

A STUDY OF THE USE OF ORAL-AURAL TECHNIQUES
IN THE ENGLISH CLASS FOR DISADVANTAGED
ADOLESCENTS

by

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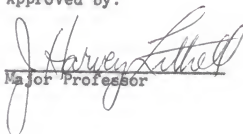
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BACKGROUND OF STUDY

Many young people enter the high school with its required English classes without being able to write or speak in standard English patterns. Some of these are the disadvantaged adolescents who at one time in the nation's history usually dropped out of school, joined the unskilled labor force, and never entered the high school. Now, they are staying in school because of state attendance laws or because they need a high school diploma to obtain many jobs. Unless the high school classes and particularly the English classes do better than they have been, some students will continue to drop out of school as soon as legally possible and some will be no better prepared than when they entered.

The English profession and the schools have had high ideals. As early as 1940, Fries declared "It is the assumed obligation of the schools to attempt to develop in each child the knowledge of and the ability to use the 'standard' English of the United States. . ."¹

In 1960, the NASSP Committee on Curriculum Planning and Development declared that one of the functions of the English language arts courses was "to improve each student's ability

¹Charles Carpenter Fries, American English Grammar, p. 14.

to convey information, ideas, and emotions, both in speaking and writing."¹

However, in 1965, the National Council of Teachers of English conceded that the profession had not been reaching all pupils and set up a Task Force to study the teaching of English to the disadvantaged.²

Corbin, a member of the Task Force, suggests that "there are fifty million culturally disadvantaged in the United States and that there will be more unless starting at an early age, they can be taught to speak, to read, and in some measure to write the forms of English that are acceptable to our society."³

Since the individual starts his future language patterns when he first starts to speak as a child, it would be better if remedial programs if necessary would start with the pre-school child, but there should be ways of helping those who have already reached adolescence without being able to use standard patterns of language. These adolescents will soon be part of the economy, and Green states:

¹English Language Arts in the Comprehensive Secondary School, a Pre-Print from the Bulletin of the National Association of Secondary-School Principals of NEA, October, 1960, p. 4.

²Language Programs for the Disadvantaged, The Report of NCTE Task Force on Teaching English to the Disadvantaged, p. v.

³Richard Corbin, "Literacy, Literature, and The Disadvantaged," Language Programs for the Disadvantaged, p. 4.

Non-standard language limits an individual's economic opportunities. Since for most jobs of status and good income, an understanding and competence in standard English are required, any unusual language of the culturally different becomes one more obstacle to desirable economic opportunity. Since language is a personal and social attribute, changing it can never be a simple method of drill, grammar book, and exhortation. The school and the English teacher must find new ways to help the students to change language and their deeply-held attitudes."¹

Although many administrators and laymen believe that the disadvantaged youth are a problem only in city schools, almost any community has its share of the cultural and economically deprived. Even in Manhattan, Kansas, a university center, in 1967-68 there were 50 high school students out of the 1,049 enrolled who came from families with less than \$2,000 annual income.² The United States suggests that families with less than \$4,000 annual income are economically disadvantaged. If this higher figure was used, Manhattan High School would probably have a greater number of students classed as economically and culturally deprived.

Since all schools and all teachers have a particular concern about helping these youth and since English teachers, in particular, are concerned about the teaching of standard English, it would seem appropriate to know more about the disadvantaged adolescent and to discover if there are techniques

¹William D. Green, "Language and the Culturally Different," English Journal, 54:724, November, 1965.

²Max Heim, Director of Secondary Curriculum of Manhattan Public Schools personal interview.

that have been used in specific learning instances that would be of value in the high school English class.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Research in linguistics has suggested that anyone can learn standard English, just as all human beings learn any language, through listening and speaking. Modern language research suggests that if a person speaks the language correctly, he will have more ability in reading and writing correctly.

Therefore, the specific objectives of this study will be:

1. To review the literature that defines and explains the disadvantaged adolescent and his learning problems, particularly in the field of language.
2. To review the literature in the use of oral-aural techniques of teaching language to disadvantaged youth.
3. To suggest applications of the techniques to the high school English classroom and its teaching of the disadvantaged adolescent.

DEFINITION OF TERMS USED

In this report, certain terms will be used. For greater clarity, it is to be understood that the following meanings are intended.

