Too, we began informal work on comparison of size, all in the "story" context.

From this sort of free and creative rod work we moved to a more structured situation in which we treated comparisons in a controlled context. The taller/shorter and longer/shorter distinctions were shown in detail and with care to both the meanings of these functional words and the long-range implications for

formation of all regular comparisons. Students were encouraged to both pose information questions: "Which rod is taller/shorter, etc.?" and answer them. As is the case in all classes, the students had available to them all the structures they had mastered previously, and hopefully they began to realize the strength of the snowball effect of accumulating structures gradually and later applying them out of original context. This work developed into comparisons of building size, as rods placed on a campus map (see Page 18) represented those buildings and their relative sizes clearly. "But" was introduced as a conjunction as in the Example: "Janeway is bigger than the Cider Mill, but smaller than the Carriage House."

COMMENTS from the teacher:

For class I had dittoed the story so that the authors could see their work inprint. The effect of this varied; some (especially Harumi, who by this time had distinguished herself as a great story fan) loved the written word, and others were left unmoved. The pace of the related Question-Response exercise aroused in them a certain motivation to both master the question form and the response.

As in the case of the operation, such a story provides an excellent framework for working on tenses and agreement. The fact that I had pointed out some inconsistency in the style of the story was greeted with all manner of "Aaaahhhs" and we very quickly corrected the errors. The dramatic reading in the first person served as comic relief after a morning of rather intense work.

Most disappointing to me was the misunderstanding over the illustration of the grandmother's family, and my candid reaction to it. In my mind I had foreseen this exercise as a triumphant review of the family relations, possessives, and in the process, necessarily a comprehension test. The story seemed perfect, with Grandmother in the star role, forcing the portrayal of three generations, the brother in Boston and most fun, the "sometimes" husband, Unfortunately my students understood the instructions as dratizing the story with the rods, with the dog and the cat and the intrigue with classical music and Mozart. This exercise was in itself a valuable diversion, but I now realize just how closely controlled I had envisioned the class. My initial reaction to the students choice of "illustration" was one of disappointment. I had been selfishly anxious to see my plan realized. I recovered however, and was able to enjoy the imaginative and quite different interpretations from the two groups.

Let me add that this lesson of disappointment served a greater cause. It vividly illustrated how verbal directions can easily be misunderstood, and set

me to wondering about the quality and/or dependability of non-verbal instructions. It certainly does not automatically follow that the latter are less well understood, or less effective, but only underlines the importance of clarity in all intentions.

20 July 1972

The rods reappeared today at the very beginning of the class. The structures we worked on involved the differences between "very" and "too," as in the sentences: "Harold's hair is very long. (Arthur's hair is hanging in his face.) His hair is too long." The technique I chose to work with consisted of quickly and clearly demonstrating four or five situations in which the peculiar nature of the two adverbs is unambiguously shown to the student. Briefly,(1) I showed the building of a wall of rods. I explained that it was very tall, that, as I added more layers, it was even taller than before, and that finally (as it fell over) that it was too tall as evidenced by its crumbling. (2) By building a medium-sized doorway of rods (ostensibly to the Kettle,(the most popular bar for S.I.T. students) and representing separately Pierre, the tallest student in the class, I first stated that Pierre is very tall. By "walking" Pierre to the door of the Kettle and making it clear to all that he can not enter the bar because of his height, I commented that he was too tall to go to the Kettle. (3) In similar fashion I demonstrated how a fictional character was too fat to go to the Kettle. (4) Finally, I portrayed a fish which had been out of water for a very long time. Then in a subsequent rod picture the same fish had changed color; it had died and I indicated that it had been out of the water too long.

After this expose of approximately fifteen minutes, I turned the rods over to the class without further specific directives. Silence ensued for a time until they realized that they were now to take their turn and create a situation or even re-create one similar to mine where the idea of abundance and over-abundance could be seen.

From the Silent Way Picture Series I posted the Smoking Man in the rocking chair. The instructions for the exercise were to discover as much as one could about the man by asking questions about him. This exercise tended to once again indicate what structures the students could handle flawlessly. Too, any vocabulary which they felt they could develop from the picture was available.

