CORRECTION OF ERRORS IN ORAL EXPRESSION

A Research Paper

Presented to

the Faculty of the Department of Education

Montana State College

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Education

by

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August 1956

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CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM AND WHY IT IS IMPORTANT

Effective speech can be a mighty weapon and a versatile tool. The destinies of nations have often been changed by a few ringing words of an individual. Effective expression depends upon accuracy. According to McGrath,[1] the basis of all social life is communication. The growing complexity of society puts increasing demands on written and spoken language.

It has come to the attention of the writer that the English language is very often not used correctly in conversation and when people speak before groups. Since this type of usage is so very important the purpose of this investigation is to find what these errors are, why they exist, and what to do about them. The problem will be examined with the use of all materials on the subject. The contention of the writer is that errors should be corrected when they are made, but this is not a universal belief. The surveys, opinions, and documented facts of psychologists and men prominent in the field of English will be used as a basis for this investigation.

The Problem

The problem is this: We must determine the time and place to make corrections, the types of errors to be corrected, the place of habits in

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[1] Earl James McGrath, editor, Communication in General Education (Dubuque, Iowa: William C. Brown Co., 1949), p. v.

correction, and the age level to make corrections.

Through research at the Montana State College Library we find that correction of errors in oral expression would be the same as any other correction. In training animals Ruch found that rewards and punishments must follow immediately to be effective. He continues:

> Several experimental studies recently have shown that learning apparently is made impossible in rats and in chimpanzees when a delay of as much as four or five seconds is introduced in discrimination-learning situations between the choice of one stimulus or the other and the attainment of either the related punishment or the related reward (Spence).[2]

He[3] further states: "In human life it is noteworthy that the introduction of a time separation of cause and effect makes it very difficult for us to learn."

According to Harlow and Dunkel we must help the students of today improve their language and give them an awareness and a capacity for growth that will let them continue to develop their language. The following quote from them substantiates this:

> The kind of standard English that the teacher should teach is a matter of considerable controversy, as is pointed out by A. J. Walker, head of the English Department at the Georgia Institute of Technology. As English teachers, we cannot leave our language or the language of our pupils alone. We are not the wardens of our mother-tongue, but we and our students are users of it. Our writers are changing it, our civilization is making new demands on it and adding new words to it. Even punctuation, grammar, and spelling are changing rapidly. We are language teachers in a democracy which recognizes no castes.

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2 Floyd L. Ruch, Psychology and Life (Chicago: Scott Foresman and Co., 1948), p. 339.

3 Ibid., pp. 339-340.

> Our students should be given a chance to learn a language that can be spoken anywhere in this country without prejudice to themselves. We must give them an awareness and a capacity for growth that will let them continue to develop their language. We cannot leave language alone.[4]

Importance of the Problem

As brought out by McGrath[5] the forces which work in human evolution have not so far taught the masses of the people to think or to express themselves effectively. The future of our civilization may largely depend on whether men do or do not develop the ability to think and talk effectively. We are proud of our right of free speech, but we do not fully utilize that privilege.

In December of 1955 the problem of correctness in the use of the English language came to the attention of the Montana State Board of Education and on December 14, 1955 the following resolution was passed after considerable discussion:

> It was moved that the teacher training institutions' personnel be instructed that the Board of Education is of the opinion that English usage of all teachers is a matter of concern to the Board, and that more emphasis should be placed on the proper usage of the native tongue. The motion was seconded and carried.[6]

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4 James G. Harlow and Harold B. Dunkel, editors, "Educational News and Editorial Comment," School Review, LXII (March, 1954), 139-40.

5 McGrath, op. cit., p. v.

6 Montana State Board of Education, Mary M. Condon, Secretary. From a letter to Dr. James F. Nickerson, Dean of Education, Montana State College, Bozeman, Montana (Montana State Board of Education, Helena, Montana: Dec., 14, 1955).

It is evident that if such action is taken by a State Board of Education the situation must be quite serious.

