

NAS-RUTGERS LANGUAGE AND ORIENTATION PROGRAM FOR HUNGARIAN SCHOLARS

Fourth Week - Feb. 10 - 15, 1957.

Daily Record

Sunday, Feb. 10 - P.M. Open house at the Chaplain's home.
Special guest: Miss Janice Harvey. Dr. and Mrs. Joseph Slater were invited but were unable, at the last minute, to come. 9:00 o'clock adjournment to permit watching "The Lark" on the Dorm TV.

Monday, " 11 - 9 to 12 and 2 to 4: Language study.

Tuesday, " 12 - 9 to 12 and 2 to 4: Language study.
8:30 P.M. Meeting with Dr. Ralph Henry Gabriel of Yale. Subject: "American Civilization"

Wednesday, " 13 - 9 to 12 and 2 to 4: Language study.

Thursday, " 14 - 9 to 12 and 2 to 4: Language study.

Friday, " 15 - 9 to 12 and 2 to 4: Language study.
7:30 P.M. Hungarian program at Agora, as guests of the International Students Club.

Saturday, " 16 - A.M. Special language instruction for newcomers and weaker members of the group.

The Week in Review

English Instruction

At the half-way mark in the course I have called on two of the instructors to comment on the status of the language work. Dr. Resnick reports as follows for the two beginning sections:

"This week we began the second half of the text, "Let's Learn English", a part dealing with American customs and family life as seen in the activities of a typical American family, the Robert Dawsons. Each lesson introduces an average of 40 to 50 new words in useful conversation patterns illustrative of basic grammatical principles. Some of the important points covered during the week were possessives, the future tense with 'going to', object pronouns, short answers with 'be' and 'do', the verb 'can', uses of prepositions, words like 'some', 'any', 'much', and 'many'. There was constant review of earlier work, especially negative and interrogative sentences, word order and drill on pronunciation, especially 'th' and 'v'.

During the week tape recordings were made of each student reading a short paragraph, the recordings being played back several times. A written quiz on Thursday produced results ranging from excellent to very weak. Each student wrote two compositions, some of which were excellent, showing ability to put together complete and

coherent sentences with very few mistakes in construction or spelling.

Our weaker students fall into two categories: those who began late (four in number) and those who seem definitely to lack linguistic ability (six, including three of the wives). They are being given special help by Rutgers students almost every day from 11 to 12 or 3 to 4, or on Saturday mornings.

Our good students have a working vocabulary of over 500 words, and can talk with reasonable facility on simple everyday topics. After they master the past tense (taken up in the fifth week), they should show a marked improvement in their ability to communicate."

Twelve members of the group are in the "advanced" section under Dr. Bertin. He reports as follows:

While most of the members of the Advanced Group began this course with a good knowledge of the most common grammatical constructions, such as the tenses of the verbs and the various pronouns, incorrect pronunciation sometimes nullified the value of their past studies. Among other weaknesses in the group were the problem of word order (especially the placement of adverbs, prepositional phrases, and direct and indirect objects); the intonation of words and sentences; difficulty in understanding English when spoken at a normal rate of speed; and difficulty in expressing themselves, primarily because of the lack of practice and secondarily because of inadequate vocabulary.

Class work has consisted primarily of the following:

1. Intensive and repeated practice - individually, in chorus, and from the tape - of English sounds, individual letters, words, and groups of words.

2. Exercises from Let's Learn English: sentence structure, grammar, and vocabulary. We have just started Practice Your English.

3. Daily oral reports by students on articles they have read in current periodicals. These reports become the basis for discussion both with regard to content material and to language improvement.

4. Reading by the instructor of passages unfamiliar to students. These passages are discussed in class without the text being in the hands of the students. Later these passages are recorded on tapes, and are copied as dictations by the students. Finally they are given the text to correct their dictations.

5. Two compositions are prepared each week. Sample topics have been My Autobiography, My Best Friend, My Ideal House, A Happy Memory, Urban Life, Country Life, Liberty, Beauty.

6. Many of the dictations, articles, and class discussions deal with various aspects of American life.

Conclusion: There has been a marked improvement in all aspects of English. Pronunciation, while progress has been uneven within the class, has become much more intelligible. The ability and the willingness to converse in English has progressed very satisfactorily. The ability to write, their best point at the beginning, has shown steady progress. Their orientation to America and to American life has been most gratifying. I think their adjustment has been due primarily to the fact that they have been treated as intelligent adults and have never felt that they were the objects of propaganda.

On Monday of the fourth week it looked as if our Rutgers and Douglass students had suddenly given up on their part in the program. The conversation groups were ready, as usual, but only 3 students showed up. Greek Week was partly to blame - or rather, the prevailing notion that during this particular week it is impossible to do anything that might conflict with fraternity obligations, real or imagined. However, my fears for the rest of the week did not materialize. The word was spread among the barbarians, and an ample number of students turned up for the remainder of the week.

Special Events

On Tuesday evening we had as our guest Dr. Ralph Gabriel, Sterling Professor of History at Yale. He had kindly sent a manuscript in advance, which was translated into Hungarian with the week-end assistance of one of the Academy employees. The manuscript was distributed and read on Monday, and formed the basis of some discussion in class on Tuesday. The evening meeting was intended to provide an opportunity for unhindered and unguided discussion on whatever aspects of American life the group wished to discuss. The questions indicated a wide range of interests - literary, economic, political, social - and tended to be so broad and complex that simple and concise answers were almost impossible. In my judgment, Dr. Gabriel's chief contribution was himself, not what he said either in the prepared manuscript or in the question period. One had the impression of being in the presence of a true "gentleman and a scholar". Mention should be made of the admirable job of translation done by Dr. Thiery, who was procured almost at the last moment, and who made what must have been a very difficult job look easy.

The other special event during the week was the Friday night party of the International Students Club. A Hungarian program had been planned, and our group was invited to come as special guests. Actually it turned out that Mr. Temessy had to produce a program on a few hours notice. Such plans as had been made by the club fell flat, and it was left to the guests to provide the program! Several members of the Academy staff were present, and Dr. Atwood expressed on behalf of the Academy his appreciation of the welcome which the Hungarian group had received at Rutgers.

General Welfare

With the course at the half-way point certain reactions and attitudes have begun to appear, which were to be expected and which, while they add to a director's worries, may be considered as evidences of healthy adjustment to a new environment. It would be strange if the freedom they are experiencing did not lead, in some instances, to excess. This excess appeared during the week in the form of one member A.W.O.L. for a 24 hour period, some members sleeping late and missing out on a part of the scheduled 9 to 10 hour, some classwork not being handed in promptly. I felt it necessary to remind the group that a full use of the time set aside for English instruction was essential if they were to get the most out of this experience, and that from now on we would expect people to be present and on time for all regularly scheduled instructional periods.

Uncertainty as to where they are going to be placed is undoubtedly responsible, in many instances, for some of the symptoms mentioned above. We can blame them if they should find it difficult to concentrate on the business at hand when the future is far from clear. The newness of the Rutgers experience has worn off, the Commons food is becoming common food, letters are arriving from Hungary, job opportunities are being hunted and investigated, and English can be a maddeningly confusing language. To all this must be added the feeling which prompted this plaintive query: "When begins here the Spring?"

As a reasonably old hand at Seminars for foreign students I should say that this one - at mid-point - is running true to form!