During the break, Pierre showed me a tongue-twister he had written for his own practice:

"Frank found five funny and fantastic fans for forty-five fathers." After the break we wrote this on the board, read it through to clarify the meaning and practice the sounds. Then, as we had done the previous day, we learned the twister by posing and answering WH- questions. Following Pierre's twister I offered :

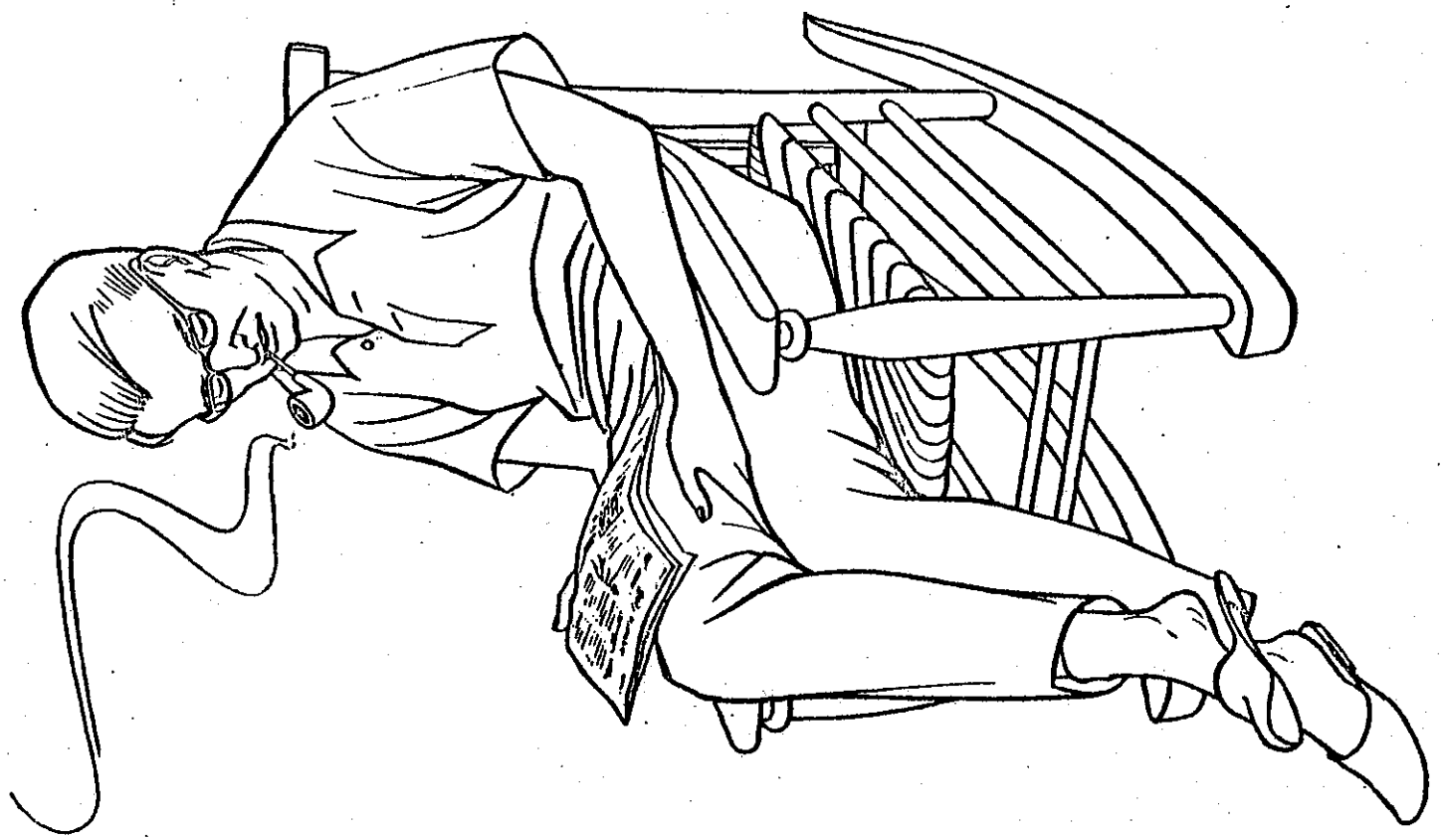
> "Sally sells seashells down by the seashore. She only sells seashells on Sundays when the sun is shining."

No student feedback session was conducted at the conclusion of this class, but included in the COMMENTS from the teacher will be ample indication of student reaction to this lesson.

THE SILENT WAY

Ten Worksheets

No. 3



COMMENTS from the teacher:

Insofar as the Silent Way presented a challenging teaching and learning situation, the order of the class on this day was the most exciting and invigorating of the program. Elements of my behavior as the teacher and class performance demonstrated vividly the potential of the class, the varied reaction of the class members, all holding different attitudes towards the learning situation, and the dynamic force of Silent Way as an actively moving approach to the acquisition of language.