In the use of the English language there is a great deal of improvement, as substantiated by Pressey and Robinson,7 from the third and fourth grades through and including the eighth grade. Then there is very little improvement until college is reached. At that time we have improvement again but not as much as from grades three and four through the eighth. This, too, does emphasize the need for more instruction--not only in the fundamentals of written English, but also the student must be taught to be careful in his speech.

Language is a marvelous tool. It is the duty of all English teachers to help the pupils attain skill in the use of that tool. A thought is an idea unspoken. Speech is thought given voice. Force of utterance comes from clarity of thought and accuracy of expression.

Summary

Errors in oral expression should be corrected in order to live an intelligent life and this should be done as early in a person's life as possible.

In animal life we find that it is important to make corrections at once or it is almost impossible to succeed and in man a time separation makes learning very difficult.

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7 Sidney L. Pressey and Francis P. Robinson, Psychology and the New Education (New York: Harper and Bros., Pub., 1944), pp. 368-369.

When are corrections to be made? Where are corrections to be made and by whom? What kind of error should be corrected? Do habits and formation of bad habits in oral expression make the task more difficult and if so how are these bad habits to be broken? Is there any transfer of learning from correct grammar to other subjects in school and from other subjects to correct grammar? At what age level should corrections be made? These questions are very important and we shall make a study of each in the chapters that follow.

CHAPTER II

THE TIME TO MAKE CORRECTIONS

When corrections are to be made in oral expression it poses a difficult problem. Handschin[8] and Simons[9] state that the golden period of habit formation is adolescence and that the grammar of usage is the grammar for our children--not only in the junior but also in senior high school. But, how are bad habits in oral composition to be corrected. How is full advantage to be taken of that golden period and how is correct usage to be taught?

Correct Error When It is Made

In everyday life errors are corrected when they are made. Public speakers are often interrupted and must continue with their prepared speeches. Stratton, in the following statement, indicates that errors in oral expression should be corrected in the same way:

> When shall corrections be made? --The question, "When shall the correction of an error be made?" has provoked much discussion by educators, some maintaining that never while the pupil is speaking should he be required to listen to a correction or to include one. Certainly if a pupil (or a public speaker before a paying audience) does not

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[8] Charles H. Handschin, Methods of Teaching Modern Languages (New York: World Book Co., 1923), p.80.

[9] Sarah E. Simons, English Problems in the Solving (Chicago: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1920), p.45.

> make himself heard, there is little sense in informing him of it after he has finished, when a slight hint might have induced him to make his words carry. Supporters of the practice of waiting until the speech is finished ask how mature speakers would like to be interrupted, and corrected, at intervals, evidently forgetting that in real life that is exactly what occurs daily, and that one of the marks of an effective speaker is that in spite of interruptions and corrections he can continue with his remarks to his intended conclusion.[10]

Stratton[11] states that class correction should not be obvious. There are ways and means such as head nodding or slight motions from the teacher to indicate error. A list of errors should be kept by the teacher and later discussed in private with the pupil.

Correct Errors at End of Sentence or Speech

McGregor,[12] Dewey,[13] and Hook[14] feel that error correction should be made after a speech and not to interrupt it. They also feel that correction should be made in private.

There are many reasons given for not making corrections at the time the error is made. Baker substantiates this in the following quote:

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[10] Clarence Stratton, The Teaching of English in the High School (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1923), pp. 251-252.

[11] Ibid., pp. 251-252.

[12] Anne L. McGregor, Supervised Study in English for Junior High School Grades (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1921), p. 18.

[13] John Dewey, Human Nature and Conduct (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1922), pp. 58-59.

[14] J. N. Hook, The Teaching of High School English (New York: The Ronald Press Co., 1950), p. 411.

> The wrong way to handle errors. The practice, common among English teachers, of correcting errors as they occur in the speech of pupils, of "never accepting an answer unless it is in expressed good English," results in little good and much evil. It does, it is true, produce a certain degree of correctness as long as the student is in the presence of his English teacher. But it does not, in many cases, produce improvement in the habitual speech of the student when not in the English class. It causes self-consciousness, it kills spontaneity and interest, and destroys the vital relation between speaker and audience. (Please note that this is written, not for primary, but for high school teachers.) So much stress has been laid in this way upon correctness that many students get the idea that there is little to English besides more correctness, and quite lose sight of those aspects of good speaking that arise from the fact that it is a social art.[15]

Craig[16] states that as far as possible the speaker should discover his own mistake. In upper grades repeating the incorrect way will help the speaker realize what was said. Careful criticism will not hurt the most sensitive person if it is handled with care. Errors should be accepted as part of our everyday learning.

