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COLORADO CONGRESS OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHERS

Dedicated to the Improvement of Foreign Language Instruction
in Our Schools and Colleges

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Colorado Congress of Foreign Language Teachers will hold its annual meeting on Thursday, October 25, at 2:00 PM in Room 5 of the Library on the campus of the University of Denver. The meeting will consist of a workshop on Audio-Visual Aids in the Teaching of Foreign Languages: I. Principles and Uses of Audio-Visual Aids in Foreign Languages, Dr. Harry Kauffman, Director, Audio-Visual Service, University of Denver; II. Demonstration Class in the Use of a Spanish Film, Dr. M. Penuelas, University of Denver; III. Discussion of Sources of Audio-Visual Aids, Dr. S. O. Palleske, University of Denver; IV. Viewing of Exhibits and Sample Projections, Inspection of the Language Laboratory at the University of Denver.

The Classics Section of C.E.A. will hold its annual meeting on Thursday, October 25 at 1:30 PM in Marjorie Reed Hall, Room 20, on the campus of the University of Denver. Program: I. "Short History of the Classical Section", by retired teachers of the classics; II. "What Ancient Coins Tell Us about the Greeks and the Romans", Mr. John Roberts; III. "Report on Latin Week Activities in Colorado", Marjorie Davis, Pueblo.

The English Section of C.E.A. will meet on Thursday, October 25, at 12:00 PM for luncheon at the Pi Phi House, 2203 So. Josephine, Denver. At 1:30 PM the group will assemble at University Park Church, University Boulevard and Iliff, Denver. Program: I. "Is Reading Here to Stay?" Dr. Eugene E. Wilson, University of Colorado; II. "Some Fundamentals of Composition", George G. Gates, Colorado State College of Education.

The Colorado-Wyoming Chapter of the American Association of Teachers of French will hold a luncheon meeting on Thursday, October 25, at 11:45 AM, at the Sigma Kappa House, 2120 So. Josephine, Denver. Program: "Georges Duhamel, romancier en tant que moderne", Dr. Roy A. Cox, University of Colorado; II. "André Gide as Literary Critic",

Professor Charles T. Latimer, Colorado College: III. "Studies in Franco-Austrian Relations, Initial Progress Report", Dr. S. O. Palleske, University of Denver.

The regional chapter of the American Association of Teachers of German will hold a luncheon meeting on Thursday, October 25, at 12:00 noon, at the Gamma Phi Beta House, at 2280 So. Columbine, Denver. Program: "Impressions of German Universities", Miss Elizabeth Fackt, Social Science Foundation, University of Denver.

The Colorado Chapter of the American Association of Teachers of Spanish will meet for lunch on Friday, October 26, at 12:30 PM, in the Blue Room of the Cosmopolitan Hotel, Denver. Program: I. "Impressions of Spain", Miss Benicia Batione; II. "Opportunities of Latin Americans in Colorado", Mr. Bert Gallegos.

N.B. The luncheon meetings on Thursday, October 25, will adjourn in time for the Congress meeting at 2:00 PM in Library 5 on the campus of the University of Denver.

In the April, 1951 issue of the Bulletin it was announced that your collaboration is urgently requested in a forthcoming nation-wide survey of the academic preparation, professional training and economic status of teachers of modern foreign languages. This survey is sponsored by the National Federation of Modern Language Teachers Associations. A questionnaire will be incorporated in the December issue of the Bulletin, and we now wish to urge all teachers of modern foreign languages to complete and return the questionnaire to the Survey Chairman for Colorado: George A. C. Scherer, University of Colorado, Boulder.

HOW IMPORTANT IS GRAMMAR?

Barbara L. Laun, Spanish Teacher, River Forest, Illinois

How many of you in learning to read English were given grammatical rules during the early years of study? Generally the technicalities of English are not given until the sixth grade when one is familiarized with some Latin terms, then again in the seventh and eighth grades, and more concentratedly in the high schools. Yet after a few years of training in school, most children can read very well, although they may not know the reasons for the word order and inflections. However, in learning a foreign language most students are immediately subjected to a maze of grammatical terminologies and constant emphasis is laid upon speaking, writing, and reading correctly. If any of you have taught English in our schools, you will support my statement that although our young people have been exposed to numerous years of formal study before graduation from high school, many still cannot give the principal parts of the verbs, nor do they have a conception of the meanings and uses of such terms as nominative, possessive, and objective. Nevertheless, these very same students can read and can comprehend what they hear and read in the English language.

