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A Study of the effectiveness of teaching French pronunciation to young pupils by means of the phonetic symbols of the International Phonetic Alphabet and by direct imitation

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FRENCH PRONUNCIATION TO YOUNG PUPILS
BY MEANS OF THE PHONETIC SYMBOLS OF THE
INTERNATIONAL PHONETIC ALPHABET
AND BY DIRECT IMITATION

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Direct Imitation

Ione K. Flower

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INTRODUCTION

At the beginning of the present writer's teaching experience in Indiana University, she was not left to her own devices as to teaching French pronunciation to Freshman students. She was required to teach the French sounds of the International Phonetic Alphabet, the physiological position of vocal organs producing these sounds, and lists of French words illustrating such sounds in conventional spellings. This study was intensive, covering the six beginning weeks of the first semester. At the end of this period, certain desirable results were apparent: the procedure had reduced French pronunciation to such a graphic and logical system that students felt no inhibiting fear of foreign sounds of speech; they were able to read passages of phonetic transcription in such a manner as to be readily comprehensible to a listener understanding French, altho the students themselves were ignorant of the meaning; various poorly grasped pronunciations which years of study by imitation had failed to elucidate for the teacher herself, were explained by the exposition of underlying principles involved. "Phonetics", then, became a mainstay in this teacher's instruction method: that is, a teaching of pronunciation by means of the symbols of the International Phonetic Alphabet and the letter combinations producing the various sounds represented by these symbols.

At first consideration, the concept appears too abstruse for other than adult minds; for immature ones, it would seem to present elements of possible confusion. Therefore, when a later teaching experience brought the writer into contact with the pupils of elementary grades in a private school she did not contemplate the possibility of using "phonetics" in teaching French pronunciation. She relied on the "Imitation Method", trusting that her young pupils would imitate her pronunciation of French words. The trust was fated to disappointment. The children were untrained to listen to speech-sounds; they did not hear accurately what was said, and so failed to imitate, altho usually they believed they were repeating the teacher's pronunciation. Some letters presented little difficulty, while others presented impossible imitation; the vowel e always fared uncertainly; the nasals were usually failures; consonant pronunciations were a matter of chance. It is unreasonable to expect pupils to repeat pronunciations which they do not hear, to utter differentiations of speech which they are unable to distinguish by ear. It became evident that imitation was not reliable.

When one baffled little pupil exclaimed, "If I could see the pronunciation, I could say it right", the writer began to wonder whether the use of the symbols of the I.P.A. would be possible in teaching immature minds. Tentatively, in the effort to show distinctions between the four nasal sounds, she taught to a group of young children the four phonetic symbols, [ɛ̃], [ã], [œ̃], [ɔ̃], and the various vowel-

consonant combinations producing each nasal; she then showed the effect of nn , of mm , and of a vowel following the combination. This exposition required time, repetition, frequent "nasal sound hunts", examples of the vowel-consonant combinations as nasals, examples of the same as not nasals. Across the top of a sheet of paper, these pupils wrote the four symbols, always in a scale order , [ɛ̃] , [ɑ̃] , [œ̃] , [ɔ̃] ; the teacher read from an easy French text. At first it was necessary to stress the nasal sounds so that the pupils took note in order to decide , by the sound, under which phonetic symbol the word in question should be written . Soon, the children distinguished between the four nasals, not only by sound, but by a knowledge of the composition of each nasal. This ear- and eye-training certainly required time; however , it was not difficult, and the pupils enjoyed the " sound hunts ". Eventually the teacher seldom heard a mispronounced nasal in that group of pupils .

It is evident that the sounds of all thirty-six symbols of the International Phonetic Alphabet cannot be taught simultaneously. Selection is necessary, progress from the familiar, as represented by the approximately same articulation in English, to the less familiar sounds of the French; lists of examples are necessary, and these should include only sounds already learned in combination with the new sound in process of assimilation which each list illustrates.

In order to present this step by step progression, the writer prepared a Manual of French Sounds which formed the outline of study during eight months for those pupils designated in this experiment as the "Phonetic Group. "

Various reasons beyond the teacher's control prevented her from developing the method with another group of pupils of a corresponding grade level. They were taught by the "Imitation method " and form, in this report, a contrasting group, the "Non-phonetic". At first there was no definite belief in the teacher's mind that one method was superior to the other. "Phonetics " were employed in an attempt to better unsatisfactory pronunciation of French by young pupils. In the course of time the experimental group was producing more satisfactory results than these obtained by the group instructed by the imitation method. The two groups presented the elements of an experiment in method of pronunciation instruction.

As the teacher came to understand the experimental aspect of her teaching, she sought, in the words of Prof. Coleman, " light from recognised sources on matters that give trouble." Articles discussing the "Phonetic Method " abound; they are written by teachers who, like the writer, have experimented, and recorded the results of the new method. These results, however , have been attained in classes of high-school and college students. In an attempt to find some account of such an experiment adapted to the

teaching of young pupils, the writer addressed various inquiries to recognised sources, such as Teachers' College of Columbia, Middlebury College, the National Educational Association in Washington, the Modern Language Association in Chicago. Invariably the reply came back that no account was known of any experiment of such a nature. It then seemed worth while, in order to form some estimate of the Phonetic Method as a device for subsequent teaching, to evaluate the results of the two manners of pronunciation instruction which this teacher had followed with two groups of pupils. These results once definitely fixed for examination, it would then be possible to decide whether this new method produced results with young pupils of as satisfactory nature as those recorded in the case of older students.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The terms "phonetic method " and "phonetics" are used in this experiment in the sense usually attached to the words in pronunciation -method discussion; that is speech-sounds are represented by devised characters or letters or symbols, irrespective of what may be the conventional spellings of those sounds.

In view of the fact that speech-sounds are common to several modern languages, it was possible for a group of scholars, interested in the teaching of foreign-language pronunciation, to arrange an alphabet of characters or symbols representing speech-sounds, those common to several languages , and those particular to some one language. This alphabet is known as the International Phonetic Alphabet. Its symbols are said to represent the speech-sounds of some 400 languages(THE USE OF PHONETIC SYMBOLS IN TEACHING FRENCH PRONUNCIATION, by Anna W. Ballard in School Review, Dec. 1920, Vol.5, p.135). The number of these symbols varies from language to language, as the number and kind of speech-sounds vary. English has a greater number than French, which is composed of thirty-six distinctly recognizable sounds of speech.

Each symbol represents a certain speech-sound always the same, no matter in what language, no matter how spelled by the letters of that language. These symbols are written as letters, mostly Latin : m , s , f , i , o , u ; some are

differentiated by slight irregularities of formation: ɔ , ɛ , ɔ ; two are copied from the Greek : y , œ ; one comes from the Danish : ø ; some borrow diacritical marks : ē , ā , œ , ḥ . These symbols are enclosed in square brackets, [], to distinguish them as phonetic symbols. It must always be remembered that they represent sound, not spelling, just as notes on a staff of music represent pitch.

Various symbols occur in several languages: [s] , [k] , [w] , [ɛ] . The spellings of such sounds may differ from language to language; every language, on the other hand, has its own particular speech sounds-- the theta sound of English, Spanish, German, but absent from the French; the nasal sounds of French and Portuguese.

The sounds represented by these I.P.A. symbols are represented in French by various letters and combinations of letters, with the result that a symbol may represent a sound spelled variously : [mɛ̃] , representing the sound of mais , (je) met , (il) met , (les) met . Therefore it is necessary not only to learn the sound of the symbol together with the physiological manner of production, but also to recognize what letters produce that sound; and , inversely , to associate with such letters the sounds portrayed by the symbols.

When pronunciation is taught by means of the International Phonetic Alphabet, understood in respect to physiological production, together with instruction as to conventional spellings of these symbols, the method employed is

the Phonetic Method. It comprises an organized body of instruction which pupils may investigate independently of the teacher's constant attendance .

The Imitation Method consists in an attempt on the part of students to imitate the pronunciation of the teacher, of some visiting speaker , or of some recording machine. It trusts to the aural apprehension of the foreign speech and the vocal reproduction thereof by the student .

For some years there has existed a state of confusion among teachers as to what should be the objective in French language instruction. On only one point is there any unanimity of opinion as to aim, which Coleman states is , "the ability to pronounce French with a fair degree of accuracy"(EXPERIMENTS AND STUDIES IN MODERN LANGUAGE TEACHING, by Prof. Algernon Coleman, University of Chicago Press, Chicago ,1924, p.13.) "The value of a good pronunciation is now generally conceded whenever speaking ability.....is the aim. But there is a deeper need than merely the need of a good pronunciation in order to make ourselves understood.....The sense, and consequently the understanding, of a word depends upon its correct pronunciation, even if it is pronounced only mentally..... As a proof of this we find that the student often gets the meaning as soon as the teacher pronounces the word correctly.....Hence, pronouncing properly even unknown words is possible and the meaning of many words which he [the student] has heard pronounced, can and will be called up again when they are pronounced properly. Or to express it in terms of psychology, pronunciation—aural impressions— serves as an added means of forming associations. Sound images call up the meanings in those cases where other associations fail". (METHODS OF TEACHING MODERN LANGUAGES, by Ch.H.Handschin, World Book Co., Yonkers, N.Y. 1923, pp . 89 and 90.)

"But scholars seem to be unanimous in the opinion that whether or not pupils are to use the spoken language in after life, they can never acquire a sound knowledge or delicate appreciation of a foreign speech unless they pronounce it correctly.

"If this were not the case, the task of the teacher of French would be greatly simplified, for no attention need be given to the most difficult and complicated part of it, the teaching of pronunciation." (THE USE OF PHONETICS IN TEACHING ELEMENTARY FRENCH, by E.B. Babcock in School Review, Nov. 1913, Vol.21, p.608.)

In the same article the author quotes (p.609) George Hempl, who devoted years to the study of pronunciation instruction methods : " It is a well known psychological fact that the mental activity involved in pronouncing a word fixes it much more firmly in the mind than do the processes involved in simply seeing and hearing it. It is therefore true economy to practice the oral use of a language, even when the primary aim be but the acquisition of a power to read."

"It is both psychologically and pedagogically sound to obtain this reading ability through a mastery of the pronunciation ,and of the vocabulary and forms of the language, and much oral, aural and written practice is needed to fix pronunciation, vocabulary and forms." (EXPERIMENTS AND STUDIES IN MODERN LANGUAGE TEACHING, by Prof. Algernon Coleman, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1934, p.90.)

Altho the unanimity of opinion as to the desirability of a good pronunciation seems well established at present, it appears to be neither long-standing nor effective in results." The teaching of an accurate pronunciation in a foreign language is comparatively new in this country." (THE TEACHING OF MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES, by Samuel M. Waxman, Educational Review, Vol.50,p.82.) This statement, written in 1915 by a language teacher of Boston University, holds a suggestion of promise which does not appear to have been fulfilled by 1931, when Coleman reports in the words of the Committee of Twelve, "Pronunciation receives scant attention" (THE TEACHING OF MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES IN THE UNITED STATES, by Algernon Coleman, Macmillan Co., N.Y. 1931,p.140). In further comment upon the modern foreign language teaching status in this country this report perhaps analyses correctly the cause for the slow progress made in accurate pronunciation instruction. The report says, (p.139) "In order to gain the necessary time the foreign language must be taken up earlier.....Until we are willing greatly to lengthen the time given to the linguistic part of our children's education, we shall have to renounce the idea of a full and well-rounded knowledge of French and German....." The time referred to is that devoted to French in courses of two-years duration in high-school curricula. This analysis is restated a year later in another report on the teaching of modern foreign languages : "The oral and aural use of the foreign lan-

guages, scarcely known in the American schools at the time the present requirements [for College Board Examinations] were adopted, now come to play a highly important role, particularly in the better class of schools which send students to the Board examinations.....

" Any revision....., approaching more nearly the successful procedure and results of the best schools of foreign countries will make it imperative that the amount of time asked for modern languages in this report be granted.

" While the conditions and exigencies of the American school are not similar to those of foreign schools, nevertheless there has always been a distinct demand for the more tangible results that characterize the foreign language work of the best schools of Denmark, Germany, England, and France." (SECONDARY EDUCATION BOARD:REPORT OF A STUDY OF THE SECONDARY CURRICULUM,1932, Milton, Mass.,p.101.)

What is this foreign language programme the desirable results of which are lacking in our American foreign language work ? The report explains (p.102) ".....those schools have not hesitated to provide for foreign language study a much more liberal amount of time than is the case in our American schools. In many cases nine consecutive years are devoted to the study of English or other foreign languages."

"In Germany the experiment is being made of teaching foreign languages in the kindergarten."(THE TEACHING OF MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES,by Samuel M.Waxman, Educational Review, 1915,Vol.50,p.84.)

There appears to be no lack of appreciation of the psychological and pedagogical reasons for such a procedure.