The disadvantaged adolescent is an individual "who has experienced puberty and is experiencing a period characterized by development from childhood to maturity and who has been unable to fully develop his capacities because of social and/or economic poverty."¹

Language is "a system of communication by sound, i.e., through the organs of speech and hearing, among human beings of a certain group of community, using vocal symbols possessing arbitrary conventional meanings."²

Standard English is the language of educated people and it has certain conventions that are observed regularly by all people who use it either orally or written.³

The English language arts courses have as their objectives (1) to help to improve each student's ability to convey information, ideas, and emotions, both in speaking and in writing, as clearly and as effectively as possible, and (2) to help to improve each student's ability to receive through reading, viewing, and listening the information and inspiration available to him through written and spoken English.⁴

¹R. D. McFarland, "Culturally Deprived Adolescent and the English Teacher," Catholic Review Digest, 63:443, October, 1965.

²Marie Pei and Frank Gaynor, Dictionary of Linguistics, p. 119, quoted in Ruth Golden, Effectiveness of Instructional Tapes for Changing Regional Speech Patterns, p. 8.

³John E. Warriner, English Grammar and Composition, p. 66.

⁴"English Language Arts in the Comprehensive Secondary School," The Bulletin of the National Association of Secondary Principals of the NEA, October 1960, p. 4.

Linguistics is the study of language as a system. This system aims at discovering the underlying regularities that introduce order and predictability into the complicated sounds of speech. It deals with the structure of language, the relations that give order and coherence, not with isolated phrases or constructions.¹

Oral-aural techniques are any techniques that will aid in the teaching of language by the speaking and/or listening methods.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE CONCERNING DISADVANTAGED ADOLESCENTS

Before any real progress could be made in an English classroom in adjusting the curriculum to the teaching of the disadvantaged adolescent, who is usually classed as a slow learner, an understanding of him must be the first step. Since it has been only recently that any effort has been made to consider the disadvantaged adolescent with concern and understanding, library research offers a proper way to find out what authorities on the subject know about him in relation to his general background, attitudes and abilities in school, needs in the language field, and methods of instruction.

¹Hans P. Guth, English Today and Tomorrow, p. 25.

General Background of the Disadvantaged Students

The disadvantaged class, as they are now called, are children from the lower economic class, generally, and live in both rural and urban areas. Corbin states that

Whatever the social or the ethnic background of these disadvantaged, their circumstances are much the same. They come from families that exist on annual incomes which fall below the established national minimum subsistence level, that have little or no schooling, that have no job security. More than half have only one parent (generally the mother) and many have never known either parent. They come from families who seldom aspire. . . . and who are often idle because few jobs are open to them. They are people who exist on the wretched rim of an otherwise affluent world.¹

A fact, however, that must be understood about this group by anyone working with them, is that "proportionately as many of them are slow, average, superior as for the school population as a whole. But conventional tests do not disclose this as intelligence tests are based on verbal ability and reading of meaningless content as far as they are concerned."² As most educators know, the norms for widely used intelligence tests are based almost exclusively on urban children of middle or high class families.³ In many cases

¹Corbin, op. cit., p. 7.

²Ibid., p. 7.

³Luella Cole, Psychology of Adolescence, p. 143.

the disadvantaged adolescents are assigned to standard curriculums which reduces rather than strengthens their ability to deal successfully with school and hastens, in many cases, their return to the circumstances of their parents or parent.¹

Riessman, who has worked with the disadvantaged in New York City, says that the disadvantaged people have many positive dimensions which should always be remembered in working with them. He lists these briefly as:

The cooperativeness and mutual aid that mark the extended family; the avoidance of the strain accompanying competitiveness and individualism; the informality and humor; the freedom from self blame and parental overprotection; the children's enjoyment of each other's company, the lessened sibling rivalry; the security found in the extended family and a traditional outlook; the enjoyment of music, games, sports, and cars; the ability to express anger, the freedom from being word bound; and finally, the physical style involved in learning.²

Disadvantaged Adolescent and Attitude Toward School

There are some general characteristics and attitudes of the disadvantaged student about school that are somewhat different from those of the general school population.

Morris Finder, a professor of English at Western Washington State College, in 1955, wrote that "the disadvantaged child is conditioned to seek only day-to-day

¹Corbin, op. cit., p. 7.