In 1692 John Locke said that a child learns the vernacular without master, rule, or grammar, and so might he learn Latin too. Bovée

says that "all American students are required to learn the five principal parts of French verbs. However, a Frenchman speaks and reads his mother tongue without ever having heard of the principal parts... Language should be taught from a functional viewpoint."¹

According to Walter V. Kaulfers "it is doubtful if a foreign language can be taught successfully by methods which in the case of the vernacular have more often proved to be a disciplinary instrument for the frustration of children than a means of facilitating effective communication in everyday life." He also reminds us that "memorizing the grammar of a language has never of itself developed ability actually to use the language as a functional medium of communication; for grammar is no more language than Spaulding's manual is tennis."² Of course, we as educators must determine whether rules or content are more important.

L. A. Johnson tells of the ASTP language program. He says that "ASTP pupils plunge at once into the active use of languages and the time saved from grammar study and translation is devoted to the memorizing of endless speech patterns." Johnson quotes Kaulfer's statement that "the more grammar the student learned, the more mistakes he seemed to make." In concluding his article Johnson says, "Third or fourth year students continue to miss the same grammatical constructions year after year in spite of conscientious efforts to master them."³ If these things are true, then perhaps our teaching methods should be changed.

To me it seems that we could well devote our time and energy in the classroom to helping and furthering our students' reading ability rather than clogging their minds with the memorization of such forms as "tengo, tienes, tiene," etc. According to the authors I have read, a concentrated studying of grammar tends to inhibit our students and to discourage them eventually in the use of foreign languages. Many students are even turned away from foreign language study after they find out what a technical approach is used. For studying grammar seems to take the thrill out of learning a foreign medium.

Another reason for omitting a formal study of grammar from a reading course is that we lose the direct bond which is essential if we want our learners to obtain a feeling for the language. If the reader has to stop to explain to his teacher in what tense a verb is or if he has to translate the selection word for word, he loses his closeness to the language and tends to lose interest. We all know how annoying it is to be reading a book in any language and to be all of a sudden questioned about one particular word. A break in thought is brought about, the student has to think in the vernacular, and the aim is defeated.

We are not interested in learning all of the rules of a game before we may start playing. A golfer would be discouraged if he had to spend one whole season learning all of the rules, forms, and techniques before he could play. Some say it is hard to do anything without learning all about its technicalities first, but it is through our experience and because of our experience that we wish to learn the whys and hows. This applies to foreign language study, for in learning to read a foreign language a student will naturally want to know why it is "la casa de Juan" instead of "Juan's casa".

As I see it, only the barest essentials of grammar are necessary in learning to read a foreign language. Verbs seem to be the most important. If a student knows the first and third person singular and plural endings, he can readily approach understanding. Of course, the infinitive is important because all verb forms are based upon it. When the student knows these few things, he can proceed with his reading. Of course, the objective in reading is to have the student comprehend groups of words and ideas, not to tear apart every single word and analyze each thoroughly. When a technical study of grammar as such is omitted, he will learn to read for content and not for form.

We have five important tenses in Spanish: the present, imperfect, preterite, future, and conditional. The obvious way for any author is to introduce these verb forms in this order. One of the big problems in verb tenses is teaching the distinction between the use of the imperfect and the preterite. In reading, this makes little difference, and it suffices to say that both are forms of the past, and that they can be used interchangeably without varying the meaning decisively.

Of course, for those addicted to the grammar method, the question will arise about what to do about such confusing pairs as estar and ser, por and para, and sino and pero. If the student is learning to read, it should make no difference to him or should cause no difficulty for him to read "Juan está en la sala de clase" or "Juan es cubano". If he knows that both mean is, no difficulties should stem from his reading.

I believe also that if the student were not immediately presented with the difficulties in using por and para and sino and pero he would not even be aware of these facts in his reading. All he needs is a general translation or interpretation of these terms and he will be able to ascertain their meanings. Calling attention to difficulties often arouses difficulties.

Leavitt Wright says, "There is a need for an elementary Spanish grammar usable in metro-rural areas where previous training in grammar is likely to be inadequate, and where emphasis on grammar would kill enthusiasm."¹⁴ He does not teach second person pronouns and verb forms; he omits second person possessive adjectives and pronouns also. Subject pronouns are not used, and orthographic changing and radical changing verbs are not labeled irregular. He teaches two uses for ser, the predicate nominative and expressions of possession, and one use for estar, location. He suggests omitting por until para is readily used to translate the English "for", then to use por as equivalent for "through, during, in exchange for".

