

SPEECH MAKING AND NOTE TAKING AS AN AID TO LANGUAGE LEARNING

EDWARD M. ANTHONY

University of Michigan

AN INABILITY to handle longer utterances is a frequent difficulty of foreign students of English. In many laboratory classes in the practice of the patterns of English, the emphasis is on short sentences unrelated in meaning. There is little attempt to have the student organize and present a long speech. The stress is on the automatic reproduction of certain basic patterns of the English language. This practice is, of course, of the utmost importance, especially to the beginner, and should be continued throughout the student's English courses. However, there is also a need for practice in longer speeches, particularly for professional men who will be continuing their studies after acquiring English.

Another necessity for this type of foreign student is experience in taking accurate notes in a language other than his own. The student who translates an English lecture in order to take notes in his own language has a two-fold task. After taking such notes, he must then translate them back into English for purposes of later research, examination, or recitation. If he has had no practice in note taking in English, he must spend valuable time learning to do it, and may miss important points of his course. Note-taking practice is thus legitimate material for any course which purports to orient a student into an American academic environment.

One method of accomplishing both these objectives has been used with success in some of the classes of the English Language Institute of the University of Michigan. Of the five class hours per week spent in vocabulary class, one was set aside for four-minute speeches by the members of the class.¹ Such general topics as "My Trip to the United States," "Industry in My Country," "Agriculture in My Country," were assigned for the early weeks of the course. Later the student was encouraged to choose his own topic from his particular field. He was also allowed to lengthen the time of his speech until he could handle longer connected discourse. The student

¹ Of the twenty class hours per week at the Institute, five each are devoted to Pronunciation, Grammar, Vocabulary, and Pattern Practice.

was not permitted to read his speech. The end aimed at was not skill in reading, but ability in speaking. He was allowed to speak either without notes or with no more than he could write on a small filing card.

While one student spoke, another took notes on the speech so that practice in note taking was occurring at the same time. The speech making aided the student in discovering how well he was understood by his classmates. The note taking helped him to find out how easily he understood *them*. Thus, at the end of one class hour, each student had had opportunity to speak and take notes, and opportunity to judge himself in production and comprehension.

The exercise did not end here. The teacher required either that the student hand in his notes at the end of the class or that he use those notes as a basis for writing a composition for a later class meeting. The teacher also took notes on the speeches, both for more valid correction of notes and compositions, and for exercises based on mistakes made in the presentation of the speeches.

Such a project as this is useful not only for foreign students of English, but could also be used to advantage in any language course where the aim is facility in oral production and aural comprehension. It is of use in giving the student confidence in expressing himself at length in a language not his own and provides an integrated practice in speaking, note taking, and composition writing.

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND NOTES

David W. Reed and Alva L. Davis, who were among the group which conceived the plan of *Language Learning* and helped guide the journal through its first year, have left the editorial staff for teaching positions. Dr. Reed, who has served as editorial director, is now teaching at the University of California. Dr. Davis, who was in charge of articles, is at Western Reserve University.