Summary

It has been shown that corrections should be made, but no clear method to make them has been determined. The disagreement is not if errors should be corrected, but when to correct them. The writer agrees with the authorities that believe correction should be made at the time of the error because the evidence seems to be in favor of immediate

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[15] Elizabeth W. Baker, Spoken English and How to Teach It (Chicago: Rand McNally and Co., 1925), p. 95.

[16] Virginia J. Craig, The Teaching of High School English (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1930), pp. 236-237.

correction.

It must now be determined where corrections are to be made and by whom. What kind of errors should be corrected? What part do habits play in oral expression? Is transfer to be considered in speech correction? At what age level should corrections be made? These questions will be considered in the chapters that follow.

CHAPTER III

THE PLACE TO MAKE CORRECTIONS

The preceding chapter pointed out that corrections are to be made in oral expression and it must now be found where these corrections are to be made and by whom. Are they to be made at school in all classes or just in the English class? Are they to be made in the home? Is the environment of a home important in the speech of a person? These questions are important in the study of making corrections in oral expression and we will now consider the place to make these corrections.

The Place of the School

All classes in school are important in establishing good grammar usage for our citizens. The time devoted to bettering the use of our mother-tongue must be used to the fullest advantage in all classes. Stratton[17] has brought to our attention that tact and delicacy should be used in making corrections. The criticism should never become fault finding. He continues:

> If speaking in earlier terms in high school has been naturally developed there will be less lost motion at the beginning of each term due to the strangeness of new teachers and classmates. When once ease of manner has been won, self-consciousness reduced, some fluency of speech developed, there should begin more strict insistence upon correction of details. At just this point the delicacy and tact of the teacher must be most in

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17 Stratton, op. cit., p. 250.

> evidence. Children are not so resentful of correction of their speech as are adults (may of whom need it quite as much) but they are sensitive and easily discouraged. The best attitude for the teacher to show is one of sympathetic frankness without any great display of apology or disappointment. He should know or learn quickly which must be delivered by him. In allowing pupil's comments he must prevent criticism from becoming fault finding, he must not allow it to deteriorate into discussion, or charge and retort, he must not permit it to get so far away from the point that no one remembers the original remark. He must not allow it to be hypercritical.[18]

He further advocates that notes be kept by the teacher on several strips of paper, say two inches by eight. The teacher should explain that he will take notes, good points as well as bad. These slips may or may not be given to the students at the close of the class period, but all are returned to the teacher if the students receive them. At the end of the term the slips are sorted out by name by a student and then they are given to the students so they can see their progress.

Another method of procedure suggested by McGregor[19] is to let the students correct each other in class. They can be appointed to act as judges and offer criticism or commendation after each discussion.

Thorndike[20] points out that perhaps better speech--without grammar errors--could be taught simular to a puzzle game if used where the learners notice that they are doing certain things in a better way,

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[18] Stratton, op. cit., p. 250.

[19] McGregor, op. cit., p. 18.

[20] Edward L. Thorndike, Educational Psychology (New York: Teachers College, Columbia University, 1914, p. 139.

Symonds[23] relates that nothing is more important in helping develop a good behavior pattern than a favorable environment where there are good models for the child to copy. McGregor in the following quote agrees with Symonds in this respect:

> Correct speech is almost entirely a matter of habit but unfortunately the establishment in school of right habits of speech frequently involves the breaking down of wrong ones. In many communities constant pressure is necessary to counteract the effect of street and home standards.[24]

The use of remedial work as related to speech correction is a problem that has had the consideration of Symonds[25] for he believes that it must be thought of as establishing new habits and attitudes which are to serve as bulwarks or defenses against old patterns of behavior, so that when the situation presents itself the newly learned behavior will overrule the older and less desirable behavior.