Let me preface any further comment on the class with some thoughts on my personal state of mind just previous to the opening of the class. Before coming into class with the rods, I was fully conscious of the fact that the students had up until this point expressed considerable negative feeling about them. I t seemed then extremely important to me to prepare and execute excellent lessons in order to hold their attention. I persisted in the use of the rods because of the deep belief that the value in this instance was justifiable. Psychologically, the effect of the wooden sticks on both my students and me was noticeable. I completely accepted the risk of total failure on this day when I decided to bring the rods into the class and once again focus the main portion of the lesson around them.

The new procedure of presentation described in the daily plan was well received; it ran quickly and smoothly and held the group's attention, thus illustrating in successive examples the contrasts between the two adverbs. They especially were interested in the examples which contained the names of members of the class. The four given by no means represent an exhaustive list of all those prepared, nor all those demonstrated in the course of the morning. On occasion, when students seemed anxious to ask questions, they did so freely. Usually other students volunteered assistance and no further explanation was required. I felt

confident in the number and variety of examples given and assured that the students were responding well to the quantity of material presented and the speed at which the class proceded. Once the material had been well presented, I always had confidence in quickening the pace of the lesson to that of a native speaker. My students always seemed to rise to the challenge when they felt pushed to the absolute peak of their ability in order to comprehend and speak.

Once the demonstration period had concluded, a short period of silence preceded the students' decision to explore the possibilities of the situation. They began to experiment with various ways in which they could successfully use the two new adverbs. Experimentation often took the form of creating stories which had to be completed to resolve a drama. In resolving the situations, the personalities of the characters cleverly entered the plays. Pierre's story represented to me one of the most astute ways of creating a story for the sake of interest and language practice . Briefly, he described a situation in which a cat and a bird were both on top of a wall. Harumi, too short, was unable to reach the cat, but I was. I interjected that I did not like cats, and therefore had no desire to rescue the cat. Pierre, then countered that that might be true, but that he knew that I liked birds and thus would certainly take the cat down in order to save the bird!

At the point when we began to work with the tongue-twister Pierre had written, the class was transformed into a truly student directed experience. Our initial approach was similar to that of the reading of the class story. By the cue "Question" I was able to encourage the students to ask and answer questions about the situation described in the sentence. While they were necessarily practicing the sounds, they were also creating a reading comprehension exercise. The introduction of "Sally and her seashells" presented a new and equally challenging twister. The fascination for me lay in the real communication exchange which was provoked by these simple reading selections. In their eagerness,

the students were not only asking and answering WH- questions with programed responses, but they were arguing about which answers were really correct and how they could prove that, and which answers were correct but less complete than others. All of this was accomplished,to my delight, independently of the teacher.

Since my introduction of the envelope operation, I had been curious about exploring student directed operations. Extemporaneously the class led up to the question of how one drives a car. For the benefit of several of the Japanese girls who knew nothing of the subject and were waiting for further information, Pierre and Toshio began in dialogue to describe the functioning of a standard transmission vehicle. When one hesitated, the other would offer suggestions on how the description might be better handled; questions from the girls were well answered. My slower student, Shige, found the topic tempting and was eager to participate. The rods were used intermittently to illustrate pedals, and occasional vocabulary was fed in when a completely strange concept left the listeners in total confusion.

There are four aspects of this morning which I found outstanding as well as stimulating. First, and most noticeable for me, was the location of the focus of action: I was virtually removed from the conversation except for when I felt a structural misunderstanding presented a true obstacle to the students. At those times I would briefly step in and with the rods create an example in order to avoid gross misconceptions and permit progress on the "driving lesson." Second, the students were operating in a problem-solving situation where co-ordination of efforts was extremely important. They were truly helping one another with a project which mattered to them, and for this reason I saw the morning as, thirdly, real communication. Finally, and perhaps most significant, there hung in the class not infrequently a kind of motivation born of the frus-

tration of the class. I felt this sensation very strongly from my position as anobserver. I was able to concentrate on the inter-reactions of the students, their functioning without an outside authority, and their approach to solving language problems independent of even the hint of reinforcement from an authority figure. This class illustrated to me the fullest potential of the class to function beautifully at a high level of sophistication in decision-making. What I hoped for, was beginning to take root in some of them. In particular, Toshio was visibly in the process of weighing his alternatives, and of deciding from within how he could make sentences within the rules of the English language. He felt the strength to insist that he was correct, even in a case where his opposition, Midori, was correct and he was wrong. He was confident in his inner criterion and effectively used it to develop and advance linguistically. Once corrected by his peers, he made the effort to re-use the structure and thereby re-stabilize his basis for further work.