The best way to carry on a reading program of the type I have proposed is to use a text designed for the purpose. The text I used was Kaulfers and Blayne, Voces de las Americas. After the introductory vocabulary lessons the reading lessons begin in earnest. Before each of the selections some of the difficult sentences are given along with their English translation. Then the selection is given followed by exercises consisting of filling in the blanks with the correct Spanish words or making up questions in Spanish, with the introductory ideas given. There are no grammatical rules given along with the lessons. This material is put into an appendix. In this

way the reading exercises are not infused with technicalities and the selections can be read for content. I don't teach my students the personal a, the difference between ser and estar, por and para, sino and pero, or the second person pronouns and verb forms, or any more than the five verb tenses.

I got into this method by chance, for I "inherited" the text with which to work. At first I was disappointed that the grammatical material was not included in each lesson, for I had been brought up on this method. However, I found that when anything bothers my students, a question is asked and the information given is better retained than if I had begun the lesson with a treatment of grammar as yet not encountered. Soon I became convinced that this was the way to reach the heart of the language.

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1. A. G. Bovée, "Some Fallacies of Formalism," Modern Language Journal, VIII (Dec., 1923), 134-144.
 2. Walter V. Kaulfers, Modern Languages for Modern Schools, McGraw-Hill, 1945, p. 73.
 3. L. B. Johnson, "Some Implications of the Intensive Language Program for the Classroom Teacher," French Review, XVII (Feb., 1948), 99-111.
 4. Leavitt Wright, "Things to Omit from an Elementary Spanish Grammar," Hispania, XVI (Feb., 1933), 59-65.

THE SPANISH SUBJUNCTIVE IN READING

Beulah Doerr, La Grange College, Hannibal Missouri
Ruth E. Edwards, Colorado A & M College, Fort Collins, Colorado
Anthony Masciotra, High School, Wheatland, Wyoming
Netta V. Niess, High School and Jr. College, Belleville, Illinois

The methods used in teaching foreign languages in high schools and colleges must be determined by the goals that are set. The trend in high schools seems to be toward a maximum of two years of foreign language study. In colleges the minimum requirement, consisting often of only one year, is the general practice; while language study beyond the requirement is the exception. With the time limit of one or two years many teachers may find it more effective to concentrate on one or two skills rather than on the multiple approach of reading, listening, speaking, and writing.

There may be geographic regions in which limiting the aims to the passive ones cannot be justified. However, the acquisition of the passive skills of reading and listening is basic to the attainment of the active skills of speaking and writing. After the student has had thorough training in reading and listening, he can readily acquire the skills of speaking and writing. Michael West, the British reading-goal advocate, makes this statement:

"Learning to read a language before learning to speak it has the advantage that when the pupil begins to speak he possesses some general idea of the form of the language and some sense of right and wrong idiom. Moreover, he meets the difficulties of the language in succession instead of all at once; he does not have to deal with the difficulty of active grammar until he has

his pronunciation and some vocabulary...."¹

The opportunities today for listening and reading are greater than ever. The radio and television have broadened our horizons. Many radio stations now give time to foreign programs. It is difficult to read any magazine or newspaper today without finding foreign words and phrases. Since the thought of "One World" is possessing our social and political minds, the literature of other nations is of increasing value to us. A knowledge of this literature is of importance to the American student.

The problem then seems to be to reduce the time that is spent on extensive active drill in grammar in our high schools and colleges and to concentrate on reading. Questions begin to rise. How much grammar is adequate for reading? Do we stress some points in grammar too much? Do we spend too much time generally on teaching grammar?

The present writers undertook to determine tentatively whether or not a knowledge of the subjunctive and its many uses was necessary for a reading knowledge of Spanish. The following criteria were set up: 1) The student has a passive knowledge of the indicative mood, including orthographic-changing, radical-changing, and irregular verbs; 2) The student has virtually no knowledge of the subjunctive.

The Mexican novel, El Indio, by Gregorio López y Fuentes, was chosen for study. It is a book that is considered a masterpiece and presents a realistic picture of the Indians' plight in Mexico. The edited text (Hespelt) was compared with the original and it was found that while the edited text was slightly abridged, it was not simplified. Had sufficient copies of the book in the original been available, the group would have preferred to use the original edition. The edited text is designed to be used in intermediate college classes.

The following characteristics of the text were noted in regard to the subjunctive: 1) The -ra form of the imperfect subjunctive was used exclusively; 2) The -ra form of the imperfect subjunctive was used a number of times to express the pluperfect indicative; 3) The imperfect subjunctive was used five times as frequently as the present subjunctive; 4) The author used the subjunctive in appositive substantive clauses.

