

THE KAKOGAWA PROJECT

F. Belle Bogard

It has long been my dream to have some of my practice teachers do teaching in some place where the students did not have the advantage of learning English through the aural approach, and there to give them that kind of teaching. It seemed to me that this work would be of great value to the practice teachers, to the students who were taught, to the school receiving the help, and to the reputation of the college sending the student teachers. Furthermore, it seemed that the practical value to the student teachers would be far greater than that of any other discipline which could be undertaken and very worthy of the units earned in this method.

It was, therefore, a great joy when the opportunity came for realizing the dream. The educational director of the Kakogawa schools was eager to have spoken English taught to the pupils in his school. All the other teachers in that school system were humble and gracious enough to concur in the desire and gladly accepted the contribution that the Kobe College practice teachers could make.

We have been very fortunate in beginning the project with two excellent young practice teachers. Both have unusual English speaking ability, a good pronunciation and outstanding teaching ability. Since the beginning of the first semester, they, with the American teacher, meet every Saturday at Sannomiya Station, board the 12:15 train, and travel for an hour out into the country. At Kakogawa Station a taxi is awaiting us; we proceed to the school and the first class begins at 1:30. It continues for an hour and ten minutes and after a five minute recess, the second class begins and continues for the same period. The taxi takes us back to the station and at 5:15 all are again at Sannomiya Station.

Of course, there are problems that have been encountered. The first problem at the Kakogawa schools was who should be in

the class. There are ten sections of students in the first year of middle school (which is the one we teach) and there are sixty in each section. I stipulated that because of the inexperience of the teachers, no more than 45 should be admitted into a class. Which ninety students out of a thousand should have the advantage of this instruction? It was decided that those who passed with the highest marks from the primary schools to the middle school could best profit by the help; this has proved to be the case.

When the surrounding schools heard of the help coming to Kakogawa, they pressed the educational director for the same advantage for their pupils. It was decided that to the five surrounding schools making a request that twenty pupils should be chosen and be asked to meet at the Kakogawa school. This group, then, comprises the second class. They come by bicycle, bus or walk through rain or shine to attend the class. With them too, there was the problem of choice for the extra work. In these schools the decision was made by lot. This has posed somewhat of a problem for us as the ability of the students naturally is quite varied. However, the speed of the first group is held in both classes as it would too greatly complicate the preparation of the teachers if two lesson plans were necessitated. As this second class was not originally envisaged in the plan, the practice teachers are given compensation other than credit for this work. This expense, as well as that of the taxi and train fare, is defrayed by a minimum charge from each student for the work is entirely extracurricular. For psychological reasons it was thought best to charge each student a nominal amount for what he is receiving; his willingness to pay for it would also be an indication of his enthusiasm for the acquisition of English.

Linguistically speaking, one lesson of spoken English a week is far from enough for the true acquisition of the language. However, once is better than nothing. The vocabulary and sentence patterns taught are the same as those taught by the Japanese teachers in

the school. In this way there is no additional burden of learning new lexical items. The student becomes accustomed to hearing these words in the stream of speech and to having his ear trained. Furthermore, two tape-recordings of the lesson are made by the American teacher in charge. These are circulated throughout the schools during the week; all the schools have tape-recorders and the pupils in some of the schools avail themselves greatly of this advantage and listen to the same recording as many as six times. This is equivalent to that number of lessons and it is easy to detect in the following lesson who has listened conscientiously to the recordings.

From the point of view of the student teachers, they find themselves becoming more and more sympathetic with the work of teachers. Every week there is the writing of the lesson plan, the conference with the instructor, often the rewriting of the plan; then the rehearsal of it for correction in pronunciation, intonation and rhythm; the next day there is the actual carrying out of the plan before student teachers; and, lastly, the final performance on the Kakogawa stage. After that there is the write-up of the experience which is corrected and rewritten. This training has value in spoken and written English expression and will be of inestimable value in later teaching experience.

We have been unusually fortunate in having only the best relationships with the officials involved. The courtesy, graciousness, and kindness on every hand is a joy indeed. The dependability of all transactions is a relief. The financial promptness with which all obligations are met is a source of happiness. The appreciation and gratitude is a reward in itself. On the other hand, if we have passed on some of the spirit of Kobe College, we shall be happy.

It is my hope that if Kakogawa is agreeable, the project may be continued, so that mutual benefit may continue. This project depends on the incoming class of practice teachers. They must have the spirit of sacrifice and service which is the essential factor in every school teacher's life. They must be willing to expend their time and effort in order that the good work which has been begun may continue.