

and should be firm and durable, so the study of the grammar should be the first and main point in the study of a language. If it is neglected, the whole structure, although it may appear well finished at first sight, has no firm basis, and cannot last. The *grammar* should be studied systematically and thoroughly; the etymological part first, and then the syntax. These two should not be jumbled together, as is too frequently done. The forms and changes of the different parts of speech should be mastered first, and then their *use* in the composition of sentences. Whilst the study of the forms is proceeding, the pronunciation should be acquired, and the vocabulary increased, for *words* must be learned, and the least tedious way of doing this is to read easy consecutive pieces on subjects of interest, as soon as the forms of the language are sufficiently mastered.

During the study of the syntax the reading should increase in extent and difficulty, idiomatic expressions should constantly be committed to memory, and, from first to last, the learner of a modern foreign language should be accustomed to express his ideas in it, both verbally and by writing. This is the natural course, and no other will ground the student thoroughly in a foreign idiom. It is too often supposed that those who have learned a few sentences by heart, and can with their help discourse on such all important subjects as the weather, the theatre, and such like, know a foreign idiom perfectly; but how shallow and limited their knowledge of it is, soon appears, when it is put to the test; but if, on the other hand, the grammatical principles are thoroughly mastered, the rest becomes comparatively easy, as it consists chiefly in the acquisition of words and idiomatic expressions.

A class of books, which are in too common use at present, pretend to make the way to the knowledge of living foreign languages exceedingly smooth and easy. For this purpose they wisely banish all difficult rules of syntax, and treat even the forms of the language in a superficial, irregular, and incomplete manner. They maintain that a foreign idiom should be learned as a child learns his own, by mechanical imitation, and not by rules. This would be very true, if the foreign language were the *first* we acquire, but it is not, because it is foreign. The first language we learned, our mother tongue, constantly predominates in our mind; the foreign idiom is a strange element with which we have to struggle, and to do this successfully, we must gain a firm foothold, which can only be done by studying the rules of its grammar systematically and thoroughly.

The books I mentioned, although many of them contain a great deal of useful matter, are too apt to produce the same confusion in the mind of the learner that we see in them, unless their deficiencies be supplied by a careful teacher.