DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 023 327 FL 000 971

By -Arellano, Sonya I.

From Speaking to Reading.

American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portugese.

Pub Date May 68

Note -6p

Journal Cit -Hispania; v51 n2 p312-16 May 1968

EDRS Price MF -$0.25 HC -$0.40

Descriptors -Audiolingual Skills, Beginning Reading, *Fles, Interference (Language Learning), Language Instruction, Modern Languages, Oral Reading, Pattern Drills (Language), Pronunciation, Reading Material Selection, *Reading Readiness, *Reading Skills, Second Language Learning, *Spanish, *Teaching Techniques

Suggestions are offered here for effecting a smooth transition in Spanish FLES classes from the audiolingual skills level to a level of reading competence which allows for proper pronunciation and both oral and silent reading comprehension. The discussion centers on creating reading readiness at the pre-reading level and considered such aspects as (1) the effective use of pattern drills, especially in verb presentation, (2) the counteraction of interference from English speech and reading habits, and (3) the selection of appropriate primary reading materials. (DS)

ERIC

HISPANIA

VOLUME LI — MAY 1968 — NUMBER 2

CONTENTS

IN SEARCH OF ARABIC INFLUENCES ON BORGES, *Erika Spivakovsky* 223
LUIS MARTÍN SANTOS AND THE CONTEMPORARY SPANISH NOVEL, *Janet Winecoff Díaz* 232
TEORÍA Y TÉCNICA NOVELÍSTICAS EN "EL EMBRUJO DE SEVILLA," *Jorge L. Martí* .. 239
SURREALISM IN TWO NOVELS BY SENDER, *Charles L. King* 244
"SOLEDAD DE LA SANGRE": A STUDY IN SYMMETRY, *Charles Param* 252
THE PRESENCE OF WOMAN IN THE POETRY OF OCTAVIO PAZ, *Ann Marie Remley Rambo* 259
JUAN VALERA: SU PREOCUPACIÓN POR ESPAÑA, *Manuel Lloris* 265
DISSERTATIONS IN THE HISPANIC LANGUAGES AND LITERATURES—1967, *Claude L. Hulet* 270
LETTERS TO THE EDITOR: Madariaga, Unamuno, Predmore y Algo Más, *Salvador de Madariaga;* In Reply to "After Colorado, What?," *Dwight Bolinger;* On "'Modern Spanish': A Dissenting View," *Dwight Bolinger;* The Review of "Breve Historia de la Literatura Española," *Diego Marín* 279
SHOP-TALK: Transformational Grammar in Teaching Spanish, *Hubert Molina;* La Composición: Conciencia de Estilo, *Marguerite C. Suárez-Murias;* A Clinical Report of the Use of Motion Pictures in Foreign Language Teaching, *Ben C. Coleman* .. 284
OFFICIAL ANNOUNCEMENTS: Program of the Fiftieth Annual Meeting; Report of the Nominating Committee: Officers for 1969; Correction 296
THE PRESIDENT'S CORNER, *Dorothy McMahon* 299
NOTES ON USAGE: "Lo" and "Le" in American Spanish, *Juanita Carfora;* Léxico de la Violencia en Colombia, *Publio González-Rodas;* Notes on "Conocer" and "Saber," *Harold L. Dowdle* 300
SPANISH IN THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS: From Speaking to Reading, *Sonya I. Arellano* 312
FACT AND OPINION: The Progress of Latin American Studies in Great Britain, *James C. McKegney;* Un Cursillo de Poesía con Juan Ramón Jiménez, *J. Riis Owre;* Miguel Ángel Asturias and the Nobel Prize, *Robert G. Mead, Jr.* 317
FOREIGN LANGUAGE CURRENTS: *Conducted by Thomas F. Sousa* 332
NOTES AND NEWS: *Conducted by Thomas F. Sousa* 340
CHAPTER NEWS: *Conducted by J. Chalmers Herman, Chapter Adviser* 345
THE HISPANIC WORLD: *Conducted by George O. Schanzer* 347
BOOKS OF THE HISPANIC WORLD: *Conducted by Donald W. Bleznick* 360
REVIEWS: *Conducted by Donald W. Bleznick* 383

Published by
The American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese, Inc.
© 1968

(The Association is a Constituent Member of the National Federation of Modern Language Teachers Associations and the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages.)

