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SYMBOLS AND SUBSTANCE IN MODERN LANGUAGE TEACHING

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Source: *The Journal of Education*, JULY 22, 1909, Vol. 70, No. 4 (1739) (JULY 22, 1909), pp. 92-93

Published by: Sage Publications, Inc.

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/42813830>

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ent upon him. If he is somewhat slow in taking up with these new movements, it is because of what he has endured in the past, and because of the fact that he wants to make sure that those whom he loves are not going to suffer.

Organized labor realizes just as keenly as anybody else that this movement in the interest of industrial education is not a fad, but a stern reality, and an absolute necessity. If this country is to preserve and maintain its industrial supremacy, men and women in all walks of life, irrespective of their station, must join hands together in one united effort. Industrial education is not and must not be inaugurated in the interest of any special class, but for the benefit of all; rich and poor alike must have equal opportunities to secure such education. The same keen desire to see their child "make good" exists in the breast of the poor parents as well as the rich; the door of opportunity must never be closed to any one who is worthy to enter. I believe the question as to the need of such education has passed beyond the debating stage; what is now needed more than anything else is for all classes to get together and co-operate in this great movement, which is not a question of capital and labor any more than it is a subject to exploit our fads and fancies. I believe we should get right hold of the boy at fourteen, when his mind is becoming impressionable, when he is just beginning to feel his wants to do something tangible; teach him the why and the wherefore of certain things and the very best way to do them.

### SYMBOLS AND SUBSTANCE IN MODERN LANGUAGE TEACHING.

BY JULIUS TUCKERMAN,

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[Mr. Tuckerman first considered the folly of transmission to the study of modern languages of the methods of the old, and observed that if the modern languages are to keep their place in the schools they will have to prove that they are useful instruments in a larger life,—in fact, that they fill the claims which have been made for the classic tongues, and something more. And his pronounced purpose was to show that in teaching a foreign language, "the teacher is beset with the danger of teaching symbols instead of substance."

He dealt first with pronunciation, observing that while the written word is merely a symbol, yet that is taught first, the sound it stands for afterward. "The neglect of the ear as a gate of approach to the mind," he said, "and the almost exclusive dependence on the eye, is producing a generation of eye-minded pupils whom it is increasingly difficult to approach in any other way than through the eye.]"

Even in the teaching of our own tongue where the value of the sound of words is so apparent to us all, our pupils are constantly losing the power to comprehend the spoken word. I think every one of you must be familiar with the almost daily experience of pupils who fail to understand some of the simplest things said to them in English, who cannot remember a sentence given orally, in the time it takes to go from their seat to the blackboard, or who cannot recall correctly a simple announcement one minute after it is given. Why so many pupils who are naturally ear-minded before they enter school should become almost wholly eye-minded during the grammar school, I leave to some grammar school teacher to investigate, but the situation in modern languages is a serious one, when pupils hearing a new word for the first time fail to learn it by ear and insist on having it written first. Similarly when it comes to recalling the word, they insist on writing or at least

spelling it first because their ear-memory is so weak. And, just as a person born deaf is also sure to be mute, so a pupil whose ear-memory has been neglected is sure to have difficulty in the pronunciation of foreign words and later in connected speech.

It will be urged by some that American boys and girls can never acquire a perfect pronunciation [of a foreign tongue]; that they will rarely, if ever, have occasion to use the spoken language, and that therefore a good deal of the time put on pronunciation is wasted. To this must be answered that perfection is not attainable in anything, let alone a foreign accent; that American boys and girls can and do acquire a good pronunciation; that since they do unconsciously call every word by some audible name, is it not better to call the word by the correct name instead of the incorrect?

In France and in Germany, where English is, of course, a modern language, would one consider a pupil properly taught if he could not pronounce correctly? Could he appreciate the beauty of English literature, and especially of poetry, if he did not know the correct sound of the language? If a French or German boy should answer that he would rarely, if ever, have occasion to use English as a spoken language, that it is not necessary for him to know the musical charm of Gray, Tennyson, or Swinburne, that he can translate them tolerably with the help of an English-French or English-German lexicon, would you say that he knew any thing worth while about the English language? Would you not answer that English is alive, not dead like Latin, that it pulsates with energy and life, that the sound of it is its substance, that the printed page is only an elusive symbol? Has not therefore a Frenchman or a German a right to speak with contempt of our attainment in French or German when we say: "I have had two years of college French or German, just a reading knowledge"? They order these things better in France and in Germany, where English is begun early in a child's life, about the age of our seventh grade pupils, and where the most persistent attention is given to our spoken language, so that French and German boys and girls can speak our language with a distinctness and charm that puts our own slovenly pronunciation to shame.