Pierre, on the other hand, dwelled continually in a negative frustration. He occasionally withdrew totally as a protest against my refusal to automatically feed correct responses to the students. On this particular day Pierre hit his height of frustration when in the midst of his description of how to drive a car, I allowed Toshio and Pierre to debate the point of whether one put the key into the "ignition" or the "ignition key." I felt this to be a minor issue concerning vocabulary, and therefore allowed the debate, forcing a confusion of suspended judgment. I noted the question and later clarified the dilemma via another student in a review situation. Pierre, at that moment, heaved a tremendous sigh of pure frustration and I realized the extent to which I had antagonized him by doubt. In later discussion with him I found it difficult to convince him that the vocabulary was the least important issue involved in the exchange, and that practically, he most likely would never forget that word. The value of what had preceded the surface dilemma was precisely and essentially

what would eventually enable him to use the English language.

I was quite pleased with the class: I had witnessed the beginnings of the basic foundation being laid. To begin to understand the language is the luxury one receives only by allowing oneself the pain and pleasure of momentarily suspending all judgment in order to collect additional data and use that too, to its greatest advantage. This I consider to be the essence of the approach.

21 July 1972:

Friday was designed as a day of review and thus a continuation of feedback to me indicating the strengths and weaknesses of my students.

Class began with a game exercise of description. First I selected one of a series of mounted pictures from magazines, etc. and described it to the class, always concealing the actual mount from them. Still keeping it hidden, I replaced it in the pile. I then shuffled the pictures and one by one showed them, asking "Is it this one?" When a student answered "yes", he received that picture, until we had exhausted the pile and possibly two or three students held pictures they thought matched the description. We discussed the possible confusion and they made one final decision together. Only when the class had identified my picture did the next person take a turn. Several students took turns and we moved on to another activity.

To pick up the tongue-twisters which had been so successful, I presented the following, once again both a twister and a pronunciation exercise:

> Harvey and Harriet have hundreds of handsome and helpful hints about who hit Helen's handball hard enough to break the highest hinge on her door.

New vocabulary was explained, by the students where they were able. A similar procedure using WH-Questions followed the example of the other twisters.

For review work with the rods, I decided to work alone with Akiko and Shige, and encourage the others to explore on their own. To the more able group I distributed cue cards, on which were written words indicating structures we had worked on. For example, "too tall", "very short," "tallest," etc. I instructed each person to take responsibility for teaching the other members that particular structure in whatever way he or she felt was most effective. With Akiko and Shige, I essentially began at the very basic rod work to build their confidence and progressed to the more recent structures. This represented for them a chance to speak without the pressure and inhibition of a larger class. Our

COMMENTS from the teacher:

My overall impression of this day is that it was slow both in content and pacing. The students seemed tired and therefore not overly responsive to anything. By overzealousness I had given them a tongue-twister of difficulty much above their actual level. The vocabulary experiment failed with the exception of Yumiko, this probably due to general misunderstanding and a sub-conscious belief that there would be no follow-through. I had resorted to it out of defensive weakness, rather than strength and undoubtedly this was apparent to my students.

The bright spot in the morning centered around the grouping arrangement. The advanced group showed themselves well capable of performing independently and to judge from the noise level, they were busily teaching each other. I was quite pleased with the students reaction to the cue cards , and saw them as one more step towards individualized learning---if one took care to hand specific cards to specific students.

Toshio's tongue-twister on the board prompted a certain amount of enthusiasm for the idea of working even with semi-nonsensical alliterative sentences for the sake of structure and pronunciation. It was, however, Toshio who stole the show. His domination of activities had by this time become a real problem, and I was consistently forced to silence him so that the others could contribute.

I was equally pleased with our small group's accomplishment. Both Akiko and Shige were able to produce much more than was apparent in large class work. An old difficulty returned: How to clearlyand unambiguously present material from the proper perspective, be it the teacher's,the students', or a universal.

Bad timing prevented me from roving between the two groups as I had planned. Under-planning and lack of novelty can be scored high for this morning.

group was interrupted when a roar of laughter from the advanced group shook the room and naturally broke all concentration. One member of that group had written an original tongue-twister on the board and they were in the process of learning it and trying to discover exactly what it meant.