The opinions expressed by writers in HISPANIA are their own, and do not necessarily express the views or policies of the staff of HISPANIA or of the American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese, Inc. Statements by individuals herein are made on their own responsibility and are not to be construed as official pronouncements by the Association or by HISPANIA.

HISPANIA is indexed in the Education Index.

ED023327

FL 000 971

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS COPYRIGHTED MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY American Assn. of Teachers of Spanish & Portuguese, Inc. TO ERIC AND ORGANIZATIONS OPERATING UNDER AGREEMENTS WITH THE U.S. OFFICE OF EDUCATION. FURTHER REPRODUCTION OUTSIDE THE ERIC SYSTEM REQUIRES PERMISSION OF THE COPYRIGHT OWNER."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY.

FROM SPEAKING TO READING

SONYA I. ARELLANO
Florida State University

"Readiness," in the sense in which the word is currently employed in the teaching of English reading to native speakers, obviously has little meaning when applied to an English-speaking child who begins to read Spanish in the third or fourth grade. Yet there undoubtedly exists the need for readiness of a somewhat different order, for the development of basic audio-lingual skills is essential before the teaching of reading in Spanish is begun. Of primary importance to both audio-lingual facility and reading is the student's need to become familiar and comfortable with the sound system of Spanish. Toward this end, rhymes, tonguetwisters, poems, and songs can be of inestimable value in heightening the child's phonetic sensitivity. The usefulness of such devices in the teaching of reading has been noted by many experts in the field, among them Gertrude Hildreth, who advises teachers to "Intensify the children's acuity for sounds in words through rhymes, poems, and songs."[1] For example, nursery rhymes built around the pronunciation of the Spanish vowels are extremely useful in training youngsters in their aural discrimination and articulation.

Yet as every FLES teacher concerned with reading instruction in Spanish knows, there is much more involved in the development of "readiness." There are other considerations related to the reading process itself, to the nature of the Spanish language, and to those speech and reading habits characteristic of English-speaking American children.

There is a great temptation, when working audio-lingually with children, to place exaggerated emphasis upon the learning of nouns, with a resultant impoverishment of drill in the more abstract concepts expressed by other parts of speech. Because so many nouns designate concrete objects, they are more readily demonstrated (either through use of the object itself or by means of models, cut-outs, or drawings) in the classroom and are, with a minimum of repetition, easily learned and retained by the student. Yet such drills, even when couched in the context of a simple sentence ("Aquí está el lápiz," "Aquí está el libro," etc.) may ultimately degenerate into little more than name calling, a process which, regardless of the number of words thus mastered, does very little to prepare the child for useful communication in Spanish, and leaves him almost totally unequipped to learn to read. And yet, with the exercise of a little ingenuity, it is possible to present nonobjective concepts in such a manner as to insure that they will be learned with relative ease and painlessness. (There are, admittedly, a great many concepts in Spanish, as in any other language, not susceptible of demonstration by any means save those of translation and exegesis in the mother tongue. The fact remains that many of the most frequently employed nonobjective words and constructions *are* demonstrable in one way or another, and offer a fertile field of material for learning at the elementary level.) Verbs, where possible, should be acted out by the student employing them in drill, so that a vivid motor experience is immediately associated with their use. Thus, a teacher might, directing himself to a pupil, give the command, "Salta, Miguel." The child thus addressed would react with the appropriate movement while giving the response, "Yo salto." The question, "¿Salta Miguel?" might then be directed to other members of the class to elicit the third person use of the verb in the response, "Sí, Miguel salta." Verbs not amenable to such treatment can often be demon-

* Articles for this section may be sent to Prof. Leonor A. Larew, New York State University College, Geneseo, N.Y. 14454

Reprint from *Hispania*—Volume LI, No. 2—May 1968.

FL 000 971

strated by means of simple but graphic stick figure drawings and suitable conversational material woven around the situations depicted.

Similarly, positive and negative verbal commands can be presented in the form of games that greatly facilitate their mastery. The one described below is merely illustrative; an imaginative teacher would have no difficulty in devising many more along the same lines.

