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ABSTRACT
              An experimental first-year German program at the
University of Texas is described. The course builds on and extends
psychologist James Asher's Total Physical Response strategy and is
based on five principles: (1) presenting language as communication in
context; (2) teaching recognition before production; (3) postponing
demands for error-free production until a high level of comprehension
is reached; (4) presenting grammar as an aspect of meaningful
communication; and (5) using German as the language of instruction.
Reading is taught by emphasizing skills of prediction and inference
and familiarity with vocabulary and structure to enable students to
sight-read German effectively. Vocabulary and structures are retained
better if used in classroom games and activities that help fix the
words in the mind. Students show recognition of language before they
are able to produce it by acting out instructions, illustrating
vocabulary or identifying parts of speech. Production of error-free
sentences is not stressed initially, but homework and lab exercises
are designed to lead to this. Grammar is learned primarily by
inferring principles from actual usage. A survey favorable compares
the performance of program students after one semester with regular
program students completing a year of German. (CHK)

Integration of the Total Physical Response Strategy

Into a First-Year German Program:

From Obeying Commands to Creative Writing

(Paper presented at the spring conference of the Texas chapters
of the American Association of Teacherr of German, April 3, 1976,
North Texas State University, Denton, Texas, by Margaret Woodruff,
Instructor of German at the University of Texas at Austin)

Building on and extending psychologist James Asher's Total

Physical Response strategy into a complete first-year university

language course, members of the Department of Germanic Languages

at the University of Texas at Austin have developed a

German program for all 23 sections of the first-semester course

and all 15 sections of the second-semester course.   This program

is based on five principles:

1. presenting language as communication in context;

2. teaching recognition before production;

3. postponing demands for error-free production until a high level

    of comprehension is achieved;

4. presenting grammar as an aspect of meaningful communication;

5. and using German as the language of instruction.

The research on which the program is based, including Asher's

work, is described in the Annual Review of Foreign Language

Education for 1974 and 1975, particularly in "A New Reading" by Janet King, Freda Holley and Betty Weber of the Department of Germanic Languages at the University of Texas at Austin[1] but also in "Learning Theory for the Classroom Teacher" by John B. Carroll.[2] Janet King is a nationally known reading expert; immediately after completing her ACTFL chapter, in summer 1975, she designed the first-year German program for the University of Texas at Austin, which is still in its first experimental year. The primary goal in this program is reading comprehension, to be achieved by a variety of means. We have incorporated into our program any technique that seems to work, regardless of what "method" it originally came from. We have tried, however, to be precise and consistent about our objectives --our expectations of the students--and not to test anything we haven't taught.

I. Presenting Language as Communication in Context

Reading is basically what we have added to Dr. Asher's Total Physical Response strategy; and not just added it, but used the Total Physical Response strategy to make the reading

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[1]Chapter 6 in Perspective: A New Freedom, vol. 7 of the ACTFL Annual Review of Foreign Language Education (Skokie, Ill.: National Textbook Co., 1975).

[2]Chapter 5 in The Challenge of Communication, vol. 6 of the ACTFL Annual Review of Foreign Language Education (Skokie, Ill.: National Textbook Co., 1974).

program work, and vice versa. We want to develop the skills,

such as prediction and inference, and the familiarity with

vocabulary and structure that are necessary for students to be

able to sight-read a German short story or magazine article

effectively, before demanding error-free spoken and written

production at a similar level of complexity. We want the students to

rely on their own basic vocabulary, small though it is at the

beginning, and on their reasoning ability to figure out what

a given story is probably going to be about, or what a given

word has to be in the sentence in which it is found--rather

than expecting to translate every word that is not familiar

with the aid of a dictionary.

We face the same problems of motivation and attention that

ary language teacher faces. We're emphasizing solving the

problem by creating a classroom context in which language is

learned as a vehicle of genuine communication--not as something

that can be put through rather abstract substitutions and trans-

formations of isolated sentences.

Students learn better if they are actively participating in class; yet the standard audiolingual drill, while better than no participation, leaves something to be desired. Structures can be internalized as effectively through the repetition in properly constructed game-like activities that involve communication of information as through pattern drills, and with better motivation and attention.

