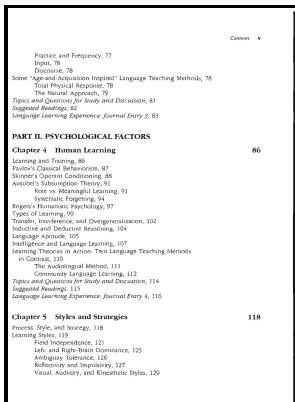


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The principles of language

Linguistics is a science, language-teaching is largely a science, but the practical study of languages is not; let us remember this primordial fact while we are endeavouring to make our subjects interesting. Learning how to use classical or artificialized forms of language such as poetry or rhetoric is a more or less studial process, an unnatural process if we do not already possess the normal colloquial. We first inquire whether they were encouraged or disposed to resist the temptation to receive their impressions through the eyes, to resist the temptation to rely on spellings, whether they did consent to use their ears as the receptive medium.

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On the other hand, many students start with no preconceived ideas whatever; children, the less intelligent adults, and those who have been unspoiled by the traditional classical fallacies will slip easily and naturally into the right attitude. We must teach him how to utilize the sound processes both spontaneous and studial ; he will not like to do so, he will constantly tend to revert to the processes to which he has become accustomed; we must react and cause him to react against his vicious tendencies. We may avail ourselves of these powers by training ourselves deliberately to utilize them, or, having more confidence in our studial efforts, or for some reason of special expediency, we may choose to leave our spontaneous capacities in their latent state and make no use of them.

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Each of us is a living testimony to this fact, for each of us has successfully acquired that form of our mother-tongue with which we have been in contact. We shall have to remove his prejudices and to modify his point of view; a certain amount of preliminary work will have to be done in order that he may see languages as they really are, in order that he may see the nature of the task before him. There is a similar reason for using such expressions as in other terms, in other words, or that is to say.

The principles of language

In most of these cases it is practically certain that the student will have formed bad linguistic habits; his pronunciation will be deplorable, his command of the inflected forms will be deficient, his syntax will be faulty, and his semantic system will be that of his native tongue. If, on the other hand, things are said in your presence concerning matters which affect even distantly your welfare or which are connected with your interests or

surroundings, you will have a tendency to grasp the meaning of what is said. Both have been acquired by the natural language-teaching forces which are at present engaging our attention.

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