Tira la pelota. Object: to familiarize the student with positive and negative familiar command forms of regular *-ar* verbs. First, pupils are taught the following rhyme, while the teacher manipulates a large, colorful ball so that the rhyme is associated with its meaningful dramatization: "Tengo una pelota que salta y que bota porque no está rota. ¡Tírala otra vez!" At the appropriate point in the rhyme, the teacher throws the ball to a child who will in turn bounce the ball until he reaches the final line, when he must toss the ball to another. When this much has been thoroughly mastered, a variation is introduced into the game. The children are told that upon throwing the ball to a classmate, they may instruct that person either to bounce the ball or *not* to bounce it, as they choose. Thus, if the recipient of the ball hears "¡Rebota la pelota!", he proceeds as before, bouncing the ball while reciting the rhyme. But if he is told, "¡No rebotes la pelota!", then he must immediately pass the ball to a classmate, telling him whether or not he is to bounce the ball.

While this operation may seem needlessly simple-minded, the response of youngsters up to the age of ten or eleven is gratifying enthusiastic. It is a game that a great many have been known to take home with them, and the repetitions thus secured will, when reinforced by one or two other games employing the use of positive and negative commands, secure the habitual employment of the *-a, -es* morphemes. With little difficulty, similar games can be invented to expedite the teaching of prepositions and adverbs.

In the elaboration of any language-teaching technique intended for use with young children, it is important to avoid drilling in a vacuum; drill that is unrelated to the child's immediate experience is not only boring but largely unproductive. Drill responses not made meaningful within the context of an activity situation all too easily become nothing more than mindless chanting. To the extent that a teacher succeeds in engaging the child's intellect, senses, and motor abilities in the process, he may be reasonably certain that language learned will be functional and not easily forgotten.

It is likewise in the pre-reading period that the Spanish teacher will be compelled to anticipate and seek solutions to another problem that arises from the English-speaking child's speech and reading habits in his native language. Numerous authorities in the field of English reading have observed that American children are inclined to focus their attention upon the foreparts and middleparts of words, displaying considerably greater accuracy in these areas than in endings.[2] This tendency, transferred to a highly inflected language such as Spanish, can present a formidable obstacle to the youthful learner. Indeed, unless adequate steps are taken to correct this defect, verb and adjective agreement may never be handled acceptably. Here again, rhyme is valuable because it focuses attention upon endings. The teacher will of course insist that students listen carefully and pronounce with the greatest accuracy of which they are capable to increase their sensitivity to sounds within words. At this point, a brief explanation in English of the necessity for "hearing words through to see how they end" can pay handsome dividends in increased accuracy and fluency.

Great care must also be exercised to assure that the child maintains proper patterns of stress within words as they are combined to form complete utterances. Misplaced stress is a frequently encountered problem at this stage of learning and is one that often plagues children whose performance is, in every other respect, excellent. Illustrative of this is the difficulty experienced with the verb *está* when it appears in sentence context. In isolation, the word will be correctly pronounced with stress on the final syllable;

yet when the student is required to produce an utterance such as, "¿Cómo está Ud.?", the accent shifts to the first syllable. This error is often accompanied by an analogous shift in accent in *usted*, and probably results from a strong inclination on the part of the child to make the phrase conform to the regular sing-song rhythm of a trochaic stress pattern. Another common source of difficulty is to be found in cognate interference from English (i.e, telephone, *teléfono*).

Brief sentences on the blackboard concerning such things as the date and weather conditions are probably the most natural means of introducing reading to an elementary Spanish class. At first the teacher will probably wish to do no more than write these simple materials and read them aloud to the class herself, with no fanfare or explanations. When it seems that students are secure in their association of speech and printed word, they will take turns "reading" them to the rest of the class. Thus far, of course, it is clear that while the child is beginning to associate print with sounds, he is not, in any true sense of the word, actually reading; the written material being nothing more than the graphic representation of well-worn formulae previously memorized on the audio-lingual level.