"It is an established fact that young children possess a faculty for acquisition of language which is weakened in adolescence, even in those children in whom the study of other languages besides their own has tended to maintain it; this faculty may have completely disappeared in adolescents who have never learned any language besides their mother tongue. The present-day scheme of education in America takes no account of these well-known facts, and regularly postpones the study of modern languages to an age when the language-acquiring faculty is greatly weakened or completely atrophied in the majority of pupils, and when the gifted minority can learn to master the language only with undue expenditure of work and a great waste of time." (THE USE OF PHONETICS IN TEACHING FRENCH, by C.J.Cipriane, School Review, 1912, Vol.20, p. 516.)

"In direct ratio as a child ages, the more difficult becomes the acquisition of new sounds because the muscles of the vocal organs are not as flexible and the assimilation faculty is weaker....." (THE TEACHING OF MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES, by Samuel M.Waxman, Educational Review, 1915, Vol.50, p.84.)

The desirable results in foreign language work obtained in European schools are due not wholly to a longer period of study but in part to method of study and instruction. Rosset, whose concern is with method, is quoted thus: "Of all the students of Teutonic origin who learn French, it is certainly the Germans who, in spite of more numerous and greater difficulties, succeed most quickly in speaking correctly because both teachers

and pupils have received a theoretical and practical phonetic education."(THE USE OF PHONETICS IN TEACHING FRENCH,by E.B. Babcock, School Review, 1913, Vol.21,p.617.)

"The activities of French phoneticians for more than a generation past in adopting phonetic alphabets to teach pronunciation have been reflected in this country and in England...

"France, the classical land of experimental phonetics, continues to be prolific in efforts to creat a sharply standardized form of instruction in the fields of articulation and syllabication, and French manuals for these are not lacking....It is worthy of note,however, that also in Germany in very recent years [1934] there is recognition of the necessity for carefully systematized books devoted especially to guiding the foreigner to a standardized pronunciation by means of a rational,pedagogical procedure.In America it is mostly teachers of French who show an active interest in devices for training in pronunciation."(EXPERIMENTS AND STUDIES IN MODERN LANGUAGE TEACHING,by Algernon Coleman, University of Chicago Press,Chicago,1934,p.17.)

This interest is echoed and re-echoed. In this report of experiments, Coleman remarks(p.17.) :*"The interest in phonetics has continued to be an out-standing feature of modern language methodology during recent years."* [1934]"....To use a phonetic alphabet, or not to use it,still remains a question of lively discussion in pamphlet and periodical."

The report of the Secondary Curriculum speaks impartially of phonetics as a teaching device, but it insists that,..... the " teacher be equipped with a thorough knowledge of

the science of phonetics whatever may be his method of teaching pronunciation"(SECONDARY EDUCATION BOARD:REPORT OF A STUDY OF THE SECONDARY CURRICULUM,1934, Milton, Mass.,p.120). Other writers stress the educational advantages in the use of phonetics for the pupil. "We want to have some phonetics introduced into our schools because the theory has convinced us, and experiment has proved to us, that by means of this science we can, with decidedly greater certainty and in an essentially easier way, give an absolutely better pronunciation in a much shorter space of time than would be possible without phonetics." (HOW TO TEACH A FOREIGN LANGUAGE,by O.Jesperson, translation from the original Danish, Macmillan Co., 1904,p.142.)

"There can be no question but that the education value of the study of French will be greatly enhanced by the use of phonetics in elementary classes. It cannot fail to foster in the pupils habits of precision and accuracy. If it is true that the student of language must first observe, then compare, and finally draw conclusions,our phonetic method will furnish excellent training for him. The hit-or-miss method that is often used to teach pronunciation does positive harm to the listener. Phonetics will teach them [students] that in languages we are dealing with sounds ,not letters, an idea that will probably be new to them."(THE USE OF PHONETICS IN TEACHING ELEMENTARY FRENCH, by E.B.Babcock, School Review, 1923, Vol.21,p.616.)

This appreciation of the value of phonetics to impress the student with the importance of sound in language study finds expression in other writers. "Language and sound must go together, and the ear is an indispensable aid to the eye." (THE USE OF PHONETICS IN TEACHING ELEMENTARY FRENCH, by E.B. Babcock, School Review, Vol.21,p.608.)

Bové expands this same idea at some length. "The object of the phonetic training which the student receives is two-fold:1st , the acquisition of a good pronunciation;2nd, and by no means the least important, the learning of the written values of the various sounds with a view to establishing finally such an exact relation between the spoken and the written word that the sound will very nearly indicate the correct spelling. This second result of the phonetic training has been found to be a very definite aid in vocabulary building. For by constantly developing the memory of the ear through continual oral drill, a degree of efficiency is attained whereby not only words but whole sentences are very easily retained. The result is a combination which produces great speed in the acquisition of vocabulary coupled with unusual accuracy in spelling.

"By constantly appealing to the ear we have developed the memory of the ear to such an extent that the sound is easily retained."(FRENCH PHONETIC TRAINING IN THE UNIVERSITY HIGH SCHOOL, by A.G. Bovée, School Review, Vol.22,p.679.)

Coleman, in his very earnest writing about foreign lan-

guage teaching in the United States dwells on the same point; "If.....we wish to impart a good pronunciation, we must acquaint our pupils with the way in which foreign sounds are made and must exercise systematically both their vocal organs and their ears until the goal is reached." (SECONDARY EDUCATION BOARD:REPORT OF A STUDY OF THE SECONDARY CURRICULUM, Milton, Mass., p.235.)

Other writers feel the value of the phonetic method as a scientific procedure. "We may be pardoned if we feel convinced that the modern scientific way of treating French pronunciation is in every respect superior to the old-fashioned combination of guess work and error." (ON THE TEACHING OF FRENCH PRONUNCIATION, by P.H.Churchman, School Review, Vol.22, p.546.) "The new method involves nothing more terrifying than an accurate analysis of the facts....." decides Churchman. With his conclusion another teacher agrees, finding that ".... this hard work of learning a foreign pronunciation can be simplified by the scientific method." (THE USE OF PHONETICS IN FRENCH, by C.J.Cipriani, School Review, Vol. 20, p. 516.)

"The pronunciation of a language is then both a science and an art. By means of phonetics pronunciation can be taught more efficiently and learned more accurately...." (THE TEACHING OF MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES, by Samuel M.Waxman, Educational Review, Vol.50,p.84.)

Still another aspect of phonetic training appeals to

Miss Anna Ballard who has written extensively on this method. Her enthusiasm is constant, but not, in the present writer's own experience, are the results she records overstated. She says, in part : "But what are we to do about French ? My only answer is phonetics. There is an easy way of teaching that difficult subject of French pronunciation. As far as I know, it is the only way to produce good results for the whole class. Each sound is taught by the correct pronunciation of a word containing it, a word in which it is easy to pronounce that sound correctly." (THE DIRECT METHOD AND ITS APPLICATION IN AMERICAN SCHOOLS, by Anna Ballard, Educational Review, Vol.51,p.451.) She stresses (p.453) a further point completely in accord with the experience of the present writer in regard to pupils' reaction to this method. "The rapid improvement in their pronunciation is little short of marvelous; their pleasure in it is a fresh incentive to diligent practice. On that all depends. From the moment that they open the phonetic text, pupils study their pronunciation at home."

After some lengthy consideration of the phonetic method , Handschin, in a serious study of modern language teaching, sums up his conclusions; " In view of the value of phonetics, we would counsel teachers in service to take an interest in the study." (METHODS OF TEACHING MODERN LANGUAGES, by Ch.H.Handschin, World Book Co., Yonkers, N.Y.

1923, p.93.) In more detail another teacher sets forth his reasons for using the phonetic method :

" 1. The old way of teaching does not give satisfactory results .

" 2. Mere imitation of the pronunciation of the teacher is not sufficient.

" 3. The only way in which the correct pronunciation can be taught is by an explanation of the formation of the sounds of French.

" 4. Much time is saved by showing the combinations of these sounds in speech by phonetic script, in the beginning.

" 5. The educational value of the teaching of pronunciation by the use of phonetics is very great." (THE USE OF PHONETICS IN TEACHING ELEMENTARY FRENCH, by E.B.BABCOCK , in School Review, Vol.21 ,p.617.)

Why then, one may ask, in view of such favorable exposition of the phonetic method, is that method so restricted in use. One explanation may be found in the words of Mr. Babcock : " And yet so loath are we to accept anything new that, inspite of extensive use in Germany and France, the practical value of phonetics in teaching has received but slow recognitionin America." (THE USE OF PHONETICS IN TEACHING ELEMENTARY FRENCH, by E.B.Babcock, School Review, Vol.21,p. 610.)

There may be another reason more prohibitive than mere natural disinclination to change. The teaching of pro-

nunciation by the phonetic method requires time at the beginning of the study, thus apparently slowing up an approach to the study of the language itself, since students usually seek a reading ability at the expense of speech. But this delay in order to acquire an understanding of the fundamentals of foreign pronunciation is soon made up, thanks to the ability to acquire vocabulary more thoroughly by aural memory. However, at the beginning, time, plenty of time, is required for phonetic exposition and drill. Palmer, in his excellent volume on foreign language work, recommends that "the first, or elementary stage, of the duration of at least one term" be devoted to ear and speech training with all written material in phonetic transcription. (THE SCIENTIFIC STUDY AND TEACHING OF LANGUAGES, by Harold E. Palmer, World Book Co., Yonkers, N.Y. 1917, p.138.) Furthermore, he proposes (p.197): "We would expect that a minimum of two years should be accorded to the exclusive use of the phonetic transcription."

Two years ;

But the whole French course in many American schools consists of but two years. (EXPERIMENTS AND STUDIES IN MODERN LANGUAGE TEACHING, by Prof. Algernon Coleman, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1934, pp.12 and 13.) This condition is fully taken into consideration by the Committee of Twelve as reported by Coleman, who writes : " In discussing the 'phonetic method', the Committee recognises that American school conditions do not allow of this procedure

as practiced in Germany unless more time is allotted to the modern language course." (THE TEACHING OF MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES IN THE UNITED STATES, by Algernon Coleman, Macmillan Co., N.Y. 1931, p. 130.)

Advocates of the phonetic method realise that time is required to build-in this comprehension of phonetic fundamentals. The actual presentation of the symbols, together with explanation of the physiological manner of production of the sounds represented, does not demand the extended time. "After six or seven lessons of fifteen minutes each, pupils know all the sounds and can begin their phonetic texts," writes Miss Ballard of her students of French in Teachers' College. (THE USE OF PHONETIC SYMBOLS IN TEACHING FRENCH, by A.W. Ballard, Modern Language Journal, 1920, Vol. 5, p. 136.) Prof. Coleman devoted three periods of one hour to the teaching of the sounds and symbols of vowels. (PRACTICAL PHONETICS IN JUNIOR COLLEGE FRENCH, by Algernon Coleman, Modern Language Journal, Vol. 1, p. 155.) The lengthened time is needed in the application of the system. "All the work done, as outlined above [phonetic and physiological analysis] will be comparatively useless unless it is followed up by diligent repetition and practice throughout at least 125 to 150 recitation periods," continues Prof. Coleman (p. 200.).

Such are the opinions as to the effectiveness of the phonetic method as a device for learning pronunciation. What of it from the teacher's point of view ?

"There is no magic in phonetics....." They are " an extremely useful supplement to the physiological explanation..."

(PRACTICAL PHONETICS IN JUNIOR COLLEGE FRENCH, by Algernon Coleman, Modern Language Journal, Vol.1,pp.155 and 156.)

The "difficulty of teaching pronunciation with the aid of phonetic symbols has been greatly exaggerated....." asserts Miss Ballard. "The method is simple, the results sure....."

(THE USE OF PHONETIC SYMBOLS IN TEACHING FRENCH PRONUNCIATION, by A.W.BALLARD, Modern Language Journal, Vol.5,p.137.)

"Let no teacher be afraid to use the phonetic alphabet, "she urges. "This method of teaching pronunciation is more difficult than the old imitation process in the sense that it demands more time and thought of the teacher in planning his presentation, as well as seeking light from recognized sources on matters that give him trouble; but it is certainly more interesting, as it appeals to his intelligence and exercises his ingenuity." (PRACTICAL PHONETICS IN JUNIOR COLLEGE FRENCH, by Algernon Coleman, Modern Language Journal, Vol. 1,p. 200.)

Perhaps Miss Ballard and Prof. Coleman are the most prolific and enthusiastic writers advocating the use of phonetics in pronunciation work ; certainly they leave no question unexamined as to practical application. Comparing the results of the Phonetic and Imitation Methods, Miss Ballard writes of her investigation in classes of phonetic and non-phonetic training that, in the case of pupils relying on imitation, "half or one-third of the class pronounces

badly and has no hope of improvement." (TEACHING FRENCH PRONUNCIATION BY PHONETICS, by A.W. Ballard, Modern Language Journal, Vol.3 , p.327.) And again , she asserts, " In Intermediate French, those who have had phonetic training coupled with practice in the use of symbols invariably pronounce better than any one else . " (THE USE OF PHONETIC SYMBOLS IN TEACHING FRENCH PRONUNCIATION, by A.W. Ballard, Modern Language Journal, Vol.5, p. 137.)