Summary

We have found that corrections should be made in school, but that tact should be used in making them. The environment, outside of the school, is very important in the makeup of a person's speech and if a parent can, he should help his children to use correct English. It is a mark of the educated to use correct grammar.

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23 Percival M. Symonds, Mental Hygiene of the School Child (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1934), p. 77.

24 McGregor, op. cit., p. 42.

25 Symonds, op. cit., pp. 220-221.

The kind of error to be corrected, the roll of habits and the age level at which it is best to make corrections are to be discussed in the following chapters.

CHAPTER IV

TYPES OF ERROR TO BE CORRECTED

From the time a person begins to talk he is taught speech--depending upon his environment it may be correct or incorrect. He may learn incorrect grammar and then he may have great difficulty in learning to use the English language correctly.

Robert Lindner,[26] author of Rebel Without a Cause, The Fifty-Minute Hour and Must You Conform, tells us that our schools demand uniformity in thought and behavior. Politics, fashion, popular art, and literature all proclaim not only the necessity but the virtue of behaving, looking and feeling just like everybody else. Corrections should be made with care. They should be made a part of a person's nature and not something for him to rebel against.

Errors in grammar, pronunciation, and speech defects are all to be corrected, within limits, in the school and to some extent by parents. For speech defects specialists should be called if necessary.

Errors in Grammar and Pronunciation

Errors of Teachers: Every teacher should scrutinize his speech and be a good example for his students and the public. He should improve the tone and pitch of his speech and examine it for personal errors and

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[26] Robert Lindner, "Raise Your Child to be a Rebel," McCalls, LXXXIII (February, 1956), 31.

inaccuracies. Teachers who insist upon correct agreement and correct verb usage often make errors themselves. The teachers according to Stratton[27] must use correct usage themselves before they can expect their students to use it. Teachers of English also mispronounce common words such as joust, livelong, bade, satyr, and archipelago. Again teachers of English must be the first to use the English language correctly.

Errors of Students: When teachers do speak correctly and try to help the students the schools are progressing to help themselves and the public; however, the types of errors made must be discovered before corrections are to be made. Blair brings us the following information:

> A number of investigations have been conducted in an effort to discover the types of errors pupils make in oral English. In December, 1939, teachers of every department in the Fort Hill High School, Cumberland, Maryland, cooperated in taking an inventory of oral English errors committed by their pupils. For one week, all errors were jotted down by the teachers. It was found, when the data were tabulated, that 77 per cent of the errors involved verb forms--wrong verb, confusion of past and past participle, failure of verb to agree with its subject in person and number, and wrong tense form. Of the remaining types of errors, 9 per cent were due to use of double negatives, 5 per cent to improper pronoun usage, 4 per cent to use of the expression "where's it at?" and 5 per cent were of the miscellaneous variety. Some of the errors in the miscellaneous group were most for almost, jist for just, that there, wait on me, off of, youse, git, and this here.

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27 Stratton, op. cit., p. 244.

28 Glenn M. Blair, Diagnostic and Remedial Teaching in Secondary Schools (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1950), pp. 337-338.

Table I shows the specific verb errors which were made by pupils in the respective grades. Errors are listed in the order of frequency of occurrence.

According to Blair[29] the ten most objectionable errors in oral English are: "(1) have went, (2) ain't, (3) could'nt never, (4) seen for saw, (5) done for did, (6) learn for teach, (7) that there, (8) Frank and me, (9) is for are, and (10) them for those."

Table II gives a list of words that are most often mispronounced.