For example, with objects available in the classroom such as a book, a woman's purse, and a pencil, gender can be drilled informally by holding up a book and asking, "Is that the pencil?" The students answer "No, that's the book." Accusative case can then be drilled by having students hide objects behind their backs and other students guess, "Do you have the purse? the pencil?" Dative case and the verb "to belong to" can be drilled if one object is collected from each student's pockets or purse and the class has to guess "does that belong to you? to that student? to her?" And more sophisticated versions of the guessing game are easy to think up for more advanced levels.

Fortunately, creating a realistic context for communication in German also helps solve another problem all foreign language

teachers face: how to help students memorize vocabulary effi-

ciently. Various studies indicate that memorization occurs

more efficiently if the items to be learned are linked in some

meaningful sequence, rather than isolated or simply paired with

their English equivalents. Pictures and visualization help

considerably; learning words in the context of stories and

performing actions, such as carrying out commands, are also

most valuable.

In addition, it seems that novel and humorous situations,

such as those that arise quite naturally in command and simulation

activities, help fix words in students' memory.   Sometimes

only one exposure to the word is required. For example, one of

our teachers told how something fell from a scaffold in a con-

struction project outside the classroom. Everyone rushed to the

widows to see what was going on. The teacher commented

casually: "Something just fell from the scaffold." The word

scaffold appeared in a story the students read four or five

weeks later and the whole class knew the word, because something

had happened earlier to focus their attention on this word

in a really memorable way. We try to create these memorable

situations in the classroom; and we don't even have to try,

after a while: the group creates them for itself.

To accomplish our primary goal of reading comprehension,

and fluency, we have students$\underset{\wedge}{}$ practice all skills--reading, writing,

listening and speaking. We test primarily listening and reading

comprehension in the first semester, however. On the standard

MLA Cooperative Foreign Language Tests, our listening scores

after only one semester were very close to the national norm for

the end of the first year. For reading they were also quite

close, particularly at the median and the lower quartile.

We also found a 20% increase in the number of students that

we retained for the second semester, an increase over the number

that we retained in the previous year, when we did not use this

method. Moreover, the reaction of the students to the course--

the overall assessment of the course--improved. On a scale in

which 0 is "average" and the range is -2 to +2, our ratings

rose from .3 ("average") to 1.0 ("above average")between fall

1974 and fall 1975, when the experimental program began. In

the same period the students' assessment of teaching effectiveness

also rose, from .9 to 1.5, that is, from "slightly above average"

to between "above average" and "excellent." (See attached summary.)

In the second semester we are testing some writing and expec-

ting some production of correct present and past tense forms,

as well as testing listening and reading comprehension. Students

spend considerable time speaking in class, and they are eager to do

more, as they indicated in the evaluations at the end of the first

semester and also in midterm evaluations that some of us conducted

in the second semester. Students also like very much acting out

stories; creating situations; solving problems, as in Dr. Asher's

film; free dialogues; and the more creative writing assignments,

such as describing their own daily schedules, planning a trip in

German, or writing poems. We were surprised and pleased to find that

they do better on the more creative writing assignments. If you

ask them to do a relatively simple exercise that is closer to a

standard drill, they turn up with more errors than when they do

something they can get personally involved in, even if it appears

to be more complicated. When students are communicating something

about themselves, they not only communicate more effectively, but

they also write and speak better German, with fewer errors.

Additional references on presenting language as communication
in context:

James J. Asher, "The Learning Strategy of the Total Physical
Response: A Review," Modern Language Journal 50, 2 (February
1966): 79-84.

B. R. Bugelski, "The Image as Mediator in One-Trial Paired-
Associate Learning: Sequential Functions in Serial Lists,"
Journal of Experimental Psychology 103, 2 (1974): 298-303.

John W. Ollor, Jr., and Dean H. Obrecht, "The Psycholinguistic
Principle of Informational Sequence: An Experiment in Second
Language Learning," IRAL 7, 2 (May 1969): 117-123.

Carlos Alfredo Yorio, "Some Sources of Reading Problems for
Foreign-Language Learners," Language Learning 21, 1 (1971):
107-115.

II. Teaching Recognition before Production

As Dr. Asher has pointed out, recognition or comprehension

seems to be a natural first stage before production of a language.