It is true that these various writers have formed their favorable opinions from demonstrations of desirable results obtained in the instruction of high-school and college students. The American school system does not provide for modern foreign language study in elementary grades. Only in private schools might classes of young children be found engaged in such study. One such school came under the observation of an interested and curious teacher who recorded impressions. The symbols of the I.P.A. were being used by the children in learning pronunciation. " It was obvious that they were quite interested in using a new code instead of conventional alphabetic characters. Children at ten and eleven are always ready to use new tools."(A NOTE ON PHONETICS IN THE CLASSROOM, by J.J. Findlay, Modern Languages, October 1931, Vol. XII , p.25.)

This statement accords exactly with the present writer's experience, which constitutes the basis for the experiment detailed in the following pages.

PROCEDURE

Conditions :

1. The groups engaged in the experiment consisted of three small classes, the Non-phonetic group, the Phonetic group A , and the Phonetic group B. The first two groups stood in a relationship of comparison in this experiment; Phonetic group B was not connected with these two groups, but offered data as to progress in improvement in pronunciation over a period of six months during which the group made a serious and continuous study of phonetics. The results of the experiment in the case of the Non-phonetic group and Phonetic group A are to be compared with each other at the beginning of the experiment and at the end six months later. In the case of Phonetic group B , the results of the experiment offer comparison as of the beginning and of the end of the six months period.

Non-phonetic group and Phonetic group A were comprised of four pupils each; Phonetic group B consisted of three children, all of good scholastic ability, and each having some speech difficulty in English which carried over into French language study .

2. The pupils of these three groups began studying French before the age of eight years, with one exception in Phonetic group A , in which case the girl at the age of twelve engaged in an intensive study of phonetics during

three months and tutoring in grammar with the present teacher during summer vacation. In the case of Non-phonetic group and Phonetic group A , the first two years of study were similar, and consisted of reading and translation in "Colette et Ses Frères ", of acquiring vocabulary and simple expressions, of memorizing short verses and lines of simple dramatizations. In all this study pronunciation depended on imitation of the teacher's speech.

Beginning in October 1930, however, a definite cleavage in type of study occurred, and the formation of two groups began; these groups eventually developed into the Non-phonetic and Phonetic groups. In Phonetic group A were included those children whose course of study was unbroken. During eight months, 1930-1931, they engaged in a study of phonetics consisting of learning the symbols, the sounds of the same, the physiological position of vocal organs for production of these sounds, the French spelling of such sounds, and the reading and writing of phonetic transcription. This study was continuous according to a pre-arranged manual, altho it was interwoven with various other kinds of language study, such as reading, memorizing, dramatization. The work was slow but thorough and not at all difficult or tiresome. The children of this group followed an uninterrupted course, altho they were not all continuously grouped together as during the last year of study. The distinguishing characteristic of their study was a constant use of phonetics in pronunciation

work; this phase of study, the acquisition and application of a knowledge of phonetics, covered some five years.

Included in the group which developed into the Non-phonetic were those children whose course of study was interrupted for long periods, and then resumed with the present teacher. During those periods the children received instruction in French from other teachers. Three received some instruction in phonetics, but none were drilled in application so as to make use of such learning. In the homes of three of the pupils French was spoken by one or the other of the parents more or less frequently; at least so reported by the pupils. The course of study of this group is of the same duration as in the case of Phonetic group A, that is of seven years; but it lacks continuity with the same teacher.

In common, both groups received instruction in reading, translation, grammar exercises, conversation, dramatization. Different grammar texts were used: "Longman's French Course" for the Non-phonetic group; "Smith and Roberts French Book One" for the Phonetic group A. The same general elementary principles of grammar, very limited in scope, were covered by both groups. The same reader, "Colette et Ses Frères", was used by both groups. In dramatization work the groups sometimes intermingled.

It was only in the last year of study, 1934-1935, that the definite grouping and nature of the course of study developed in such a manner as to allow of the designation

of Phonetic and Non-phonetic groups, and to permit the experimentation in phonographic recording of pronunciation. Nor did these various groupings comprise the entire class reciting at all given periods; they did, however, comprise a nucleus for each group receiving a distinctive kind of instruction .

Class periods for both groups were of one half hour three times a week for a school year of eight months, with long Christmas and Spring vacations.

Phonetic group B consisted of pupils with special and similar needs. Two of them began the study of French at the age of five when all work was oral and imitative of the teacher's pronunciation. The third child began at the age of seven. All three were of high scholastic ability, eager at lessons, and they had been pushed ahead in school grades. All had some speech defect in English, which prevented good enunciation in French; no one had received any training of the ear for speech sounds. Study consisted in translation, reading (by the teacher) of simple French texts for comprehension on the part of the pupils, memorizing verse and dramatization with much labor and poor pronunciation results. In October 1934, it was possible for the teacher to bring these three children together in a group by themselves. She found them to be tired children, too advanced for play-work, too immature for a grammar-text. The entire year, therefore,

was devoted to pronunciation work : learning phonetics, ear-training and speech drill. There was practically no home work, all study being carried on in class with the teacher. Besides a manual of French sounds which the pupils composed under the teacher's guidance, they used " Que Fait Gaston?" and Churchman's "Phonetic Gateway to French". The teacher felt that the the year of specialized work had justification in improved French pronunciation.

3. The pupils of all three groups had undergone , at various periods, standard tests of one kind and another. Only one test had all experienced in common, the Pintner Educational Achievement Test, in which intelligence is rated as an Educational Quotient, which must perforce be used in intelligence scoring . Note has been made in a few cases where a pupil had an I.Q. scoring recorded.

Non-phonetic group and Phonetic group A had been tested for English vocabulary as each pupil attained twelve years of age, and all had a scoring in "English Vocabulary Test, by Johnson O'Connor, Stevens Institute of Technology." This test consists of multiple choice (four choices) of definition of 150 English words; the normal scoring for the age of twelve is reckoned at 66 correct choices of definition. All these pupils did not take the test at the same time, as their ages varied considerably; but all did take the test upon arriving at twelve years, so that the resulting scorings

do constitute a comparison between pupils as of twelve years of age.

Record is made also of the ages of pupils in October, 1934, when the first phonographic tests were made. For Group A the study of phonetics had begun four years before, of French six years before. The non-phonetic group also had begun the study of French six years previously, so that when this experiment ended French had formed a part of their curriculum during seven years.

Group	Name	Age	E.Q.	I.Q.	Eng. Voc.
Non- phone- tic	{ Ellen	14	102	111	69
	{ Janet	13½	109	119	42
	{ Judy	13	107		76
	{ Alice	12	117		50
Phone- tic	{ Jane	14	105		54
	{ Grace	14	109		39
	{ Cherry	12½	123	133	104
A	{ Molly	12	120	125	67
Phone- tic B	{ Jeff	10	137	143	
	{ Mary	10	124		
	{ Betsy	10	117		

Table I

4. All the pupils in this experiment came from well-to-do homes, where physical needs received attention; all knew about the same social experience; all were included in the intelligence grouping of "Superior " as scored by Terman (1). No one of them presented "behavior problem " disturbances. They were alike in having no great inclination for study, with two exceptions , brother and sister; on the other hand they were not disinclined to study when extra-curricular activities and social engagements allowed time for preparation of lessons. Excepting in the case of brother and sister, there was no expression of desire to continue schooling into college. This attitude, the present writer believes, is induced mainly by parental influence, and constitutes a much larger factor in a pupil's academic attainments than the "home" realises. It would seem that between home attitude toward study and scholastic achievement there exists a decided positive relationship which it is not the aim of this experiment to investigate, but which does influence scorings recorded in the experiment. The following facts as to individual case histories, read with the individual scorings of Table III and Table VI seem to indicate such a correlation.

Ellen : The mother had spoken French during foreign residence as a child and retained a good pronunciation, able comprehension of spoken and written word; vocabulary inactive in all but very common expressions and pat social phrases,

(1) "Psychology and the New Education", by S.L.Pressy, Harper &Brother, N.Y.1933, p. 217.

very little solid grammatical foundation, no background of academic training. Ellen was withdrawn from the present teacher's instruction and tutored by the mother during two years; she was then returned to the class with which, however, she was unable to work, since during her absence, the class had begun the study of phonetics.

Janet : Janet's whole French course was taken under the present teacher's instruction, but she was transferred into different classes several times during the seven years. These changes were unavoidable, but prevented her presence in a group studying pronunciation by the phonetic method. An easy-going attitude toward study on Janet's part reflected a rather meager background of academic attainment.

Judy, Alice : These sisters came from a home of wealth where there flickered a vague aspiration for academic achievement; however , it followed no definite programme, and the children were moved from one private school to another as the family peregrinations required. Their course in French was pursued under several teachers. The father was reported as conversing in French with the children frequently.

All these case-histories of the Non-phonetic group present irregular courses; in Phonetic group A, the situation is markedly different.

Jane : For seven consecutive years Jane studied with the present teacher. She was of the original group with which was begun instruction by the phonetic method. The mother was interested in the experiment and prodded onto

achievement a rather easy-going daughter, who eventually took pride in striving for a good pronunciation .

Grace : The French course began for Grace when she was twelve, some three or four years later than in the case of her companions. She wished to study with them, and therefore undertook an intensive course of tutoring in phonetics with the present teacher; during a summer vacation she continued studying, especially grammar work and phonetic transcription .In the fall she entered the advanced class. Her interest and ambition were sustained by her mother and by a family tradition of academic success.

Cherry : With a high I.Q. Cherry also possessed in her home a background of respect for scholastic excellence. Both parents were college graduates, the father a Phi Beta Kappa and a secondary school teacher. She received every encouragement in her study. She had a slight speech difficulty in a spasmodic lisp. She seized upon phonetics as a tool with which to help her overcome this handicap.

Molly : Fun provided the approach to study for Molly during the first part of her French course. Immature for her age, she showed a serious attitude only in the last years of the course. It was almost inspite of herself that she acquired an understanding of French sounds; eventually she was inspired with pride of success and ambition for improvement, and developed into one of the most ardent participants in this experiment. This change appeared to oc-

cur when success freed her, at least in her own mind, from a rather adverse critical attitude about the course on the part of her mother.

Phonetic group B consisted of three children of ten years of age when the present teacher undertook a leisurely study of phonetics as a means of improving pronunciation in pupils of high scholastic ability, each of whom had a speech difficulty in English .

Jeff : Jeff was brother to Cherry and came from a milieu offering every encouragement. He had a decided speech defect, apparently of nervous origin. He sought to master his difficulty, and was disinclined to pronounce any word about which he was uncertain. Phonetics offered him an opportunity to know how to pronounce without depending upon hearing the word repeated often before attempting it himself. With this reassuring aid , he was unafraid.

Mary : To judge from Mary's English pronunciation, her first speech patterns had been set by Irish maids. She had no definite sense of speech sounds; she could not hear what sounds she herself, or other persons, uttered. Written characters had no aural counterpart. She learned to associate with the phonetic symbols definite and particular sounds. She refused to take part in the first phonographic recording, but after six months study of phonetics, her interest was aroused so that she wished to be a part of the second recording .

Betsy : Betsy's speech in English was marred by a rapidity which allowed no enunciation. She was a wide reader with an unusually large reading vocabulary, which, however, did not enrich her speech. Words interested her as to meaning, but not as to sound. It was necessary to engage her active mind in an appreciation of enunciation, of speech sounds. By phonetics, this sense was developed. In fact a very keen discrimination developed, and a pride in good French pronunciation.

Much drill remains to be done with this small group, but a means of overcoming their speech difficulties in French has been presented to them.

The Experiment:

1. This experiment covers, in truth, several years, altho the full implications involved in the use of two different methods of teaching French pronunciation, were not realized until the last year of the French course taken by two groups of children. The participants of both groups experienced teaching by an identical method during the first two years of the course. During this period, the unsatisfactory results of the Imitation Method induced the teacher to organise another method. For reasons beyond the teacher's control, one group did not use the new, phonetic, method, but continued the study of pronunciation by imitation. For the other group, a manual of French sounds was prepared; it taught the sounds and the script of the phonetic symbols, and the spellings of those sounds; the teacher explained and demonstrated the physiological adjustments necessary in the production of those sounds. During succeeding years, pronunciation was studied and corrected by application of phonetics.

In the exposition of speech sounds by the phonetic manual, it is possible to introduce the study by certain consonant sounds sufficiently similar to English pronunciation of those consonants to be called the same sound; the increased tenseness of the French articulation can be easily demonstrated, and imitated. Then the vowels may be introduced, in their alphabetical order, using the known consonant sounds to form French words, short and easy to recall. For

instance, the letter a has two sounds, [a] , [ɑ] ; the pronunciation of [a] is acquired in the words ma , ta , sa , la , va , words which the pupil will find in even the simplest reading; the pronunciation of [ɑ] occurs in chat , pas , bas , again common, frequently found words in simple reading. The teacher read from the text, and as these two sounds occurred, the pupils made lists of the words containing the sounds, and from these lists discovered the French spellings of each sound. This work was slow; necessarily slow , since few pupils have ever listened to speech sounds, and must be trained to hear distinctions. Never, after the few initial consonants, should French sounds be taught as approximations of English sounds; the French sound should be taught in a French word. This is invariably possible. Never should more than one new sound be taught at a time. The old rule of from the familiar to the new should be adhered to.

