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Second Chance Language Learning: A study of what the slow language learner's problems are, why they exist, and how to give the slow language learner help on a remedial basis.

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SECOND CHANCE LANGUAGE LEARNING:

A study of what the slow language learner's problems are, why they exist, and how to give the slow language learner help on a remedial basis.

by

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MAT 瑟 Ⅴ

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ABSTRACT

SECOND CHANCE LANGUAGE LEARNING:

A study of what the slow language learner's problems are, why they exist, and how to give the slow language learner help on a remedial basis.

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AUDITORY DISCRIMINATION	PSYCHOLOGICAL STUDIES
AURAL STIMULI	SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING
EMOTIONAL ADJUSTMENT	SLOW LEARNERS
LANGUAGE ABILITY	STUDENT CENTERED CURRICULUM
LANGUAGE ACQUISITION	STUDENT TEACHER RELATIONSHIP

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Introduction

Our paper is based on the realization that in every language class, be it ESL or any other, there is the problem of what to do with the slow learners, the students that need remedial help with learning the language. While our practical experience deals with one isolated teaching situation, we believe the slow language learner problem exists in the teaching of a foreign language in the States and in other institutions and schools overseas. In our particular case, we were teaching in a private school for Greek students, Anatolia College in Thessaloniki, Greece. The school system there is autocratic and highly structured. The class consisted of students thirteen years of age. We removed the ten weakest students from the class of twenty-five or so studying English. They were taken out of their regular English class in order to be given remedial help in ESL. They managed in two months to improve remarkably in their oral work. Their written work improved also, but not to as great a degree.

We think the problem of the slow second language learner is universal, and that the reasons why it exists (particularly at this age level) and how it can be dealt with are certainly applicable to many situations.

In the course of our paper, we will discuss theories of why the problem of the slow language learner exists, what the problem was for our specific situation and how we personally dealt with the problem(s). Realizing that other teachers will not be facing the same physical situation we did, we will discuss alternatives concerning physical facilities needed for remedial help. Lastly, we offer an annotated listing of resources dealing with theoretical explanations of why slo-

students become discouraged when learning a language and the psy-

chology involved in dealing with these students; and suggestions

for the practical application of materials and methods to facilitate

the remedial student in his learning.

Why are some students unable to learn a foreign language?

To begin dealing with the question of why these students are unable to learn English, we will first discuss characteristics that enable a person to learn a foreign language. Though we believe that most of the reasons for the failure of our ten Anatolia students to learn English were psychological, the fact that they did not originally have some of the characteristics a good language learner should have may have contributed to their not acquiring a sufficient basis of English in their first year of study, thus contributing to the psychological factors that kept them from grasping English well enough to continue successfully with their study of the language in their second year.

In examining our past experience with teaching foreign languages, we have classified our language students into four basic categories. The first type of student we had had experience teaching was the "bright" student. These students caught on quickly, enjoyed doing their homework, understood, and used the language quickly and easily. They resignedly accepted the fact that there were other students in the class who seemed to want to learn the language as much as they did, but just could not quite get it. This second type of student often became frustrated and eventually apathetic toward the whole situation as he was not used to failure. Depending on the individual, the second type of student would either get by on the equivalent of "B" or "C" grades in the class or slump into an almost failing category, but most managed to get through all right. A third type of language learner was the student that most likely had the skills and maybe even some of the characteristics necessary for a good language learner, but for

various reasons, lacked any kind of motivation for wanting to learn the language. (This was the classification that most of our ten students fell into.) And the fourth type of student was the one that just did not seem to have any ability to study a foreign language and lacked all motivation to do so. (Some of our ten students were in this classification.) We noticed that one of the main things the quick learners had in common was that they nearly all had had the experience of having learned or studied at least one language previous to their language learning experience at Anatolia.

For the purpose of answering why our students had been unable to learn English, we have tried to define what the characteristics of a good language learner are in order to understand our remedial students and see which abilities and characteristics they were lacking. Leon A. Jakobovits and Paul Pimsleur offer definitions of a good language learner which we will outline below.

Jakobovits, in <u>Foreign Language Learning, A Psycholinguistic Analysis of the Issues</u>, refers to J.B. Carroll (1962) as having "isolated a number of factors which are predictive of success in a foreign language." Jakobovits suggests that Carroll's factors "...may offer clues about the strategies that a successful learner uses with the possibility that such strategies may be taught to those who normally make no use of them." Jakobovits outlines the learning strategies as follows:

> One of the abilities Carroll has identified deals with
> verbalization of grammatical relations in sentences.
> The successful foreign language learner is apparently
> capable of the following task: given a word italicized
> in one sentence...he can identify that word in another
> sentence which has the same grammatical function....

The "ability" required of the language learner for this task is "...one of explicit verbalization of implicitly known rules and relations." Jakobovits goes on to say that verbalizing a grammatical relation can take two forms:

> ...one refers to the type of statement that can be found in a grammar book that includes technical terms,....; the second refers to a statement of equivalence or relation expressed in any convenient way using whatever terms are available to the individual, whether technically correct or not. The teaching of such verbalizations... ought to facilitate foreign language acquisition.

Jakobovits quotes the second variable identified by Carroll as being

> "...the ability to 'code' auditory phonetic material in such a way that this material can be recognized, identified and remembered over something longer than a few seconds."

At present, the specific strategy that may be employed in facilitating this kind of coding is not known. Jakobovits states that this latter strategy is not derived "...from a special innate capacity" because

> In the first place the strategy is not related to the ability to perceive phonetic distinctions, and second, given the biological foundations of language capacity ..., we would not expect innate differences in the general capacity of coding phonological material.[1]

Therefore, it might be considered a learned ability.

If the two preceding strategies are "learned" strategies, then it stands to reason that the student who is dubbed as having a high aptitude for language learning has had some sort of experience or exercise with this type of learning before. If he has never been exposed to a

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[1]Leon A. Jakobovits, <u>Foreign Language Learning: A Psycholinguistic Analysis of the Issues</u> (Rowley, Mass.: Newbury House Publishers, 1970), pp. 19-20.

foreign language, perhaps he has disciplined his conscious learning efforts before in a similar way.

