

THE BERLITZ METHOD

FIRST PART



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ENGLISH PART

FIRST BOOK

ENTIRELY REWRITTEN AMERICAN EDITION

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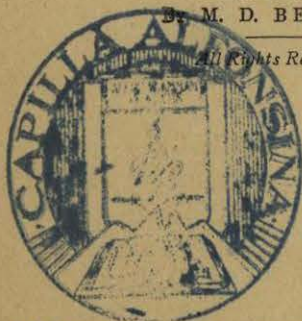
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PREFACE

Fundamental Principles of the Berlitz Method

- 1.—Direct association of Perception and Thought with the Foreign Speech and Sound.
- 2.—Constant and exclusive use of the Foreign Language.

Means of Attaining this End

- I.—Teaching of the Concrete by Object Lessons.
- II.—Teaching of the Abstract by the Association of Ideas.
- III.—Teaching of Grammar by Examples and Ocular Demonstration.

The Berlitz Method is the systematized application of the psychological process which enables a child to learn its mother tongue; it is adapted, however, to the different stages of mental maturity reached by a youth or an adult.

In the Berlitz Method, translation as a means of acquiring a foreign language is entirely abandoned. From the first lesson, the student hears only the language he is studying. The reasons for this feature of the method are as follows:

1. In all translation-methods, most of the time is taken up by explanations in the student's mother tongue, while but few words are spoken in the language to be learned. It is evident that such a procedure is contrary to common sense.

2. He who is studying a foreign language by means of translation, neither gets hold of its spirit nor becomes accustomed to think in it; on the contrary, he has a tendency to base all he says upon what he would say in his mother tongue, and he cannot prevent his vernacular from invading the foreign idiom, thereby rendering the latter unintelligible or, at least, incorrect.

3. A knowledge of a foreign tongue, acquired by means of translation, is necessarily defective and incomplete; for there is by no means for every word of the one language, the exact equivalent in the other. Every language has its peculiarities, its idiomatic expressions and terms, which cannot possibly be rendered by translation. Furthermore, the ideas conveyed by an expression in one language are frequently not the same as those conveyed by the same words in the other.

These undeniable facts suffice to show clearly that all translation-methods are deficient, and prove that every language must be learned out of itself. This is also confirmed by the well-known experience of a traveller in a foreign country. He learns with little trouble and in a comparatively short time to speak the foreign language fluently, whilst the student at school, in spite of his wearisome work with grammar and translation exercises, vainly strives for years to obtain the same result.

Instruction by the Berlitz Method is to the student what the sojourn in a foreign land is to the traveller. He hears and speaks only the language he wishes to learn, as if he were in a foreign country. He has, however, the advantage that the language has been methodically and systematically arranged for him.

In order to make himself understood, the teacher in the Berlitz Method resorts at first to object lessons. The expressions of the foreign language are taught in direct

association with perception; the student thus forms the habit of using the foreign tongue spontaneously and easily, as he does his mother tongue, and not in the roundabout way of translation. The difficulties of grammar, which frequently are created only by translation and the consequent comparison with the mother tongue, are greatly diminished. It is, for instance, just as easy for the student to learn "I you see" (French form) as it is "I see you" (English form). The difficulty appears only when the student compares the foreign expression with that of his mother tongue, in which the construction is different. It is also evident that the value of the various words and constructions is understood much more easily by means of the practical and striking examples of object lessons than by the abstract rules of theoretical grammar.

What cannot be taught by means of object lessons is elucidated by being placed in proper context; *i.e.*, the new words are used among previously learned expressions in such a manner that the meaning of the new becomes perfectly clear from its connection with what precedes and follows; this is in accordance with the established mathematical principle of finding the value of the unknown X through its relation with the known quantities A. and B. In the more advanced lessons, new words may frequently be explained by simple definitions containing the vocabulary previously acquired.

The entire stock of words used in the book is given principally in the form of conversations between the teacher and the student; whilst in the arrangement of the lessons our aim has been to give the most necessary and the most useful first, so that if the student discontinues at any point, he will be able to turn what he has acquired to practical use.

Edition of 1926

“Docendo discimus.” Experience has shown us that a number of expressions demanded too much reflection on the part of the student, who was thereby exposed to the danger of mentally having recourse to his mother tongue. We have, therefore, transferred certain matter to later stages, when the student’s inclination to think in his mother tongue has almost disappeared and his “ear” has been formed to such a degree that he may be guided in a large measure by intuition.

We are convinced that this new arrangement of the lessons will make the method not only easier, but also still more interesting and efficient.

Synopsis of the Lessons contained in the First Book

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HINTS TO THE TEACHERS

1. Before giving any lesson, the teacher should be perfectly familiar not only with the contents of that lesson, but also with those of the preceding ones. Unless he is well acquainted with the vocabulary already learned, he is not certain of employing only known words in his explanations; and trying to explain a new expression with others equally new would, of course, be useless.

2. The examples in the book must be modified so as to suit circumstances and surroundings; and as the progress of the student is in proportion to the amount of drill he receives, the teacher should greatly multiply the examples—being careful, however, not to give anything too difficult, but merely to imitate the expressions laid down in the book. “*Repetitio est mater studiorum.*”

3. New words and expressions should generally be written on the blackboard, but only *after* they have been practised a little. The student must at first learn through the ear, in order to acquire a good pronunciation. If he sees the spelling before having learned the spoken words, he will unconsciously attach to the letters the pronunciation of his mother tongue and will thus be prevented from fully grasping and imitating the foreign sounds.

4. If a student hesitates to answer, the teacher must help him immediately and, if necessary, write the expression on the blackboard. After which, the same question should be repeated, in order to see whether the student can answer then. Subjects that seem difficult to the student must not be given so long as to fatigue

him, but the teacher should frequently return to the subjects until they are mastered.

5. When correcting a mistake, the teacher should merely pronounce the correct expression without quoting the mistake. Repeating the mistake would accustom the student's ear to the wrong expression, whereas it should be familiarized with the correct form. The latter should be repeated several times so as to efface all remembrance of the mistake.

6. The student should never be allowed to prepare lessons in advance; as, however diligent and talented he may be, he cannot help mispronouncing and misconstruing a number of expressions. He does this without being aware of it. That such practising of mistakes does more harm than good needs no further explanation.

After the sixth lesson, however, the student should continually *review* at home all lessons previously had and should familiarize himself thoroughly with them.

7. We have divided the lessons not according to hours of instruction but according to the matter treated. The teacher may therefore give more than one lesson in an hour if the lessons are short and easy, or he may devote several hours to one lesson if it is long and difficult.

8. Each lesson must first be given orally in order to make a deep impression on the pupil's ear and memory and also to establish a direct association between the sounds received by the ear and the objects, pictures, scenes, etc., presented before the pupil's eyes. This must be repeated until the mental pictures (ideas) are immediately awakened when the sound strikes the ear. After this oral practice the lesson should be read (but not before the sixth lesson has been given) and finally be copied by the pupil; remember that speaking is learned only by speaking, reading by reading, writing by writing.

PREPARATORY LESSONS