To terminate the morning I experimented with an idea prompted by my students complaints that they were learning no new vocabulary. I agreed to "give" each one of them three new words, three that were noticeably missing from daily conversations. For Pierre, I could literally translate and give him the English word with the French equivalent on the reverse side. For the Japanese the task involved description on their part and then I could give them their vocabulary. I would then ask them at the next class meeting something which involved their words in context,and if they had not really learned and assimilated their words, I would "take them back." As a vocabulary learning tool this seemed dubious to them and class ended in a somewhat disorganized fashion.

"I am eating," "I am listening to music," etc. Most interesting were the examples which offer multiple responses, often stimulating discussion pertaining to culturally determined habits.

Still using the rods the students reviewed work they had done previously in a non-SilentWay lesson on how to make long-distance phone calls. With rod telephones they created their own situations and placed their calls.

The concluding activity of the morning centered around the Shopping picture, #9, in the Silent Way series. The discussion of the picture involved the students' ability to use all their previous knowledge in discovering more about the picture and describing exactly what they saw in it. They were each given cue cards which contained the present continuous (the participle) of a specific verb which characterized the action of one or more of the people in the picture. Each student joined in the game of giving hints so that the others could guess which figure his word referred to, and exactly what the word was. Examples included bending over, picking out, weighing, paying, choosing, etc. Once again, those cues referring to more than one figure (Ex."choosing") caused the most animated discussion because of the more sophisticated level of description required to identify the person.

24 July 1972

The object of the lesson was to demonstrate one distinction between the simple present and the present continuous tenses. The vehicle chosen was a house of rods. First I constructed the house room by room, explaining in narrative style where each room in my house was located, and often characterizing the rooms by the furniture contained in them. I then explained the sequence of my personal daily routine:

I get up at 7:00.
I go to the bathroom.
I wash my face.
I brush my teeth.
I go back to my room.
I make my bed.
I get dressed.
I comb my hair.
I go to the kitchen.
I have a small glass of range juice and
I have a cup of coffee.
I leave the house and drive to S.I.T.

By choosing one rod to represent myself, I proceeded to replay my daily routine showing and underlining what I was doing as each move. I narrated the routine this time in the present continuous. For emphasis, I had preceded the simple present with "every morning" and the present continuous I preceded with "right now."

After my opening narration I non-verbally transferred the situation to the students and indicated that it was their turn to do with the situation what they felt a propos. The began by discussing my routine and I encouraged them to transpose the information to their own situations.

The tense distinction was directed away from the rods to the actual class seating arrangement. With the use of time cues,"right now, " and "every day" we explored the possibilities offered by the new situation. Both questions and responses were employed.

Briefly we returned to the house situation and played a quiz game: "I am sleeping. What room am I in?" Other examples included, "I am taking a shower,"

THE SILENT WAY

Ten Worksheets

No. 9

COMMENTS from the teacher:

To pick up a thread already introduced let me emphasize that the responsibility of transposing to relevant real situations the structures mastered with an artificial teaching material (the rods) belongs to the students. Until they are aware of the necessity of this transposition and until they willingly and consciously transpose language concepts from the pile of rods to the reality of their worlds, they are in fact equipped with nothing but a series of logically sequenced grammar structures. The lesson illustrated that the class had not yet grasped the idea of the potentiality of the structures I was distributing. There was an expected amount of confusion over the two tenses we were working on---they presented major problems for both groups of language learners---but in the course of the lesson it was clear to me that the students would be content with repetition of "my story" rather than any option to expand to their experience. I felt this to be partially a fault of mine: that I had not sufficiently penetrated them with the philosophy I saw as the core of their success. Too, I could not help but suspect that the obligation was in large part theirs. Perhaps the unspoken understanding I had hoped to communicate needed rather to be a spoken agreement.

The execution of the lesson itself indicated to me that I had perhaps not chosen the most effective means to illustrate unambiguously the difference between the two tenses. My emphasis was compromised when in an effort to be interesting, I simply complicated the presentation. We had the time to treat both the tense point and the house situation: once the former had been mastered, the latter might better have been received. My mistakes in execution seemed often to be the result of planning problems which indicated in advance the complexities of a structure. Some English structures might not have been best illustrated with the rods, and yet I felt compelled to try. Such experimentation on my part was the basis of my relation to the Silent Way.