We think Paul Pimsleur supports this concept in his article, "Testing Foreign Language Learning" Part I in Valdman, Trends in Language Teaching (p. 177), in which he states that in predicting aptitude for language study

> ...the more audiolingual the language class, the more a specialized aptitude battery is needed to predict success in it. This is so because an audiolingual class calls into play audiolingual abilities which the student has not had to exercise in his other subjects.

Thus it is assumed that unless the language learner has had some sort of previous audiolingual training (either by way of another language studied earlier or some subject that demands this sort of skill, such as music, his aptitude for language study may not have been well developed. According to Pimsleur, two of the most commonly used predictors for selection and placement into language classes are IQ scores and English grades. (These factors may or may not be a practice in other schools overseas, but because our students are given placement exams before entering Anatolia, we are including them for the benefit of those foreign language teachers that might be in a situation - most likely in the States - where these factors are often considered to determine language learning aptitude.) Pimsleur goes on to show by statistical analysis of student performance in language class that this method of selection is not a good predictor of success and therefore can be unfair to many students. Hence, Pimsleur has developed his own test for language aptitude, the Pimsleur Language Aptitude Battery, LAB. This test is designed to determine who will be good at understanding

and speaking a language, as opposed to writing and reading it. Only
one other test of this kind has been constructed: the Modern Language
Aptitude Test, MLAT, by Carroll and Sapan. Pimsleur justifies the giv-
ing of a diagnostic test to prospective language learners with the fol-
lowing statement (p. 178):

> To predict a learner's achievement and to diagnose his
> strong and weak points, we must know what abilities it
> takes to learn a foreign language. An additional reason
> for studying aptitude, then, is that as we learn more
> about it, we learn to understand the individual differ-
> ences among language learners and perhaps to cope with
> them.

Upon analyzing the validity and reliability of his LAB test, Pimsleur
came to the following conclusions about the characteristics of a good
language learner (pp. 182-183):

> ...the "talent" for learning foreign languages consists
> of three components. The first is verbal intelligence, by
> which is meant both familiarity with words...and the
> ability to reason analytically about verbal materials
> .... The second component is motivation to learn the
> language.... The third component of language learning
> ability is called "auditory ability".... Auditory abil-
> ity was identified...as the main factor differentiating
> normal achievers from underachievers in foreign language
> learning ability which are not explainable by intelli-
> gence or interest.[2]

Pimsleur's definitions of the characteristics of a good language
learner provide us with a convenient categorization of the four types
of language learners that we have observed in our own classes and
described previously in this paper. The first type (the <u>overachiever</u>
in Pimsleur's terminology), has all three characteristics of a good
language learner: verbal intelligence, motivation, and auditory abil-
ity. The second type of language learner (the <u>average achiever</u>

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[2]Paul Pimsleur, "Testing Foreign Language Learning," in <u>Trends in
Language Teaching</u>, ed. by Albert Valdman (New York: MacGraw-Hill, Inc.,
1966, p. 177, p. 178 and pp. 182-183.

or underachiever) has demonstrated his verbal intelligence in other
school work, has the motivation, but does not have the auditory ability.
The third type of student we described, also an underachiever, has the
verbal intelligence and maybe even the auditory ability but lacks moti-
vation. The fourth type of student may lack all three characteristics,
but even if motivation is present, will have a very difficult time
achieving average performance unless the teacher can influence the stu-
dent in some positive way that will prompt his motivation.

This fourth type of student as defined by Pimsleur's characteris-
tics may lack a high level of verbal intelligence. He may be extremely
bright in areas dealing with, for example, mathematics, but since
learning English is required, he must call on his weaker capacity of
verbal intelligence. Hence, he does not, comparatively speaking, do as
well. Lack of sufficient intelligence is hardly ever a factor at Ana-
tolia since the selection process to attain entrance to the school is
highly competitive; entrance exam scores and previous performance in
elementary school are considered. Competition is extremely high.

We think that the fact that a student has or has not studied a
foreign language before has a great deal to do with his performance in
class and probably in the "auditory ability" section of a language
aptitude test. This factor was isolated in Pimsleur's conclusions as
the ability that differentiated normal achievers from underachievers,
and it very possibly may be a "learned" characteristic.

We agree with Jakobovits and Pimsleur in their defined character-
istics of a good language learner (though there are always exceptions)
and think that there are certain talents specific to language learning
that can be learned and practiced by the student who has not had to use

them previously in a language learning situation. These talents may not have been exercised, as in the sense of beginning to learn a language, since he acquired his ability to speak in his native language, i.e., in early childhood. This is yet one other factor to consider, especially in regard to the age group we were working with.

It is apparent that each student is developing physically and intellectually at his own rate. No two are alike. It is especially apparent at this age that the student is going through not only a physical, bodily change, but is also changing from the emotional and intellectual characteristics of a child to those of an adult. With this change comes a definite change in the way the student learns a foreign language. Students at this age may very probably be in flux between the child's language learning process and the adult's.

According to William G. Moulton in Chapter 1, "Language and the Learner," in his book, A Linguistic Guide to Language Learning, the child seems to learn languages "effortlessly" because of the methods he employs for learning. First, practice: a child learning a language is constantly talking to everyone around him. His only goal is to communicate immediately. He has no higher aspirations at stake such as grades, a trip abroad or entrance to a university. The second thing noticeable in a child's language acquisition is that he does not "fight" the language he is trying to learn; he simply copies what he hears or says what he is told to say, without worrying about whether this seems reasonable or not. Thus, the more adult characteristics an adolescent acquires in his maturity, the more preconceived ideas he will have about language - one of which is that every language should be "logical" and that there must be a "reason" for the way everything is

said. The child simply practices and mimics what he hears without
question. The adult can copy these two child devices and perhaps
manage the third child device, that of drawing analogies, even better
than the child, but only to a limited extent. To quote Moulton:
(pp. 3-4)

> ...apparently it is the very process of becoming an adult
> which so conditions us that foreign languages suddenly
> become "foreign" and hence no longer learnable in the same
> way they are for children.... ...the adolescent (assuming
> he is an American) develops a new attitude toward English:
> where it was previously simply a language, it now becomes
> the language - against which all others are measured. At
> the same time, the adolescent also develops a new attitude
> toward all languages other than English. Where their sounds
> and forms and meanings were previously accepted without
> question, they are now topics for comment and matters of
> ridicule or embarrassment, for they have suddenly become
> "foreign."