²Frank Riessman, "The Culturally Deprived Child: A New View," Office of Education Bulletin No. 17-35044, 1963, p. 9.

satisfactions. This pupil is not motivated nor rewarded by others in his out-of-school environment for his work in school. To engage his interest, his school must in itself be of immediate interest and significance to him."¹

Ethel Tincher in her work in the Detroit Public Schools believes that "the main characteristic of the disadvantaged as they reach maturity is that they have failed and they expect to fail time and time again. They do not expect adults to understand them and they are not regarded very highly by their peers. They have distinct feelings of inferiority and they may have no ambition. They prefer non-academic tasks to academic and they do not like school."² Tincher also states that teachers need to know that these children do not look upon an adult as a person to whom you ask questions and from whom you get answers--yet school is based on the assumption that youngsters who do not understand will ask.³

A Florida Secondary School Bulletin of 1962 suggests that the disadvantaged child has a 'sour attitude' on school and on life itself. He views the school and the teachers as his enemies because the school program is generally oriented

¹Morris Funder, "Teaching English to Slum Dwelling Pupils," English Journal, 64:199, April, 1955.

²Ethel Tincher, "Helping Slow Learners Achieve Success," English Journal, 54:289, April, 1965.

³Ibid., p. 290.

to middle class values and objectives which are not his values and objectives in most cases.¹

In June of 1965, a research conference on Education and Cultural Deprivation was held at the University of Chicago with leading specialists from many different disciplines contributing their findings on the education of the disadvantaged. In the summation they state:

By the beginning of secondary school the typical culturally disadvantaged student is reading at a level approximately 3½ years below grade level. He is considerably retarded in arithmetic and other school subjects. His problem solving and abstract thinking is at a very low level compared with others at this grade or age level. For these students there is a dissatisfaction with school such that the student approaches learning tasks in a most apathetic manner.²

The Disadvantaged Adolescent and Learning Problems

There seem to be several contradictions by authorities in discussing the learning problems of the disadvantaged adolescent.

One of the contradictions is in relationship to reading. Tincher says that reading problems of slow learners present the greatest challenge to upgrading attempts. A large percentage cannot read the traditional text book, but childish

¹English in Florida Secondary Schools, Bulletin 35A, Florida State Department of Education, quoted in Teaching English in Today's High Schools, edited by Dwight L. Burton and John S. Simmons, p. 447.

²Benjamin S. Bloom, Allison Davis, Robert Hess, "Adolescent Education," Compensatory Education for Cultural Deprivation, p. 34.

material is an insult to them. Self conscious and guilty about reading inadequacies, they develop an "I don't care" attitude.¹ However, Loretan and Umans suggest that it is obvious today with the electronic age that the disadvantaged youngster does not need to depend completely on how well he reads to learn and grow intellectually. By insisting on reading as the only acceptable method of learning, doors have been closed to those that are not reading oriented.²

Another contradiction is the amount of verbal ability of the disadvantaged adolescent. Tincher states that disadvantaged children lack a sense of auditory discrimination and cannot distinguish differences of sound. They have great difficulty in following the teachers' directions because they usually come from a non-verbal household and have low verbal ability.³ However, Riessman says that disadvantaged children are very verbal with their own group and with their own language. This tends to make them very good at role-playing situations because they can be very expressive. They do have a deficit of formal language because they have not lived in the middleclass which produces it.⁴

¹Tincher, op. cit., p. 289.

²Joseph D. Loretan and Shelley Umans, Teaching the Disadvantaged, p. 80.

³Tincher, op. cit., 290.

⁴Riessman, op. cit., p. 7.

In addition to these contradictions there are some other learning problems of the disadvantaged, most of which deal with the relation to the middle-class structure of the schools.

Finder found that the typical curriculums, textbooks, and standardized tests call upon the use of middle-class language habits and experiences. These the disadvantaged adolescent does not possess, and, therefore, success in school is relatively hard for him to obtain. He also has to try to adjust to the standards and values set up by the middle-class teacher who confronts him. Many of these are alien to him, his family, and his community.¹

Riessman finds that most disadvantaged children are relatively slow in performing intellectual tasks. The middle-class culture tends to reward speed and has put too much emphasis upon it. The pupil may be slow for several reasons, all of which have their rewards if the school will give him time to develop them and take time to recognize some of the merits of slower work.²

The Disadvantaged Adolescent and Need for Language Development

In everyday society if the school is to be effective, students of all classes must be trained in how to use their

¹Finder, op. cit., p. 210.

²Riessman, op. cit., p. 4.

language as a tool with which to improve their minds and with which to compete in the economy.

Loretan and Umans believe that much attention has been given to the language problems of the foreign-born migrants but little attention has been given to the native born immigrant. Both these groups exhibit a class based language, one that denies the lower class person the verbal strategies necessary to obtain social mobility. They urge that children from disadvantaged homes must have stimulating, motivating, and constructive language programs, as language is the heart of the educational process.¹

Loban, who has done much research in language development, suggests that the disadvantaged group use language primarily for immediate concrete situations, and, therefore, use partial sentences or indicate feeling visually. They use the same grammar as the middle-class, but they do not use the potentials of language, and their vocabulary and usage are different.²

Everetts and Lecampayne believe that the disadvantaged must have the power of language if they are to be helped.

