

## *DRAMA—The Holistic Approach to English*

by Marrie Schaefer

Traditional methods of teaching language rely too soon on speech and are stressful for all but the linguistically gifted. People, such as the psychologist James Asher, have suggested that the trauma and frustration encountered while attempting to learn a foreign language can be alleviated if students learn a second language the way infants learn their native language. Linguists and psychologists have studied children's language development for years, but most researchers start to investigate at the point when the child begins to talk. By that time, most of the clues to development of language have vanished. The critical period to investigate is the age of silence—from birth to the appearance of talk. Research by psychologists who have studied infant development and language acquisition suggests that during this silent time, infants are constructing an intricate cognitive map for understanding what others are saying. The map is probably acquired through the right hemisphere of the brain when parents direct the child gently, with utterances such as: "Let's wash your hands," "Pick up your teddy bear and come with," "Give Mommy a kiss."<sup>1</sup>

For many years scientists have believed the left hemisphere of the brain is dominant for all linguistic functions. The right, known since the 1940's to be crucial for visual and spatial functions, is said to have nothing to do with language. But recently several articles and books have documented the increasing number of linguistic abilities thought to be processed, at least in part, by the right hemisphere in normal right-handed people. The right hemisphere is now emerging as vital in appreciating how the different parts of a narrative relate to one another, in understanding the theme or moral of a story, in grasping metaphor and verbal expression of emotion, and even in supplying the punch line for a joke.<sup>2</sup>

Studies done on the bilingual brain have shown that the brain handles languages in a manner far more flexible, adaptable, and mysterious than anyone had imagined. For decades scientists thought they knew how the brain deals with language: in the right-handed monolingual male who is the typical experimental subject, the left cerebral hemisphere, which controls the body's right side, also controls linguistic processing: the right hemisphere, on the other hand (and literally so—it controls the left side), accounts for other, nonverbal abilities—spatial reasoning, music, grasping the whole of an idea or impression rather than analyzing its parts. But, says Loraine Obler of Boston's Veterans Administration Medical Center, it now appears that "particularly in the early states of language learning, there's more right-hemisphere involvement than you'd expect. And the right hemisphere remains surprisingly important even after a second language is completely mastered."<sup>3</sup>

Not surprisingly, the brain seems to handle linguistic material in part according

to its physical form. Tadanobu Tsunoda of Tokyo Medical and Dental University has found that right-handed Westerners and Chinese process vowels on the left if they occur along with consonants and on the right if they occur alone. Right-handed Japanese and Polynesians, however, process all vowels on the left. Is that because lone vowels in Western languages tend to be inarticulate expressions of emotion (a right-hemisphere task), while Japanese and Polynesian permit all-vowel sentences?

This type of difference can occur even within a single language. Japanese has two distinct writing systems, the phonetic kana and the ideographic kanji, which appear to be processed in opposite hemispheres. In a few recorded cases, brain lesions have damaged one type of reading without touching the other. Yiddish and Hebrew, which run from right to left, also seem to favor more right-brain involvement. Yiddish-English bilinguals, according to Opler, appear "more balanced between the hemispheres."<sup>4</sup>

To be sure, there were legitimate reasons for believing the left hemisphere was the predominant linguistic zone. Since 1861, researchers have known that injuries to the left hemisphere (but not to the right) cause a normal individual to become aphasic. A century later, studies of split brain patients—mostly, epileptics whose right and left hemispheres had been disconnected (by severing connecting tissue called the corpus callosum) to control seizures—strongly suggested that only the left hemisphere was able to process linguistic material to a significant degree. Many experiments with normal subjects also pointed to the left hemisphere as the dominant agent in all manner of linguistic functioning.

Brain scientists with more sophisticated experimental techniques and access to patients whose injuries can be precisely delineated have gradually been able to get a fuller picture of right-hemisphere functioning. The right brain is now thought to be important or dominant for a variety of cognitive capacities, ranging from musical fluency to the ability to act in an emotionally appropriate manner.

The most impressive evidence for that has come from the latest studies of split-brain patients. Although the first studies by investigators did not seem to disclose mature linguistic capacities, several patients have now demonstrated a considerable ability to understand language when it is delivered solely to the right hemisphere. According to Eran Zaidel of the University of California at Los Angeles, two patients displayed a vocabulary about as large as that of a high school student and the grammatical competence of a five-year-old.

Two patients seen by Michael Gazzaniga of Cornell University Medical College are not only able to understand with the right hemisphere but can also use it to speak. The evidence comes from studies in which the subjects are exposed to written material in their left visual field, which sends information to the right hemisphere. For instance, the name of an object (say, an apple) is flashed briefly on a screen so that the information is received only by the right hemisphere. Then, the subjects are asked to repeat the word or, if they are unable to do that, to choose the correct object from a group of objects presented to them.