Of course, the acquisition of adult language learning characteristics
can compensate for the loss of the perfect language learning ability
of childhood.

> ...though the young adult may have to work harder to learn
> a foreign language, he also remembers it much better

And secondly,

> Young adults...begin to insist more and more on answers
> which "make sense" because they tie in with the many
> other things which they are learning.[3]

Moulton believes that by and large, the ability to learn a language as
a child does is retained up to about the age of twelve to fourteen. A
teacher working with a group averaging thirteen years old will undoubt-
edly be confronted with a mixture of those students that are still
learning in a child's capacity and those that are already fixed in
many of the adult learning characteristics. It makes teaching language

[3]William G. Moulton, A Linguistic Guide to Language Learning
Menasha, Wis.: Gurge Banta Co., 1966), pp. 3-4 and p. 5.

many of the adult learning characteristics. It makes teaching language to this age level a difficult and challenging task.

We have already stated that we think this problem, that of the slow language learner, is a universal one. We would also like to assume that many of the reasons for failure that we have mentioned previously are universal as are their solutions. The solutions to these problems rest in the hands of the teacher. When a teacher does not recognize and fulfill the student's language learning needs, the result is that the original academic problem(s) he had had, e.g., inadequate audiolingual abilities, will produce psychological problems because of his sense of failure. This then contributes again to academic problems which result in failure - and so the circle continues until the student lacks any desire, motivation or seeming ability to learn the language.

Too often the failing student cannot learn because the teacher is devoted more to the <u>method</u> of teaching than to how the individual student learns. Mary Finocchiaro states in her book, <u>Teaching English as a Second Language</u>, "There are no good or bad methods; there are only good or bad teachers."[4] A good teacher should not be attached to a book, method, or theory; she should be attached to her students. Since not all students possess the same abilities for language learning, a method that caters to one specific talent is not going to be successful in teaching all of the students. If the teacher does not adjust her teaching in some way, there are bound to be students that do not catch on. This is especially important in the first year of taking

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[4]Mary Finocchiaro, <u>Teaching English as a Second Language</u>. (New York: Harper and Row, 1969), p. 23.

the language because it is then that the student's attitude toward the
language is set and his tendency for success in the language is deter-
mined - at least, in his eyes.

Two other problems that encourage student failure are 1) the fact
that the teacher sets standards for her class and expects the students
to meet her at that level rather than being sensitive to their ability
level. This demand is often accompanied by the additional one, 2) that
the students all learn at the same rate. If a teacher is teaching in
a very structured situation in which curriculum, materials, testing,
etc., are all fixed and the students must pass certain goals for lang-
uage class established by the institution in order to (as in Anatolia's
case) be promoted to the next grade level, then it requires particular
effort and planning on the teacher's part to try to reach all of the
students.

We grant that there are often outside conflicts, over which the
teacher has no direct control, that affect the student's behavior in
language class. The failing student might see no relevant reason for
learning English if English is not spoken in his community; or, he may
be rebelling against the parental authority that demands he see the
relevance in learning English for social prestige and future education-
al and/or career advantages. If a child is an immigrant to another
culture and dislikes having had to leave his former home, friends, and
language (even though it is still spoken in the home, he confronts the
"other culture" he is now forced to live in every time he steps out-
side), he may want to reject anything that suggests acquiescing to his
new environment - the main representative of which is the new language.

Often, student-teacher conflicts will arise from these outside

factors. The student who is rebelling against a strange society or parents and choosing the language class by which to do it, will naturally regard the teacher of that language as being "against" him. The teacher is the one who is trying to force this unwanted knowledge on him, who is siding with his parents or mocks him by speaking perfectly the language of the environment he dislikes.

Perhaps the most keenly felt of any conflict in a classroom situation, and one that would have the most effect on learning a language, is the student/peer conflict. This is probably one of the most complicated of conflicts and one requiring insight and sensitivity on the part of the teacher. There are many symptoms of the student/peer conflict. If a student is openly or covertly ridiculed by peers, it may be because he is in some way "different": he comes from a strange place, wears different clothes, has a physical handicap. Usually, if the ridiculed student, through words or actions, reinforces his differences or emotes a feeling of inferiority, he will be attacked all the more readily. We often had conflicts between the wealthier students boarding at Anatolia and the scholarship students, there by the good grace of a donor. The scholarship students usually came from very poor families, had grown up in tiny villages, were very much subject to family ties and, especially in their first year at Anatolia, had a lot to learn about being knowledgeable and sophisticated by their wealthier classmates' standards. A student experiencing great pangs of inferiority, socially and academically, falls easy prey to one or more of the factors that contribute(s) to his problem(s) in learning a foreign language. Unless the teacher can encourage him and make him prove to himself that he can do well, he will be among those "unable to learn English."

One thing that everyone at Anatolia is subject to is the test-oriented system of learning. This system contributes to student failure and makes it difficult for teachers to encourage students to learn the language for communication's sake. Constant competition for grades discourages learning for knowledge, encourages cheating and, upon receipt of a poor grade, encourages the poor student's feelings of inferiority, of his inability to learn English. This could easily be true wherever students are in a system that is grade and test oriented.

In summary, we think the main factors contributing to some students' inability to learn a foreign language are:

1. According to Carroll's article in Jakobovits, the inability of the student to verbalize grammatical relations in sentences. The two variations of this ability are: Verbalizing explicitly or implicitly known grammatical rules and relations, and the 'coding' of auditory phonetic material in such a way that it can be identified and remembered.

    We concluded that the above ability might be considered a learned ability. We reasoned that if the language student had had some sort of experience or exercise with this type of learning earlier, he would have perhaps already disciplined his conscious learning efforts in a similar way.

2. Lack of one or more of the three characteristics of a good foreign language learner as defined by Pimsleur, namely, verbal intelligence, motivation, and auditory ability.

3. The problems associated with the physical and intellectual state of flux a student might be experiencing in his change from a child's learning process to that of the adult's, usually between the ages of twelve and fourteen.

4. A teacher's devotion to the method of teaching as opposed to how the individual student learns.

5. A teacher's setting of standards for her class and expecting the students to meet her at that level rather than being sensitive to their ability levels, i.e., her demanding that the students all learn at the same rate.