At this time I would like to add that my conception of the Silent Way approach as an attitude in the classroom, rather than as a teaching methodology, determined the validity of the activities I chose to bring to the class as justifiable examples of Silent Way. Some of these activities, like the telephone exercise, are not unique to a Silent Way class. To the contrary, most good teachers could conceivably conduct the exercise in an identical fashion. I insist only that an attitude which recognizes and puts trust in the ability of the students to perform well with proper guidance, is the governing attitude of a Silent Way class. By allowing the students the freedom to make errors in the process of learning, I hoped to achieve with them a sense of co-operation in the learning activity. Ultimately, however, it would be they who would do the work of organizing and synthesizing the language material so that they could understand and use it independently.

Although up to this point I had not once felt a loss of control over the class or a lack of direction, I did lament my inability to pace the class more consistently. I had been very conscious of the delicacy of balance of the amount and variety of material presented and recognized a relation of those to pacing. During the class, I always became deeply engrossed in the movement of the group as language learners. I had, however, become involved silently, and although I had been warned that it was no sin to smile, I found that I had removed myself and my reinforcing influence from the spirit of the class. My patience with my students was admirable: I had learned to adapt to the silence of a student as long as I could see the sorkings of a mind which was thinking, I came to value "busy silence" far more than "empty babbling."

25 July - 28 July 1972

There were no Silent Way lessons planned or executed on these days of the course. Explanation of this radical change in routine is central to the COMMENTS which follow and the summation of the Silent Way experience at S.I.T.

COMMENTS from the teacher:

The development of my lesson plans clearly demonstrates a trend away from the most classical Silent Way approach. This is indicative of both my responsiveness to my students and to my perception of myself as a teacher. Insofar as the daily lesson plans no longer contain a well defined formal Silent Way presentation, but rather a more loosely constructed organization and introduction of grammar and vocabulary structures, I will continue to describe my daily routine by simply alluding to those portions of interest and relevance to the discussion of the Silent Way. In so doing, I hope to summarize for the reader a personal experience with the Silent Way approach to teaching language.

It is impossible to conduct a Silent Way class without becoming totally involved with the students in their concentration. As an approach it is equally intense and exhausting. It is a pedagogical experience and at the same time a deeply moving personal experience. The Silent Way, in essence, is the personality of he who accepts its principle of subordinating teaching to learning. The eventual breakdown of the approach in its formal form is, as I see it, a personal reaction to that formality. The final days of my course included activities which were conducted in the manner of the Silent Way, but which were not often founded on the cues from Silent Way materials. For example, the class did some work with adverbs of frequency. The lesson presentation included the model structures usually centered around a unified context in situation. The learning of the structures, however, took place in a way not unlike the learning of earlier structures presented with the rods. In this way, we worked on the irregular comparison of good/bad using origami cranes we had made as the props. Occasionally cue cards were introduced and the students were able to direct themselves totally in the learning process. Also situational activities in mini-dialogues, such as ordering in a restaurant, were role-played with a similar attitude.

I felt at ease and more important, responsive to the cries of my students

by conducting the classes less radically. Here the whole idea of the expectations of the students enters. They represented the lowest level in their two groups. Undoubtedly, they too, had visions of leaving the School for International Training with "instant English for all occasions" in their back pockets. I too would have wished for nothing less than this, but my sights were a bit more realistic, For my students, unaware of the style of Silent Way, and surely feeling the strain of learning , once the novelty wore off, so did the initial responsiveness in part. It was very apparent that the Silent Way was not a conversational technique, and yet the exchanges in class were far more significant stepping-stones toward control of English. Such preoccupations contributed to a low threshhold of frustration.

It is this frustration born of concentration, intensity, anxiety, and effort which might be seen as the central emotional barometer of the course. My students were frustrated, I was frustrated, my observers were frustrated. And yet, I defend this state as a motivating factor, a dynamic of the movement of the class. It very rarely took the form of boredom or total withdrawl. Rather, it prevented the stagnation which can all too often smother a class where much less is demanded of the students. It is the frustration which pushes wildly from within, and demands a re-ordering of all the secured information when a new concept is introduced. It is the frustration which demands of the individual a sense of critical learning. This is the power of the process of learning. But it can also be the downfall of he who is not willing to work. In the case of Toshio, he had the desire to acquire all he could, and to this end he fought the creeping frustration which sometimes threatened to hold him back. He fought and he arrived at the marvelous point where he was able to benefit . He was literally able to reap the fruits of his linguistic labor.

Unfortunately, all my students did not have either the temperament of Toshio or his dedication. He was particularly well suited to the approach and

held in his hand what I might call a "cultural wild card." He is a teacher in a technical college in Japan, therefore a respected and honored member of his society. The other two Japanese boys were younger and less agressive: both students, Shige has been mentionned numerous times, and Minoru might be characterized as a charming and idealistic romantic who sadly missed his fiancee in Japan. Needless to say, Toshio monopolized my attention and that of his peers whenever he could. In my effort to allow the students the right and privilege of controlling their own class, I attempted to avoid the air of authority and the accompanying power to silence others at will.