These two sounds of the letter a firmly recognized, the vowel e was studied in its three pronunciations of [e] , [ɛ] , [ə] ; the first presents the greatest difficulty, but the teacher will be repaid if she establishes a speech distinction in her pupils between [e] and [ə] .

Of the remaining vowel sounds , u alone offers difficulty; much drill is required to induce satisfactory pronunciation of this utterly foreign sound. Once heard, however, pupils recognize its quality and are able to articulate it.

There follows introduction to other consonant sounds. The present writer believes that a thorough understanding of the pronunciation of the nasal group of sounds is of greatest

aid in acquiring a good French pronunciation. The sounds of the series are not in themselves difficult, but the differentiation by ear and by speech requires careful drill, as does a recognition of each sound when spelled in French. Furthermore drill is required to distinguish, and pronounce correctly, these same vowel-consonant combinations when not nasalized.

In the teaching of every new sound, there must be elements in the illustrating words of familiar and learned sounds; some sounds when first encountered seem difficult, but when presented with old acquaintances they are not, after all, so hard to come to know. It happens that some pupils can best hear and enunciate a given sound in one word, others in some other example. It is the duty of the teacher to recognise each pupil's "best-fitting" word, and to help the pupil to transfer the correct pronunciation to syllables less easily articulated.

It is true that initially all speech sounds must be learned from the teacher's pronunciation, but explanation of position of vocal organs is necessary. Once the elements of any speech group are comprehended, pronunciation no longer depends on imitation, but on recognition of the phonetic elements involved. Correct pronunciation is thus possible of printed passages the meaning of which is ignored.

2. By October, 1934, the results of the two methods of teaching French pronunciation to two groups of pupils who were then finishing their course of instruction with the present teacher, were of such nature as to provide a comparison

of methods. Up to this date, there had been no deliberate experimentation for the purpose of comparison of methods; chance decided which pupils were taught by the imitation method, which by the phonetic method. From this point on, a deliberate experiment was undertaken, intended to cover a period of six months. All participants were fully aware of the nature of the experiment, and engaged themselves to special effort in pronunciation study.

A passage of French of some fifty words was selected. Neither group was familiar with the passage, altho the vocabulary, very simple, was known to both groups. They were allowed to read it to themselves before making a phonographic record. The same procedure was followed with word lists involving, first, the pronunciation of the vowel-consonant combinations sometimes nasalized, sometimes not nasalized; secondly, words chosen as containing examples of the three pronunciations [e], [ɛ], [ə]. Each pupil made a phonographic record of these three selections; six months later, after special study of pronunciation during the interim, a second phonographic record was made of the same selections by the same pupils. (1)

During the six months interval, study consisted for both groups, of work in a grammar text, upon which was based reading, conversation, dictation; the same text was not used with both classes, as the phonetic group used a text with a phone-

(1) These phonographic records remain in the care of Mrs. Ione K. Flower, Bement School, Deerfield, Mass.

tic transcription of vocabulary and phonetic exercises, which the Non-phonetic group could not understand. Each text developed the same elementary principles of grammar with much similarity of simple and usual vocabulary. At regular periods of four or five weeks interval, tests were given to each class; a dictation test and a test of comprehension of spoken word. These tests were based on vocabulary previously studied; they all consisted of ten sentences each, the time allowed being of about twenty minutes. The dictation tests consisted of French sentences read twice in succession by the teacher and written down as understood by the pupil. The comprehension test consisted of French sentences read twice by the teacher and translated in writing by the pupil. Phonetic group A had also a third test consisting of ten sentences printed in phonetic script to be written into French. There were four or five sets of tests for each group during the six months interval.

Phonetic group B also made a phonographic record of a short passage from their French reader, and from the two word lists used in the other recordings. The first trial records of Phonetic group B were unsatisfactory in that one pupil refused to speak into the microphone. After six months study, another trial gave a full set of records of a more satisfactory nature.

Reading Test for Non-phonetic Group

	1st	2nd	
			Les couleurs de la ville de Paris sont bleu et
E	2	0	✓
Jy	1	1	✓
A	3	2	✓
Jt	1	0	✓
			rouge. Pendant la Révolution les républicains
E	4	3	✓
Jy	3	2	✓
A	5	1	✓
Jt	3	0	✓
			ont décidé de marier le drapeau de Paris et le
E	4	0	✓
Jy	2	1	✓
A	2	1	✓
Jt	0	0	
			drapeau des rois. Ils l'ont fait, et les Français
E	2	2	✓
Jy	5	1	✓
A	3	2	✓
Jt	3	3	✓
			ont aujourd'hui le drapeau tricolore, le drapeau
E	3	0	✓
Jy	2	0	✓
A	2	1	✓
Jt	3	0	✓
			bleu, blanc et rouge que nous avons vu.
E	1	1	✓
Jy	2	0	✓
A	3	2	✓
Jt	2	2	✓

61 25

Black ✓ = errors of first trial record.
 Red ✓ = errors of second trial record.

Word Test for Non-phonetic Group

List No. 1

	E	Jy	A	Jt
faim			✓	
leçon		✓	✓	
enfant				
jeune		✓		
nom			✓	✓
ami				
Seine				
homme	✓		✓	
temps		✓	✓	
humeur	✓	✓	✓	✓
singe		✓		
honi				
chacun				
immense	✓	✓	✓	✓
année		✓	✓	
humble		✓	✓	

1st 3 7 6 4
2nd 1 4 3 3

List No.2

	E	Jy	A	Jt
bête				
le				
né			✓	✓
verte				
je				
chez			✓	✓
lait	✓		✓	✓
cheval	✓			
ped	✓	✓	✓	✓
chère				
aller				
devant				
bec				
les		✓	✓	
qu'est-ce				
que c'est		✓		

1st 5 4 4 1
2nd 1 1 1 0

Black = errors of first trial.
Red ✓ = errors of second trial.

Chart II

Reading Test for Phonetic Group A

1st2nd Les couleurs de la ville de Paris sont bleu et

M 1 0 ✓

C 1 0 ✓

Je 0 1 ✓

G 0 0

rouge. Pendant la Révolution les républicains

M 1 0 ✓

C 1 0 ✓

Je 0 1 ✓

G 0 0

ont décidé de marier le drapeau de Paris et le

M 1 0 ✓

C 0 0

Je 0 0

G 0 0

drapeau des rois. Ils l'ont fait, et les Français

M 0 0

C 0 0

Je 2 0 ✓ ✓

G 0 0

ont aujourd'hui le drapeau tricolore, le drapeau

M 2 1 ✓ ✓

G 1 0 ✓

Je 2 1 ✓ ✓

G 2 1 ✓ ✓

bleu, blanc et rouge que nous avons vu.

M 0 0

C 0 0

Je 1 0 ✓

G 0 0

15 5

Black ✓ = errors of first trial record.

Red ✓ = errors of second trial record.

Word Test for Phonetic Group A

List No.1					List No.2				
	M	C	Je	G		M	C	Je	G
faim					bête				
leçon					le				
enfant					né				
jeune					verte				
nom	✓				je				
ami					chez			✓	
Seine			✓		lait			✓	
homme			✓		cheval				✓
temps	✓				pied				✓
humeur	✓				chère			✓	
singe	✓				aller				
honi	✓			✓	devant				
chacun	✓		✓		bec				
immense	✓	✓	✓	✓	les				
année					qu'est-ce				
humble					que c'est				
1st	7	1	2	2	1st	3	1	1	1
2nd	2	1	2	0	2nd	0	0	0	0

Black ✓ = errors of the first trial.
 Red / = errors of the second trial.

Chart IV

Phonographic Tests

Test	Reading		1st word list		2nd word list		Totals
	1st	2nd	1st	2nd	1st	2nd	
Non-phonetic							
Ellen	16	6	3	1	5	1	32
Judy	15	5	7	2	4	1	34
Alice	18	9	6	3	4	1	41
Janet	<u>12</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>25</u>
Totals	61	25	20	9	14	3	132
Phonetic A							
Molly	5	1	7	2	3	0	18
Cherry	3	0	1	1	1	0	6
Grace	2	1	2	0	1	0	6
Jane	<u>5</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>13</u>
Totals	15	5	12	5	6	0	43

Table II

Table II: Number of errors of pronunciation made by pupils of Non-phonetic and Phonetic A groups in first and second trials of a reading test of fifty-two words of French, and word lists of sixteen and fifteen French words.

Table III

Non-phonetic			Phonetic A		
	E.Q.	Errors		E.Q.	Errors
Alice	117	39	Cherry	123	6
Janet	109	24	Molly	120	16
Judy	107	34	Grace	109	6
Ellen	102	30	Jane	105	13

Table III: Educational Quotient scores and number of pronunciation errors in phonographic record tests of Non-phonetic and Phonetic A groups.

Table IV

Non-phonetic			Phonetic A		
	Home	Errors		Home	Errors
Janet	1	24	Cherry	1	6
Judy	2.5	34	Grace	2	6
Alice	2.5	39	Molly	3	16
Ellen	4	30	Jane	4	13

Table IV: Home ranking in respect to attitude toward pupil's study, and number of Pronunciation errors in phonographic record tests of Non-phonetic and Phonetic A groups.

Table V

Non-phonetic			Phonetic A		
	Eng.Voc.	Errors		Eng.Voc.	Errors
Judy	72	34	Cherry	104	6
Ellen	69	30	Molly	67	16
Alice	59	39	Jane	54	13
Janet	42	24	Grace	39	6

Table V: Number of correct choices of definition of 150 English words of the Johnson O'Connor English Vocabulary Test, and of the number of pronunciation errors in phonographic record tests of Non-phonetic and Phonetic A groups.

Table VI

Test	Number of Pronunciation Errors			Eng.Voc.
	Phonographic	Comprehension	Dictation	Correct Definition
Non-phonetic				
Ellen	30	54	85	69
Alice	39	61	43	59
Judy	34	49	49	72
Janet	24	58	70	42
Phonetic A				
Molly	16	18	31	67
Cherry	6	11	11	104
Grace	6	30	20	39
Jane	13	23	34	54

Table VI : Number of pronunciation errors in phonographic record, comprehension, and dictation tests as compared with number of correct definition choices in English Vocabulary Test.

Table VIII

Test	Comprehension					Dictation						
	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5		
Non-phonetic						Total					Total	
Ellen	14	8		16	16	54	34	22		22	7	85
Alice	11	15		20	15	61	21	5		11	6	43
Judy	11	13		13	12	49	25	10		11	3	49
Janet	<u>8</u>	<u>12</u>		<u>22</u>	<u>16</u>	<u>58</u>	<u>36</u>	<u>8</u>		<u>21</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>70</u>
Total	44	48		71	59	222	116	45		65	21	247
Phonetic A						Total					Total	
Molly	5	10	1	1	1	18	9	10	4	3	5	31
Cherry	1	4	2	3	1	11	1	6	2	1	1	11
Grace	8	9	2	7	4	30	9	10	1	0	0	20
Jane	<u>6</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>23</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>12</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>34</u>
Total	20	26	8	16	12	82	27	38	11	8	12	96
Phonetic Transcription						Molly	8	22	5	8		43
tests for Phonetic A						Cherry	0	3	5	0		8
						Grace	5	7	3	3		18
						Jane	<u>8</u>	<u>24</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>4</u>		<u>43</u>
						Total	21	56	20	15		112

Table VIII: Number of errors in four Comprehension for Spoken Word tests, four Dictation tests given to Non-phonetic group; and five of each of these two tests given to Phonetic A; four phonetic transcription tests for Phonetic A group.

Reading Test for Phonetic Group B

Voilà Gaston. Gaston est un garçon. Il cligne de l'oeil.

B 4

J 2

Il a deux yeux, mais il cligne de l'oeil gauche. Il

B 3

J 2

porte un chandail. Le chandail est rayé. La raie

B 1

J 2

noire est étroite; la raie blanche est large. Sa cu-

B 3

J 4

lotte est noire; ses bas sont blancs; ses souliers

B 1

J 2

sont noirs. Pourquoi cligne-t-il de l'oeil? Il a une

B 3

J 2

idée amusante. Quelle est cette idée?

B 2

J 6

B 17

J 20

Black ✓ = errors of first trial record.

Chart V a

Reading Test for Phonetic Group B.

Deux crayons et deux plumes. Un, deux, trois, quatre;

B 0

J 0

M 1

une, deux, trois, quatre. Les deux plumes ne sont pas

B 0

J 1

M 1

sur les deux crayons. Elles ne sont pas sur les deux

B 0

J 1

M 2

crayons. Les deux crayons ne sont pas sur les plumes.

B 0

J 1

M 2

Ils ne sont pas sur les plumes. Ils sont sur le livre.

B 0

J 1

M 2

Comptez les plumes. Comptez les crayons.

B 0

J 0

M 0

B 0

J 4

M 8

Red ✓ = errors of second trial.