6. Outside conflicts over which the teacher has no direct control that may create student/teacher conflicts.

7. Student/peer conflicts, and

8. Conflicting of goals brought about by a test/grade oriented academic environment, i.e., the students learn for the grade's sake, not for communication's sake.

In our next section, we will explain what we were personally dealing with in our special class for a "slow-learners" group of English language learners and describe the physical and academic background in which we taught at Anatolia College in Thessaloniki, Greece.

What are we dealing with?

The students we want to focus our attention on in this section of our paper are those that made up our class of slow learners. They were between the ages of twelve and fourteen and were having trouble with English. These students, when compared with the rest of their class, did not know English as well as their peers who had had approximately the same amount of instruction while at Anatolia College. The slower students seemed unable to learn English.

At this point, we would like to give a little background on the educational system in Greece in order to provide the reader with a context for the students we dealt with at Anatolia.

There are both public and private schools in Greece. Anatolia is a private school, grades 7 - 12, sponsored by Americans, with its head office in Boston, Mass. The public schools are free and the private schools require tuition fees and room and board costs if such is provided, as in Anatolia's case. All students with Greek citizenship must attend either the public schools or a private school such as Anatolia that is subject to the Greek Ministry of Education. The schools are divided into two main levels: elementary, ages six through twelve; and high school, ages thirteen through eighteen. Attendance for elementary school is compulsory, but not all students continue to the academically oriented high school. An alternative is the technical school which can be compared to three or four years of high school courses with an apprenticeship. Most students in Greece now finish some sort of additional education and/or training past elementary school.

After attending academic high school, the student may enter, upon

passing the entrance exam, the Greek university (which is free of charge), or a "higher" technical school.

The student's promotion from one level of schooling to the next is determined by his passing of exams. There is not an entrance exam for elementary school, but at the end of the fifth year, an exam is given that is conscientiously studied for. The elementary school diploma is awarded upon passing of the final exam after the sixth year. During this same exam period, the entrance exam is taken at the desired high school or technical school for admission the next fall. Promotion exams are also given at the end of each year of high school. Depending on whether the student fails core or minor subjects, he may or may not have to repeat an entire year of work - including all courses studied in that year. Students of public high schools take exams at the end of the sixth year (diploma exams) from their teachers. Students of private schools take their exams before a state committee made up of public school teachers and also of their private school's teachers. As of last year, the high school diploma grade is averaged with the entrance exam score for university entrance. Entrance to the university requires written exams in the subjects relative to the field of study a student wants to enter.

The grading system used in Greek schools is a graduation of numbers. In elementary school, the children are graded from one to ten. Five is the lowest passing grade; in other words, failure is also graded. Ten is excellent. In the high school, the system is one to twenty with ten as the lowest passing grade.

All subjects taught in Greece are the same for both public and

private schools. In elementary schools, the basic reading, writing, mathematics and arts skills are taught. In the upper grades, religion, geography and history are also included. The philosophy and classroom structure is similar to the traditional classroom approach used in an American public school. Languages are not taught in public elementary schools; some private elementary schools do teach a foreign language.

In high school, each year the student takes an average of ten to twelve subjects, increasing in load as he advances in years. The courses taught are divided into core or major subjects (of which English would be one, only at Anatolia), and minor subjects. English is considered a minor subject in public schools, therefore, students attending public schools hardly ever really learn the foreign language taught. The students do not take the same subjects every day but rather operate on a weekly schedule. If the subject is considered to be a major one, it could meet as many as eight times a week, if a minor subject, as little as one hour a week. All subjects are compulsory; there are no electives. The subjects taught in high school include: Greek - ancient and modern, Latin, chemistry, history, religion, math, geography, physics, biology, philosophy, health and hygiene, civics, physical education, home economics, art and music, and a language, usually French or English. Anatolia College has gained some privileges, for although it must follow the Ministry of Education's curriculum for all Greek subjects, it can have its own English program. During the sixth form (twelfth grade), the students are offered a choice of electives for the first time in their school career

in their English classes. They can choose from a number of courses offered in English each term.

In addition to the homework required in their high school courses, many Greek students attend one of a number of private institutes operated for language learning. (Even if they are studying English at their high school, many will take English at night school also, or even another foreign language.) Most of the private institutes offer night classes since the majority of their patrons are students. English, French, German and Italian are taught. Also, there are special night schools called "Frontesteria" that the students go to while still in high school to help prepare them for the university entrance exams. The students feel that high school courses do not prepare them sufficiently for these exams. Students in a Greek high school feel the pressure of the large amount of work they must do. Those that are expected to attend a university are even more conscious of their academic responsibilities. Most of the Anatolia students (particularly the boys) are expected to go on to universities; either in Greece or abroad. Those whose families do not expect this of them probably have a place in the family's business waiting for them.

In our situation at Anatolia College, we made two basic classifications of students depending on their background in English and the importance they placed on learning English.

The first classification and majority of the students consisted of those from the upper middle to "upper-upper" classes. Most of these students lived within the Thessaloniki area and commuted to school every day by bus. The other students that came from about the same

financial standing as those that commuted had families in some other
area of Greece (usually northern Greece) and boarded at the school.

The second classification of students consisted of those attend-
ing Anatolia on scholarships. Most of these students boarded at the
school, and, by contrast, came from all over Greece and usually from
very low-income families.

Since students must take English as one of their major courses at
Anatolia, (six hours per week of class instruction plus, for the first
two years, two hours per week of lab work,) those that want to continue
studies at a university are obliged to get a good grade in English as
well as in other subjects. As in most traditionally run high schools
with compulsory course work, there were students that were highly
interested in some of the subjects and completely uninterested in
others. Our slow English learners came from both of the student
classifications aforementioned.