Earlier subjects had sometimes been able to point with their left hands to the cor-

rect object, but they could never express the name orally. In fact, when they attempted to describe what the right hemisphere had seen and the left hand had touched, they spoke nonsense; in effect, the left hemisphere, which had never seen the word, was fabricating. But as Gazzaniga's two patients have demonstrated, the right hemisphere *is* able to name objects seen in the left visual field. In addition, both Zaidel and Gazzaniga now believe that some communication goes on between the hemispheres of the brain even after they are severed, thereby suggesting a richness of linguistic interconnections that has not been suspected before.<sup>5</sup>

James Asher's ideas of acquiring a foreign language are based on the theory that motion and learning are inseparable. "Without motion" he states, "there is no experience." For a child who is learning to speak the home is an "acquisition-enriched environment," in which there is maximum understanding of spoken language in transactions between the parents and the child. The transactions do not demand speech from the child, who initially responds exclusively with a physical action and later with simple one-word utterances such as yes or no.<sup>6</sup>

Since the beginning of Western civilization, philosophers and educators have stressed importance of motor development and learning. Plato emphasized gymnastics and Spinoza stated that training the body will help perfect the mind. This belief has persisted through the centuries and in the last twenty years has become the basis for many new educational programs. These programs are based on the theory that movement is the basis of intellectual functioning. The support for this theory stems from the following three primary sources:

- 1) Observations that during the first weeks of life infants begin to explore their world using their motor capacities. Therefore, the theorists state that motor precedes verbal and cognitive behavior and is, in fact, the basis of all learning.
- 2) Correlative and factorial studies in which scores on intelligence tests have been contrasted to various indices of motor aptitude.
- 3) From experimental investigations which have hypothesized that change in intelligence may be elicited by following various programs of physical activities.

A prominent motor theorist, Barsch, in his movigenic theory, defines movement as it relates to learning. He believes that because man is a moving being in a spatial world, his learning is directly related to his motor efficiency. The ten theses which provide the foundation for his movigenic theory are:

- 1) Man is designed for movement.
- 2) The objective of movement is survival.
- 3) Movement occurs in an energy surround.
- 4) Man acquires information through his precepto-cognitive system.
- 5) The terrain of movement is space.
- 6) Developmental momentum thrusts the learner toward maturity.
- 7) Movement occurs in a climate of stress.
- 8) Feedback is essential for efficiency.
- 9) Development occurs in segments of sequential expansion.
- 10) Communication of efficiency is derived from the visual spatial phenomenon called language.

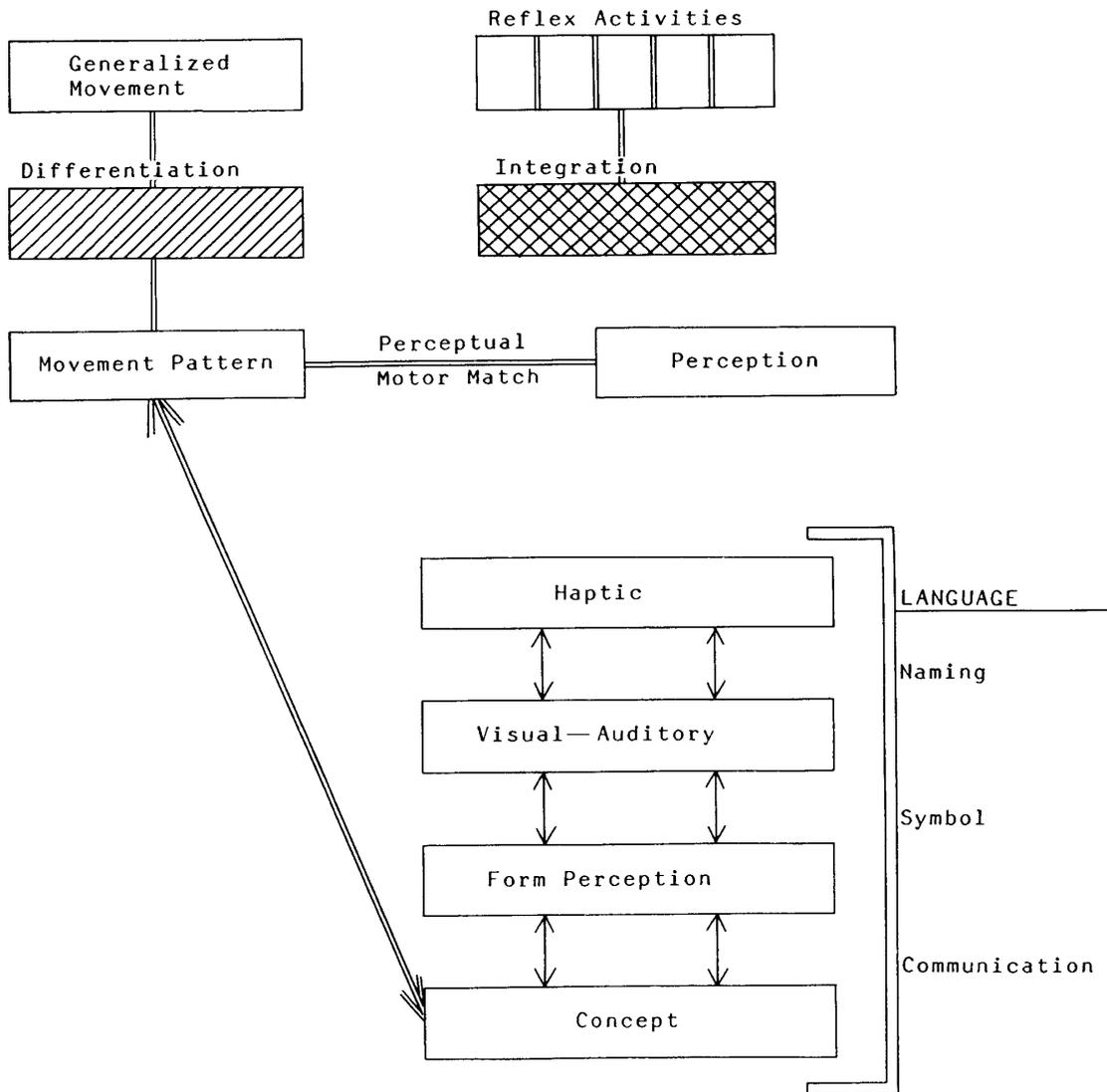
Piaget emphasizes early sensory learnings as the building blocks for later complex perceptual and cognitive learnings. Perceptual-motor is a term used for the integration of perception with previously learned motor skills. Perception is defined as the process of organizing the raw data obtained through the senses and interpreting its meaning. William James (*Essays in Radical Empiricism*) once wrote: "The intellectual life of man consists almost wholly in his substitution of a conceptual order for the perceptual order in which his experience originally comes." Indeed two kinds of learning lead to comprehension or understanding. The initial stages of learning occur on a perceptual level and perception gives meaning to sensory data in terms of past experiences and current needs. The perceptual level skills allow the human organism to differentiate, organize, store and associate sensory data. Percepts, internalized composites of meaningful images, and language provide a solid foundation for comprehension through conceptual learning. Again the interaction of the various channels of perception with motor activity is perceptual-motor.