Speech Defects

According to Pressey and Robinson[30] defects in speech may be of various types and come from various causes. Children with physical defects such as cleft palate are quite rare. Emotional strain is thought to be the cause of the most common defects. Pressey and Robinson continue:

> In general it will be convenient to think of speech difficulties as possibly due to any one of five causes, and check these off in considering a particular case. (1) Defective speech may be one feature of a general mental inferiority or delay of development. Idiots cannot speak at all, and imbeciles relatively little. Speech defects are more common among children below average in ability. (2) Some difficulty in speech may be one feature of a total picture of malnutrition, infection, or nervous disease. (3) Poor speech may be due to some structural defect in the speech organs such as cleft palate, a tongue tied, dental deformity, or nose and throat deformity due to enlarged tonsils and adenoids. (4) Lisping in babyhood continued by parents who think it is cute. (5) Insecure feeling thus resulting in stuttering on repeating syllables, or stammering and is unable to articulate freely.

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29 Blair, op. cit., p. 342.

30 Pressey and Robinson, op. cit., p. 50-51.

TABLE I

ERRORS IN VERB FORMS MADE BY PUPILS IN FORT HILL HIGH SCHOOL, CUMBERLAND, MARYLAND.[31]

7th Grade (87%)	8th Grade (73%)	9th Grade (90%)	10th Grade (84%)	11th Grade (62%)	12th Grade (70%)
you was	I seen	can-may	ain't	come-came	ain't
I seen	ain't	done-did	come-came	They was	don't
done for did	don't-doesn't	ain't	don't-doesn't	done	I seen
We was	you was	don't-doesn't	have saw	you was	have saw
They was	done-did	We was	can-may	I seen	has rang
ain't	We was	has went	brung	can-may	have did
has went	Was you?	has rang	I seen	is-are	is-are
knowed	knowed	is-are	you was	Use of lie	sit
can-may	has rang	burst	set-sat	learn	set
don't-doesn't	have saw	learn-teach	has went	have saw	done-did
come-came	can-may	Was you?	We was	We was	fall
Use of sit	Use of lie	have saw	have did	eat	can-may
Use of eat	have did	have did	Was you?	sit	drawed
learn-teach	has went	Use of lie	They was	burst	blowed
Use of lie	come-came	Use of sit	Come-came	done	
have saw	learn-teach	Use of set	burst	written	
rang-rung	is-are	Use of fall	knowed		
brung	set-sat	Use of eat	is-are		
set-sat	burst	knowed	Use of lie		
burst	done finished	come-came	Use of sit		
is-are	Use of eat	You was	He says		
Use of fall		git	throwed		
done-did		give-gave	took and		
take and do					
have took					
find-found					

[31] Blair, op. cit., p. 338.

TABLE II

PRONUNCIATION ERRORS[32]

	As Heard		Correction	Authority
1.	literacher	for	literature	dictionary
2.	human beans	for	human beings	dictionary
3.	prespiration	for	perspiration	dictionary
4.	ad'dress	for	address' and ad'dress	dictionary
5.	Febuary	for	February	dictionary
6.	terble	for	terrible	dictionary
7.	grimmy	for	grimy	dictionary
8.	libary	for	library	dictionary
9.	bedder	for	better	dictionary
10.	colyum	for	column	dictionary
11.	holler	for	halloo	dictionary
12.	idear	for	idea	dictionary
13.	pome	for	poem	dictionary
14.	con'tractor	for	contract'or	dictionary
15.	Roozevelt	for	Roosevelt	dictionary
16.	simular	for	similar	dictionary
17.	coz	for	because	dictionary
18.	don'tcha	for	don't you	usage
19.	hith	for	height	dictionary
20.	reconize	for	recognize	dictionary
21.	fud	for	food	dictionary
22.	formid'able	for	for'midable	dictionary
23.	maintninance	for	maintenance	dictionary
24.	wat	for	what	dictionary
25.	influ'ence	for	in'fluence	dictionary

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[32] E. A. Cross and Elizabeth Carney, Teaching English in High Schools (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1939), p. 219.

> Clearly each case must be dealt with according to its cause. The second and third types call for medical or surgical attention. Whether in a given instance a speech defect is psychological in origin or not, almost always such defects have important psychological consequences.[33]

Cross and Carney[34] together with Griffith[35] feel much the same as Pressey and Robinson in regard to speech defects. Teachers should do what they can, but specialists or medical help should be called if it is necessary.