The transition from this stage of what might be termed "recitation supported and prompted by print" to true reading poses several problems, not the least of which concerns the choice of materials. Every teacher of English reading is acutely aware of the importance of the emotional element in words and the stories woven from them as a factor in learning to read. Words that call up pleasurable sensations, words that arouse feelings of satisfaction, words associated in the young learner's mind with agreeably exciting experiences—these are more easily mastered and remembered than a vocabulary which does not fulfill these requirements.[3] Yet this fact has all too often been ignored in the rather dreary tales of the ubiquitous Juan and María served up in readers for the young beginner in Spanish. The euphoric advertisements to be found in any professional journal—for texts, tapes, readers, records, "methods" and all the other paraphernalia currently dear to commercial purveyors of learning—would seem in fact to be only remotely related to reality in a field where the dearth of creative and stimulating teaching materials remains as a significant problem to be resolved by language teachers at nearly all levels, but particularly by those in the primary grades. A survey of the reading materials now available for use in elementary school Spanish classes leaves one with the disheartening and disagreeable impression that in many instances we have only succeeded in translating some of the more deadly inanities of our English basal readers into a foreign tongue, creating in the process vast quantities of print that neither instruct nor entertain. Likewise, the sometimes suffocating banality of much of the dialog material currently in use argues against its usefulness in the reading program. Indeed, there arises the question of whether we have not been guilty of a serious confusion of goals in assuming that the teaching of culture and of reading must be undertaken simultaneously, with Spanish texts limiting themselves exclusively to the depiction of people and events within a Spanish or Hispanoamerican context. While such accounts are not without value, the young American learner does not easily identify with the characters and situations portrayed—a fact that may detract from their efficacy.

For these reasons, the imaginative teacher may find that at least in the beginning he is better advised to create much of his own reading material. The author has found that the folk story approach has certain distinct advantages that are further enhanced by the availability of excellent film editions of classics such as *Los tres osos*, *La gallinita roja*, and *Caperucita roja*.[4] The selection of a film such as *Los tres osos* as the point of departure for an initial reading experience provides the teacher with a fine audio-visual aid to teaching and reinforcement which has the additional happy consequence of exciting student enthusiasm for the material.

Once students have been prepared audio-

lingually in the simple, carefully controlled vocabulary and sentence structure of such a film, they may be introduced to reading; first, in brief, self-contained episodes presented as short stories, then in mimeographed copies of the complete text. The opportunities afforded by such reading for enriching the audio-lingual resources of a class are almost unlimited, and these familiar story materials offer a further advantage in that youngsters tolerate great amounts of their repetition without boredom—a factor whose importance will not be underestimated by those who teach audio-lingual classes at the elementary level.

When children have made a reasonably good start in learning to read, the Spanish teacher all too often retires to the background and trusts that the process will continue to move forward of its own momentum, limiting himself to correcting mispronunciations as they occur, facilitating and checking comprehension through questioning. Yet it is precisely at this stage that the teacher's real work properly begins: assuring that reading skills are consolidated and that new vocabulary does not languish and disappear.

In line with current pedagogical practice, based upon research which indicates that an analytic approach is to be preferred to the older synthetic method, the child has learned whole words, comprehended within the context of short, meaningful units. Hopefully, such a method of presentation assures that reading will, from the very beginning, function for the child as a tool of communication rather than as a somewhat irritating form of puzzle decipherment. Yet the question of comprehension is a complicated one, and the situation described by Buswell in his pioneering research effort is one that persists in many Spanish classrooms today, though for different reasons.

> The oral reading of foreign languages presents an interesting problem for study because there are two distinct difficulties involved—one the difficulty of comprehending what is read and the other the difficulty of properly pronouncing the words. One of the most interesting observations made during the investigation relates to the attitude of students toward comprehension in oral reading. Although in every case they were directed to read the paragraph orally to find out what it was about, one of the most common responses of the students when the comprehension quesions were asked was as follows: "I was paying special attention to the pronunciation of the words and I didn't get the meaning." This was generally offered as a perfectly satisfactory excuse and no apologies were made for the explanation. Furthermore, this explanation was obtained not only from the elementary-school pupils but also from the high-school and college students . . . This is . . . radically different from the concept that reading is essentially a process of comprehension, a process of fusing word units into thought wholes . . .[5]