Taking this natural sequence into account seems eventually to

lead to more efficient recall and production, when the students

are ready. Although students are certainly active while learning

under our approach--by physically demonstrating comprehension of

what they hear and read--they are not producing German at the same

rate at which they are learning it. Some researchers feel that

interference occurs when repetition or recall and recognition

are attempted simultaneously. Practice is not the same as learning.

Delay of demands for production until comprehension is achieved

is believed to prevent this interference and increase learning

as well as preventing frustration, which is a valuable goal in

itself. Only after recognition has been thoroughly taught and

confirmed through simple responses are our students expected to

produce their own sentences. About the end of the second week

students start to speak, beginning with simple commands, but only

if they feel ready. At the beginning of the semester we had told

them, "OK, we're going to tell you what to do. You play our game

for a while and then you can tell us what to do." It works well:

they show remarkable creativity in combining and varying the com-

mands given earlier by the instructor, to produce interesting

situations in the classroom.

What do our students do to show comprehension, if they are

not speaking at the same level at which they are understanding,

but just letting the language patterns sink in?

1. They obey commands and pantomime, as in the Asher films.

2. On daily homework assignments and weekly tests, they--

    a. Draw pictures or match words to pictures or to related

       words. Often they draw before-and-after pictures or

       cartoon strips based on the stories they have read.

    b. Select the appropriate item--such as multiple choice of

       the correct question word--wer, wo, wohin or wohe: --that

       a specific phrase answers.

    c. Circle or underline all words in a certain category, to

       show grammar recognition--for example, underline all parts

       of the verb in the sentence, because, of course, they will

       misunderstand half the sentences they read if they fail to

       notice the verb at the end.

    d. Copy into a list all words in the reading text having to

       do with a given vocabulary category, such as school or

       politics. The students can make such identifications

long before they can produce the verbs or give a precise English

equivalent of the words. They have learned to get a feel from

the context of how words fit into a sentence grammatically (what

part of speech the word must be) and of what semantic field

words must be in. As Dr. Asher has pointed out, students' minds

work very fast, and in the past we've been slowing them down by

staying at the level on which they can produce an error-free

form of the foreign language. Performing these preliminary ac-

tivities not only allows students to demonstrate comprehension,

but also reinforces the learning that has already taken place.

At the beginning, students make physical responses and simple

verbal responses, such as their names, yes, no. When students

feel ready to write and speak, they are encouraged to do so and

are given as much reinforcement as possible for their attempts.

Indeed, they are expected to speak after about the second week

of class, but errors that do not prevent communication are

accepted. Accurate production is demanded and tested only after

comprehension is well established--beginning in the second

semester with simple present-tense sentences, and increasing only

gradually.

From the first day, students are given printed syllabi

consisting of the vocabulary for the commands and questions prac-

ticed in class. In the fifth week they begin reading short

stories accompanied by pictures. When students are well into

the reading phase they also enjoy composing dialogs for basic

situations, as Asher's students do in some of his films, as well

as pantomiming stories they have read and later acting them out,

using a little dialog. They also enjoy participating in infor-

mal class discussion of their own daily life and plans, for

example, describing their daily schedule or weekend plans.

Additional references on teaching recognition before production:

James J. Asher, "Children's First Language as a Model for Second
    Language Learning," Modern Language Journal 56, 3 (1972):
    133-139.
Leon Jakobovits, "Implications of Recent Psycholinguistic
    Developments for the Teaching of a Second Language," in
    Readings in Applied Transformational Grammar, 2nd ed., ed.
    Mark Lester (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1973),
    pp. 245-268.
Harris Winitz, "Problem Solving and the Delaying of Speech as
    Strategies, in the Teaching of Language," Asha 15, 10
    (October 1973): 583-586.

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III. Postponing Demands for Error-Free Production

Production of error-free sentences is not stressed even
in the second semester, but from the beginning of the course
many of our homework and lab exercises are designed to lead
the students into error-free production. The students are not
under much external pressure to avoid errors because we hope
that as they become interested in German they will feel
self-directed pressure to speak more like native Germans.
Accurate production is encouraged gradually through simultaneous
use of intensive and extensive reading assignments. If the
students can get the main idea of the story as a whole, that's
fine. With the intensive paragraphs, we work on identification
and transformation of verbs and similar tasks. Janet King has
been writing our labs, designing tasks that will teach students
to hear contrasts of minimal pairs, copy accurately, and take
dictation accurately. Through these slide-and-tape programs in
the language lab one day a week, students learn accuracy incre-
mentally, proceeding by small, carefully planned steps. We
introduce important contrasts, such as wo/wohin, in the appro-

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priate contexts. Meanwhile, effectiveness of communication

is the main criterion for judging production in the first year.