Those from the wealthier backgrounds usually came from families
that were very concerned with their son or daughter's progress in
school. The periods set aside for parent/teacher conferences always
showed evidence of interested, concerned parents. However, many times
the slow English learner from this background was obligated to meet
too many academic (and perhaps social) demands. Extracurricular ac-
tivities such as music or dance lessons plus the taking of night school
classes often took time that should have been devoted to Anatolia
course work. If the student was early made aware that he would step
into a particular profession when high school was finished, a profes-
sion in which he did not need English, this served as a reason for not

studying English to his full capacity. However, most of the students
from this classification came from families that considered knowing
foreign languages and in particular, English, as a definite advantage
socially and professionally. But if the student, as is often the case
in twelve-to-fourteen-year-olds, is rebelling against parental standards
and authority, he might very likely choose English as the area in which
to demonstrate his independence by doing poorly. Thus, there is an ab-
sence of motivation as a result of the rebellious attitude. The result
is a student who seems unable to learn English. One definite advantage
(or disadvantage if it had a negative effect on the student) that a
student from this classification had, was the fact that he very likely
had been exposed to learning English or some other foreign language in
his previous schooling, either at a private elementary school or at
night school classes. He may even have been tutored privately; many
of the students whose families could afford it had private tutoring in
their major subjects.

Among the second classification of students, the scholarship stu-
dents, there existed several factors that might have contributed to
their seeming inability to learn English. Some of the factors include
adjustment to the new environment (homesickness, loneliness), feelings
of social and academic inferiority, and ambiguity insofar as future
goals are concerned (for further schooling, career, etc.). Their feel-
ings of academic inferiority were especially justified because even
though the student might have been the best in his village school, the
the quality of instruction he had received was so inferior to that of
the instruction offered in the larger towns and cities, that he was at

a disadvantage in all subject areas. As for previous exposure to English, many of the scholarship students heard it for practically the first time on their first day in English class.

Anatolia's situation itself had great bearing on the students' reactions to learning English. Anatolia is the prestige school of northern Greece. All students upon graduation are supposed to be able to read, write, and speak a respectably good brand of English. Many parents send their children to Anatolia for the express reason of their mastering English. An Anatolia student may pass all of his English courses, but if he does not score well enough on Anatolia's final English exam, he will not receive a certificate in English proficiency to accompany his graduation diploma.

A student failing English at Anatolia is not only failing in a major course, he is failing in one of the most prestigious of subject matters. A great emphasis is placed on grades and, as was mentioned earlier, promotion and success are nearly always dependent upon the passing of exams.

The students we worked with, the ones that seemed slow, unable to learn English, discouraged in their attempts, were classified in Anatolia's grading system as failing students. Our job as teachers was to give these slow students special remedial help so that in a short time (in our case, two months), they could be brought up out of the failing category and made capable of participating on the regular class level. Because these slower students were so aware of their classification as failures by way of the grading system, they became very discouraged in their attempt to learn English. As teachers of

these students, we also had to consider very carefully the psycho-
logical reactions and feelings that these students had previously
experienced and were presently experiencing in their attempt to learn
English.

Before considering why these students seemed unable to learn Eng-
lish, let us first examine their linguistic problems with English.

Our students understood what the teacher was saying or what they
themselves were reading because they had previously been exposed to
basic English structures and vocabulary in their first year of study
at Anatolia. Now, however, in the middle of their second year of
studying English at Anatolia, their median age being thirteen, they
could not express themselves in correct grammatical sentences in either
oral or written work. For example, they would have trouble with tense
sequencing: "She try but she couldn't." or verb construction in the
question forms: "Who does go?", "Do he will go?", "Did you forgot to
ask?". Also the use of to + infinitive gave them trouble: "I forgot
to asking." The students had been exposed to the uses of "there is"
and "there are" but could not use them correctly and could not put
them into past tense. They had learned words such as "supposed" but
could not use it in a sentence.

At the time we began working with the ten students that required
remedial help, they were beginning the third term of their second year
of studying English. The English 900 series had been used in their
first year of studying English and was being continued in the second
year. They were just beginning Book 4. After the administering of
both a written and oral test to the students, we determined that we

would concentrate work on the following areas: 1. Past tense irregularities, i.e., in the spelling of, the doubling of final consonants, e.g., stop(ped), shop(ped); the changing of the final "y" to "ied", e.g., try - tried, (or the unchanged); and the pronunciated of "ed." We also decided to work on, 2. reflexives, 3. if clauses, 4. passive voice, 5. questions, 6. use of past, present perfect and past continuous verb tenses and, 7. sequence of tenses, e.g., "I didn't go because I can't." These were the main linguistic problems we dealt with in our class of ten remedial English language learners during our two-month "catch-up", or, Second Chance English session.

The theoretical question we then asked when helping these slow language learners was why the language student, then into his second year of studying English and classified as a failing student in need of remedial help, didn't develop the characteristics necessary for successful language learning during his first year or previous exposure to learning the language. What factors contributed to his failure to achieve average performance during that first year, thus resulting in failing performance in his second year?

Upon discussion, we determined that much of the reason for the students ultimately being classified as failing students of English in their second year of study was due to the fact that they were victims of the academic system set up at Anatolia College. Most of the students in our class had entered Anatolia with "zero" English according to the placement test given them. Lena had them in their first year or "first form", (1972-73). They did beginning materials (English 900, Book 1). They were rather weak during their first year but not failing. That year, the first form had been divided into five sections according

to the English they knew. Several mistakes were made (some students
with no English at all were placed in advanced sections, etc.). Moving
students around to different levels caused them to fall a little behind.
Almost in the middle of the year, Lena had several "weak" students
from the advanced sections placed in with her novices. Hence, there
were her "real beginners" and some very weak students from other sec-
tions. The work slowed down, but they did alright by the end of the
year. At that time, Lena was sure they needed special help and recom-
mended measures be taken when planning the next year's schedule to in-
sure the students' receipt of it. In spite of her recommendation,
this weaker group of students was placed in a regular section the next
year, (1973-74), and were expected to do the impossible: catch up with
the others when they were at least one book behind.

We site two basic mistakes made with these students as being much
of the original stimuli for their failure that therefore fed the psy-
chological feelings and problems accompanying failure. The first mis-
take lies in the fact that the English department did not provide for
these students' needs when scheduling them for their second year Eng-
lish course. The second mistake was: once they began the second year
course, the teacher was not sensitive to the slower students' needs.
The teacher was expecting them to meet her "set" standards, i.e.,
Book 3, when, we feel, she should have started at the students' level.

By winter term, (1974), the students were hopelessly behind and
classified as "failing." It was then that they were pulled out of the
regular class to make up the group of students we taught for ten weeks
in our special help session. We thought they deserved a "second chance."

How did we deal with our particular situation?