Chart V b

Word Test for Phonetic Group B

List No. 1

	B	J	M
faim	✓		✓
leçon	✓	✓	✓
enfant	✓	✓	
jeune	✓	✓	
nom		✓	
ami			
Seine		✓	
homme	✓	✓	
temps		✓	
humeur	✓	✓	✓
singe		✓	
honi	✓	✓	
chacun		✓	✓
immense		✓	
année		✓	
humble	✓	✓	

1st 8 13
2nd 1 4 4

List No. 2

	B	J	M
bête			✓
le			
né			✓
verte	✓	✓	
je		✓	
chez		✓	
lait	✓	✓	✓
cheval			
pied			
chère			
aller			
devant			✓
beg			
les			
qu'est-ce			
que c'est			

1st 2 7
2nd 0 1 1

Black ✓ = errors of first trial.
Red ✓ = errors of second trial.

Chart VI

Phonographic Tests

Test	Reading		1st word list		2nd word list		E.Q.
	1st	2nd	1st	2nd	1st	2nd	
Phonetic B							
Betsy	17	0	8	1	2	0	117
Jeff	20	4	13	4	7	1	137
Mary	—	8	—	2	—	1	124

Table VII

Table VII: Number of errors in pronunciation made by pupils of Phonetic group B in first and second trials of a French reading test, and of lists of French words; E.Q.'s of members of the group.

TREATMENT OF DATA

The phonographic reading tests for Non-phonetic group revealed certain errors common to all participants, viz, Charts I and II. It is evident that there was a lack of aural appreciation of the differentiation in vowel sounds in the words les , le , des , de , la— that is in the values of [e] and [ə] . Invariably, the sound of the vowel u was incorrect. Since this sound is unfamiliar to English speech, the pronunciation must be remembered, and apparently some other aid than aural memory is needed to fix it in mind. Confusion existed as to the pronunciation of ill , even in a word which had served repeatedly as an exception to the [j] sound. Even in the second trial this difficulty had not been cleared up. In the first trial there was small appreciation of the euphonic desirability of linking, as in the phrases ont aujourd'hui and nous avons ; repeated drilling developed this sense by the time of the second trial. The number of errors of pronunciation in the second trial was reduced by a little less than half; of this half, it was noticeable that few were new mistakes. The great part were established mispronunciations.

List No.1 presented words with vowel-consonant combinations, which are sometimes nasalized, sometimes not. It is evident that there existed confusion as to the exceptions to nasalization, as well as to the pronunciation of the nasal sounds. In first and second trials, the fact that the letter h has no sound was uniformly ignored. A

phonetically trained group becomes conscious of this absence of sound because of the absence of a symbol for the consonant h . Again the vowel u caused confusion, whether by itself or in combination with other vowels.

List No.2 reiterated uncertainty as to values of [œ] , [ɛ] , [ɔ] , as was shown in the reading test. These three sounds, and the French spellings producing the sounds, were not clearly differentiated in the pupils' minds. There was no aid possible by the recall of graphic representation of the distinctions. Some of this confusion had been removed at the time of the second trial, as is evident in Chart II.

In the reading tests for Phonetic group A the phonographic records showed a tendency to individual errors of pronunciation rather than to typical ones, thus revealing no lack of understanding of any definite fundamental. The one exception occurred in the unusual word tricolore, which apparently suffered from confusion with the familiar word couleur. The class had been drilled on the sounds [ø] and [œ] as occurring as final or medial in pronunciation of a word; nevertheless the word couleur presented some uncertainty as to the sound of the diphthong eu . The euphonic need of linking was uniformly sensed in the expression nous avons , but not in ont aujourd'hui , perhaps because of less frequent occurrence in speech. However, when the pupils listened to the records and checked the errors of each trial, it was decided that the failure to link should count as an error

because of the more pleasing sound resulting from linking. In the second trial the improvement was effected.

As in the reading test , the errors in the word-list tests were individual. No general lack of comprehension of fundamentals was revealed, except in the word immense, in which imm and en , non-nasalized and nasalized combinations, caused confusion, persisting even into the second trial. Such continuous confusion emphasizes the necessity of insistence on distinction between the nasalized and non-nasalized combinations.

A possible criticism of the validity of such tests as to pronunciation ability became evident when, in the first trial of the first word-list, Molly was confused by the group of final consonants of the word temps , pronounced the p, realized her mistake at once with an emotional reaction which distracted her in several following pronunciations. Practice before the microphone might diminish the liability of emotional disturbance. It may be said, however, that all participants in these trials were equally unacquainted with recording experience.

In analysing the pronunciation errors of the two trials of each group, and of the two tests as compared with each other, certain results became apparent. The second trial results, occurring six months after the first trials, all showed consistently a marked improvement in pronunciation, the decrease of errors being roughly by half(See Tab-

le II). Special attention to pronunciation does tend to improvement in pronunciation, especially in the correction of errors which are recognized and analysed. The errors of the Non-phonetic group apparently were due to a lack of comprehension of fundamental phonetic elements; the errors were typical in the pronunciation of the group as a whole. On the other hand, the pronunciation errors of the Phonetic group A were not made in common; they were individual mistakes, and hence they revealed no failure of comprehension of general underlying fundamentals of pronunciation. The sum of the errors of all the phonographic tests was much smaller in the case of Phonetic group A, the ratio being 43 errors in the Phonetic group as against 132 errors in the Non-phonetic group. The same proportions held generally throughout the various trials of the tests. The total of the Phonetic group A was unduly increased by the emotional disturbance of one pupil, whose usual contribution of errors was small in a test scoring.

Table III shows Educational Quotients as compared with the number of pronunciation errors made by pupils of both groups. There does not appear to be any positive correlation. Intelligence, as scored by tests, does not appear to be a measure of ability to pronounce French correctly. It is true that in the case of the pupil making the smallest total number of pronunciation errors throughout this entire experiment, her E.Q. was also the highest among all the pupils of the Non-phonetic and Phonetic A groups. It is also

true that she had a slight speech defect in English, not great enough to mar her speech, but sufficient to require effort to overcome.

This matter of effort on the part of the pupil is, in the present writer's opinion, one of much importance and, in her observation, is closely allied with the home attitude. In order to show such a relation, a ranking for the home has been tabulated in Table IV ;it is to be read in comparison with the number of pronunciation errors. This ranking is based on the writer's subjective evaluation of the home and parents as known socially and in connection with school-work; it includes an intelligent direction of educational aims, an attitude of enlightened encouraging, and a background of scholastic training or appreciation of scholastic achievement. The writer believes that it shows the home attitude toward school-work, and that such a ranking may be an indication of the degree of interest in scholastic achievement to be expected from the child of such a home. The all important factor in achievement is incentive, and to that the home can contribute largely.

Table IV, then, does reveal such a relationship in a more positive degree than exists between E.Q. and pronunciation errors, or between English Vocabulary and pronunciation errors, in which tabulations (See Table III and Table V) there exists practically no correlation. Added to such

statistical evidence as Table IV presents, the writer wishes to state that during the whole course of seven years, the pupils participating in this experiment, and others whose records are not included, were markedly influenced by the attitude of the home towards this rather unusual subject of an elementary school curriculum. A favorable attitude is the home's contribution to the pupil's achievement. Occasionally a pupil may fare well without it or may free himself from the handicap of an indifferent or unsympathetic attitude; most children find in the home's interest and encouragement a necessary incentive. This incentive culminates in attainment of the goal. If only the home would heed !

As a further note on phonographic recording experimentation, the writer wishes to remark that the resulting scores in the present case, while important for this report, were of secondary interest from a teaching point of view. The primary value of phonographic recording consists in a stimulus to the study of pronunciation. After the first trials, each pupil prepared a chart similar to Chart I and Chart II: each group heard its four records played on the phonograph, and checked the pronunciation errors of each record. Close attention was required and frequent repetition, but interest never flagged until every error was detected and checked on the charts. Such study provided excellent ear-training, all the more interesting because these pupils were listening to their own and their companions' voices. For the first time they were actually hearing their own speech, pleasant and un-

pleasant qualities, good and poor articulation, correct and incorrect pronunciation. Criticism of a phonographic record has no personal implication; it loses a sting and possible cause of embarrassment. Owners of voices may be quite critical of their own speech habits. Such was the reaction of the present writer's pupils. The interest was so lively, the ear-training so valuable, that she felt that such happy results alone justified the experiment. As a frequent occurrence in speech study phonographic recording cannot but be an aid:

During the six months interval between the first and second phonographic trials, two sets of tests, four in number, were given to the Non-phonetic group to test ability to understand the spoken word; these tests consisted of written French sentences dictated by the teacher, and of written translation of spoken French sentences. The four sets of tests were spaced over the six months period. Phonetic group A had the same type of tests, five in number, during the same six months period. In addition this group had a phonetic transcription test, which the other group was unable to take.

Four out of five of these tests showed an improvement during the six months in ability to understand the spoken (French) word, but this improvement is by no means regular; and in one instance there was the reverse. It is the present writer's belief that improvement in ability to understand foreign speech does not progress in orderly fashion during intervals over a given period. It increases by plateaux and leaps of uncertain extent and incidence; if, at the end of six months study, some improvement is marked, pupil and teacher may well feel encouraged.

In comparison between the results of these tests for the two groups, Phonetic group A again made a better showing. The totals (See Table VIII) stood: for Non-phonetic group, number of errors in Comprehension test, 222; in Dictation test, 247; for Phonetic group A, Comprehension

test,82;in Dictation test,96. It seems permissible to conclude from such scores that detailed and intensive study of the phonetic elements of speech results in a better understanding of the spoken(foreign) word. Imitation does not reduce speech-sounds to elements which can be studied and memorized.

These tests would seem to contribute corroboration to George Hempl's proposition that the mental activity involved in acquiring a clear idea of the pronunciation of a word helps to fix the meaning of the word in the mind, that active vocabulary is increased by knowledge of the pronunciation of the words. Apparently the Non-phonetic group did not have a sufficiently firm hold on the vocabulary of the lessons they were studying to be able to recall the word or the meaning when spoken by the teacher as reliably as did the Phonetic group A.

The reaction of the participants in this experiment offered commentary upon the two methods. As the pupils of Phonetic group A became aware of difficulties in pronunciation, of uncertainties as to the sound of syllables and individual letters, they knew how to help themselves by re-studying a manual of French sounds, and by composing from reading texts lists of word examples to illustrate the conventional spellings of the sound under consideration. All such analysis was encouraged; the teacher seldom pronounced a doubtful word for a pupil until the latter had reduced the word to its phonetic elements, and was thus able to

pronounce it without the teacher's assistance , except as corroboration.

Such analysis was impossible for the Non-phonetic group, who depended upon repetition by the teacher and by themselves to fix the pronunciation in mind. There was frequent complaint that there was no way to recall a pronunciation, except to remember. The teacher was aware that the members of the Phonetic group A were studying pronunciation with efficient tools, and that among the Non-phonetic group there existed a vague sentiment of grievance that tools for study were lacking. The pupils themselves appeared to have no doubt as to which method of teaching pronunciation was the more effective.

The use which pupils can make of these tools is illustrated by the Phonetic Transcription tests, Table VIII, page 59. The ten sentences of each of this set of four tests were written in phonetic characters. In order to transcribe the words into French, it was necessary for the pupil to pronounce mentally the phonetic symbols, which thus uttered for aural comprehension formed the French word, and recalled the conventional spelling. Grammatical mistakes may occur, and in fact did occur, in tests of this nature, but such mistakes should not be numbered as pronunciation errors; they belong to another phase of language study. It is interesting to the teacher that pupils find this work of phonetic transcription intriguing; it seems to have a lure similar to that of jig-saw and cross-word puzzles, a lure very

profitable for pronunciation drill, whether putting French into transcription or the latter into French spelling.

The writer is conscious that the results obtained in teaching French pronunciation by two different methods to these two groups, are based on small numbers of participants. However, there is a uniformity of superiority in all results obtained by one method over those obtained by the other method. These results conform with those obtained by the phonetic method in language work with high-school and college students. The method, then, seems adapted to all levels of language teaching. That the presentation of the symbols of the International Phonetic Alphabet must be effected in a somewhat different manner for young pupils is not objection to the method itself. In view of the recognized greater physiological ease of acquiring new speech-sounds during childhood, the sounds of the symbols are learned with surprisingly little effort by young pupils. It has been markedly noticeable in the present writer's experience that much less resort to detailed explanation of physiological adjustments of vocal organs has been necessary in the case of young pupils than that required by Freshman students. Once speech-sounds are actually heard and distinctions truly recognized, young children experience little difficulty in reproducing these sounds, without any great insistence on the physiological aspect of articulation; except in a few instances, such as the sound of r, gn, l, and the nasals.