The functioning of the perceptual-motor system is as follows:

- 1) input——perceptual information.
- 2) integration—association of new data with previously learned motor activity; dependant on receptive system.
- 3) output——verbal expression of gesture; individual understands to respond in a certain way to a particular situation.
- 4) feedback——monitoring device; output is fed back to receptive system and modified accordingly; greater selectivity in reception and association.

The term perceptual-motor match is the match which must occur between the individual's perception and his movements. Newell Kephart, a "motor before higher learning" theorist, states that perceptual-motor learnings are a result of perceptual data match with previously learned motor. The comparing and collating of the two kinds of input data is the perceptual-motor match. (See following diagram) Kephart states that "It is logical to assume that all behavior is basically motor, that the prerequisite of any kind of behavior are muscular and motor responses." Behavior develops out of muscular activity and so called higher forms of behavior are dependent upon lower forms of behavior. He has taken the ground work for his theory from D.O. Hebb who states that "stimulus activates cells in the brain." As the stimulus is repeated there are actual structural changes taking place and synaptic knobs are formed in the brain which are building blocks for future experiences.

Laboratory researchers have known for some time that more stimulating environments can bring about changes in the brains of test animals: stimulation not only causes the nerve cells to grow larger but also to form additional connections (synapses) with other nerve cells. Recently some scientists have found surprisingly that nerve cells in the brains of young animals such as rats, cats, and monkeys often had more synapses than they did when the animals were adults. Since most neuroscientists now believe that the synapses largely determine a creature's behavioral characteristics, these experiments may have important implications for adult human beings. They suggest that the



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developing brain may “prune” some synapses to achieve its proper adult organization.<sup>7</sup>

In one study of the newborn rat, up to five climbing fibers made contact with other cells in the cerebellum but only one of these contacts persisted in the adult rat. Up to 80% of the early synaptic contacts between cells were eliminated during development, while a few contacts are selected and strengthened. However these changes occur only as a result of activity. The system has to be active to eliminate redundant synapsis. Therefore learning must involve a selective stabilization of developing synapsis by functioning.<sup>8</sup> Developing efficient pathways for performing certain tasks may require the brain to reduce its potential to perform others. But while a certain number of synapses may be lost, evidence suggests that more are lost if the environment doesn't provide enough stimulation to the child or adult brain. The broader the experience, the greater the individuals's intellectual and behavioral range. To learn is to eliminate.

These findings suggest that the developing animal comes equipped with a broad range of potential brain-organization patterns, not all of which are necessary in any

one environment. Patterns activated by the animal's experience become strengthened and refined, while those that remain unused are lost or weakened. A parallel psychological development pattern has been observed in human speech perception. Human infants appear to be able to perceive and produce both the sounds of their native language and others found only in other languages. As children learn their own language, they become more adept at recognizing its sounds but less able to recognize other, new sounds.<sup>9</sup>

It is not implied that the brain, once sculpted, is impervious to experience. Scientists have found that there are more connections in the brains of adult rats that have been trained in mazes than in those of other rats who have not received such training. This suggests that the adult brain remains susceptible to experience.