In working with the problem, in dealing with <u>how</u> to help the students who, in their second year of studying English, found they were failures by way of the grading system, who were discouraged and defeated or indifferent in their attempts to keep up with the rest of the class, we were able to set up an ideal remedial classroom situation. What we offer now is not a course. That would be contradictory to our attempt at being sensitive to each individual student. What we want to offer are suggestions that can be adapted for remedial use. In the following section, we do not make a specific proposal that covers all situations. We are reporting on one; it worked. These students "made it."

In preparing for our course, the first consideration that had to be dealt with was: Which students needed the remedial work? By conferring with the teacher we were cooperating with, we chose ten students that we felt would best benefit from special help. However, a consideration for a different situation might be to let the students themselves choose whether or not they want remedial help.

Upon selection of the students, we met in a separate room and by way of a written test on the first day, we determined what grammar structures needed to be taught and emphasized. (Note: In keeping with our policy, these tests were not graded - we will embellish on this later.) We determined the problems in their oral work by using English in games and carrying on interesting, informal conversation.

At this point, it must be decided what area the students need more work in - oral or written. We didn't expect wonders on all levels. We decided to stress ability in speaking and understanding.

When samples of the students' written work from the beginning of our session were compared with those done toward the close of the term, we determined that their written work had improved a lot, but not to as great a degree as their oral work.

One of the first things we tried to stress in our classroom was atmosphere. We were fortunate enough to be able to remove our remedial students completely from their original classroom - the site of their failure. However, taking the students out of their classroom was potentially dangerous psychologically speaking, because it could have promoted a further feeling of alienation on the part of the slow students. It could have easily emphasized physically their inadequacy when compared to their peers. Tensions could have developed with the feelings of superiority and inferiority so it was imperative that we set the tone, the atmosphere of pride and accomplishment in our classroom. Upon occasion, we did combine with the other class, but only when we were sure that our students were prepared more than enough to succeed in the area of English being covered that day. These occasional encounters with the old classroom and teacher were marvelous morale boosters because the students saw that they could participate, that they knew and understood what was going on and sometimes even made a better showing than the average students. There was also a slight feeling of competition between the two groups which tightened comradship and feeling of "specialness" among the remedial students. This mixing of the classes must be done, obviously, when the teacher feels the remedial students are very well prepared and will not experience, again, in that classroom situation, major failure.

In order to achieve the feeling of specialness, a separate room

is highly desirable: a room that does not look like a classroom may be even better.

One of the major things we had to get across to the students was convincing them that they were not working for grades. We made the students responsible for grading their own progress. Their goal was to work for the purpose of speaking with the teacher, not for a high number. The result was that they soon felt no fear of speaking, of doing what many of them needed most: practice. They were not threatened by a grade from the teacher.

At one point, our most difficult discipline problem, a young student who had not yet caught on to the concept of working in our special classroom for the sake of communication and knowledge, demanded (in Greek) upon being given an assignment: "What do we get for this?" Hearing this could have been very disheartening to us if one of his fellow students had not answered back immediately: "Stupid! We don't work for that here!" (Also spoken in Greek, but we forgave the temporary lapse.) Eventually, when the troublemaker gradually began tasting success with no strings attached, he settled down and produced without demands for rewards from the teacher.

The teacher must use all her sensitivity and awareness of the psychological issues involved with each student to make him feel special - not dumb - as has been their previous experience. When the students feel they are worth something, they will begin to take pride in their work. We found this to prove true in our situation.

The factor that makes the student feel that he can talk to the teacher, that makes him feel he is special and will not be judged every time he tries to speak in English is trust. In order to help in

the gradual, delicate task of building trust between students and teacher in our classroom, we spoke with the students on a personal level, about real situations in our lives and theirs. We made the rule that the students could ask the teacher any personal questions and vice-versa. The teacher had the right not to answer and vice-versa. This arrangement put the students on an equal basis with the teacher.

For instance, on the second day of class, Lena introduced the subject of her engagement. The students asked her about her engagement; a discussion followed and the words and expressions concerning engagement were introduced: fiance, get engaged, are engaged, get married, plan to get married, and, plan our future.

During any of the classwork, but in particular oral work, the teacher should be very aware of criticizing in a positive way. Even the use of a negative can demoralize and discourage a child who has waited for twenty minutes to gather up enough courage to open his mouth and say something. In Rudolf Dreikurs' book, Maintaining Sanity in the Classroom: Illustrated Teaching Techniques, he discusses encouraging a student but warns: (p. 76)

> A child does not feel encouraged if the teacher gives with
> one hand and takes away with the other. Complimenting a
> child with a "but" kills any encouraging words. "Buts"
> easily slip into our good intentions. "I'm very proud of
> your reading, but you must watch your punctuation." "Your
> spelling is improving, but you're neglecting your English."
> Acknowledgments must stand by themselves, with nothing to
> mar them if they are to be effective. At another time she
> may discuss the child's need for improvement in his English.

Dreikurs also lists nine good trust-building points to keep in mind when encouraging a student: (pp. 76-77)

1. Place value on the child as he is.
2. Show faith in the child and enable him to have faith in himself.
3. Sincerely believe in the child's ability and win his confidence while building his self-respect.
4. Recognize a job "well done" and give recognition for effort.
5. Utilize the class group to facilitate and enhance the development of the child.
6. Integrate the group so that each child can be sure of his place in it.
7. Assist in the development of skills sequentially so as to insure success.
8. Recognize and focus on strengths and assets.
9. Utilize the interest of the child to energize constructive activity.[5]

Another good trust-building device is letting the students correct each other's mistakes; this again promotes a feeling of equality. The teacher should not babysit; she must find the balance between control of the class, of authority being recognized rather than imposed on the students. The atmosphere in our class was relaxed, at times, almost one of play - though we were careful never to let the purpose of the play escape the students. Nothing was a humiliating factor. Discipline, except for a few exceptions, was hardly ever a problem because the sincerity of purpose and respect was felt on both parts. It is up to the teacher to set this tone with the class.