Power in language involves the ability to generate all types of acceptable English sentences and grammatical constructions, to understand the socially approved varieties of language required

¹Loretan and Umans, op. cit., p. 81.

²Walter Loban, "A Sustained Program of Language Learning," Language Programs for the Disadvantaged, p. 223.

in specific social situations, to have a wide listening and speaking vocabulary, and to recognize the symbolic nature of language.¹

The Disadvantaged Adolescent, Ways of Teaching Language and Need for Oral Approach

Several authorities feel that the language programs for the disadvantaged are of little value as they are now taught. The National Council of Teachers of English in their study of schools found few programs within the regular secondary school framework doing much in the way of teaching language to disadvantaged youth. "Much of the work seemed repetitive, questionably relevant, and unsubstantial. Attempts to teach the intricacies of traditional grammar to students several years behind in reading skills occurred frequently. Few secondary schools had developed a program that recognized the needs of their students and few had well defined objectives."²

Since some of the disadvantaged come from homes where a non-standard dialect is spoken, Love believes standard English must be taught as a "means of enrichment, as a second language, with no attempt to change the student's linguistic habits, and in general, to change habits, it seems more effective to concentrate on adding, not on

¹Eldonna L. Everetts and Robert J. Lecampayne, "Techniques and Media for Overcoming Handicaps," Audiovisual Instruction, 11:538, September, 1966.

²Language Programs for the Disadvantaged, op. cit., p. 99.

eliminating."¹

One of the recommendations for secondary education given by the conference on Education and Cultural Deprivation as reported by Bloom states that "Culturally disadvantaged adolescents who are having great difficulty with the regular school curricula should have a school program which emphasizes the basic skills of language."²

Many of the people who have studied the disadvantaged adolescent are recommending the return to some sort of oral work in the teaching of language. In addition, several mentioned the use of electronic devices as perhaps a new method that will aid in the instruction.

Loban recommends a sequential study of language to help the disadvantaged, and he would restore the oral tradition to English instruction. In grades 7 through 12, he would use drill tapes and language laboratories to accomplish ear training that would alternate with dramatics, literature, discussion, and writing. The tapes would focus on usage, pronunciation, vocabulary, and idioms. He suggests that through the ear everyone learned to speak before going to school and it will be only through the ear that anyone will change usage or pronunciation.³

¹T. R. Love, "Needs and Approaches for Developing Linguistic Abilities," Journal of Negro Education, 35:402, Fall, 1966.

²Bloom, et al., op. cit., p. 38.

³Loban, op. cit., p. 229.

Love gives four approaches as being helpful in inspiring linguistic skills in non-standard readers and speakers, and in two of these he stresses the need for oral work. His approaches are:

1. Study English as a science--a linguistic approach of relation of sound to writing and reading.
2. Moderate use of descriptive grammar.
3. Use oral approach. Students may learn acceptable grammatical usage from speaking activities quicker than in traditional composition classes. Use oral work in speaking complete sentences. The use of individual tape recording and listening is helpful.
4. Have students write about ideas or experiences which are of interest to them.¹

At least one state, Florida, is very cognizant of the need for an oral approach in the teaching of English to the slow-learner, many of whom are disadvantaged adolescents. The Florida State Department of Education in its bulletin on English in Secondary Schools for the Disadvantaged stresses the following:

1. A stress on individual items of usage is profitable, especially sub-standard usages of verbs and pronouns. Oral drill is helpful. Teaching of grammar as such, including rules, analysis, nomenclature, diagraming, should be avoided.

¹Love, op. cit., pp. 404-407.

2. Much drill with basic sentence patterns, including oral drill in order to develop learning of sentences, is helpful. The work should be directed toward formation of clear, complete sentences.

3. Drill in the use of major punctuation marks, illustrated with cartoons or pictures, is helpful. No rules should be presented. Spelling work should also avoid use of rules and stress learning of words and their parts.

4. Oral work should stress basic speech mechanics: clear articulation, avoidance of substituting one sound for another, avoidance of slurring sounds or syllables, avoidance of dropping endings. Slow learners tend to like such oral activities as socio-drama, dramatization, and practice of social amenities.