The book contains approximately 29,000 running words. The subjunctive occurs 203 times. In 191 instances it can be interpreted with no training in the subjunctive. Only 12 instances may require explanation on the part of the teacher or editor. In other words, 94 per cent of the subjunctives used offer no serious obstacle to the reader. Only 6 per cent require explanation. An examination of four other texts, (Pepita Jiménez, Doña Perfecta, Marta y María, and Misericordia), yielded essentially the same results.

This study was prompted by the deplorable fact that so many students consider one or two years of foreign language study to be terminal. Therefore, it seems justifiable from the study of El Indio to draw the following conclusions: 1) A thorough knowledge of the subjunctive is not necessary for reading skill; 2) Too much time is spent in the classroom on teaching the subjunctive; 3) The reader

is usually not conscious of tense and mood, since content is his aim;
4) Lack of familiarity with the subjunctive does not seriously affect appreciation of style.

L. Michael West, "The 'Reading Approach' and 'The New Method System,'" Modern Language Journal, XXII (Dec., 1937), 220-222.

TEACHING AIDS IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLASSES OF COLORADO SCHOOLS
George A. C. Scherer, University of Colorado

This is the fifth of a series of reports on a survey of foreign language teaching conducted during the year 1948-49 by visitation of schools.¹ Considerable attention was given to the extent to which our accredited public high schools make use of audio-visual aids, standardized tests and club activities. This report presents briefly the information obtained.

At the time the survey was made, there were 165 public accredited high schools in the state in which one or more foreign languages were offered. Of these, 82 schools, with 89 language positions, were accredited only by the University of Colorado. The remainder, 83 schools, with 157 language positions, were accredited by the North Central Association as well as by the University of Colorado. In this report no comparison will be drawn between conditions in the two types of schools, except to say that the North Central schools have a decisive lead in the use of the various teaching aids. This is only to be expected since they "generally are larger, more adequately financed, employ more fully qualified teachers, and in many other ways, are better able to meet the needs of youth."²

In the following statements on the extent to which language learning aids are employed in our schools, all percentages and fractions are based on the number of teachers from whom a report was obtained in the category concerned. Since the reports are all at least ninety per cent complete, the values indicated below should give us a reasonably accurate estimate of the use made of the various teaching aids.

Films. Educational films are used by about forty per cent of our foreign language teachers. The Spanish teachers lead in the use of this device. The film programs vary from the use of one or two films per year in the majority of the schools to monthly showings in a few of the larger schools. Many teachers state that a) available educational films are poor, b) film use is severely limited by budgetary considerations, or c) the school owns no projection equipment. In a few Spanish American communities Spanish feature films are regularly shown at the local theaters. Some teachers are making effective use of modern film strips and slides.

Records. About twenty per cent of the Spanish teachers employ speech records in the instructional program. In French, German and Latin there is virtually no use made of this device. Some teachers report that the school has records but no phonograph, or that there is a phonograph but no records. A number of the better sets of speech records used at the schools, and a few of the playbacks, are owned by

the teachers themselves.

Pictures and Maps. Approximately sixty per cent of our foreign language teachers have access to a worthwhile supply of pictures, maps and charts. In a great many instances practically the entire collection of pictorial materials is the personal property of the teacher. Although these devices are employed more widely than films or records, they are certainly not used as much as one might expect, for there are numerous concerns willing to send such up-to-date materials to teachers just for the asking.

Books. Only sixty per cent of the school libraries contain books directly related to the language fields offered, and many of these collections are woefully inadequate. Donations or loans by the teachers account for quite a number of the better equipped libraries. Novels, travelogues and histories in English comprise the bulk of this supplementary reading material. Little is available in the form of literature in the foreign language. A great many of the smaller schools do not even own a foreign language dictionary. Several schools, on the other hand, are making wise use of materials available in the library of the community.

Newspapers and Periodicals. It was noted that only about one fourth of the teachers avail themselves of the opportunity to use a foreign language newspaper or periodical in connection with classroom instruction. In most of these instances the school subscribes, and the journal is circulated by the library and brought to class occasionally by the teacher. In a few instances the entire second-year class subscribes. The journal is then used for several days as the classroom "text". The majority of the periodicals in use are domestic publications designed especially for high school pupils.

Language Clubs. Few teachers, about twelve per cent, attempt to conduct a foreign language club outside of class hours. In the typical school competition with other activities makes it all but impossible to engage in extra-curricular activities of an academic nature. Many teachers, however, motivated by the need for variation, set aside a regular class hour during the week for an escape from the text.