The symbols then fix these recognized sounds in the pupil's mind; they do not introduce confusion, but hold steady the memory of each sound no matter what the confusing conventional French spelling may be. At this level of elementary learning, a good many other symbols are fixing sounds and meanings in the pupil's mind: mathematical signs, quotation marks, punctuation marks, the dollar sign, musical notation. Willingly and easily are these speech-sound symbols accepted along with other new learning. None of these symbols can be taught hurriedly, not on account of their meaning, but because the young mind requires time to absorb the new. And still more time, with constant drill, is necessary in learning how to use these new tools. Learning to apply is no quick performance, but a patient repetition. Once a correct pattern of the elements of speech-sounds is memorized at this age, and an understanding of how to use the pattern is built into pronunciation habits, this pattern serves as a valuable aid in foreign language study during all the subsequent years of schooling.

The phonographic record tests of Phonetic group B, (pp.49,50,51) presented less of detailed interest than those of the other older groups. In the first place , the tests themselves are not so well organized. One child refused to make the first record. The text of this reading was chosen from a reader, "QUE FAIT GASTON? ", with which the pupils were familiar from a year's use; it seemed an appropriate selection in view of the fact that at that moment the vocabulary was known to the pupils, and the story fresh in their minds . Such was not the case six months later when other material was in use. The constant reference text was "PHONETIC GATEWAY TO FRENCH," by P.H. Churchman. From this text selection was made for the second phonographic record trial. The teacher now believes that the matter of familiarity with text is less important than that both trials be made on the same text in order to measure accurately pronunciation improvement.

The first trial presented more varied speech-sounds, and thus offered more opportunities for mispronunciations, which revealed a general vagueness about the phonetic elements of French speech-sounds. In the second trial errors in pronunciation were fewer, and such errors were of an individual nature. Final re still caused trouble; a fault, which in the present writer's opinion, is due to poor understanding of syllablization, whence derives a failure to utter the re with the preceding consonant .

A characteristic of Mary's usual pronunciation was a failure to distinguish between the sounds [e], [ɛ], and [ə]; they were all one to her, and any one served. She failed to hear differentiations, and she produced none in speech. This inability marked the same vowel sounds in English. When and then she "paddy-ised" into whin and thin, altho she did understand a difference in pronunciation of thin (her pronunciation of then) and thin(not bulky). She was conscious of no difference between les and le ; [le], [lɛ] , [lə] , offered choice which she took without attention to the French spelling. In taking dictation of very simple sentences, she made many grammatical errors because of this inability to distinguish vowel values.

The two word-list tests offered better comparison as to pronunciation improvement than did the reading tests. The first word-list, especially, showed a great improvement in understanding of vowel-consonant combinations nasalized and not nasalized. Here , as well as in the second word-list, errors were due to lack of ability to differentiate fundamental phonetic elements. Even six months of repeated, altho only occasional, drill did not fix these sounds any too accurately in memory.

It is interesting to note in this group that E.Q. does not denote superior ability in pronouncing French (See Table VII, p.52). Jeff and Mary both surpass Betsy as to E.Q.'s, but the latter had a far more satisfactory pronunciation.

She has indeed developed a definite language ability, keenly enjoying the mere sound of foreign words. On the other hand, Jeff has as high an E.Q. as any pupil of the present teacher, but this high intelligence scoring does not carry with it high ability in French pronunciation.

The writer feels that the six months study of phonetics improved the pronunciation of the three children, and she observes after another year's further work that the study is still bringing forth good results in language work.

SUMMARY

This study was undertaken in the attempt to evaluate the respective effectiveness of two methods of teaching French pronunciation to young pupils. The methods under observation were the "Imitation Method " and the "Phonetic Method". Numerous tests, devised to examine the results of instruction obtained in groups of pupils, showed a constantly smaller number of pronunciation errors and a uniformly greater ability of comprehension in that group which had been taught pronunciation by the "Phonetic Method". The scorings in these tests remained so consistently , and by such a wide margin, in favor of the latter group's performance, that a conclusion seems well founded to the effect that that method employed in the instruction of the group proves more effective at this level of French language teaching than does the "Imitation Method".

Such findings, moreover, are in accord with the results obtained in similar experimentation in foreign language study among high-school and college students.

APPENDIX

In order to provide very simple material with which to carry on instruction in French, the present teacher wrote various short dramatizations which her pupils enacted. These plays served as a means of presenting easy and fluent French with the rhythm of usual speech. They were written in play form, rather than as reading, in order to produce the feeling of the spoken language, to provide material for memorizing, and to respond to children's ever-present desire "to give a play".

Pronunciation errors were studied and corrected thru application of phonetics. In "lines" examples of speech-sounds were found, and listed, linkings were noted, and the euphonic qualities of speech patterns appreciated. Common phrases and grammatical constructions became familiar from repetition.

Two of this series of plays are appended to this report to illustrate completely the method employed by the writer in the instruction of French to classes of young children.

IL Y A UNE DIFFÉRENCE

Personnages : Pierre ; Henri, ouvriers quelconques en blouses; Jean , mécanicien en blouse; Michaud en tablier blanc et coiffé d'un bonnet de coton; deux jeunes dames en costumes de voyage.

Scène : Un coin de rue de village. A droite un pan de la devanture d'une auberge dont on voit la porte ouverte audessus de laquelle s'étale une enseigne:

"GRANDE AUBERGE DU TOURISME UNIVERSEL

A.MICHAUD, Prop.

Touring-Club de France. "

Une petite table ronde sur le devant de la scène; deux petits verres là-dessus; deux chaises à côté. Pierre est assis; Henri va s'asseoir. Il vient de parler aux deux jeunes dames qui s'en vont du côté droit. Au moment où Henri se rassied , Michaud se présente sur le seuil en regardant après les dames.

Michaud : De quoi s'agit-il , Henri ? Qui sont ces dames?

Henri : Je ne risque pas de vous le dire, Michaud.(Il boit.)

Pierre : Etrangères , à leur façon de parler.

Michaud : Que voulaient-elles ?

Henri : Eh ma foi, je ne risque pas de vous dire ça, non plus !

Michaud : Leur façon de parler. Elles disaient qu'elles cherchaient "du pont".

Pierre : Il n'y a pas de pont par ici.

Henri : C'est ce que je leur ai dit. Pas de pont, mesdames, pas de pont par ici. Et puis l'une d'elles a insisté, "du bon pont".

Michaud : Ce sont peut-être des touristes qui cherchent le vieux pont de Vaison, plus loin sur la route. On dit qu'il vaut la peine d'être visité.

Pierre : Mais pourquoi est-ce le "bon pont" ? Il est vieux comme je ne sais quoi.

Michaud : C'est bien pour ça qu'il est bon. Il date de loin, des temps des Romains. Il faut qu'il soit bon pour durer deux mille ans.

Henri : Alors, si ce sont des touristes, qu'elles aillent trouver le "bon pont".

Michaud : Mais, voyons, si ce sont des touristes peut-être est-ce d'une panne qu'elles voulaient parler.

Pierre : Et avec ça ! Elles parlaient de quelque chose de rond... rond... rond comme ça. (Il fait un rond des bras.)

Michaud : Ah, un pneu de crevé ! (Criant par la porte) Jean, il y a de votre affaire ici.

(Jean se précipite par la porte, et regarde autour de lui.)

Jean : Qu'est-ce qu'il y a ?

- Michaud : Une panne.
- Jean : Une panne ? Où , ça ?
- Michaud : (Confus) Ah....ma foi... je ne sais trop....Il est venu des dames touristes qui disaient chercher du pont.... des pannes.... on ne sait trop..
- Jean : Des dames qui cherchent des pannes! Ça, c'est quelque chose de nouveau ! J'aimerais le voir ; Pour les dames une panne, c'est une peine à éviter plutôt qu'à chercher ;
- Hneri : Il n'y a que les mécaniciens qui les cherchent, hein ?
- Jean : Et encore chez autrui.
- Pierre : Comme les peines, on les préfère chez les autres.
- Michaud : On ne cherche pas de peine, mais, mon dieu, comme on se donne de la peine quelquefois ;
- Henri : Surtout les aubergistes, hein ? (Il montre l'enseigne.) Ils se donnent de la peine pour attirer le monde touriste! (On rit .)
- Michaud : Et pour faire payer les petits verres aux blagueurs ; (On rit plus fort .)
- Pierre : Et puis Henri, tu sais , toi, tu n'as pas bien compris. Elles ont dit " dou pont."
- Michaud : Doux pont ? Quel pont est-ce, celui-là ?
- Jean : Deux pannes ? A la fois ? Pas de chance !
- Henri : Messieurs, donnez-vous la peine de regarder par-là.

(Ils regardent à la cantonade droite; puis ils se regardent étonnés. A ce moment les deux jeunes dames traversent la scène au fond, du droit au gauche. Elles portent un grand pain rond. L'une d'elles dit d'un accent anglais très prononcé, "Merci".)

Michaud : (Avec beaucoup de façons, en véritable aubergiste de la Grande Auberge du Tourisme Universel) Il n'y a pas de quoi, madame. Il n'y a vraiment pas de quoi.

(Elles sortent.)

Henri

: Du pain !

Pierre

Jean

: C'est ma panne , hein ? Rond.... rond comme ça ; Sapristi ! (Il fait un rond des bras.)

Michaud

: Tout de même , il y a une différence !

(RIDEAU)

VIGNETTES DE M^{lle}. MISS

I

- Scène : Le salon chez une famille bourgeoise française.
- Personnages : La mère; Laure, qui a dix ans; Camille qui a douze ans ; une jeune femme anglaise.
- Mère : Il faut avoir beaucoup de patience avec Miss. Vous êtes petits et elle est une grande personne. Pourtant, il ne faut pas oublier qu' elle ne sait pas parler français comme vous.
- Laure : Ne sait-elle rien, maman ?
- Mère : Si, elle connaît beaucoup de mots. Elle sait assez bien prononcer les sons français, mais...
- Camille : Mais quoi , maman ?
- Mère : Elle fait beaucoup de fautes .
- Laure : Exprès ?
- Mère : Oh non, non! Assurément que non !
- Camille : Ne sait-elle pas mieux ?
- Mère : Non, mon enfant. Elle apprend. Voilà pourquoi il faut être très polis et très obligeants.
- Camille : Oui, maman, nous le serons.
- Mère : Alors , je vous quitte pour aller faire des courses. (Elle sort.)
- Camille : C'est drôle qu'on peut ne pas savoir le français.

Laure : Comment peut-on penser si l'on ne connaît pas les noms des choses ?

Camille : On les pense en anglais.

Laure : Est-ce là même chose que de s'asseoir sur une chaise en anglais qu'en français ?

Camille : Mais , oui ! On plie les genoux, on se baisse, et voilà, on est assis.

(Il accompagne ses mots avec des actions.

Mlle. Miss entre portant chapeau, manteau et gants. Camille se lève.

les deux enfants la saluent poliment.)

Les

enfants : Bonjour , Mademoiselle. Bonjour, Miss.

Miss : Bonjour , chaqu'un.

Laure : Chacun ?

Miss : Oui, vous , Laure , et vous, Camille.

Camille : Nous sommes " tout le monde " .

Miss : "Le monde ", vous ! The world !

Camille : Pas " le monde " . Mais " tout le monde", Miss.

Miss : Deux sont " tout le monde " ?

Camille : Deux , vingt , cent, c'est toujours "tout le monde".

Miss : Bien ! Bonjour , tout le monde !

Laure : C'est ça ! Avez-vous fait une bonne promenade ?

Miss : Bonne promenade, longue promenade, vite.

Camille : Eh oui, parce qu'il fait froid ce matin.

Miss : Beaucoup froid! Une poêle pour chauffer .

(Les enfants ne comprennent pas.)

Laure : Une poêle pour chauffer ?

Miss : Oui, en Angleterre une poêle pour chauffer.

Camille : Mais nous avons des poêles en France , aussi.

Miss : En France , aussi ?

Camille : Mais oui, Mlle. Miss.

Miss : Je ne regarde pas ici.

Camille : Mais non, Miss. Vous ne voyez pas la poêle au salon .

Laure : Elle est à la cuisine.

Camille : Je vais la chercher .

Laure : Eh oui, allez la chercher . Il faut être obligeant.

(Camille sort .)

Est-ce que les poêles en Angleterre sont grandes?

Miss : Oh oui, et rondes comme ça.

(Elle fait un grand rond des bras.)

Laure : Si grandes que ça ! Quel appétit chez les Anglais!

Miss : Oui , et haut comme ça.

(Elle se touche à l'épaule .)

Laure : Si hautes que ça , Mlle. Miss ?

(Camille rentre en courant . Il

porte une petite poêle en fonte.)

Camille : Voilà , Mlle. Miss!

Miss : Ça, une poêle ?

Camille : Mais, oui, Miss . Pourquoi pas ?