5. Literature should have low difficulty but should be of a maturity level appropriate for the group. They should be of the fast moving, high interest type, free of subtlety in technique or theme.

6. Composition should stress very short papers on topics of interest, such as sports, cars, television. Much preparation should precede any writing assignment, and assignments may be read orally in class by writer.¹

¹English in Florida Secondary Schools, Bulletin 35A, op. cit., p. 448.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE ON ORAL-AURAL
TECHNIQUES FOR TEACHING LANGUAGE
TO DISADVANTAGED ADOLESCENTS

The Task Force of the National Council of Teachers of English that reported in 1965 on its investigation of the teaching of English to the disadvantaged gave a recommendation at the close of their survey of the secondary schools to the effect that there was a great need for increased work in language instruction. The Task Force felt that there was a vital need for work in oral language in the secondary school; yet they observed that teachers have less knowledge about oral language development and dialectology than about most other areas of English instruction.¹

They did note that many schools were providing experience in oral language but little of it appeared helpful or professionally sound. There was some emphasis on reading laboratories where the student could work on his own level and see personal progress. However, observers noted most of the material used was of inferior or inappropriate quality.² In a few schools where language laboratories were used, they noted that they were used as a mechanistic approach and were very little help in contributing to language ability.³ Even

¹Language Programs for the Disadvantaged, op. cit., p. 115.

²Ibid., p. 99.

³Ibid., p. 137.

though they found very little being accomplished by the methods used, they continued to stress the need for oral work in teaching language, that use of tapes for speaking and listening could be helpful, but that much more research must be done in providing proper material.¹

It seems that it has taken twenty-five years for schools and English teachers to become concerned about oral-aural work in teaching of language. As early as 1940 Fries gave his knowledge on the use of speech and standard English;² in the 1950's Mario Pei added his knowledge of language as communication by speech and hearing,³ and Riessman suggested in 1963 that the school should develop new oral approaches and techniques in teaching the culturally deprived child.⁴

In 1958, Golden in her work in English in Detroit Public Secondary Schools suggested that a direct approach to the solution of teaching standard English could best be done by letting the student hear himself as others hear him, through the use of recording and listening devices. Some schools have some of this equipment, but she found little provision had been made for its use in the English language classroom.⁵

¹Fries, op. cit.

²Pei, op. cit.

³Riessman, op. cit., p. 5.

⁴Language Programs for the Disadvantaged, op. cit., p. 137.

⁵Ruth Golden, Improving Patterns of Language Usage, p. 72.

In 1962, when Golden started her doctoral research on the use of tapes in the English classroom to help Negro children change regional speech patterns, she could find no research experiments done on the use of oral-aural language techniques for adolescents to improve their own language.¹

Jones and Wisniewski, in 1965, believed that schools had not adopted to new instructional techniques and that slower students suffer most because they are least able to conform and perform in existent programs. They were convinced that many of the electronic devices, such as teaching machines or tapes, could represent some approaches to better teaching.²

At the present time there is some literature on the use of oral-aural techniques in the teaching of language to disadvantaged adolescents. However, some of these can be reported as definite conclusions from actual research and some are just accepted conclusions from observation on a tried technique.

¹Ruth Golden, Effectiveness of Instructional Tapes for Changing Regional Speech Patterns, p. 23.

²Loretta B. Jones and Richard Wisniewski, "Curriculum Needs of Slow Learners," in The Schools and the Urban Classes, edited by August Kerber and Barbara Bommarito, p. 338.

Use of Tapes in Changing Regional Speech Patterns

From 1962-1964 Golden conducted research in the Detroit, Michigan, secondary schools on the use of tapes in helping to change regional speech patterns. The purpose of the experiment was to test a possible means of helping students to adjust their language patterns to more effective ones for the area in which they now live. Specifically, the experiment was to evaluate the audio-language laboratory techniques as a means of helping students to substitute Northern Urban speech patterns for those of other regions, primarily Southern Rural. An objective also was to produce as a by-product of this study, a set of English lessons on magnetic tape designed to explain the structure of the English language, to improve articulation, and to meet the specific needs described.¹

The specific technique tested was the use of English lessons on tape calling for an immediate response on the part of the student in which he imitates the language sounds and patterns heard by earphone. This was contrasted with the effect gained by reading the same lessons from duplicated scripts.²

As a result of her research Golden concluded that the group which used the tapes did almost twice as well over-all

¹Ruth Golden, Effectiveness of Instructional Tapes for Changing Regional Speech Patterns, p. 13.

