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PRACTICAL PHONETICS FOR GERMAN

Theoretically, the value of phonetics in the study of a foreign language has been generally conceded, but, as every one knows, there is a vast difference between the mere intellectual acceptance of a new creed and a living faith which takes hold of it and lives it in a real and practical way. Viëtor's vigorous pronunciamento, *Der Sprachunterricht muss umkehren*, is regarded as a landmark in a more rational study of languages; but in this country, at all events, recent investigation would seem to indicate that no great or widespread effort has been made to realize the standards demanded in phonetics.\* In only a comparatively small number of our institutions of higher learning is any systematic training in phonetics given. This must mean that the vast majority of our high school teachers of German are limited in their knowledge of German pronunciation to the one or two weeks drill in pronunciation given them when they began their German studies and to the general impressions they have been able to gain from listening to three or four years of college German, supplemented by such hints regarding pronunciation as the lesson book in use may suggest.

One needs but visit the German classes in a few of the smaller high schools to be convinced that a defective pronunciation on the part of the German teacher is by no means rare. Quite commonly final *b, d, g* are voiced as in English; no fine discrimination is made between long and short vowels, as in *Kahn* and *kann*, *Ofen* and *offen*, *Fuss* and *Fluss*; long *e* is commonly pronounced

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\*1) *Handschin, Charles H.* The Facilities for Graduate Instruction in Modern Languages in the United States. Miami University Publications, Oxford, Ohio, May, 1914. 97pp.

2) *Purin, C. M.* Monatshefte für deutsche Sprache und Pädagogik, XVI, p. 113.

too open in such words as *sehr*, *wer*, *werden* and *Schwer*; foreign words and geographical proper names, as *Reformátor*, *Iphigénie*, *Lichterfelde*, *Schaffhausen*, are all too frequently accented on the wrong syllables; teachers of German-American descent especially are guilty of pronouncing the final *e* long in such words as *liebe*, *habe*, *gebe*, instead of slurred. It is for such inadequately prepared teachers, who are not able to take a thorough training in phonetics at some large university or spend a year in Germany, that the first part of this article is especially intended. These mistakes in pronunciation can, as I know from personal experience, in a large measure be corrected by self-education, by helps that the teacher can employ while engaged in his daily task.

Let the teacher provide himself first with Viëtor's *Kleine Phonetik*\*, or with Walter Rippmann's *Elements of Phonetics*\*\*, an English translation and adaptation of Viëtor's book, neither of which costs over seventy-five cents. Let him at the same time secure for fifty or sixty cents, the post-card edition of Rausch's *Lauttafeln*\*, which show a front, side and cross-sectional view of the positions of the organs of speech in producing each German sound. It is also advisable to buy Viëtor's large *Deutsche Lauttafel*\*\* to hang on the study wall. Let the teacher now read in the work on phonetics how each sound is made, wherein it resembles and wherein it is unlike the corresponding English sound. Let him grasp fully the principle of the Viëtor vowel triangle, then note on the Rausch charts the positions of the organs of speech for each sound and consciously imitate these positions when producing the sound himself. When the teacher has familiarized himself with the theoretical side of German pronunciation, he should provide himself with two other books, both from the pen of Professor Viëtor, the *Deutsches Lesebuch in Lautschrift*\*\*\*,

\*Kleine Phonetik des Deutschen, Englischen und Französischen. Leipzig. O. R. Reisland. 10. Auflage 1915. M 2, 40; geb. M. 2, 80.

\*\*Elements of Phonetics, English, French and German. Translated and adapted by Walter Rippmann from Prof. Viëtor's "Kleine Phonetik." London, J. M. Dent & Co., 1899.

\*Rauschs Lauttafeln. Ausgabe in Postkarten-Format. 26 Tafeln mit Wortbeispielen nach den Begleittexten zu Viëtors Lauttafeln M. 2.—. Marburg, N. G. Elwert.

\*\*Deutsche Lauttafel. Dreifarbig. M. 2. —. Marburg, N. G. Elwert.

\*\*\*Deutsches Lesebuch in Lautschrift. I. Teil. 5. Auflage. 1914. Geb. M. 3.—. Leipzig, B. G. Teubner.

or the smaller work, *Kleines Lesebuch in Lautschrift*\*\*\*\*, and the *Deutsches Aussprachewörterbuch*\*\*\*\*\*, a work well worth its weight in gold. The teacher may then practise reading selections in the phonetic script, which is that of the association phonétique internationale, and transcribe other German selections into this script, checking up the accuracy of his transcriptions in the *Aussprachewörterbuch* until he is thoroughly familiar with the system. This last exercise is especially valuable, for it compels the teacher to pay strict attention to long and short vowels, voiced and voiceless consonants, syllable accent, and other details. He should furthermore keep the *Aussprachewörterbuch* constantly on his desk as a final arbiter in all doubtful cases; for this dictionary is based upon Professor Viëtor's own thorough studies in phonetics and at the same time conforms essentially to the German stage pronunciation as agreed upon at the "Bühnenkonferenz" of 1898, in which leading actors, theater directors and philologists took part. Here in America the Bavarian may pronounce words in one way, the Saxon in another, and the Mecklenburger in still another, the high school teacher who uses this dictionary remains unperturbed; for he himself has cultivated a pronunciation which is standard and backed by the best authority and usage in Germany.

