

ORAL LANGUAGE LESSONS.

BY JAMES L. HUGHES.

I. Kind.

1. *Incidental.* These should form a part of every lesson in which the pupils have an opportunity to speak. Their chief function is to correct errors of all kinds.

2. *Special.* These should take the place of what are commonly called grammar lessons until the pupils are about ready to enter the Fourth Book.

II. Objects

Oral language lessons should include constant and careful attention to the following:—

1. *The position of the pupil.*

- (a) He should stand on both feet.
- (b) He should stand in the aisle.
- (c) His head should be held up, and his shoulders back.
- (d) His hands should be at his sides, without touching the desks.
- (e) His eyes should be directed to the person addressed.

2. The pupils should speak in complete sentences. In elliptical questioning, or when the answer is merely a name or a date, this rule need not be followed. Indeed whenever the pupil's answer consists merely of a repetition of the chief part of the teacher's question with a name or a fact inserted to complete it, the development of the language power of the pupil is extremely small.

3. Grammatical accuracy.

4. Pronunciation, including clear articulation, especially of words that must necessarily be used very frequently, and are almost universally mispronounced, such as, was, and, do, you, just, can, because, such, have, the ending ing, &c.

5. Pitch and volume of voice.

6. Rate of utterance, including pausing.

7. Habits of inflection, emphasis, &c.

8. Spelling of difficult words, as a preparation for written lessons.

III. General Suggestions.

1. The teacher should be a correct model.

2. Language lessons should consist of PRACTICE not rules.

If pupils can be led to talk freely in expressing their opinions or in repeating what they remember in their own language the chief difficulty will be overcome. Nothing will remain but the correction of errors. The erroneous liabilities of the individual pupils can only be found out by free conversation on the part of the pupils themselves.

3. Pupils should be trained to notice incorrect expressions and errors in pronunciation. This is the most essential step in teaching them to avoid them.

4. The pupils should make the corrections themselves, in both incidental and regular lessons. They will be delighted with the privilege of making corrections or improvements in expressions used and what one omits will be suggested by another.

Directly, this exercise acquaints the pupil with the common errors of speech, refines his style and improves his vocabulary; indirectly, it promotes readiness in speaking and facility in expression.

5. In giving formal lessons on language the teacher should direct the attention of his class to the use of one class of words, or to one construction at a time. Each class should have its own specific

work to do. It will not do to allow hap-hazard work in a regular language lesson. The teacher in his lesson plan must have a definite aim, for example, the correct use of the pronouns, and he must also arrange his plan of teaching this lesson so as to secure the use of the pronouns in every conceivable way. This must not be left to chance, but should be the necessary outcome of a series of pre-arranged illustrations and skilful questions.

In leading the pupils to use pronouns in their conversations, some plan similar to the following may be used. Each teacher will of course use as many plans as possible, but each plan should make it essential to use a pronoun in some part of the sentence. The other parts of speech may be dealt with in a similar way.

"Mary and Jane, you will each take a pencil in your hand."

"Mary, tell me what you have."

"I have a pencil."

"Jane tell me what you and Mary have."

"We have pencils."

"Tell me another way Mary."

"Jane and I have each a pencil."

"Tell the same fact to Mary herself, Jane."

"You and I have each a pencil."

"What has Jane, Mary?"

"She has a pencil."

"Tell me what Mary and Jane have, John."

"They have pencils."

"Whose pencil have you, Mary?"

"This is my pencil."

"Say the same thing in another way."

"This pencil is mine."

"Tell Mary whose pencil she has in her hand, Jane."

"That is your pencil, Mary."

"Another way."

"That pencil is yours, Mary."

"Speak to Jane about both pencils, Mary, and tell her who owns them."

"These pencils are ours."

"Another way."

"These are our pencils."

"James, tell me whose pencils those are."

"Those are their pencils."

"Another way."

"Those pencils are theirs."

"Samuel, tell Mary and Jane whose pencils they have."

"Those are your pencils."

"What are you doing with the pencil, Mary?"

"I hold it in my hand."

"Take both, Jane, and tell me."

"I hold them in my hand."

&c., &c., &c.

Formerly it was regarded as sufficient to compel the pupils to recite by rote:—

Singular.		Plural.	
Nom.	I	Nom.	we
Poss.	my or mine	Poss.	our or ours.
Obj.	me.	Obj.	us.

With the corresponding tables for the second and third persons. What a developing exercise this *was* and *I fear is*! What is needed is PRACTICE instead of rules and lists.

Of course in the average class, the replies would not be at all accurate at first. "Jane and me," "me and you," would occur frequently. Practice by the pupil who blundered, is the only way of correcting such mistakes.