Summary

Poor grammar usage and speech defects should be corrected. Lists of common errors in grammar and pronunciation (see Tables I and II) have been given. "If pupils are to speak and write correctly they must be given practice in speaking and writing correctly." The quote is from Blair.[36] A final and very important principle has to do with motivation. People must want to improve their English usage and to eradicate their speech defects or little good will result.

It is important to know when to correct errors in oral expression, where the corrections should be made and what kind of error should be corrected, but the part that habits and age level have in making these corrections must also be shown. This is done in the chapters that follow.

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33 Pressey and Robinson, op. cit., pp. 50-51

34 Cross and Carney, op. cit., pp. 120-122.

35 Coleman R. Griffith, Psychology Applied to Teaching and Learning (New York: Farrar & Rinehart, Inc., Publishers, 1939), pp. 352-354.

36 Blair, op. cit., p. 369.

CHAPTER V

HABITS AND HABIT FORMATION

Habits are very important in living. Thorndike presents clear evidence that we do most of our daily tasks by habit and life thus becomes much simpler:

> Practically all of human behavior is a series of illustrations of habits. In common talk the word is used only of tendencies to respond which have become very frequent and very habitual, such as eating three meals a day, taking off our clothes when we go to bed, bowing to acquaintances, thinking four when we see 2 + 2, and the like.[37]

There are plateaus in the learning curve in which it is very difficult to break habits (see Figure 1). According to Gates a person will learn at a very rapid rate for a time and then it seems that he can learn very little. He does not learn at the same rate for any definite period and the rate varies according to the person and what is being learned. Gates substantiates this as follows:

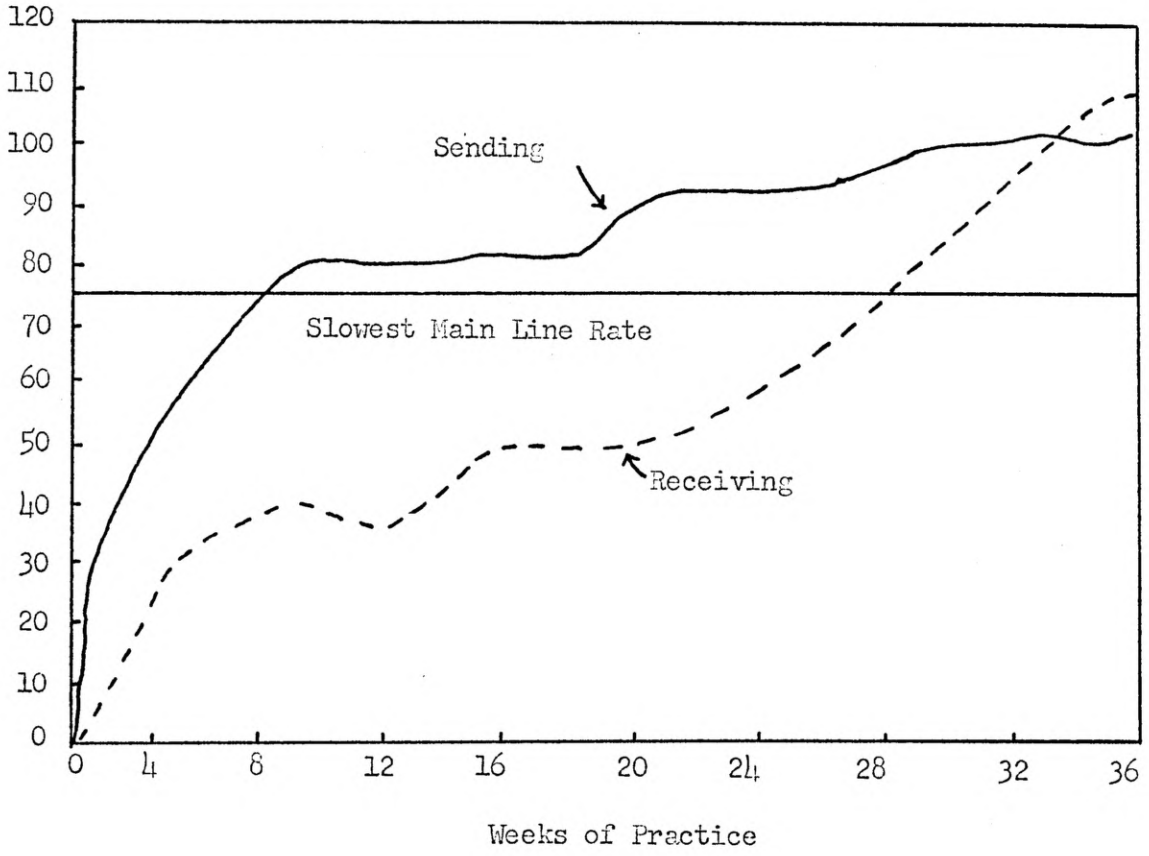
> Plateaus, although not evitable, may occur despite an interest in improvement and an effort to secure it. Sometimes they are due, unintentionally but unhappily, to hitting upon a bad habit or method which interferes with further progress until it is eliminated. In writing, a pupil may develop an unfavorable sitting position or too firm a grip of the pencil; in reading, a habit of pausing too frequently in a line, or of giving too much attention to the minute details of words; habits which may inhibit progress until they are corrected either accidentally or after diagnosis and positive