²Ibid., p. 97.

as did the control group. She believed that the taped lessons were highly significant in helping students to improve speech when they were speaking extemporaneously and in impromptu speaking, as in interviews. She also found that all sections improved in written achievement tests and the experimental group made greater gains.

Golden, therefore, believes that tape teaching is a sound teaching technique and that her series of English language lessons did help the students to change Regional speech patterns.¹

Comparison of Two Methods of Teaching Remedial English to College Freshmen

An experiment was done in 1962-1963 at Grambling College, Grambling, Louisiana, on a comparison of two methods of teaching remedial English to college freshmen. The investigators felt that there should be a better way to improve the language skills of entering freshmen. Without the teaching of remedial English more than three-fourths of the students failed or dropped out of college. Even with the traditional remedial English program only 50 per cent were able to stay in school.

In the experiment two groups of 80 students each were used. Group A was taught remedial English by the traditional method in two classes. In these classes the teacher attempted

¹Ibid., p. 108-9.

to teach the students better understandings and skills in written and spoken English by use of such activities as lectures, grammar drills, class discussions, and impromptu speeches and essays centered around the most common errors of college students. Group B of two classes was taught with a Laboratory Method in which the teacher attempted to instill in the students better understandings and skills in written and spoken English by using especially structured, unrehearsed verbal recordings of responses of class participants and mimeographed copies of the same material. Group B also used some of the drills, speeches, etc., as the listening and discussion sessions showed the need for such.¹

The investigators in this experiment came to the conclusion that both methods were helpful in the teaching of remedial English. However, the results of the research show that the Laboratory Method was superior in this particular instance. They believe that Grambling College might more profitably use the Laboratory Method in both Remedial English and in Basic College English.²

They, also, feel that much more research should be done in the teaching of English Language by a laboratory method.³

¹Lamore Carter, Bessie Dickerson, Tillen Le Melle, Comparison of Two Methods of Teaching Remedial English to College Freshmen, pp. 10-11.

²Ibid., pp. 44-45.

³Ibid., p. 45.

The Tucson, Arizona Program for Improved Understanding and Use of English

The Tucson Public Schools have tried to create educational programs suited for the needs of the disadvantaged child, as they have students from non-English speaking homes as well as from bilingual homes. In particular, they have tried to improve the use and understanding of English. In the junior high they have used several devices of which some are audio-aural. They use language records in a simplified language laboratory. This consists of eight headsets inserted into one or more jack lines. They use the same listening device with a tape recorder. At different times small groups practiced specific skills in pronunciation of words and sentence patterns. Students also listened to stories that had been tape-recorded by a variety of individuals of differing age and sex. As the students followed in their books, emphasis was on pronunciation, intonation, and rhythm. They also used other materials such as charts, generative grammar, discussion from films, and opaque projector depicting phases of culture.

The supervisors have been encouraged with this program as tests before 7th and after 8th showed good results. There was improvement especially in reading, listening, and abstract reasoning. Improvement in poise and confidence was clearly discernible.¹

¹Iris Mulvaney, "Teaching Students from Bilingual or Non English Speaking Homes," Audiovisual Instruction, 10:35, January, 1965.

Prince Edward County Free Schools and Use of Language Master

Because of the ruling by the United States government that schools must be integrated, the public schools of Prince Edward County, Virginia, were closed in 1959. In September of 1963, the Prince Edward Free Schools were established for the students who had had no education for four years. Many of the students were not properly clothed or fed and their parents were illiterate. The students talked in monosyllables and fragmented sentences and had forgotten whatever they might have learned about writing.

The students were divided into three groups--Elementary Middle, Upper School. The stress for learning in the Middle School group was on reading and language arts.

One of the school's most effective pieces of equipment proved to be the Language Master, a device which enables the student to see written words, sentences, and symbols as well as being able to hear the specific items pronounced by means of a card which contains a magnetic sound track. The voice on sound has general or standard speech patterns. Teachers may record their own voices, and the students are also able to make their own vocal sounds and compare with the master or teacher's voice. Additional blank cards are available for making special situation materials.

The team of teachers who taught in the Middle School felt that the Language Master was of great value in teaching

the language arts to the children of Prince Edward County, many of whom had serious speech difficulties.¹

Other Projects for Oral or Aural English

There are several other projects and research experiments that are in the process of being evaluated, and some new methods and materials for oral-aural teaching of English may be given.