Stephen D. Krashen states that adults actually "have more initial success in learning a foreign language than children if they have "Monitor Ability." His Monitor Theory hypothesizes that there are two independent systems for the development of language ability in a second language: subconscious acquisition, and conscious learning. Acquisition typically results from natural communication where the focus is on the message. Structures are acquired in a roughly predictable order and grammatically result from feel rather than conscious knowledge of rules. Learning, on the other hand, is based on the presentation of rules and error correction. The Monitor Theory postulates that conscious learning is useful to students as a monitor of their utterances, which are initiated by the acquired system. In relation to second language acquisition research, Krashen finds that individual variation between students, for example, can be accounted for in terms of monitor overusers (those who pay too much attention to correct form and are therefore hesitant speakers), underusers and optimal users.

Learning is seen to be a feature of the formal operations stage of human intellectual development which Piaget has described as occurring at puberty. This may account for the differences between adults and children in second language acquisition. Adults can apply the monitor early in their learning whereas children must wait for the acquired system to develop.<sup>10</sup> Recent research even in neurolinguistics suggest that the theories of cerebral dominance may bear no relation to differences between children and adults in language acquisition.

Newell Kephart believes "processing patterns" are developed in terms of actual neurological processes and changes to deal with symbolic material. The child must have precise observations of time and space and relate them to objects and events. Without adequately organizing their information processing systems a child will be disorganized motorically, perceptually, and cognitively.<sup>11</sup> Kephart places emphasis on the visual channel with motor learning.

In the field of cognitive psychology, Ulric Neisser stresses the central roles that movement and exploration play in making the information in our field of vision available. Emphasis on the perceiver's own activity is one of the characteristics of his approach. In this approach, it is not necessary to think of people as if they were looking through peepholes, confined to boxes, responding to stimuli or blinded by their instincts.

A more accurate image of humanity is that of the active organism, learning more about its environment and itself as it explores.

Perception involves more than the pickup of currently available information. There is always an element of anticipation, or readiness for what will appear next. Infants' skills of perceiving develop smoothly into skills of expecting and imagining. Imagining, thinking, and remembering free us from the immediate environment. Perceiving and imagining, like all other activities, involve choice. There is generally more to see than we can look at and more to hear than we can listen to. Perceptual choice has been much studied by cognitive psychologists, who call it "selective attention." While we are looking at one event, we see very little of others, even if they are equally present to the eye. We are largely responsible for what we come to know.<sup>12</sup> Teachers are largely responsible for helping students to selectively attend to the learning situation at hand.

Perceiving and imagining are not the only cognitive skills. Language is especially important for our conception of human nature because language is uniquely our own. This point has sometimes been disputed, but recent research has put it beyond doubt. There have been several concerted attempts to bestow sign language on apes, for example, and they have essentially failed. Full records are not available, but the published reports of these studies present no convincing demonstration of anything beyond what other animals can be trained to do: make isolated responses to isolated stimuli, or produce repetitive behavior in the hope of a food reward.<sup>13</sup>

The failure of these intensive efforts is even more impressive when it is contrasted with the naturalness and spontaneity of human language. Children all over the world learn an amazing variety of languages, all at about the same age all without formal instruction.

Together with movement, perception, and right-hemisphere utilization in acquiring a foreign language, memory is of vital importance. All learning implies memory—the retention, storage and recall of information evolving from past experience. Man learns from experience, so experience must be stored and recalled if man is to progress. If no aspect of previous experience could be remembered, learning could not take place. A lifetime of interaction with the physical and social environment would produce no new knowledge. Thinking, problem solving and mastery of the physical world would be impossible. Man would be unable to adapt—and unable to survive. Yet, man has an immense capacity to learn from experience. Sensory perceptions are stored and linked together in very complex clusters. Thinking and reasoning occur in the context of remembered facts; all thinking and learning is built on what has gone before. Learning requires constant reference to past experience.

There are, of course, various types of memory. Memory can be divided into short-term memory and long-term memory. Short-term memory is concerned with retention over a very short period of time, usually for a period of seconds or minutes. Long-term memory requires storage over a long period of time, usually for days, years, or even for the lifetime of the organism. Short-term memory is very limited in terms of storage capacity; the storage capacity of long-term memory is immense. Both types of memory

are, of course, important. Some information should be retained for a very short period of time and then rapidly forgotten. Other information should be overlearned; learned beyond the point of mastery. Information initially gathered via short-term memory may with proper practice form a basis for long-term memory.

Memory may also be differentiated on the basis of the stimulus information provided. Recall is a form of remembering in which the individual demonstrates retention by repeating what was previously learned in the absence of the original stimulus. The individual recalls the original data "out of the blue." Recognition is a form of remembering that occurs when the original stimulus is re-presented. Recognition, although a complex process, takes place quite automatically. Redintegration (Hilgard, 1962), a technical word meaning to reintegrate or to reestablish an earlier experience on the basis of partial cues, constitutes a third type of memory on the "stimulus information" continuum. Redintegration involves a remembering the whole of an earlier experience on the basis of partial cues.

A third approach to classifying types of memory is based upon the amount of meaning or organization present. Memories exist in patterns, remembered items woven together with varying degrees of organization. Degree of retention depends upon how much organization is present and upon the meaningfulness of the material. Meaningful materials, even when randomly arranged, are more readily retained than are nonmeaningful or nonsense materials. This phenomenon is due to the greater richness of associative organization inherent in meaningful materials. If the meaningful materials are tied together in logically related patterns—that is, if they are meaningfully organized—retention is additionally improved. Rote memory (verbatim memory in the absence of meaning and/or meaningful organization) is inferior to substance memory (learning based upon meaning, organization and understanding) because rote memory is less permanent and less applicable to new problems.