We correct "global", errors--errors that actually interfere

with communication, such as saying "ich bin gut, danke" ("I'm

good, thanks") instead of "es geht mir gut"("I'm fine"). We

usually don't correct local errors--errors that do not interfere

with communication. There is growing evidence that reading and

aural comprehension depend less than we had thought on control

of morphological details, such as case endings, and it is

primarily comprehension at which we aim. When a student says

something that wouldn't make sense to a native German, we stop

and find out what the student is trying to say and help him

say it correctly. This happens rarely; generally we spend

class time eliciting responses and reinforcing them. When

students make local errors, we either ignore them or repeat

the sentence correctly without comment (the student says "er

gehen nach Hause," we say "ja, er geht nach Hause").

We encourage and even insist on inference and prediction

because such techniques are crucial to efficient reading,

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whereas some of the morphological details are not. A general

comprehension should precede a comprehension of every detail.

Precision is less important and can wait. Moreover, the desire

to achieve accuracy on the part of the student has been shown

to be dependent on motivation. Dr. Asher and some of the

audience spoke last night about students who had decided on their

own that they were ready for conventional learning of correct

forms. When they are ready, we give them the information and

practice that they need. We work with them in our office hours,

direct them to the language lab for out-of-class practice, refer

them to pages in their textbooks that contain the forms they need

to learn. Meanwhile, however, we feel that our time is better

spent in demonstrating that Gorman can be validly used for

interesting communication and that the Germanic cultures are

worth exploring, than in premature and rigid demands for

accuracy.

Here is the strong point of the American Association of

Teachers of German summer camp for high school students in

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Junction: students see German used for communication in

everyday life. A relaxed and happy classroom atmosphere should

prevail, in order for production by the students to be

encouraged. Speaking German must seem natural and obvious to

them, and having teachers use German for classroom instructions

and announcements and informal friendly greetings to students

helps make this possible.

Additional references on postponing demands for error-free
    production until a high level of comprehension is achieved:

M. Kim Burt and Carol Kiparsky, "Global and Local Mistakes,"
    unpublished paper (Language Research Foundation).
Freda M. Holley and Janet K. King, "Imitation and Correction in
    Foreign Language Learning," Modern Language Journal 55, 8
    (December 1971): 494-498.

IV. Grammar as an Aspect of Meaningful Communication

Since we want to show the students that language is for

communication in a personally meaningful context, we do not ask

for isolated sentence transformations. Both in class drill and

in testing, any German sentence used is clearly part of a

discussion or description or dialog or story. Moreover,

grammar is presented as an aid to understanding; students

learn what they need in order to understand the text.

Our attitude is that teaching first-semester students

about grammar is rather like teaching someone to play baseball

by conducting a seminar on the theory of contacting the ball with

the bat. It's interesting, but discussing this in detail is

more appropriate for advanced students. One takes beginners

out on the field and gives them the ball and the bat. We do

this, not only figuratively but almost literally, because we

actually use balls in the classroom to elicit student responses.

The students hardly suspect as they throw balls around the

classroom and talk casually with the teacher about what they

are doing that they are transforming statements to questions,

dependent to independent clauses, present tense to past tense

in a game that is really rather like a standard structure drill.

We try not to waste students' time by teaching them rules

that they don't need to accomplish our goals. We have been

careful about outlining behavioral objectives, about knowing

what we want and teaching to accomplish these goals. Adult

speakers of English have already acquired a large portion of the

grammar of German, whether they know it or not, and we try

to emphasize transference of this grammar and deemphasize

interference from English. . We believe that, far from⋯

wasting students' time in required German courses, we're

teaching them techniques of inference and speed reading that

will carry over into their reading English and other foreign

languages and be useful to them throughout their lives.