The last trust-building device we will describe was done with great success. We let one of the students be the "teacher." Instead of the teacher teaching for the day, one or two students are responsible for the lesson. There is maximum participation since there is no fear involved. Students who prepare the lesson (with the teacher's help if they so desire) learn a lot more too. The teacher can learn

[5]Rudolf Dreikers, M.D., Bernice Bronia Grunwald, and Floy C. Pepper, Maintaining Sanity in the Classroom: Illustrated Teaching Techniques New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1971), pp. 76-77.

a lot about her students because she can observe their reactions and responses from a different vantage point, from the "other side of the desk." This type of "student teaching" creates an atmosphere of equality. The teacher sits with the students - perhaps in a circle, and is one of them. When in doubt, the student teacher calls on her for the answer, and she does the exercise, just like the rest of the students. There is no "Can you help me", or, "May I...", or, "I don't know." The system helps create a feeling of importance, pride, responsibility, and understanding between the students and the teacher. A discipline problem benefits a lot from this when he has to handle other discipline problems in "his" class.

In presenting the material that will be learned in the class, the teacher's main concern is to present it in such a way that it is pleasant to the group but is also a learning experience. If it becomes a pastime, learning stops.

In the classroom, physical and methodological situations should help ease the learning process. In our classroom one of the distinctive physical adaptations was the absence of a teacher's desk. In keeping with the "we're all equal" concept, we had everyone sit around a table. Students began to get the feeling that the room was theirs, that a particular area or corner was their own. With individual "ownership" came pride in their spot and pride in what they did there.

Other physical materials we set up or took advantage of were the bulletin boards and an easel, pictures, slides, the overhead projector, puppets and flash cards. Two very useful devices were games and songs. A story on a record with an accompanying book is good for listening and reading comprehension. Though we did not have access to one, various

types of reading machines are available. Some have cassette tapes with corresponding film strips that students can operate individually. If the students are studying the native language of the area in which they live, don't hesitate to use the local radio and television stations for practice in listening comprehension and stimuli for class discussion.

All of these materials are invaluable aids in teaching the structures that the students need review on. Once what they need work on has been determined, it would be disastrous to hand them the same text they had worked with the year before and try to get them interested in English. We tried to subtly weave the problem areas we wanted to cover into the lesson. We disguised the redundancy through games and different approaches. In other words, we didn't review the present tense by starting out with: "This is a book."

Lastly, we allowed no Greek to be spoken in the class. Every Greek word cost the speaker one drachma, ($ .33). (The money contributed to a fund for a small party at the end of the term.)

We realize that the previous example of our dealing with students who were "unable to learn English" is taken from a very specific situation. We don't pretend to make a specific proposal that covers all situations. It is up to the reader to take from the paper what is useful for his/her situation and adapt whatever might be helpful to his/her problems. In this next section of our paper, we do try to present other situations that are likely to exist, with alternative suggestions for ways to accommodate the slow students, the ones requiring remedial help.

Alternative Situations

Since we realize not every teacher who has slow language learners in her classroom will be able to remove them to a separate physical location as we did, the following offers alternative suggestions for the use of physical facilities, materials and personel, that might aid in the remedial work the slow language learner needs.

The first alternative suggestion deals with the use of aides. These aides could be upperclassmen in the school, advanced students in the language being taught. If these older students are available to help, it could be of benefit to them, the slow students, and the teacher. It would be particularly good if the upperclassmen used were interested in becoming teachers. If there is no separate room available for use with the remedial students, the regular classroom could be divided in such a way that certain designated areas would be used for and by the slower students. We recommend that it be the teacher who works with the slower students and the teacher's aide that works with the regular ones. Even if the remedial work period were possible for only one or two hours a week, it would be better than nothing. The aide might take the rest of the class to language lab or some other language-related activity during the hours designated for remedial work.

These aides need not come only from the school of the teacher and her class. If the remedial class is in a separate jr. high (or other school), away from a high school, it could be arranged for the high school students to come as a practical application of course, volunteer or club work. Even more probable might be the possibility of these aides coming from a nearby college or language institute.

If the teacher is teaching the language of the community the stu-

dents are living in, then there are even more resources for possible aides and/or para-professionals.

One of the best ways for dealing with the remedial students with-- in the regular classroom among the "bright, successful" students is to individualize the classroom. This is very possible for one teacher, but of course aides or para-professionals would indeed help. In the book, Individualizing the Foreign Language Classroom, Perspectives for Teachers, edited by Howard B. Altman, the series of articles offers many helpful suggestions on planning, execution, experimentation with, and analysis of individualized classrooms. The important factor in individualizing the foreign language classroom is that students work alone or together in groups of two or three where their interests lie. Students work at their own pace, thus the constant strain of having to meet peer standards is gone. In its place comes the impetus to meet his or her individual standard in order to reach a self-chosen (though teacher-guided) goal. The learning of a foreign language becomes much more relevant then.

The language lab can serve as a useful tool for individualizing a student's language learning. The language lab provides anonymity for the slow language learner; he is not called upon to perform in front of critical peers and a teacher. This applies in particular to the lang-- uage learner who "freezes" when he has to do oral work in class. He is his own judge as to whether or not he is truly making an effort to practice the language. We have observed that even the most reticent of language learners will work harder in the language lab and be more critical of themselves than their teacher would be. It is extremely beneficial in most cases if the language lab is set up so that students

can record the lesson on their own reel or cassette tapes and have these available for use in their spare time. The student can record his own answers to oral patterns, dialogues, etc. He can listen to his responses and record over them as many times as he thinks necessary.

When the language lab is introduced to the remedial students as a non-threatening learning device, it can be highly successful. The ones who like it will be relieved when the language lab period is scheduled and will probably want to spend more time there. The ones who dislike the language lab most likely won't learn too much during a required lab and will escape as soon as possible. The teacher can try and make the experience more appealing and helpful by striving to make time spent in the language lab as independent and self-disciplinary for the student as possible. If tests or quizes are to be given, the teacher should try to administer them individually, after listening and checking to be sure the student being tested is indeed prepared to do well.

As the language lab can prove beneficial for aural comprehension and oral work, devices for individualizing reading and writing practice are also helpful to the slow language learner. If a student is not trained in the auditory ability that proves to be beneficial when listening and speaking a second language, he may have to rely more on sight. This is not to say his aural/oral training should be neglected, but, particularly in the slow language learner's case, it is important that he feel successful in some area of the language learning process as soon as possible.