In my previous paper I reported that the emotional intensity surrounding a set of events may have a great deal to do with what we pay attention to and how much we remember about it. A requirement for storing data into long-term memory is that an event must have both novelty and "biological significance" for the individual. The stimulation for arousal is necessary in order for the perceptual motor system to work as well. The ability to recognize the novel is basic to perception. Just as we know faces instantaneously without analyzing their feature by feature, we know if a situation fits any of our existing pigeonholes.

Memory, the ability to incorporate experience into behavior, gives an individual, and indeed the species, an important survival advantage. Our distant ancestors had no radio or television, only their own eyes and ears and those of a few close associates. They must have seen, rather than heard about secondhand, most shocking events in their lives. When a predator attacked, when lightning struck, when they spotted a new source of likely prey, the surprise and the news came together. In an important sense, the surprise was the news. These things had to be stored in memory promptly and enduringly.<sup>14</sup>

And just how does the storing take place? A suggestion comes from Seymour Kety's speculations on the chemical and anatomical nature of heightened emotion. Kety, a Harvard psychiatrist and a leading researcher in psychoactive drugs, sees mental events as biochemical processes. "Perhaps affect is not taken account of in most theories of learning because it does not enjoy a high degree of credibility among rigorous psychologists and neurobiologists," he writes. "They think of it as a subjective state. But states of affect, such as anxiety, fear, anger, hunger, sexual arousal, satiety, or pleasure, are more than subjective experiences. They are also adaptive biological states associated with general and specific changes in autonomic, visceral, and endocrine functions. There must also be appropriate changes in the central nervous system."

It's well known that affective states are associated with release of certain substances—neurotransmitters such as norepinephrine, for example, and various pituitary, hypothalamus, and adrenal-cortex hormones. As Kety observes, even anatomy may be cooperating. Certain important dendrites and their synapses lie close at the surface of the brain. Might this be to permit the cerebrospinal fluid to reach them? Cortex surface obviously plays an important role in brain function; why else would the brain have evolved a convoluted shape, which maximizes surface area? "Although embryological and geometrical considerations have been invoked to explain this phenomenon," Kety writes, "it is also possible that the position of these structures in close proximity to the cerebrospinal fluid permits substances carried in that medium to act on cortical synapses." As an individual's state of emotion or arousal rises, substances are released into the fluid that tend to encourage memory fixation. The fluid reaches many receptors and the synapses that are currently or recently active immediately "store."<sup>15</sup>

I have reiterated and delved even further into the rationale as to why using drama will positively contribute to the learning of a foreign language. The data supporting the importance of movement, perception, right hemisphere utilization and memory in foreign language acquisition presents a strong case as to the advantages of the use of drama and its techniques.

To summarize, Kephart and other motor theorists believe and stress that perceptual data only becomes meaningful when matched with a built up body of motor information. Perception is matched to motor, not vice versa. The child first acquires motor skills which are specific motor acts. As he matures he develops motor patterns which are broader, then motor skills provide feedback. Finally the motor patterns lead to motor generalizations. Motor generalizations are the result of combining and integrating motor patterns into higher abstractions of thought.

Motor tasks can elicit optimum levels of arousal. There are optimum levels of alertness or arousal necessary for the efficient performance of a given task. To establish this alertness, moderate exercise has been found to produce optimum reactions in excess tensions which will contribute efficient mental work.

In regards to memory and the brain, there is some physiological evidence to suggest that long-term and short-term memories are located within different structures of the brain. The long standard theories of the right and left brain capabilities are being

challenged. The phenomenon of memorizing material shortly before an examination and forgetting the bulk of it shortly thereafter is well known. Long-term memory requires the ability to assimilate, store and retrieve information when it is needed. There is evidence that the memory of an experience is influenced by conditions that affect the brain soon after learning. We learn best when we are alert, motivated, and aroused. Long-term memory is especially dependent upon the learner's skill in seeing the relevancy of the material and relating it to past knowledge.

For efficient learning, an individual's memory in many areas of performance must become an automatic habitual response to a stimulus. Examples of such automatic responses include remembering words when speaking, inserting the proper syntactic word form in a sentence, and remembering a word by sight when reading. Many factors have an effect on memory: the brain's intensity of attention, meaningfulness of the material, interest in the subject and the amount of drill and overlearning.

By constructing a reality in acquiring a foreign language parallel to the one they created as infants, James Asher, believes that adults will learn a second language easily. This involves reenacting the developmental states that an infant experiences in acquiring a first language but at a speeded up pace. If the target language is English, the Japanese students construct their reality in English by being silent but following directions uttered by the instructor in English. By listening and following through the direct motor responses of the instructor's directions, right-brain learning will store what is learned into long-term memory.

Asher's methods obviously stress listening along with the action which provides important reinforcement. Harris Winitz states that through listening and understanding we can build the competency that allows us to speak in a language; that when we listen and understand, it is only when our conscious mind is on the message and off the language itself that we can build that competency; that there is a place for conscious learning of structure and usage but it is a separate and secondary one from the main business of acquiring language unconsciously through listening and understanding.