The reason adduced by Buswell for this failure to comprehend when reading orally was the then current practice of meaningless English declamation in American classrooms; today this custom no longer exists, but the nature of audio-lingual training and concern with accuracy of pronunciation in the foreign language pose a difficulty very similar to that faced by the students in Buswell's experiment. Several means of helping the child cope with this dilemma suggest themselves. The teacher will of course emphasize the idea that reading is above all an information-getting process and stress the need to read for meaning. He will make frequent pauses in the reading of a passage to assess student understanding through skillfully worded questions that do not require that the student use Spanish creatively to frame an original utterance (something that very few beginners are able to do) but only that he have understood what he has read to the extent that he can answer with material lifted from the text. In addition, it is essential to allow a few moments for silent perusal of new material before requiring that it be read aloud. In this way, the child is not asked to read for meaning and concentrate upon correct pronunciation simultaneously, but is permitted to fix his attention upon first one and then the other of two very different skills.

Once the teacher feels that youngsters are comfortable in their reading and show evidence of fluency and comprehension, he should begin to devote some class time to word analysis, vocabulary drill, and phonic practice. If satisfactory progress is to be maintained, attention must be given to the development of certain critical and

analytical skills. As Gray contends, "Most of the evidence now available supports the view that guidance in word discrimination should be provided from the beginning, with increasing emphasis as the pupil advances on word attack skills."[6] And Gertrude Hildreth notes that "Children make faster progress when they learn to watch for recurring syllables and words within words . . . Dividing a word into syllables, seeing each syllable as a part of the whole, pronouncing words slowly, by syllables, helps the young reader see, hear, and say the words correctly. . . ."[7]

This process of oral sounding by syllables assumes great importance in a language such as Spanish.

> In the alphabetic language . . . the learner notes that the same letters occur repeatedly in different words. He thus comes to distinguish one letter from another. In . . . languages [such as Spanish] he discovers shortly that a given letter always has the same sound. With guidance, he learns to apply this fact in the recognition of new words. In Spanish, in which the syllables are simple, prominent, and frequently repeated, the learner may focus attention on syllables at first rather than on individual letters. Ultimately all the details of form and sound are noted and their significance as elements of words is recognized.[8]

Syllable study is given a prominent place in classes conducted with Spanish-speaking children, where the use of the *silabario*[9] for beginning readers is universal. Such exercises are easily adapted for use in American classrooms, and the author has found that time devoted to them is more than repaid in increased reading accuracy. When presented in a sprightly manner, they take on the aspect of a game in which students participate readily and eagerly.

Reading in Spanish is a skill which could, with little difficulty or expense, continue to enrich the lives of great numbers of our students long after formal study has ended. Such skill, far from being exclusively literary, may also be expected to function in the maintenance of audio-lingual skills, especially in circumstances where active employment of these is not possible. In spite of the increased attention received by foreign languages in recent years, their inclusion in the curricula of public schools, especially at the elementary level, is by no means assured, and those of us who are convinced of their importance and committed to their teaching cannot permit ourselves the luxury of complacency. The child who can read Spanish is justifiably proud of having acquired yet another skill in his new language, and the readers and workbooks that he takes home with him are *tangible* evidence of accomplishment. These two factors, the child's pleasure in his accomplishment and visible proof of achievement, should not be overlooked for their importance in winning parental and community support for Spanish instruction in the elementary schools.

NOTES

[1]Gertrude Hildreth, *Teaching Reading* (New York, 1959), p. 326.

[2]Hildreth, p. 52.

[3]Hildreth, pp. 130-31.

[4]All three produced in color by Film Associates of California. These elementary Spanish films are, in spite of an occasional egregious technical blunder, among the very best available.

[5]G. T. Buswell, *A Laboratory Study of the Reading of Modern Foreign Languages* (New York, 1927), pp. 40-41.

[6]William S. Gray, *The Teaching of Reading and Writing: An International Survey*, Monographs on Fundamental Education, x (Chicago, 1958), p. 66.

[7]Hildreth, p. 152.

[8]Gray, p. 66.

[9]In a typical *silabario*, the children are first introduced to the sounds of the vowels in isolation. The vowels are then combined with consonants and with each other in a presentation of progressive difficulty (first the so-called *directas*, then the *inversas*, followed by the *compuestas* and otherwise *difíciles*). Throughout, learning is facilitated by colorful illustrations that help make new word meanings clear.