How was the revolution brought about? In France, the minister of public instruction issued November 15, 1901, his famous circular on the teaching of modern languages. I will translate but a few lines: "The principal object in the instruction of foreign languages is to teach pupils to speak and write them. The living tongues are taught for the sake of use. The goal which the teaching of living languages shall set for itself in its course of study shall be, therefore, to give the student a real and effective possession of these languages. . . . A living language being first of all a spoken language, the method which will lead most surely and most rapidly to the possession of these languages shall be the oral method." Thus with one stroke of the pen were the shackles of tradition broken. English became a living tongue, taught for its own sake, not for "discipline," not for its "training in logic," not for its "cultural value," not for its abstract symbols, but for its concrete substance. And to arrive at his goal, the French student reverses the established order and he is taught first to speak, then to read, then to write. Speaking is really the easiest of all, for a child begins by speaking. I wonder, in passing, that our teachers of English and so-called rhetoric (which, by the way, no longer deals with speech) do not see in this a light that might help them in their difficulties, in that they try to teach their pupils first to write correctly, when by teaching them first to speak correctly, not only

would correct writing come of itself, but it would be alive and spontaneous, like their speech.

The ability to say certain things in French or German should precede the ability to write those things. When a sufficient amount of good French or German has become part of the student's mental furniture, he can then be asked to move it about into new arrangements, a premium being placed on such quickness as would preclude his going through the process of first declining mentally every noun, or inflecting every verb. Composition would then become an oral exercise, designed to show the ability to say something in the foreign tongue, an exercise which could be reduced to writing only for the sake of the spelling, but must always remain a useful thing, a substantial possession, not a legerdemain of symbols.

Nothing in all the realm of pedagogy is as crude, so much against sound psychological principle, so barren of any tangible results as the present processes of translation of foreign languages into English. Language has a cultural value only as it enables us to enter into the experience back of the language, that is, only as, for the moment, we become Frenchmen or Germans and see

with their eyes and hear with their ears. This widens our sympathies and adds a new soul to our being. Translation alone, when it means merely the thumbing of a lexicon, the matching of foreign symbols with our own, is powerless to do this.

Teachers of French and German, with special application to women's colleges, one must suppose, should be equipped in their classroom with maps, charts, pictures of the foreign lands, and reproduce as far as possible the very atmosphere of a French or German room. French and German plays should be given, so that the correct mental associations of action and expression may accompany each word. French and German clubs should be maintained, so that pupils may enter into such phases of foreign life as are expressed in French and German customs, games, and songs. In other words, the French and German languages must be connected up with life, their concrete reality brought into the minds of the pupils until they no longer translate French or German into their own idiom, but transport themselves into the foreign element to the extent that the element ceases to be foreign to them, because they are perfectly at home with it.

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## Practical Agriculture in Rural Schools.

BY PROFESSOR F. B. JENKS,

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Industrial education, which is receiving the attention of so many educators of to-day, includes no more important branch than that of agriculture, nor any branch more nearly universal in its adaptation. We are doing practical work of an agricultural nature in all kinds and conditions of schools, both in city and in rural districts, both in large and in small schools, and are finding that the results justify the efforts. There is as yet no uniformity either in the subject matter or in the methods of teaching, and perhaps it is better that there never should be. The conditions are so different in each school from those in every other school that each one must necessarily be treated as an individual problem.

All over the state of Massachusetts the work is being started, and this coming school season will open with no less than six agricultural high schools; four regular high schools, offering agricultural courses; three special or private schools doing high school agriculture; and a great many other high schools doing some definite work in agriculture, chiefly by correlation of the subjects already taught, while by far the greater number of the grammar schools are making some attempt in this direction.

During the past winter I visited more than forty schools in various parts of Massachusetts, and while that is a very small portion of the total number of schools in that state, yet scattered as they were over the entire state, I believe that they fairly well represent the conditions of the entire state. Three-fourths of these schools are doing either home or school garden work, or both. Some are working with the idea of obtaining some agricultural information, some for the added interest and general helpful effect upon pupils, and still others to furnish material for composition, arithmetic, et cetera, of a practical nature. Each school, however,

considers it worth while from its own point of view. The home and school gardens are only the beginnings of the teaching of agriculture in the public schools, yet they are the centres around which all else revolves in the earlier years of school work, and they are practical alike in both city and rural districts.

Educators differ very greatly in their ideas as to where this agricultural training should begin, but I am inclined to the opinion that the earlier in the life of a child the better, so long as judgment is displayed in the selection of material and in the manner of presenting it. The college work is reinforced if some definite work has been done in the high school. High school pupils take hold of their work with more interest and appreciation if they have learned a few facts in the grammar school. At North Adams we begin with the kindergarten.

As has already been remarked, each school has a different problem, and in telling what we are trying to do at North Adams, I do not mean that I consider it a model for other schools to pattern after. My only thought is that it may encourage some in their efforts or, perchance, offer a suggestion that may be of use. We have three distinct types of training schools in connection with the North Adams Normal school. A city school with all the grades, including the kindergarten, with an enrollment of about 500 pupils; a mill village school with two rooms, eight grades, and an enrollment of about eighty pupils; and a rural school of two rooms with six grades and an enrollment of about seventy pupils. All three of these schools have both home and school garden work; the school garden is a part of the regular work in each school but of distinctly different types of work.

In the rural school, it started as a social problem, and the first attempt was the growing of a few flowering