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37 Edward L. Thorndike, The Elements of Psychology (Syracuse, New York: The Mason-Henry Press, 1907), p. 16.

FIGURE 1

PLATEAUS IN THE LEARNING CURVE



Improvement in Telegraphy

The upper curve shows the results for transmitting messages; the lower the rate of receiving. Note, just above the word "receiving," the plateau which extends over a period of nearly ten weeks, followed by a rapid rise. The line marked "slowest main line rate" indicated the slowest rate at which commercial messages are sent. (From Starch, Educational Psychology, after Bryan and Harter.)[38]

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[38] Gates, op. cit., p. 369.

> treatment. Plateaus may be caused occasionally by eye trouble, fatigue, and other physiological conditions, despite intentions to improve.[39]

The Part Habits Play in Making Corrections Difficult

Mario Pei[40] points out that we are creatures of habit. From the moment a person is born he starts forming habits. These habits help form his future. Language is also a habit. Certain expressions, utterances and sounds are acquired. Some of these are good while others cost us infinite pain, difficulty, and turn into a series of almost mechanical reflexes.

When a child has learned a bad habit of speech, incorrect usage or learned a word wrong it is difficult to learn to be correct. The older the child is the more difficult the task is for him according to Pei. Pei believes that:

> After a child has developed a technique by which he can learn new words, it is not only necessary for him to write a word correctly one or twice, but that the habit of writing the word correctly must be made stronger than the bad habits for which the new must be substituted. We must expect all the difficulty that is experienced whenever a firmly fixed habit has to be broken. The longer the bad habit has existed, the more difficult the task will be. It will require more repetition of the correct form than if the bad habit had not existed. We often find old habits of learning persisting or recurring, even after the child has

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39 Gates, op. cit., pp. 368-369.

40 Mario A. Pei, The Story of Language (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Co., 1949), p. 394.

> been shown how he can learn best. The older the child is, the more difficult it will be to develop a corrective program, because habits are more fixed and the child is less interested in the mechanics of learning a new word.[41]

The Way to Break Habits

The teacher has materials available that can be of great help in correction of errors in oral expression. The most important thing is to discover the error early and correct it. As Gates points out:

> The study of errors in speech has been pursued sufficiently to provide valuable assistance to the teacher. The reports or manuals dealing with analysis of errors often call attention to types of errors that might otherwise not be observed and give standards whereby their significance can be judged as well as helpful suggestions for replacing the inappropriate techniques by better ones. Since recent investigations have shown that many of the most serious "disabilities" are the results of permitting unnoticed errors to become habitual, the discovery of errors at the time when they can be nipped in the bud becomes an important part of the program of appraisal in education.[42]

Summary

Bad habits in oral expression can be broken, but it takes a great deal of patience and time. It must be remembered that good speech is a habit as well as bad speech and good speech is a point of social manners.