The textbooks used in our first experimental year have

been: first semester--Roland Schäpers, Deutsch 2000, Band I
      (München: Hueber Verlag, 1972)
      Guy Stern and Everett F. Bleiler, Essential
       German Grammar (New York: Dover, 1961)
   second semester--Roland Schäpers, Deutsch 2000, Band II
      (München: Hueber Verlag, 1973)
      Essential German Grammar (above)
      Irmgard Feix and Ernestine Schlant, Junge
      Deutsche Prosa (New York: Holt, Rinehart
      and Winston, 1974)
      Robert Spaethling and Eugene Weber, Literatur
      I (New York: Oxford University Press,
      1972)
Essential German Grammar is used only as assigned outside

reading; there is little to no conventional grammar discussion

in class. We design our own homework exercises because we do

not know of any textbooks that have the kind of exercises we

want. We use our textbooks only as readers, not for the drills

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in them. We are working toward a massive reading program,
under the theory that the more the students read, the better
readers they will become. We are planning to change some of
the textbooks, and feel that our approach is adaptable to
almost any existing textbook or system, but that some books are
better than others for our purposes.

The students do quite a bit of reading--about one chapter or
story per day--but they are not expected to master every detail
of the text. We occasionally encourage students to infer the
most important grammar principles from the examples in class
commands and in the stories that they read. But primarily we
create situations and exercises in which the students will use
German: read, speak, write, and listen; and show comprehension
in such ways as carrying out commands or drawing pictures.

Additional reference on presenting grammar as an aspect of
meaningful communication:
Leonard Newmark and David A. Reibel, "Necessity and Sufficiency
in Language Learning," in Readings in Applied Transformational
Grammar, 2nd ed., ed. Mark Lester (New York: Holt, Rinehart and
Winston, 1973), pp. 220-244.

V. Using German as the Language of Instruction

Studies indicate that when German is the language of
the classroom students learn more German. One of the benefits
of starting a first-year program with commands that manipulate
the behavior of the students along the Asher model and
practicing those until the commands are thoroughly learned is
that the teacher then has a basic repertoire of instructions for
classroom activities that can be used throughout the student's
years of German study: go to the board and write on it, put your
chairs in a small circle, open your books, look at the teacher.
go sit down next to Carol, and so on. Moreover, these commands
make it possible to stay in German throughout the class hour
from the very beginning of the course, except for a five-minute
period at the end for questions in English.: Our tests and the
syllabi that are given to the students, sometimes so detailed that
they seem more like lesson plans, are in German, including all
instructions. Thus teaching assistants are given the vocabulary
that they need to conduct a class entirely in German, including
instructions and most announcements.

Additional references on using German as the language of

instruction:

Janet K. King, "A Reading Program for Realists," German
Quarterly 42, 1 (January 1969): 65-80.

Janet K. King, "The Use of Audiolingual Techniques in the
Third- and Fourth-Year College Classroom," Foreign
Language Annals 2, 2 (December 1968): 185-194.

I. Comparison: Department of [illegible] Texas at Austin: first-semester course (German 4[illegible]) students at the end of the first semester compared with a random sample of colleges whose students had one year of German

--Modern Language Association Cooperative Foreign Language Tests: German, Form LA (Educational Testing Service)

	LISTENING		READING	
	Other college norms, 1st year	UT norms, 1st semester	Other college norms, 1st yr.	UT norms, 1st sem.
No. students	394	329	515	349
No. colleges	19	1	28	1
Range of raw scores	7-45	8-42	3-50	5-47
Mean raw score	20	18	23	18
Standard deviation	8	6	10	7
Upper quartile	25	22	29	21
Median	19	18	21	17
Lower quartile	15	14	15	14
SCAT-V mean	309	305	308	305
Standard deviation	13	10	13	10

II. Comparison: ENROLLMENT

	1974-75	1975-76
1st sem. (406) fall	429	398
spring	187	175
2nd sem. (407) fall	132	98
spring	238	287

III. Comparison: Course-instructor surveys (sections taught by teaching assistants only)--average rating given by students

Scale: -2 to +2 (0 = average)	Fall 1974 23 sections taught by t.a.s of 24	Fall 1975 16 sections taught by t.a.s of 21
Overall rating of course	0.3 (average)	1.0 (above average)
Overall rating of teacher	0.9 (above average)	1.5 (between above average & excellent)

Data from U.T.-Austin Measurement & Evaluation Center, Mar. 8, 1976