There is a program in individualized instruction being developed and used at Woodrow Wilson Junior High in Passaic, New Jersey. Students in the program are individually tested, and every Monday each student receives his week's program for specific work in reading, composition, and language. In some instances the oral-aural techniques are being tried.²

The North Carolina Advancement School at Winston-Salem is a residential integrated school for underachieving eighth grade students. These students are given new and different instructional methods and materials for an eleven week period. Testing and evaluation of such techniques are being made.³

There is an experimental program supported by a grant from the Carnegie Corporation and directed by Sol Tax, a

¹"Prince Edward County, AV Helps Virginia's Deprived," Audiovisual Instruction, 10:19-23, January 1965.

²Language Problems for the Disadvantaged, p. 109.

³Ibid., p. 125.

professor of Anthropology at University of Chicago, on a Cross-Cultural Education Project which will investigate whether American Indians can bridge the gap educationally, with the main emphasis on literacy. Several methods of instruction are being tested.

There are other programs testing the teaching of language by the oral-aural method, but it was found that the majority of the programs reported were being used with elementary or pre-school children. There are a few programs that are being tried in adult education, but as of now no adequate report of findings could be ascertained.

APPLICATIONS OF ORAL-AURAL TECHNIQUES IN THE ENGLISH CLASSROOM FOR DISADVANTAGED ADOLESCENTS

The disadvantaged adolescent, as shown in the literature read, has not been understood or taught successfully in the English classroom. Too many times he has been shoved aside as a slow learner without verbal ability because he could not compete in a class for middle-class students, taught by a middle-class teacher in old and traditional ways using materials that had no meaning to him.

The literature shows that the disadvantaged adolescent has verbal ability, he has intelligence, and he has many good traits; but it also reveals that he does have limited ability with formal language or standard English. Since all educated people need to be able to speak and write in standard English

patterns, the main objective with the disadvantaged adolescent in the English class is to help him with his language difficulties. All of the literature suggests that an oral approach is necessary to helping the student find acceptable English patterns.

The use of the language laboratory in teaching foreign languages has shown that actual practice in hearing and speaking the language gives language mastery, as proper habits can be formed by motivated drill exercises and repetition.¹

The literature read on the use of the same procedure, the oral-aural technique, shows that this method can be used in the English classroom to teach standard English.

Therefore, the English classroom should be equipped with enough electronic devices, such as tape recorders, listening posts, Language Masters, and other similar devices, that the disadvantaged adolescent may hear himself and practice proper pronunciation and speaking of language patterns.

However, just the equipment will not be enough. The class must have an imaginative and creative teacher who, by some original methods will give the adolescent a start toward accomplishment, a sense of value in himself and what he is doing. Too many English teachers, according to Lin, believe that "standard English can be mastered by work-book

¹Theodore Huebener, Audio Visual Techniques in Teaching Foreign Languages, p. 111.

drills or by goading and correcting the pupil, or by diagramming. Traditional schoolgrammar with its imposing array of definitions and rules, invested with an authority not to be questioned, plays its role in discouraging curiosity and critical judgment."¹

Therefore, the English teacher in a classroom for the disadvantaged must make an effort to discover the exact nature of the language problem of the individual students and try to adapt language instruction, using electronic devices where appropriate, to real problems.

Beyond the uses of devices in the teaching of language, the English class must give the student a chance to use the patterns of speech in class activities such as dramatics, reports, and literature. At all times the teacher must keep the classroom in an atmosphere conducive to learning and one that will give the students a measure of success.

This type of teaching, of necessity, would mean smaller class size so that the teacher could work with the individual or with small groups and develop rapport with the students. It would also mean that the teacher would have to do much improvising of methods and materials, as at the present there are not many that have been proved of value.

The one series of lessons that has been shown to be of value in teaching standard English patterns to the disadvantaged

¹San-su C. Lin, "Disadvantaged Student? or Disadvantaged Teacher?" English Journal, 56:172, May, 1967.

by the oral-aural method is the series of tapes made by Golden.¹ It would be of interest to test its value in other classrooms.

The review of the literature seems to show that the disadvantaged adolescent needs to have differing experiences in the English classroom. These are:

1. Whatever is presented must be of significance and interest in itself, as outside or long range applications do not seem to be of value.

2. Situations of learning must be given where the student can succeed instead of fail. In some cases he just needs more time, as speed is not a part of his culture.

3. Subjects presented must be on ideas of which he has some knowledge, such as games, sports, cars, music, and feelings of anger and loyalty. Traditional subjects of middle and higher class values have little meaning to the disadvantaged.

4. Methods used should bring some physical satisfaction, if possible, as he is a physical learner. Laboratory and role-acting methods are particularly successful.

