

FIRST YEAR ENGLISH

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First Year English by Henry Noble MacCracken

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HENRY NOBLE MACCRACKEN

**FIRST
YEAR ENGLISH**

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BY

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PREFACE.

This little book for beginners in English has been prepared from the standpoint of the needs of Eastern students. There are numerous excellent books by well-known language teachers in Europe, admirably suited to the needs of Continental students. But, written as they are, for those whose mother-tongue is cognate to English, they sometimes fail to put the stress where it is most needed by students whose language is radically different from our own.

Few, if any, of these books give a prompt development of the verb, which, as the center and base of the English sentence, should receive full attention from the first. In this book an attempt has been made to correct this error. The imperative of the verb is first given, as the simplest form and the one most easily treated. The other forms follow rapidly, so that at the end of two months the student should have mastered all the common verb forms. The irregular verbs are given early and full attention.

Many text-books lose force by expressing rules of grammar in difficult technical phraseology, which is almost meaningless to the average student in the East, accustomed as he is to sentence constructions and grammatical forms totally different from our own. The present book strives to present the principal rules of the English language in the simplest terms, basing them on examples in the text, and omitting as far as possible every technical expression.

The existing books also fail to take into consideration the linguistic ability of students in the Orient. From their youth their

memories are especially developed, and hence their capacity for the absorption of words is usually greater than that of students in the West.

The vocabulary begins with familiar objects and actions. It aims to present vividly the life of the student in school-room, study-room and living-room; during class hour, playtime, and vacation; in the street, the market, and the country. From these easy subjects the book leads on to more remote scenes. The vocabulary increases more rapidly than in the ordinary textbook for the reasons already given, and includes more than two thousand words.

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Syrian Protestant College.

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SUGGESTIONS TO TEACHERS.

The first six lessons must be taught with the help of bodily motions. For example, take the first lesson. The teacher indicates by an upward motion of his hand that he wishes the student to rise. The student stands up. Thereupon the teacher reseats him with a downward motion of the hand. Next he says, "Stand up." The student fails to comprehend. The teacher then joins voice and gesture, saying, "Stand up," and at the same time motioning him to rise. The student rises. Then the teacher, placing his left hand at his ear, gives the motion of rising with the right hand, seemingly questioning him. The student will rarely fail to repeat the required words. Thus the teacher proceeds, making gestures take the place of words, and letting the scholar exercise his voice. Expression is not gained by hearing, but by speaking. Even after the first six lessons, motions may well be employed in teaching the various tenses of the verb. The teacher should point to a certain person and then use the needful motion. This is no hardship. Nothing is so natural or so readily interests as a gesture, nothing is more easy as a conveyer of ideas. The teacher need not fear any lack of interest at this stage. The teacher should not be afraid to repeat these motions over and over. Repetition is the secret of all language learning.

Every boy should have a chance at every idea. Speed is the last thing to be considered in the early lessons. As to vocabulary, stick to the book. The student should not be allowed to use any words not found in the text till after the thirtieth lesson. This will keep him from that faulty pronunciation acquired through learning English by sight and not by sound. Let the teacher's own vocabulary also be that of the book, even at the risk of awkwardness in expression. The teacher should remember that he is talking to students whom he must treat as children, so far as respects language. Much will be gained by the teacher's complete knowledge of what is to be covered by the day's lessons. Preparation of this kind is especially necessary in language teaching. By a careful reading of the text the teacher can judge for himself what course is best in conducting the recitation.

The following methods are very helpful:

(a) Use questions and answers, always insisting on complete answers. In the early exercises, ask questions that can be answered in terms of the question—simply to familiarize the student with the sound of the words. Later on the complete answer becomes mechanical.

(b) Use blackboard work in many ways. Words that occur for the first time in the book should be written and sentences built out of them. Write sentences, leaving blanks to be filled in. Blackboard work is especially valuable in aiding poor spellers. Faulty English may be employed, to be corrected by the student. Wherever possible, engage the attention of several students at one time by using illustrations drawn from them.

(c) In assigning each lesson, the correct pronunciation of the new words should be given by the teacher. The exercises are to be written in notebooks, corrected by the teacher, and the wrong sentences re-written as corrected. The drudgery of this work is more than repaid by the added value of the student's work in his own eyes.

(d) Practice constantly the principal parts of the verb, the comparative and superlative degrees of adjectives and other exercises which demand mere memory. It is well to have rapid impromptu reviews, with one short question for each student, to relieve the monotony of the class recitation. It serves the same purpose as an exercise in running in physical drill.

(e) The treatment of rules is a matter for each teacher to decide. Much depends on the maturity of the pupils, on their home training, and on knowledge of their own language. In general, the best results are obtained by letting the students work out the rules for themselves.

This book will have value according as its system is good or bad. Give the system a chance, therefore. Let the teacher's own methods supplement rather than replace those of the book.

Beirut, 1903.

H. N. M.

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