In using the motor response method, the teacher gives commands to students who can understand the action and hear the target language. The student intuitively understands that what the teacher is doing and what the student himself is doing and what the teacher is saying are directly linked.

There are many advantages to this method: The meaning gap is overcome. The teacher can speak at normal speed without resorting to an unnaturally slow and clear pronunciation which results in the students understanding their teacher's English and no one else's. It holds the students' attention. The students quickly come to know that the commands given to their colleagues will soon come to them. There is immediate feedback. The teacher does not have to ask if the students understood. He just watches. Hesitation and puzzled looks immediately inform the teacher. Tension goes down after the student realizes that the teacher won't trick him with unfamiliar vocabulary and that the teacher is simply asking him to do what he already knows. Another reason tension goes down is that listening and understanding are a lot easier than speaking.

Enjoyment goes up when the student finds he can actually understand what before was a garble of sound. The student is further exhilarated to find he can understand new combinations of sentences never heard before. Retention is heightened because the body remembers through muscles as well as brain cells. The action is meaningful.<sup>16</sup> Classroom instructions can be handled in the target language which is English in my case.

However a student is introduced to a new language, a level is inevitably reached in even the best of learning situations when classroom use of the language becomes mechanical and uninspired. After all there are only so many objects in a classroom and there are only so many things a student can do with them. This stage is accompanied by feelings of fatigue and frustration on the part of the student who believes that he knows the rules of grammar but cannot produce the matter of the language that the grammar identifies. A major factor in the creation of this fatigue and in the accompanying lapses in acceptable colloquial usage is the student's uncertainty as to precisely what a native speaker of the language would say in a particular situation. It is at this juncture that skits can be introduced. These skits must be consistent with the level of the class and past lessons. In writing skits two things are helpful to keep in mind. One is to maintain a balance between words and actions. Without action you merely have the students mouthing the words again as they have for countless of lessons before. The second point is to make sure that the role each student plays is clearly defined. Keep in mind appropriate vocabulary and grammar previously introduced but don't use it just to be using it. The drama should be natural.

After the drama is written, compile a list of new vocabulary that must be introduced and drilled. It may be the case that some vocabulary is best introduced in the context of the drama itself. Other vocabulary can be taught in the motor response fashion. But I would not hesitate to introduce new vocabulary in other ways, for example, pictures or even translations.

Researchers working in the area of imagery have developed the dual coding hypothesis which states that when a picture and verbal stimulus are presented simultaneously to a subject, that individual uses both the left and the right hemispheres to process the information. The visual image is processed in the right hemisphere whereas the verbal material is dealt with in the left hemisphere. Because both hemispheres are working together memory is enhanced and recall is quicker and more complete. Furthermore, by increasing the number of associations with the verbal material to be learned—words, phrases, sentences—the effectiveness of the memory is also increased. The unique is more memorable than the neutral.

Here is one of the skits I wrote called "Arranged Marriage." It was written for a pre-intermediate group of students for practice in introductions and the use of the phrase "to get married."

1. This is a lobby of a hotel.
2. You are a go-between (matchmaker). You are sitting in a chair in the hotel lounge drinking coffee.
3. You are the young man who is planning to get married. Your name is Taro Yama-

- moto. You are sitting in the hotel lounge too, drinking coffee.
4. You are the young man's father. You are sitting in a chair in the hotel lounge looking nervously at your watch. Say: I wonder what's keeping them so long?
  5. You are the young lady who is planning to get married. Your name is Hanako Ueda. Open the door of the hotel and walk into the hotel lounge. Say: I hope this one is taller than the last one was.
  6. You are the young lady's mother. Walk into the hotel lounge with your daughter. Look around for the go-between and say: I'm sure he'll be tall, dark and handsome. Where can they be?
  7. Both of you spot the go-between and the two people with him. Smile and wave to them. Walk over to them.
  8. Go-between, stand up and bow and say to Hanako and her mother: Thank you for coming.
  9. Hanako and her mother bow back and say: Sorry to have kept you waiting. There was an accident so the traffic was quite heavy.
  10. Go-between shake your head and say: Don't mention it. Introduce them to Mr. Taro Yamamoto and his father. Say: I'd like you to meet Mr. Yamamoto and his son Taro.
  11. Taro and Mr. Yamamoto stand up and shake hands with Hanako and Mrs. Ueda. Say: How do you do? I'm happy to meet you.
  12. Go-between say: This is Mrs. Ueda and her daughter Hanako.
  13. Hanako and Mrs. Ueda say: How do you do? It's nice to meet you too.
  14. All sit down and drink coffee.
  15. Go-between say: Mr. Yamamoto is a widower and Mrs. Ueda is a widow.
  16. Mr. Yamamoto and Mrs. Ueda show pleasant surprise as you look at each other. Say: Oh really?
  17. Hanako and Taro look bored.
  18. Mrs. Ueda say: I think my daughter is too immature to get married.
  19. Mr. Yamamoto say: I think my son isn't worthy of your beautiful daughter.
  20. Mrs. Ueda say: I agree, but I'm available.
  21. Mr. Yamamoto say: To marry my son?
  22. Mrs. Ueda say: No, to marry you.
  23. Mr. Yamamoto grin broadly and say: It's all settled then. Let's get married next month.
  24. Mrs. Ueda, clap your hands, smile and say: How wonderful! I accept. My horoscope told me that everything would turn out all right today.
  25. Taro and Hanako, look at each other and with dumbfounded surprise. Shake your heads.
  26. Go-between, throw up your hands in resignation and say: I don't believe it!