The age level when corrections should be made must be taken into consideration and this will be done in the chapter that follows.

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[41] Grace M. Fernald, Remedial Techniques in Basic School Subjects (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., Inc., 1943), p. 202.

[42] Gates, op. cit., p. 601.

CHAPTER VI

THE AGE LEVEL TO MAKE CORRECTIONS

The best way to learn language is from birth, or as close to it as possible according to Pei.[43] Some countries such as the border regions of Europe bear out this contention. The ability of young children to imitate and reproduce sounds, words and phrases is unparalleled in later life, when habits have become set.

Voice culture is important in childhood, therefore, parents and teachers should pay close attention to a child's voice in the early years. Gates expresses his point of view as follows:

> Although the physical makeup of the speech organs plays important parts in determining the characteristic quality of an individual's voice, the quality of speech is influenced to a large extent by chance or deliberate habit formation, and the potentialities for modification through example and training are enormous.
>
> There is, of course, no guarantee that speech mannerisms acquired during childhood will carry over, intact, into later years, especially in the case of boys who have a "change of voice" at puberty. A systematic study of the speech of adults as related to childhood speech would no doubt, however, show a tremendous carry-over and no doubt would emphasize that a relatively small amount of attention to voice culture by the parents and teachers of young children would accomplish more than a larger amount of instruction and drill at maturity.[44]

Special aptitudes of children can be discovered through such means

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[43] Pei, op. cit., p. 420.

[44] Gates, op. cit., p. 192.

as singing. Gates further states that the school and home should nurture such special aptitudes when they are discovered:

> The development of motor skills at early ages probably lays the foundation for greater proficiency in later performance. Furthermore, these activities give the child a greater control over his environment, and enable him greatly to extend his experience. Early practice may also forestall the acquisition of habits which might interfere with the development of skills at a later time. One of the most important purposes of encouraging the development of such skills as singing in young children is to reveal special aptitudes which the school and the home should nurture.[45]

The teaching of correct oral expression should begin as soon as the child begins to talk and if correction is necessary the formative years of adolescence are the best years to make these corrections so that good expression will be permanent. That, of course, is not saying that error correction should not begin before that because correction should be made when the error occurs.

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[45] Gates, op. cit., p. 303.

CHAPTER VII

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

It has been found that correction of errors in oral expression should take place when errors occur. The best method of correction is not certain, but it is important that tact be used for all corrections. When tact and delicacy are used and the error is corrected when it is made learning is generally more permanent than if the error was corrected after an interval has elapsed. The individual must use whatever method is appropriate at the time and for the particular person being corrected. Depending upon the individual--from direct correction to writing down errors may be used.

Home and street environment have much to do with a person's speech and often times it makes the task of correcting much more difficult. According to Dewey[46] a child has to acquire ways of expressing his desires and wants. The fact that a child learns the language around him is no miracle.

Closely related to incorrect oral usage are defects which inhibit correct pronunciation and some which make correct speaking very difficult, if not impossible. Since they are closely related, a cure must be provided for them. If a teacher cannot handle the problem either a specialist or medical help should be summoned.

Speech is almost entirely a matter of habit. It becomes necessary

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[46] Dewey, op. cit., pp. 58-59.

to break the bad habits and insert good ones in their place. When a person is talking at his own language level he has very little if any difficulty with his vocabulary, syntax, or sentence structure according to Dean,[47] but the difficulty comes when a person passes from one language level to another. The learning of standard English could be considered changing habits when a person is from an environment where it is not used.

Correct oral expression should be taught to people from the time they first begin to talk. This, of course, would be ideal, but many parents and other people who associate with the child do not speak correctly themselves; therefore, most of the responsibility lies in the school. The formative years of adolescence are the best years in which correction can be made for then there is more permanence in learning.

It is the author's opinion that if the knowledge of certain incorrect usages can be placed in a person's mind he can improve his speech. An example of this is the use of he don't for he doesn't. If a person is conscious that he is wrong when using he don't he will soon improve his speech.

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47 Howard H. Dean, Effective Communication (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1954), p. 93.

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