To improve still further his pronunciation, to check up on the accuracy of his self-training and to develop his ear for the real German sentence melody and intonation, the live teacher will utilize every opportunity to hear the German of recognized German scholars traveling in this country; and he will purchase for his Edison or Victrola, German records by such recognized artists as Schumann-Heink and Gadschi.

In this connection other good works on pronunciation might, of course, have been mentioned, such as Hempl's *German Orthography and Phonology*,\* or Grandgent's *German and English Sounds*,\*\* but it seemed preferable to recommend those works which present a unified aspect, namely, one kind of phonetic

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\*\*\*\**Kleines Lesebuch in Lautschrift*. 1912. Kart. M. o. 80.

\*\*\*\*\**Deutsches Aussprachewörterbuch*, 1912. Geb. in Halbleder M. 14. — Leipzig, O. R. Reisland.

\*Hempl, G.: *German Orthography and Phonology*. D. C. Heath & Co.

\*\*Grandgent, C. H.: *German and English Sounds*. Boston, 1893.

script, which can easily be understood by the teacher unaided, and which constitute the minimum amount of phonetic material consistent with efficiency.

Assuming that the German teacher has adequate training in phonetics, the question still remains as to how much direct training in phonetics pupils in elementary German should receive. Formerly I was opposed to phonetics for the pupil, but an experience of several years in the class-room has convinced me that some drill in phonetics is the quickest and surest way to develop in the pupil an accurate pronunciation. It causes him to think of a living language as made up of sounds rather than letters, it educates his speech organs, and it causes him to pay attention to details that he would otherwise overlook. Of course, a systematic phonetic exposition should not be given all at once, but only by degrees. The following remarks state the extent to which I employ phonetics in my elementary German classes, and in a slightly modified form they may be equally applicable to high school conditions.

The only apparatus required is a Viëtor sound chart hanging in the front of the room and a post-card edition of Rausch's *Lauttafeln*. By means of the horizontal divisions on the Viëtor chart one can readily explain the general notions of vowel, spirant and stop, as determined by the degree of opening in the articulation. The matter of voiced or voiceless sounds is forcefully emphasized by the colors red and black. Having established the general notion of what constitutes a vowel, the teacher takes up the vowel triangle, explaining how it shows graphically the articulation of the different vowels in a large mouth with the teeth in front of *i* and the throat behind *u*. Then the teacher proceeds to pronounce the simple vowels, beginning with *i*, running down to *a*, and up again to *u*, describing the tongue and lip positions and having the pupils repeat the sounds after him. To make the matter clearer to the pupils, the Rausch cards are passed around, arranged in the same order as the vowel triangle, viz., *i*, *I*, *e*, *ε*, *a*, (ɔ), (o) (U), (u). Giving the sounds in this order, the pupils cannot help detecting how the tongue is at first lowered and the point of articulation moved back until *a* is reached and how the tongue subsequently rises again. On the Viëtor chart the more open character of short vowels can also be readily pointed out.

After these preliminaries, lists of words containing long and short vowels are pronounced and drilled upon, and the rules for long and short vowels are developed. Next the phenomenon of "umlaut" should be explained, and this cannot be more clearly shown than by means of the vowel triangle, which indicates at a glance the philological truth that "umlaut" is merely an attempt to make a vowel approximate an *i* sound and that therefore an *i* or an *e* cannot be "umlauted." Having done this and having briefly explained that all German consonants, except *l*, *m*, *n*, *r*, and *ng*, become voiceless when final, the teacher may safely start his class out in German study, at first having the class pronounce by imitation any consonants that cause difficulty.

However, before long, the teacher should begin a systematic treatment of the consonants, taking them up in order on the sound chart, a few each day. He may well begin with the stops, as they offer no new sounds to the English speaking student. The distinctions *labial*, *dental*, *palatal*, *velar*, as well as *voiced* and *unvoiced* are clearly set forth. The pupils are drilled thoroughly in the articulation and pronunciation of each sound. Then the sounds are tabulated and this arouses the greatest enthusiasm on the part of the pupils. For each phonetic symbol the pupils, assisted by the teacher, find all the possible ways it can be represented by German letters and these are listed, as well as appropriate key words. The teacher must, of course, have carefully worked all this out himself in advance. It is possible to compile the requisite data from Viëtor's *Kleine Phonetik* but in the last edition of his *Elemente der Phonetik*\* just such a tabulation for each phonetic symbol is given in the greatest detail. This complete treatment of the consonants extends over several weeks, following which frequent reviews must be made. One good plan of review is occasionally to put short German selections on the board in the phonetic script and require the pupils to read them in concert and individually. It is not essential that each pupil possess a reader in phonetic script.

If this procedure is consistently observed, the pupil gains an accuracy of pronunciation and an insight into German sounds such as he could get in no other way and is ever afterwards safe-

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\**Elemente der Phonetik*, O. R. Reisland, Leipzig, 1915. M. 12.—.

guarded against bad blunders in pronunciation. The underlying principles of phonetics thus obtained will also prove of the greatest benefit to him and serve to clear up many phenomena, should he subsequently study older Germanic dialects or philology in general.

JOHN A. HESS.

Indiana University, Bloomington.