Upon presenting skits to a class you should have all the needed props in the room. After all the vocabulary necessary for understanding the drama has been drilled, the first step in skit presentation is for the teacher to read the script and demonstrate the drama in its entirety. A dramatic and even exaggerated interpretation could be useful. The novelty of such a presentation would be the stimulation for arousal which is necessary for storing data into long-term memory. Then pass out the scripts for the

students to read. You can check pronunciation at this point. The class can read the script as a whole, in groups, or individually. If you have introduced the vocabulary previously and acted it out, students will not experience difficulty. The drama is putting your previous work into a context and giving it coherence and direction. Then call back all scripts. Give one script to each group of students who will act out the drama. The student with the script is called the reader. That student reads the mini-drama and the others play various roles. Security is maintained by the reader who tells everyone what to do and say. For the reader, the minidrama is a reading exercise. For the others, it is a listening exercise. Then the roles change. The drama is done as many times as there are students in the group. The students never seem to mind doing the drama again because each time they have a different role. They don't memorize the drama although certain phrases are retained. As an optional activity, the students can do the skit with no reader, especially if the drama is being reviewed. The goal is not to memorize the drama but to understand it. Of course, speaking is built into the drama. A final option is to role play the situation using any vocabulary the student has.<sup>17</sup>

Role-playing—assuming the personality of a native speaker of English—has long been recognized as a valuable and valid means of mastering a language, for there is a high correlation between language and culture. In Japan there has been a persistent tendency to believe that verbal language is not necessarily the best medium for enhancing human understanding, and preference has always been given to non-verbal communication. Quite contrary to Japan, verbal language is highly valued and considered to be indispensable in Western countries for daily living. The ideal attitude of Japanese samurai who were taught to remain silent without a word of protest or pleading even when they were going to be put to death still lingers on in contemporary Japan. It is no accident that Japanese politicians including those who hold the highest positions of power as well as top business executives are most likely noted for their verbal inarticulateness. In Japan someone who speaks well and colorfully is regarded as belonging to the entertainment world, not to the realm of sublime human relations. A person who heavily relies upon verbal communication as a means of expressing his feeling is said to prove his abruptness, immaturity, and possible dishonesty.

To master a foreign language one must learn the whole unspoken culture. Research done by Nan Susman, a psychologist at the International Council on Education for Teaching indicates that body language is bilingual. When foreigners converse in English, their bodies seem to do likewise. People from cultures that favor getting close seem to back away unconsciously; those from cultures that are partial to keeping their distance seem to move in.

Researchers have known for some time that Arabs, South Americans, and Eastern Europeans favor close conversational encounters, while Asians, Northern Europeans, and North Americans prefer to keep their distance. In the most recent study, 35 Japanese and 31 Venezuelan students who were bilingual in English and 39 American students each talked to someone from his or her own country about hobbies or sports. Half of

the foreign students were told to speak in their native language, the others to speak in English.

The participants sat down when they talked, and had to arrange their own chairs. Speaking their native tongues, each group ran true to form: The Venezuelans sat closest (32.2 inches apart on the average), the Americans were in between (35.4 inches), and the Japanese were farthest away (40.2 inches). But the spacing changed dramatically for the foreign students speaking English. The Venezuelans sat an average of 7.9 inches farther away than their countrymen who were speaking Spanish—farther away, in fact, than the Americans. The Japanese students hitched their chairs an average of 1.6 inches closer than the Japanese who were speaking Japanese.

Why did the English-speaking Venezuelans pick such a large distance? Perhaps, the researchers speculate, because they were not sure of the American “distance norms... They knew the proper direction to move, but not how far.” Why did the English-speaking Japanese make a smaller adjustment? Perhaps, the researchers say, because they did not speak English as well.<sup>18</sup>

Just as long as a Japanese continues to heed the ritual code of behavior, the required behavioral inhibition will keep him at a distance, not only physically but emotionally. He will not successfully master English. To master a foreign language, you must learn it in your body, in the scanning patterns of your eyes, in the way you touch and walk. You must internalize it mentally, physically and emotionally. Among the many positive advantages in the use of skits and role-playing is the creation of an aura of reality and a corresponding loss of self-consciousness. A skit is a skit, but within its own context exchanges between characters are believable and, to that extent, real. Students *do* want to know what a native speaker of a language may say in a given situation; the skits indicate what these characters and many—but not all—native speakers may use. But, especially with adults, inhibitions are obvious and, as a consequence, language use falters. Role-playing contributes greatly to the free use of language.