Conclusions. In view of the widely recognized values of teaching aids in the foreign language classroom, it is naturally disappointing to realize that so little use is made of them in Colorado schools. There is no doubt that much of the defection is attributable to insufficient budgeting. On the other hand, teachers often do not fully exploit opportunities to acquire the materials that could enhance teaching effectiveness. Some lack the courage to ask for funds, others are kept too busy to give the matter any attention, and still others are simply indifferent. One regrettable prevailing attitude is that the regular text constitutes an all-inclusive program and that it would be impossible to incorporate any other features into the course. Another unfortunate attitude is that it is too much of a struggle to compete with more colorful areas such as athletics and music for the available funds of the school.

Perhaps it is not amiss to suggest that the schools would be aided immeasurably by a service center somewhere in the state. Where such a center should be set up and who should take the responsibility

for it is not for this writer to determine. Existing film libraries could certainly continue to handle demands for films, and the directors would no doubt improve their film holdings if sufficient interest were shown. However, a foreign language service center might take it upon itself, first of all, to become a clearinghouse for information on sources of audio-visual aids of all types. Secondly, the center could gradually become the storehouse for a vast variety of teaching aids (other than films) to be rented out to schools at minimum rates. Materials such as speech records, pictures, maps, film strips, slides and even books could then be circulated among the schools for the price of little more than the postage.

It is true, of course, that the professional journals for the several language fields constantly call teachers' attention to new and old sources of realia. Unfortunately, the survey reveals that only one third of the teachers have access to a national professional journal in their respective language fields.

Since the Congress Bulletin has always considered its main purpose to be that of coming to the aid of foreign languages in the secondary schools of Colorado, the Congress could, no doubt, be persuaded to make of its official organ the clearinghouse for information above. And perhaps, if enough interest were shown, the clearinghouse would automatically give birth to the storehouse for learning aids. But who except the high school teachers could do the persuading?

1. The survey was made possible by a grant-in-aid of research awarded by the Council on Research of the University of Colorado. Results of other phases of the survey have been reported in previous issues of this journal as follows: a) Enrollments, V (Oct., 1949), 6-8; b) Enrollment trends, V (Dec., 1949), 5-9; c) Subject combinations, V (Feb., 1950), 8-11; d) Teacher qualifications, V (April, 1950), 6-9.

2. Stephen Romine, "Improving Teaching Combinations and Assignments in Secondary Schools," School Review, LIV (Nov., 1946), 537-38.

E. Hildegard Schumann and G. M. Wolff, German Short Stories of Today. Boston, D. C. Heath & Co., 1951, 185 pp. Reviewed by V. J. Gingerich, Michigan College of Mining & Technology.

It is always an admirable project for editors to publish a school edition of recent writing, for it brings to large numbers of students material that might otherwise be unavailable to them. This collection of seven short stories covers the period of the two wars, with all that is implied in that term of political and social turmoil. Most of the authors were forced to leave Germany at one time or another because of their beliefs, political or otherwise, and it is not altogether surprising that they should maintain a rather somber tone in their collective efforts, dealing as they do with death and despair and the search for an explanation of human behavior.

The stories may be classified into two groups -- those having a military or political background, and those which are primarily an examination and a criticism of the general stock of twentieth century values.

In the first group, Das Obdach by Anna Seghers and Die Flucht by Martin Behaim are the most dramatic and would have the greatest appeal for high school or younger college students. Both of these are concerned with flight from Nazi occupation, one in France and the other Norway. Die Farben der Republik, by Freimut Schwarz, is in the same vein, while Der Hauptmann von Kapernaum, by Ernst Wiechert, depicts the personal inner struggle of an army captain.

The second group presents three distinguished writers whose satirical attitude toward civilization will probably be appreciated only by the mature mind. Thus, Franz Kafka, with his Bericht für eine Akademie, shows us human nature through the eyes of an ape; Eduard Saenger, in Mira, gives us a fantasy reminiscent of the Gormelshausen theme but with a different kind of ending; and as a conclusion to the book, Hermann Hesse takes sly quips at men and institutions through the pseudo-autobiographical Kurzgefasster Lebenslauf.

A photograph and short biographical sketch of the author precede each selection. There are explanatory notes dealing mainly with historical and geographical references and an end vocabulary.

NOTICE

Please send your dollar for membership in the Congress and subscription to the Bulletin to the treasurer, Luis Cortes, at the University of Colorado.