5. Materials used should be adult but not too difficult, should be based on something other than traditional reading materials. Television, popular magazines, school problems, books without deep theme or subtlety are good choices.

¹Golden, *op. cit.*, p. 163-293. (May be purchased as tapes from Detroit Public Schools)

Kohl, about his work in Harlem, says:

A child will not write if he is afraid to talk. It is the effort to use words well, to say what he wants to say, to people whom he trusts and wants to reach and move, that alone¹ will teach a young person to use words better.

His statement reveals that which should be of importance in planning the curriculum of the English class in teaching the disadvantaged adolescent. The class should help the student to use words well, by using all appropriate methods, with all of those he trusts and wants to reach, his peers, the teacher, his employer, the community; and, if it does, the student will not be afraid to talk and he will be able to write.

CONCLUSIONS

It was the purpose of this study to review the literature that defines and explains the disadvantaged adolescent and his learning problems in the field of language, to review the literature in the use of the oral-aural technique of teaching language to disadvantaged youth, and to suggest applications of the techniques to the high school English classroom and its teaching of the disadvantaged adolescent.

It was found that the main problem in the field of language for disadvantaged adolescents was that he was unable to use standard English patterns in speech and writing and

¹Herbert R. Kohl, Teaching the Unteachables, p. 9.

that traditional methods of the teaching of language to the disadvantaged have not been successful. It was found that the oral-aural techniques of teaching language to the disadvantaged adolescent have not been used very often, but that where research has been done, it has been an effective method of teaching standard English patterns.

Therefore, it would seem that the oral-aural techniques of teaching language to the disadvantaged adolescent have merit if used with new materials by a creative teacher.

It was also found, by this study, that there should probably be much more done by the schools and by educators in research on the disadvantaged student and on methods and materials to teach him. This research must then be applied in the classroom as it is estimated that "by 1970, one child out of every two will be a disadvantaged child in the metropolitan areas where 97 per cent of the national growth has occurred since 1950."¹

¹Frank Riesman, The Culturally Deprived Child, p. 1.

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A STUDY OF THE USE OF ORAL-AURAL TECHNIQUES
IN THE ENGLISH CLASS FOR DISADVANTAGED
ADOLESCENTS

by

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to (1) review the literature that defines and explains the disadvantaged adolescent and his learning problems in language, (2) to review the literature in the use of oral-aural techniques of teaching language to disadvantaged youth, and (3) to suggest applications of the techniques to the high school English classroom and its teaching of the disadvantaged adolescent.

Literary research revealed that the adolescent is not necessarily a slow learner with low verbal ability. Within his own culture and with peers he has verbal ability. It is only when he is put into a classroom with traditional materials based upon middle or upper-class values that he is unable to compete and understand.

The research also revealed that the disadvantaged adolescent does have a language problem in using formal or standard English which is the standard that is necessary to compete in modern United States. The research showed, too, that the traditional ways of teaching language and grammar in the high school have not been of any value to the disadvantaged adolescent as he is a physical learner and a "now" learner. Abstract ideas or future values seem to have little meaning.

Literary research revealed that there have been a few experiments done in the teaching of language by an oral-aural technique. This is the technique that has been used in the

teaching of a second language by actual practice in listening and speaking with the aid of a language laboratory. In these few instances, the investigators believe that the oral-aural technique has merit and gives the students a better command of standard English in both oral and written work. Research also showed that the authorities who have worked with disadvantaged youth believe that the English classroom must return to the oral tradition and give to the student, in some manner, a sense of accomplishment instead of failure.

It is suggested, then, that the English classroom for the disadvantaged adolescent must be equipped with some electronic devices such as tape recorders, listening posts, Language Masters, in order that the student may have practice in speaking and hearing himself and others. The high school English class must also have a very creative teacher in order to use the devices, motivate the student, and teach standard English. The present methods and materials are not adequate. As far as could be found, the only oral-aural series of lessons that is available and has been found to be of value in teaching language to the disadvantaged is the taped series by Golden.

Class size will have to be limited in order that the teacher will have time to plan and work with individuals and small groups. Materials and subjects will have to come from the things with which the student is familiar, such as sports, cars, television, popular magazines, music. The methods used

must be concrete and exciting and be of an oral nature.

Literary study showed that much more research must be done on methods and materials to teach the disadvantaged adolescent. The number of the disadvantaged in schools, particularly in urban areas, is greater each year. The disadvantaged adolescent must have a command of the English language if he is to become a part of society and find his place as a productive and interested citizen, and the oral-aural technique of teaching language in the English classroom has merit.