- Miss : Pour chauffer les pieds et les mains ?
- Laure : Pour chauffer les pieds ! Mais non ! Pour faire cuire de la viande, le filet et les cotelettes.
- Camille : Elle veut dire un poêle ;
- Miss : Poêle , oui . Un...une.. quelle différence. Il n'importe.
- Camille : Oh si, Miss, il importe beaucoup. En français, on ne choisit pas un ou une . C'est toujours l'un ou l'autre, mais pas par choix !
- Laure : Une poêle , voilà ! (Elle fait semblant de passer la poêle au feu pour faire cuire.)
- Camille : Un poêle est pour le charbon, pour tenir chaud.
(Il fait semblant de manier une pelle à charbon, et de tisonner un feu.)
- Miss : (tristement) Comment sait-on ?
- Laure : Mais....on sait...
- Camille : On apprend. Il faut toujours chercher un truc pour se rappeler si le substantif est du féminin ou du masculin. Une poêle, c'est du féminin (en designant Laure) et c'est une femme qui la tient pour cuisiner. (Laure fait semblant de passer la poêle au feu.)
- Un poêle , c'est du masculin (en se designant) et c'est le masculin qui s'en occupe.
(Il fait semblant de ranimer le feu.)
- Laure : Comprenez-vous , Miss ?

(Miss attrape Camille par le bras; elle attrape Laure par le bras; elle se met entre les deux enfants; elle s'incline d'un côté , puis de l'autre.)

Miss : Toujours un ou une! (S'inclinant à Camille , puis
à Laure .)

Toujours le ou la ! (Même action .)

Bonjour, M. le poêle ; (Même action.)

Bonjour, Mme. la poêle! (Même action .)

Adieu , M. le poêle! (Même action.)

Adieu , Mme. la poêle! (Même action.)

(Rideau)

II

(Mlle. Miss est assise à la table,
 et étudie; Laure entre, suivie
 de Camille.)

Laure : Nous voilà de retour de l'école, Mlle. Miss.

Camille : Et Miss fait toujours ses études.

Miss : Il faut. Il faut apprendre "le" et "la" ;
 "un " et "une " .

Laure : Pourquoi dites-vous presque toujours "un", Miss?

Miss : (tristement) Je ne sais pas. En anglais il y a
 toujours "un " . Alors.....

Camille : Est-ce que "un " est plus facile que "une " ?

(Miss répète les deux mots plusieurs
 fois .)

Miss : Un.....une.....un.....une..... Ni "un " ni
 "une" n'est plus facile. Tous deux sont des sons
 très français et difficiles.

Laure : Est-ce que ces sons ne sont pas en anglais ?

Miss : Non , Laure.

Camille : Alors , il n'y a pas de choix, n'est-ce pas ?

Miss : Vous dites , Camille , qu'il faut toujours cher-
 cher un truc pour se rappeler si c'est du mascu-
 lin ou du féminin. Qu'est-ce que c'est qu'un truc?

Camille : Un truc , c'est une association d'idées qui fait
 rappeler. Vous savez que "mère" est du féminin,
 n'est-ce pas ?

- Miss : Oui, je sais cela. "Mère " est du féminin, la, une.
- Laure : La mère-chatte, et la mère-chienne, et la mère
à nous!
- Camille : Alors , truc : La mère garde la maison pour la
famille.
- Miss : La mère , la maison , la famille, tout ensemble.
- Camille : Très bien ; Et encore : Une femme porte une robe;
un homme porte un pantalon et un gilet et un habit.
- Miss : Je comprends.
- Camille : Cherchez une association, vous-même , Miss.
- Miss : (lentement) Une maîtresse dans une école apprend une
leçon d'une langue étrangère à une classe.
- Laure : Très bien ; Encore , Mlle. Miss.
- Miss : Un garçon prend un crayon pour écrire un devoir
dans un cahier!
- Camille : Ça y est , ça y est ! Voici une autre association;
une assiette , une serviette , une fourchette. Qu'
est-ce que c'est ?
- Miss : Les choses de la table pour manger .
- Camille : Ce sont les choses du couvert, mais cela n'est
pas l'association.
- Laure : Dites encore d'autres mots, Camille, s'il vous plaît.
- Camille : Une casquette , une noisette, une étiquette, une
lunette.
- Laure : J'y suis, j'y suis ! Et vous , Miss ?
- Miss : L'association , c'est le son ette, n'est-ce pas?

- Camille : C'est ça .
- Laure : J'en connais, j'en connais.
- Camille : Eh bien , allez-y.
- Laure : Une association, une éducation, une instruction, une occasion , une na....
- Miss : Je sais , je sais.
- Laure : Une nation , une....
- Camille : Attends , Laure. Miss y est. Qu'est-ce que c'est?
- Miss : C'est le son "tion " au bout.
- Camille : La terminaison "tion " et " sion" est toujours du féminin.
- Laure : A vous , Miss . Trouvez un autre truc.
- Miss : (tout en cherchant) Une maîtresse, une comtesse, une duchesse, une messe, une masse, une classe.
- Camille : Très bien.
- Laure : Mais qu'est-ce ? Je n'y suis pas!
- Camille : Encore , Mlle. Miss.
- Miss : Je n'en sais plus. A vous , Camille.
- Camille : Une tigresse, une ogresse, une tasse de thé,
(Laure rit et bat des mains.)
une hôtesses , une caresses, une chasse aux fées.
- Laure : J'y suis à présent!
- Camille : A la bonne heure !
- Miss : Bravo, bravo!
- Laure : Et je connais une autre association. La France, l'indépendance, l'expérience , la danse...
- Camille : La chance , la médisance...

(Ils s'interrompent en criant toujours l'un plus fort que l'autre.)

Laure : La pénitance...

Camille : L'essence pour le Renault...

Laure : La science

Miss : La silence....

(La mère ouvre la porte .)

Mère : Mais quel bruit ! Qu'est-ce qu'il y a donc ?

Camille : Oh , maman, c'est la silence au féminin !

(Les enfants rient et battent des mains.)

La mère regarde Miss.)

Mère : Hélas , Miss , de tous ces mots , le seul au masculin est " silence " .

Camille : Et pour bonne raison , maman !

(Rideau)

I I I

(Mlle. Miss , debout à la fenêtre , regarde à l'extérieur : son chapeau et son manteau reposent au dossier d'une chaise; ses gants et son porte-monnaie sont sur la table a côté d'une lettre dépliée. Miss se retourne au moment où Camille entre en scène. Il voit qu'elle a l'air découragé .)

- Camille : N'êtes-vous pas encore prête, Mlle. Miss ?
- Miss : Pas prête . Je ne vais pas.
- Camille : (surpris) Vous n'allez pas en promenade?
- Miss : Non, Camille , pas en automobile. Je ne peux pas.
- Camille : Et pourquoi pas ? On vient vous chercher.
- Miss : Pensez-vous ?
- Camille : Si je crois qu'on vient vous chercher. Mais, je le sais.
- Miss : Comment est-ce que je sais ce que c'est ?
- Camille : Comment ? Mais , la lettre , Miss....
- Miss : (ramassant la lettre) La lettre dit....
(cherchant l'endroit) Voici : " faire une promenade en automobile pendant l'après-midi."
- Camille : Eh bien ? (Laure entre en scène.)
- Laure : Miss, maman dit qu'on vient vers deux heures. Il est moins le quart à présent.

- Camille : Miss ne part pas .
- Laure : Ne part-elle pas faire une promenade ?
- Camille : Il paraît que non' .
- Laure : Mais une si belle promenade en auto jusqu'à Nîmes . C'est au moins cinquante kilomètres de belle route.
- Miss : (avec conviction) C'est justement ça .
- Camille : Justement ça ?
- Laure : Mais quoi donc ?
- Miss : Je comprends que c'est une promenade de beau- de "milles " .
- Camille : Cinquante kilomètres , à peu près .
- Miss : Pas cinquante " milles " ?
- Camille : Je crois qu'un kilomètre est moins qu'un "mille" .
- Miss : Mais c'est loin .
- Camille : Assez .
- Laure : Pas trop .
- Miss : Il faut longtemps pour aller, n'est-ce pas ?
- Camille : Pas trop longtemps en auto .
- Miss : Combien est un après-midi ?
- Laure : Combien de temps ?
- Miss : Oui, combien de temps est un après-midi ?
- Camille : Mais.... de midi à ... je ne sais trop... jusqu'à cinq heures , peut-être .
- Miss : Et combien de temps est une après-midi ?
- Camille : Mais , Miss, c'est toujours le même . Une après-midi, un après-midi.

- Miss : Toujours le même temps ?
- Camille : Toujours le même temps .
- Laure : Toujours les heures de midi à six heures.
- Miss : (en riant un peu) Alors , un après-midi, une après-midi , c'est dans le jour ?
- Camille : C'est pendant le jour , et pas pendant la nuit.
- Laure : Cela dure cinq ou six heures , et l'on prend le goûter au milieu !
- Miss : Est-ce qu'on va dans une automobile ou dans un automobile ?
- Camille : Mais , Miss , quelle est la différence ?
- Miss : (avec conviction) Je ne sais pas . Et je veux savoir avant de partir . Peut-être c'est comme "poêle " . Peut-être une automobile marche derrière les bœufs ! Alors il faut une semaine pour aller cinquante kilomètres !
- (Les enfants rient, et Miss sourit.)
- Camille : Huit jours pour aller !
- Laure : Une quinzaine pour aller-retour par automobile aux bœufs..... comme une charrue avec un laboureur comme chauffeur !
- Camille : Non , Miss , une automobile , un automobile, c'est toujours une voiture à quatre roues de pneu qui marche à moteur à essence de pétrole.
- Miss : Alors je sais ce que je vais faire.
- Laure : Qu'est-ce que c'est , Miss ?

Miss : Je vais faire une promenade dans une automobile pendant une après-midi .

Camille : Très bien , Miss . Vous y êtes.

(On entend 'a la cantonade la corne d'appel d'une auto. Laure court à la fenê[^]tre; elle agite la main .)

Laure : Elle arrive . Miss va arriver . (à Miss) On y est , Miss. On vous attend . Au revoir . Bonne promenade ;

(Miss attrape son manteau et son chapeau qu'elle met en sortant.

Tous : Au revoir ; Bonne promenade! A tantô[^]t ;

(Les enfants vont à la fenê[^]tre et font signe d'adieu .)

Laure : Une promenade , dans une automobile pendant une après-midi.

Camille : Mlle. Miss apprend , et elle prend les choses au sérieux!

Laure : Pensez donc, après l'histoire des poêles .

(Rideau)

IV

(C'est le soir. Mlle, Miss et Camille sont assis à la table: Elle est en train d'écrire dans un cahier; lui étudie. Laure est très à son aise dans un fauteuil; elle tourne les pages de l'illustration en regardant les images.)

- Miss : (se rejetant sur sa chaise et s'écriant)
Grand nigaud !
- Camille : (un peu surpris) Mais, Mlle.Miss, qu'est-ce que j'ai fait pour vous fâcher ?
- Miss : (surprise) Vous ? Rien.
- Laure : Mais alors ? C'est lui, le nigaud, et personne autre que lui!
- Miss : Oh non, pas Camille !
- Laure : Que si !
- Miss : Mais, non. C'est moi.
- Laure : Vous nigaud, Mlle.Miss ? Oh non !
- Miss : Oh oui.
- Camille : Et pourquoi, je vous en prie ?
- Miss : J'écris :(en lisant de son cahier)
"Un beau enfant ;un beau arbre ;un beau homme;
un beau oeuf."
- Laure : (en riant) " Un beau oeuf", c'est un boeuf !

Le boeuf pour trainer une automobile, sans doute!

(Ils rient tous .)

Camille : Que tu es folle , Laure !

Miss : Mais non , elle n'est pas folle . Elle a raison.

Laure : (toujours très gaie) Et puis un "beau homme",
c'est un baume pour les bobos !

Camille : Mais sois sérieuse , petite sotte !

Miss : Elle me fait bien comprendre pourquoi il faut
dire "un bel oeuf " et "un bel homme".

Laure : Et "un bel arbre " plutôt que " b--arb'e " pour
le bel homme !

Miss : Oh oui, Laure , j'y suis pour beau et bel !

Camille : Je crois bien que oui, Miss , pour beau et bel.
Mais pas pour nigaud .

Laure : Car de nigaud , il n'y a que Camille . Moi, Miss,
étant du féminin, je suis nigaude.

(Elle fait explosionner le "d".)

Miss : Aha, et moi, aussi, nigaude .

(Elle imite bien le "d" de Laure.)

Laure : Alors , ne soyons plus nigaudes !

Miss : (tristement) Comment ne pas ?

Laure : Comment ne pas l'ê[^]tre ?

Miss : Eh oui, comment ne pas l'ê[^]tre ?

Camille : Ajoutez e pour le féminin de l'**adjectif**.

Laure : Commencez avec un pour Camille, un garçon, et
ajoutez e pour moi , une fillette.

Miss : (cherchant lentement) Un , une ; petit, petite ; grand, grande

Camille : Faites exploser la consonne, Miss. Petite, verte, méchante, contente.

Miss : (répètent avec attention au t) Méchante, verte, contente, intéressante , ouverte, C'est joli, n'est-ce pas ?

Camille : Mais oui, Miss , c'est gai comme le staccato quand Laure joue au piano .

Miss : (prononçant toujours très nettement) Sotte, verte, porte, chante, toute, tante...

Laure : C'est comme les chaloupes à moteur.....toute, tante, toute , tante. (Elle continue à répéter ces mots de plus en plus rapidement en produisant une succession de petits sons explosifs semblables à ceux d'un moteur qui se met en marche.