Among his countrymen Toshio found little if any opposition; among his countrywomen, there were Harumi and Midori, both able and both willing to challenge him. I noted that both were considerably more westernized in their attitudes towards the traditional male-female relationship, and therefore less content with the subordinate role the other young women in the class seemed to accept. Culturally, Pierre introduced a vigorous and challenging spirit into the class to counter Toshio. I continually examined the make-up of the class as a melange of two very distinct cultures, in order to pin-point possible problems in opening channels of communication among the members. Pierre had the unhappy distinction of being the sole representative of his nationality, thereby having only Japanese after whom he could model his language. His problem was a very real one, he confessed, in that he often could not understand his classmates through their unique accent. Considering such variables, I found it extremely rewarding that the class functioned as well as it did. I am not completely persuaded, however, that the students felt the same rush of excitement at their performance.

The beauty of the Silent Way is its openness. It was both refreshing and stimulating to work within a system so flexible. I especially enjoyed

directing a lesson in a way so that the cues given by the students indicated the new trends of movement. New dimensions of my planning developed naturally during class out of the needs and interests of the students. Being sensitive to the students is this way in no way implies a shirking of responsibility. The teacher is still very much in control of the class; not only is he presenting a lesson, but also moment by moment, he is observing the various reactions of the students and considering the alternative directions for extended work. It is this intense involvement which can and did in my experience lead to the very controversial question of teacher reinforcement.

My personal style of non-reinforcement came to my attention initially when Harumi declared the first day that she would prefer that I give an indication of the correctness or incorrectness of all responses. Clearly, this proposal understood that I had succeeded even the first day to avoid the blatent positive and negative reinforcement common in many a class.

Later in the program, observers remarked variously on the same theme. Some found the phenomenon interesting and beneficial for the students; others felt openly uncomfortable as observers and dared not imagine how my students felt. Certainly, this aspect of my teaching was always noticed. I began to concentrate especially during class, now not only on my lesson plan and my students, but also on myself and my reinforcement style. I found that my observers had verbally expressed a characteristic of my teaching attitude which was in fact quite influential.

There is no doubt that I had thought extensively about the concept of reinforcement in my pre-teaching planning. I was and still am greatly intrigued by the idea of helping the students to develop their own basis for determining their progress. It is this intangible element in language learning and teaching which fascinates me and ispired a great effort to avoid "yessing" and"no-ing" my students from the start. In this respect I had conceived of casting them

somewhat into doubt from the beginning. In the same way I had intended to repeat very little if at all: by so doing, I would teach them the lessons of listening and of thinking and working for themselves, thus rewarding themselves with progress. I wanted to be a warm and understanding guide, but I wanted them to know without question that the learning was their chore. Thus, I silenced a normally chatty personality, and strived to help them understand the "rules" of the class and the ability each of them possessed to succeed with my help and that of their classmates.

As closely involved as I was, I cannot truly divorce myself enough from the situation to comment objectively on the issue of reinforcement. Instead I offer the informal thoughts of a friend and collegue who so kindly wrote me her impressions of a class (24 July 1972) she had visited:

> ...When someone says something ungrammatical, you give no feedback--he's supposed to know I suppose--but we learn our first language with lots of feedback and correction as well as just trial and error. What's wrong with helping?---that's my stumbling block." *

For the one-time visitor to my class, the experience must have been draining. As one who knew and felt for my students as they were "struggling," I felt too a sense of developping a strength which would lessen the painful sensation of stabbing in the dark for a misplaced puzzle piece. Obviously, the idea of reinforcement was my "stumbling block" too. Were I to begin my experiment again, knowing what I now know, would I yet be sensitive enough to the question and well enough equipped to handle the doubts of my students, my observers, and myself?

For me, the continual request for honesty in student feedback is both exciting and frightening. It represents a conscious effort on the part of

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* From a letter written by Barbara Swartz, candidate for the degree of Master of Arts in Teaching English as a Second Language, Boston University, 28 July 1972.

the students to respond verbally in the new language to the classroom activities. I regarded this variety of reinforcement as additional information to be internalized and transformed into further cues on the students' progress. My view of the students during the lesson and their own vision of their experience and skills after the lesson jointly indicated where we were and where we might go next.