One of the devices Pamela has found useful for help in reading improvement is the S.R.A. (Science Research Associates, Inc.) Reading Laboratory by Dan H. Parker and Genevieve Scannell. SRA is a totally

individualized reading exercise. It consists of individual cards with reading passages and accompanying self-tests. The test questions basically cover vocabulary and reading comprehension. When the student has read the passage and answered the questions he then checks his answers with a key on a separate card. The levels of difficulty can be identified by each level's respective color. There are no fewer than six reading cards in each level. The teacher checks the student's progress and helps with any reading problems that might occur. The teacher can discreetly test the student if she deems it necessary to see if he really understands the material before he moves on to the next level of difficulty, or "color."

The SRA Reading Laboratory serves as a trust-building device. The student feels in complete control of his own testing and progress. It can be used with the entire class - from the slow language learner to the quickest one in the class.

In summary, both the language lab and the S.R.A. reading materials are ideal helps for the teacher who has no physical means of separating the remedial language learner from the average or exceptional learner in her classroom for special attention. Even a small cassette tape deck with earphones , located in a quiet corner of the room, could provide just the haven needed for individual oral practice. Even an exceptionally adept language learner might need some extra work in a specific area. Since the language lab and reading materials are limited only by the student's own abilities, the listening or reading areas need not become the "dummies' corner," but rather, can be used freely by all the class members - each to his or her ability.

Conclusion

In conclusion, we would like to stress that, for whatever reasons, there will be slow learners in almost every language class. Our particular case demonstrated one practical way of dealing with students needing remedial help. But more importantly, we believe the reasons behind a student's failure should be of primary concern for the teacher. It is only by recognizing what situation(s) the student is or has been in which has (have) affected his language learning, that the teacher can understand why the slow student is having trouble. Upon understanding why the student has been unsuccessful, the teacher can then decide how to deal with her students needing remedial help. Given that the teacher employs sensitivity, understanding and patience, remedial language learners can experience success in the foreign language classroom.

Selected Annotated Bibliography

Selected Annotated Bibliography

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     Inc. 1972.
          Consists of four parts: Part I - The Language Class, an
     Overview; is a general discussion of the teacher and his
     course, preparation of supplementary materials. Part II -
     Teaching Various Aspects of Grammar; reviews methods for doing
     so. Part III - Developing skills: Listening Comprehension,
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     Language, Teaching Culture; shows ways of introducing culture
     of language being taught into the classroom.

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          Divided into three main topics, this book is an excellent
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     Part I discusses: What is Individualized Foreign Language
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          A collection of games for the classroom that could be
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        The report includes: 1) The need for teaching intonation
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    and French intonation. Tapes accompany examples from 23 differ-
    ent languages thus enabling the teacher to compare the student's
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    are written out in an appendix with directions for classroom use.
    The tapes can provide good listening skills for teachers and
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        This thesis is geared toward exposing students to various
    historical and contemporary cultural aspects of American civili-
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    can be used for: 1) introducing a discussion and/or writing
    topic, 2) teaching new vocabulary in context, 3) reinforcing
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    slang, 5) changing classroom pace and atmosphere and 6) having
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    remedial child in motivation if only by giving him something
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     Note especially on page 131 the discussion of the question:
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          This thesis shows how to use realia by incorporating them
     into different lesson plans, each based on a different method
     of teaching. Methods include: SR/Microwave, Silent Way,
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        Moulton offers some excellent views on second language
    acquisition, particularly in Chapter 1, "Language and the
    Language Learner".

Newell, Stanford., ed. Dimension: Languages 68 - Proceedings of the
    Fourth Southern Conference on Language Teaching. Spartanburg,
    S.C.: Converse College. 1968.
        The entire series of articles in this work discusses motiva-
    tion. One in particular, W.E. Lambert's "Motivation and Language
    Learning: Psychological Aspects" is worth reading.

O'Leary, Susan Jan. "The Teaching of Poetry for Language Learning."
    Unpublished Independent Professional Project, School for Inter-
    national Training, 1973.
        Ms. O'Leary discusses techniques for teaching poetry and
    provides an anthology of American poetry, some of which is suit-
    able for beginners. If a teacher of remedial beginners could
    use some of the suggestions in the paper, they might provide a

Selected Annotated Bibliography Continued

real sense of accomplishment for students who considered
themselves "dumb" in English to actually analyze poetry.
We also think that one of the best motivations for wanting
to speak a language is the need to express personal thoughts
and opinions - to tell people what you think.

Rollin, Marcia. "Songs to Learn English By." Unpublished Inde-
pendent Professional Project, School for International Train-
ing, 1971.
    To quote Marcia's Introduction: "This songbook is intended
for use as a supplement to regular classroom work in the teach-
ing of English as a second language. The book is organized by
structure. Each of the approximately 80 songs is meant to 'drill'
a different aspect of the structure of English. The major focus
is on those structures that present special problems to ESL stu-
dents." Though the songs can be used only in an ESL classroom,
obviously they could be of great help in the remedial classroom.
Most of the songs are American folk songs, past and contemporary,
with accompanying guitar chord charts.

Rojas, Ronald. "Easy Reading in English for Foreign Students."
Unpublished Independent Professional Project, School for Inter-
national Training, 1971.
    This is an annotated listing of easy reading material avail-
able in Watts library.

Stevick, Earl W. Helping People Learn English - A Manual for Teachers
Teachers of English as a Second Language. New York: Abindon
Press, 1957.
    This is a good general view of teaching suggestions for
and information about the English language; a good book for
a beginning foreign language teacher. Adaptable for methods
in teaching of remedial students.

Tursi, Joseph A., ed. Foreign Languages and the 'New' Student:
1970 Northeast Conference on Teaching of Foreign Languages.
Menasha, Wis.: George Banta Co. 1970.
    Articles discuss motivation in foreign language learning.
Specific things discussed include: instructional factors,
learner factors, and socio-cultural factors - all of which can
be pertinent to the success or failure of a student to learn
the language he is studying.

Selected Annotated Bibliography, Continued

Valdman, Albert, ed. Trends in Language Teaching. New York:
    McGraw-Hill, Inc. 1966.
        The article that we referred to in the paper, Paul
    Pimsleur's "Testing Foreign Language Learning" might
    prove beneficial as would a number of other readings
    included in the book.

Winters, Margretta. "Cross-Reference of Grammatical Structures".
    Unpublished Independent Professional Project, School for
    International Training, 1971.
        A good reference for various grammar points to be
    found in the texts available here at S.I.T.