La mère entre en scène, regarde tout le monde d'un air étonné.)

Je fais voir à Mlle. Miss que le son te au bout des mots sert de moteur au français.

(Laure offre son fauteuil à sa mère, et commence à

circuler en accélérant les sons explosifs.)

Chante , vente , lente, méchante, contente, intéressante, toute, tante , toute , tante....(On rit.)

Mère : (assise) Il est vrai que ces mots donnent de la vivacité et de la force à la langue.

Camille: Ce sont les petites explosions qui font marcher.

(Pendant ce temps, Laure continue à circuler autour de la pièce en répétant à mi-voix des mots qui se terminent en te .)

Mère : (en riant) Mais , Laure , tais-toi !

Laure : (espiègle) Aha... on s'arrête..... Heureuse, ennuyeuse, honteuse, française, anglaise....

(Elle fait bien résonner le s de sorte qu'il ressemble au sifflement de la vapeur qui s'échappe d'une locomotive en train de s'arrêter.)

Hollandaise , Marseillaise, mayonnaise... .

Camille: Mais tu es folle !

Laure : (de plus en plus enjouée) L' aéroplane prend son vol; (Elle fait chanter le l de " vol" et des mots qu'elle répète en produisant un son de trille qui fait penser aux tressaillements des toiles des ailes d'un aéroplane.)

Folle, molle, cruelle, duel, elle, belle, tel, sel.

Mère : Oh , cette enfant !

(Camille se met de la partie en
répétant les mots en se ; Miss
fait de même pour les mots en te .
Ils parlent tour à tour. C'est un
bourdonnement.)

Camille : Heureuse, malheureuse, ennuyeuse....

Laure : Elle, réelle.....

Miss : Méchante , contente, absente.....

Laure : Sel, belle, appelle.....

Camille : Honteuse , Chinoise,

Miss : Verte, morte, chante.....

(Il faut que ceci soit enjoué,
enfantin, mais pas ennuyeux.)

Mère : (en se bouchant les oreilles) De grâce ! Mettez
fin à toutes ces terminaisons!

(Rideau)

V

(Camille et Laure se trouvent au salon en train de causer. Sur la table se trouvent les livres de Miss, un cahier, une grammaire, un dictionnaire.)

- Laure : Elle. Miss va venir dans un moment. Jouons à cache-objet, veux-tu ?
- Camille : Je veux bien, si Miss a le temps.
- Laure : Elle va avoir le temps.
- Camille : Elle travaille bien. Elle ne perd pas son temps.
- Laure : Mais on apprend en jouant. Ce n'est pas temps perdu.
- Camille : Elle apprend vite.
- Laure : Mais elle fait des fautes drôles, n'est-ce pas ?
- Camille : Quelquefois.
- Laure : Elle dit souvent "gèle". Qu'est-ce que c'est ?
- Camille : Je ne sais pas .
- Laure : Elle ne gèle pas assurément par le temps qu'il fait à présent.
- Camille : Je pense bien ! C'est autre chose qu'elle veut dire .
- Laure : Peut-être est-ce anglais.
- Camille : Peut-être bien . Ça se peut .
- Laure : Cherchons !
- Camille : Cherchons ? Mais où ?

Laure : Mais dans son dictionnaire.

(Camille s'assied à la table, ouvre le dictionnaire et commence à chercher. Laure regarde pardessus son épaule.)

Cherche dans la partie anglaise.

Camille : C'est ce que je fais.

(Il murmure incompréhensiblement en suivant son doigt du haut en bas de la page.)

Laure : Dans les g.

Camille : D'abord, oui.

Laure : "D'abord" ? Pourquoi d'abord ?

Camille : Mais peut-être est-ce un j au lieu d'un g

Laure : C'est vrai. Qu'ils ont un drôle d'air, ces mots anglais! Comment arrive-t-on à les prononcer ?

Camille : Il n'y a pas de g e l .

Laure : Eh bien, cherche aux j

Camille : C'est ce que je vais faire ,(en cherchant).

Laure : Il n'y a pas beaucoup de j en anglais, n'est-ce pas ?

Camille : Voici bien j e l l y .

Laure : (prononçant à la française) "Jelly ". Peut-être est-ce cela . Qu'est-ce que c'est ?

Camille : (Lisant) Une confiture de jus de fruits.

Laure : (étonnée) Quoi donc ?

Camille : Une confiture de jus de fruits.

Laure : Mais.... pourquoi Miss veut-elle toujours meler de la confiture à son parler ?

Camille : Demande -le-lui.

Laure : La voilà qui arrive .

(Miss entre en scène; Camille se lève.)

Camille : Ne le lui demande pas maintenant, Laure.Attends qu'elle le dise.

Laure : Bon . Mlle. Miss , voulez-vous jouer à cache-objet avec vous ?

Miss : Je veux .

Laure : Et toi, Camille ?

Camille : Je veux bien .

Miss : Ah oui, je sais, je me rappelle. Je veux bien .

Camille : Bien rappelle , Mlle. Miss .

Miss : N'est-ce pas ? Laure , voulez-vous cacher l'objet?

Laure : Je veux bien, merci, Miss . Regardez, c'est la gomme rouge de Miss. Fermez les yeux. Camille, ne triche pas !

(Camille et Miss se cachent la figure dans les mains en se retournant contre le mur. Laure circule en cherchant une cachette, et cependant Miss et Camille comptent jusqu'à dix. Laure cache la gomme sous le dictionnaire.)

Camille : Dix! Ça y est ?

Laure : Oui, ça y est ! Ouvrez les yeux. Cherchez !

(Les actions de Miss et de Camille en cherchant doivent s'accorder avec les exclamations de Laure.)

Laure : Vous avez froid, Miss. Ne vous en allez pas....
Tu commences à avoir chaud, Camille. Fais attention.

Miss aussi..... Camille a froid à présent.....

Ah , Miss a chaud..... très chaud.... Oh, là-là!

Elle brûle!

Miss : J'ai le ! (Les enfants se regardent, puis ils éclatent de rire.)

Camille : La voilà , la confiture !

Miss : Quelle confiture ? C'est ma gomme rouge.

Laure : Non, Miss , nous ne parlons pas de la gomme, mais du " gèle".

Miss : "Gèle " ?

Camille : Mais oui, Miss. Vous avez dit "gèle ". N'est-ce pas une confiture anglaise ?

Miss : Moi, j'ai parlé d'une confiture ? J'ai parlé que j'ai la gomme rouge.

Laure : Vous avez dit, " gèle ".

Miss : J'ai parlé.... non, je veux dire, j'ai dit,
" J'ai le! J'ai la gomme.

Camille : Ah , je comprends ; "Je l'ai ". Le pronom précède le verbe. "Je l'ai , je les ai."

Miss : Ah , j'oublie cela toujours ; " Je les ai, je les ai ".

- Laure : "Nous les avons, vous les avez, ils les ont."
- Camille : "Nous ne les avons pas, vous ne les avez pas."
- Miss : " Nous les avons, vous ne les avez pas ."
- Laure : " L'avez-vous ? Ne l'avez-vous pas ? "
- Miss : " Je ne l'ai pas . Je l'ai ". J'y suis, je crois.
- Camille : Bon, continuons le jeu.
- Miss : La voilà, Camille .(Elle lui donne la gomme.)
la cachez. (Les enfants éclatent de rire.)
- Camille : Non, non , Miss . On dit , "Cachez-la".
- Miss : La après le verbe ?
- Camille : Eh oui, cette fois c'est après le verbe .
- Miss : Alors comment savoir ?
- Camille : A l'imperatif, le pronon vient avant au négatif, et il vient après à l'affirmatif.
- Laure : "Cachez-la , ne la cachez pas. "
- Camille : "Trouvons -les, ne les trouvons pas ".
- Miss : "Regardez-le, ne le regardons pas ".
- Camille : Vous y êtes , Miss.
- Miss : Oui, je crois que je l'ai.... lay me down to sleep.
- Laure : Mais..... que dites-vous , Miss!
- Miss : Oh, ce n'est rien. Un truc à moi pour la prononciation. "Ne la cachez pas. Cachez-la."
- Laure : N'oubliez pas, Miss, qu'il y a toujours un trait d'union pour relier le, la, les , au verbe.
C'est un tout petit mot, tout seul à la fin de

la phrase. Peut-être se perdrait-il sans ce bout de trait d'union pour le rattacher.

Miss : Compris!

Camille : Continuons ;

Miss : Cachez-la, Camille.

Laure : Adieu la confiture de "gèle"!

(Le jeu recommence.)

(Rideau)

VI

(Laure et Camille étudient à la table de travail.)

Laure : Tu sais, je suis bien bête pour les mathématiques.

Camille : Beaucoup de jeunes filles le sont.

Laure : Je fais des fautes idiotes. Je confonds toujours 7 fois 9 qui font 63 avec 8 fois 8 qui font 64.

Camille : C'est pourtant très simple. Vois, 64 est plus grand que 63 par un , et 8 est plus grand que 7 par un .

Laure : Très simple ! Mais 9 est plus grand que 8 par un aussi. C'est la faute que j'ai faite dans ce problème. Où est la gomme ? (Elle cherche la gomme sur la table.)

Camille : Je ne sais pas. Par ici quelque part. Cherche-la.

Laure : C'est ce que je fais.

(Mlle. Miss entre en scène.)

La gomme , où est-elle ?

(Camille se lève .)

Camille : Où l'avez-vous mise, Mademoiselle ?

Miss : (étonnée) Où ? ... Mais.... je ne comprends pas. Je lave..... dans la salle de bain.

Camille : Non, non ,Miss , pas laver! Mais la gomme rouge! Elle n'est pas ici sur la table. Avez-vous mis cette gomme quelque part? Où l'avez-vous mise, Miss?

(Miss rit gentiment.)

- Miss : Que je suis nigaude ; Je l'ai mis dans...
- Camille : Mise.
- Miss : Je l'ai mise dans mon cahier.
- Laure : Et le cahier, où est-il ?
- Miss : Il est sous le dictionnaire. Je les ai mises...
- Camille : Non! C'est mis cette fois, car il y en a deux, l'un au masculin , l'autre au féminin. C'est le masculin qui décide comment s'accorde le participe.
- Miss : Je les ai mis là en jouant à cache-objet, et je les ai complètement oubliés.
- (Laure les trouve.)
- Laure : Je les ai trouvés. (Elle commence à effacer.)
- Miss : Alors , vous aussi, vous faites des fautes ?
- Laure : Si j'en fais ; Et des bêtes ; Continuellement!
- Camille : Et éternellement la même!
- Laure : Combien de fois ne l'ai-je pas faite, cette faute!
- Camille : C'est la faute que tu as apprise au lieu de la bonne réponse.
- Laure : Précisément !
- Miss : "Apprise, apprise ?" Qu'est-ce que c'est ?
- Camille : C'est ce qu'on apprend.
- Miss : "Apprendre, apprise ".
- Laure : Ou pas apprise, s'il s'agit de ma leçon !
- Miss : Surprendre, surprise; comprendre, comprise.
- Camille : C'est bien ça!
- Laure : Mettre , mise ; permettre, permise; commettre,

commise."

Miss : C'est compris, merci bien. (Elle ouvre son cahier.)
Camille, voulez-vous bien corriger les pages de français que j'ai... que j'ai.... attendez, ne me dites pas.... que ... j'ai écrites.

(Les enfants éclatent de rire.)

Camille : Non, non, Miss. "Que j'ai écrites."

Miss : (faussement lugubre) "Écrites" ?

Camille : Oui, Miss, cette fois c'est "écrites".

Laure : Et les phrases que vous avez dites, et les fautes que vous avez produites!

Camille : Et qu'en a découvertes!

Miss : Oh mon dieu! Je vais toujours me servir des Verbes Réguliers qui ont le participe passé prononcé le même au masculin et au féminin, au singulier et au pluriel! Comme ça, je ne ferai pas de fautes.

Camille : Mais c'est plus embêtant de chercher incessamment à éviter une forme que de l'apprendre une fois pour toutes. Trouvez toujours une ressemblance dans un groupe; ou bien une dissemblance. Lire, lue; rire, ri ; dire , dite.

Laure : Voir , vu ; avoir , eu ; boire , bu; recevoir, reçu.

Camille : Ouvrir , ouverte ; couvrir, couverte ; découvrir, découverte.

Miss : Pour me donner la patience d'apprendre tout ça,

il me faut répéter : " go, went, gone : break, broke, broken ; speak, spoke, spoken; run , ran, run; swim, swam, swum " ;

(Pendant qu'elle chantonne ces formes
les enfants la regardent étonnés.)

Camille : Mais qu'est-ce que c'est que ca ?

Miss : Ca ? Ce sont les verbes anglais qui sont tellement irréguliers qu'on se trompe quelquefois.
Je ne sais vraiment pas si " I have swum " ou si " I have swam".

Laure : Est-ce une langue qu'on parle véritablement ?

Miss : Mais oui, Laure, couramment !

(Rideau)

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