To ask students for negative as well as positive feedback requires the courage to accept the responses. It can be extremely demoralizing in addition to being pedagogically justifiable and helpful. Too, negative feedback may simply represent one student's image of how one best learns, founded onlittle besides emotional reaction to the present situation, whatever that may be. Quite frankly, I am persuaded that one must realistically expect the worst critique if one dares at all to ask for opinions. Any other comments in the long run are flattering, but not nearly so helpful.

From the journal it is evident that the frequency and extent of student feedback formally gathered decreased as the course progressed. As important as I felt them to be, the sessions seemed less and less satisfactory. Pierre, feeling definitely older and unaccustomed to student routine, volunteered little in class despite his occasional discontent. Outside class we exchanged more extensive comments. The Japanese, I discovered, were even less comfortable with the concept of critiquing either a teacher or her lesson in her presence. The cultural issues of disrepect for a teacher and causing her to "lose face" prevented such frankness. I noted that most commentary was given in the spirit of hoping that it was exactly what I wanted to hear. Only very pointed and specific further questioning might reveal a modified response. For this reason I feel the feedback session of the first day of class was most valid and most sincere. I began rather to collect feedback during the class even more attentively and

tohold supplementary sessions only intermittently when they promised to be beneficial.

With the considerable perspective of several weeks, I now see my Silent Way experiment as a remarkable experience in being a person, a teacher, and a student. As one new to the world of the teaching profession, I have never before felt so pushed from within to perform well in the classroom for my students. Without question, my motivation for excellence in class came from the desire to aid my students as extensively as I could in the capacity of guide and resource. As a person involved with nine others for five concentrated hours per day, I cared about our time together and wanted to spend it well. The questions raised serve as a point of departure for further experiments and advancement in teaching and learning effectiveness. They are, to me, far more relevant than any profound answers I may have inadvertently unearthed, for they assure the continuation of the learning process. They offer not the final summation of my thoughts, but the freshness of a new beginning.

PART V

"If....."

If as educators, we could be sure of our progress, if we could unquestionably understand the processes involved in education, if we could make tangible the intangible, then one day we might be able to touch our progress. Knowing that the experience related here is but a small part of a very expansive realm, and that it offers at most the consideration of issues all too often taken as a priori, I would like to pause to raise to the attention of the reader the questions which must not be allowed to be taken for granted.

And,especially if one is tempted to explore the world of subordinating teaching to learning one must sharpen the critical sense and consider

The Intelligence of the Learner... .

The Expectations of the Learner and His Right to Express His Desires... .

The Degree to which the Teacher is Obliged to Answer these Desires... .

The Expectations of the Teacher and the Degree to which he has the Right to Insist on them in Practice... .

The Dynamics of a Class as a Group of Individuals Engaged in a Common Task... .

The Responsibility of the Members to Themselves and to One Another... .

The Source of Motivation in the Class... .

The Value of "Busy Silence" over "Empty Babbling"

and

One's Own Self, as a Thinking and Feeling Being .

SUMMARY of Items Taught *

12 July: Introduction of the noun "rod," singular and plural
Names of colors of rods
Cardinal numbers, 1-10
Conjunction "and"
Pronouns:
  Subject: I, you, he, she
  Object: (direct) it, them
  (indirect) her, him, me
Verbs: to be, third person present
have, first, second, third persons singular present
take, give, keep, imperative
Negation : "not"
Demonstrative adjectives: this/that, these/those
Question forms:
  What is___?
  What color is____?
is/are equal to
the same as
Vocabulary of buildings labelled on the Campus Map of S.I.T.

13 July: Nouns indicating social relations of family members
Possessive form of nouns (Example: Max's ____)
Possessive adjectives: my, your, his, her
Verbs (in context of family model): to be married/divorced/dead
: to marry/divorce/die
Question form: Would you like to ___?

14 July: Prepositions: (locative expressions including prepositions)
  on/under
  to the left of/ to the right of
  between
  beside
  in front of/behind
Articles: definite/indefinite (plus "an")
Relative pronoun: "which"
Verbs: put, imperative
sit, present continuous, first, second, and third persons, singular
Question form: Where is/are____?
North, south, east, west

17 July: Cardinal numbers to trillions
Comparatives and superlatives:
  bigger than/smaller than,
  greater than/less than
  the biggest/ smallest
over, as a locative preposition
in
next to
Question form: What is (description by location)?
"it", as apronoun to refer to an indefinite thing
  "I am thinking of something in the room... ."
  "Is it (location)?

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