I want to stress the distinction between the kind of drama I'm advocating which the student is placed in an emotional situation and led to express his inner feelings and traditional role-playing in which the student is, in effect, asked to put on a mask and pretend to be someone he doesn't feel he is. Often times the latter can be as mechanical as any drill repetition and just as unworthy. Viola Spolin in *Improvisations for the Theater*, defines role-playing as follows: “Role-Playing: as opposed to playing a role: imposing a character as opposed to creating a role out of the problem; artificial imposition of character on self as opposed to allowing natural growth to evolve out of relationship; using a character to hide behind; a mask keeping one from exposure; withdrawal; solo performance.”<sup>19</sup>

We must help students to grow and be themselves, able to function with another language and culture with true communication. Dramatist Stanislavski's view of the dramatic art is an inner game in which the essential must come from the self. This should also be the basis of real language learning, full of personal, active involvement. The best way to teach something is to make people do it. You can't learn how to ski

by reading a book about it. You have to get on the skis and ski down the hill. The same with riding a bicycle and with learning to drive a car or to play tennis. Active participation involves the right hemisphere of the brain in addition to the normal left-language hemisphere, making drama a truly holistic learning process.

As the student gains control of the basic vocabulary and structures of the second language using skits and role-playing, he needs to explore their use in more natural ways if he is to gain any genuine fluency. Doing a play demands that the actors participate in new cultural roles and behave in a culturally acceptable way. Playing a role demands that the actors develop a sensitivity to how English speakers interact with each other—for example, how they hold their bodies, how far they stand apart, where they look when they talk, how men shake hands with each other, how children talk to their parents, and so on. It also demands a great awareness of the ordinary mechanics of daily life in English-speaking countries—for example, what time people have their meals, what they eat, the kind of clothing they wear at home, how much furniture a room would have and so on. A classroom that uses drama is not only concerned with the words and expressions that English speakers use, but with the situations in which the words and expressions should and should not be used. Drama provides at least one practical classroom technique for developing fluency in the second language by focusing on the communicative needs of characters in an actual meaningful situation. Drama is a purposeful activity because it gives the students something to do that has a beginning, and middle, and an end, even if the end is a performance before their own classmates. It is motivating because every participating student has a specific responsibility in making a group activity a success. There is a sense of participation in a team effort which makes the class into a very supportive self-motivating group,<sup>20</sup> particularly in Japan where the group effort is prized over individual effort.

For intermediate and advanced students, when you're actually ready to produce a play, don't have them memorize the lines! A common comment to amateur and professional actors is, "How did you memorize all those lines?" In language texts there are constant directions to "memorize the useful phrases below" or to "memorize these dialogues." Richard Via in his "Talk and Listen" system advocates tossing out the words "memorize" and "recite". Through memorization and recitation students have been misled in believing they could speak a language. They have been trained to speak, not to listen. To these students, conversation is speaking only. Conversation is not recitation, but communication.<sup>21</sup>

The "Talk and Listen" system works like this. Have the students in a position so that they may make eye contact with each other. The student who is to speak first looks at the line and reads it silently and then looks at the addressee and says as much of the line as can be remembered. One must make eye contact with one's partner, who is listening. They should look at each other as if they were actually carrying on a natural, original conversation. One may look back at one's lines as often as necessary, but whenever speaking *must make eye contact*. Most beginning students remember about three words before looking back at the script. Gradually, however, the student will

begin to say the words in sense groups. When the student has finished speaking, the respective partners look at their lines and follow the same procedure.<sup>22</sup>

A simple device to train students in the talk-and-listen system is the use of talk-and-listen cards. The cards contain a short scene of usually not more than ten lines between two people. Yoko Nomura in her book *Pinch and Ouch* offers a wide variety to choose from. Very often students of a new language get into the habit of talking in a monotone, forgetting to make use of the great variety of intonations that they use in their own language to make that language more expressive. To help them make use of these (intonations) tones, have the students speak in various exaggerated ways. One can begin by speaking in a high voice. The next time through, one can speak slowly, the other quickly. Then loud and soft. And finally any combination thereof. You can change the setting for each dialogue and act according to the changes. As a last stage the same people can remain in the same setting but can improvise their own dialogue.

A well chosen play is a good model of spoken English. A successful playwright must be able to produce natural speech in proper context. He is not concerned with the rules and regulations of English, pattern practice, or in illustrating a particular structure, but in expressing ideas and feelings. In most cases the plays use the type of language in use in daily conversation, which is the type of dialogue that students will find most useful.<sup>23</sup>

It is a generally accepted fact that a language must be linked with all other aspects of a culture and that it is virtually impossible to learn a language fluently, independent of its cultural context. A play can give a good picture of language in its social-cultural environment and show us how the situation affects the language. A play often demonstrates the interaction of many characters and illustrates the various levels of speech.<sup>24</sup> A teacher should introduce cultural knowledge as the play progresses so that the students are not trapped into interpreting the new language through their own cultural understanding.

A play is written for communication between actor and actor, and audience and actor. The drama method offers a chance for the students to use and understand the language from the gut level. They can become involved in the situation and discover the how and why of the language. They are learning through the experience of communicating in the language; thus their understanding of the language is greatly enhanced.<sup>25</sup>

## NOTES

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