

Changes in the Newly Printed *English Through Pictures*

Yuzuru KATAGIRI

I am one of the group of the teachers who have been teaching *English Through Pictures* more than fifty years in Japan. I am happy that Pippin Publishing in Toronto took interest in this great work in the field of the English language teaching, and made new prints in 2005. There are some changes in words and pictures in the new prints. "In updating *English Through Pictures*," says Archie MacKinnon in the opening notes, "the greatest care has been taken at all times to maintain the integrity of the learning system." Certainly it goes true as far as page 9 of Book 1 (EP1, 9), but on pages 10 and 11 the words are placed away from the pictures. In the old print, where the words are near the pictures, the man in the picture seems to say those words himself. This feeling of words and pictures together making a unit is frequently not present in the new print. This unit of words and pictures was named by I.A. Richards "SEN-SIT" (sentence-situation), and it was the key idea on which Richards' way of teaching English is based. (See his "Notes on Principles of Beginning Language Instruction", given to UNESCO meeting in Paris on June 19, 1947.)

This feeling of unit comes back again on page 12, but it goes out on page 13 and after that. It comes back sometimes, but most of the time the printing of the words is started at the upper left end of the top of the frame having little relation with the pictures. It seems that not enough care was taken in the placing of words in relation to the pictures.

Another change which may give trouble to starting learners is the use of letter "a" in the new print, while in the old print letter "ɑ" is used: "I am here -> I am here; They are there -> They are there; That is a man -> That is a man." On the other hand, letter "g" is kept in the new print as in the old: "These are the fingers. This is my right hand. He is taking it off the table."

The purpose of this book was not only teaching English as a second language, but helping boys and girls to whom early steps in reading are hard going, said Richards in his "Notes" in the first printing of the book when it came out as *The Pocket Book of Basic English* in 1945. Richards himself was in touch with numbers of Chinese who had no experience of reading or writing in any form, and with numbers of persons in the war time who came from Europe to the U.S. without any knowledge of letters. He saw how important the experience of reading and writing was to the development of the mind of men and women and boys and girls. *First Steps in Reading English* came out in 1957 as a development out of *English Through Pictures* and was used in the first stage of reading and writing in some Primary Schools in New York State and experts made observation of its good effect on learning in general. Richards had his theory of using "ɑ" and "g" in places of "a" and "g". The use of letter "a" in the new print gives a serious question to teachers of early stage reading and writing. In addition the letters in the new print are thinner than they were in the old print, which may make reading a little harder for the new-comers to the book.

When I.A. Richards was a boy, he saw horse carriages going in the streets and cries of carriage drivers came to his ears. He came to America by ship when the war was started in Europe in 1939. He came back to England by airplane after giving his last talks in China in 1979. He had experience of all these changes in transport. There are changes in the pictures and words and numbers about transport specially on page 63 of Book 2:

"A train may go eighty (-> one hundred) miles in an hour. An airplane may go three hundred (-> six hundred) miles in an hour. Automobiles and horses and carriages are other sorts of transport. -> Automobiles and buses are other sorts of transport. Airplanes, trains, ships, automobiles, (+buses) and horses and carriages take us from one place to another." Here is an addition of a picture of a bus. The old picture of a horse carriage is moved from its old left frame to the right. On pages 12 and 13 of Book 2, the pictures of a taxi and a train engine are changed. The new electric engine has no bell on it, while these words are kept together with the old picture of a bell: "This is the bell on the engine."

There are changes in prices: on page 14 of Book 2, "He gave \$132.35 (-> \$841.80) for his ticket." The price of the newspaper is changed (EP2, 71): "The price of the paper was five (-> sixty) cents. I got the paper and ninety-five (-> forty) cents from him."

When the book came out in 1945, the voice for the women's rights was not as strong as it is now. We are happier now to see these changes: Men(+ and women) go up mountains(EP2, 65). Men(-> We) are making new discoveries every day (EP2, 98). Fire is of very great use to men (-> us). They[wheels] are of very great use to man (-> us)(EP2, 99).

But it seems to go farther than is necessary when Mrs. Smith is changed to Ms. Smith in the new print (EP1, 61). But Mary Smith has to come back as Mrs. Smith in EP2, 2-19, when Mr. John Smith goes to California and sends a card to Mrs. Smith in New York State.

And who is responsible for changing the old "housekeeper" to the new "homemaker" in EP2, 112? This page is where the idea of "work" is made clearer: "What sort of work does this man do? He keeps a store. It is a fruit store. He is a storekeeper. What sort of work does this woman do? She keeps a house. It is her house. She is a housekeeper." Putting -er ending to the acts like "keep", the learner gets the new way of making words like "keep-er" who keeps something. On this page, there is no room for "a homemaker" to come in. And strangely, my copy of 2005 Pippin print keeps the page unchanged, but a homemaker comes in only in the book printed in Japan by IBC Publishing. This change seems to be unnecessary.

Another unnecessary and almost shocking change is made on page 56 of Book 1, where answers to questions on pages 52 and 53 are given. The new placing of answers downward has a better look than the old left-to-right placing. To the question, "Where is the dog?" the old answers are started with "He is ..." In place of pointing to the dog as "He", the new answers are started with "The dog is ..." Certainly this is better, because we have no knowledge of the dog if it is male or female. But the trouble comes with these answers: "The dog is under the chair. The dog is between the chair and the table. The dog is on the chair." The reader of this book has no way to say "chair" because it is not on any page, but "seat" is used. Learners will be at a loss and unhappy to see these answers when they had in their mind their own answers as "The dog is under the seat. The dog is between the table and the seat. The dog is on the seat." The word "chair" comes in suddenly from nowhere without any reason. This may be a blow to the steps of learning the reader has been taking. The person responsible for answers to questions on pages 52-53 may have seen only the questions on page 52, without taking care how a "seat" not a "chair" came into the past learning. It is quite possible that these changes are made without good knowledge of Basic English. "Chair" and "home" are not on the Basic English word list.

English Through Pictures first came out under the name of *The Pocket Book of Basic English* in 1945. "The book puts 500 of the 850 words of Basic English before you," says Richards in his opening notes. "Basic gives you a good start on the way to the rest of

English. For a full account of Basic English, see *Basic English and Its Uses* by I.A. Richards (W.W. Norton, 1943)...This opening note itself is in Basic English." At Harvard School of Education where the teacher training of English as a second language was done by Richards and Christine Gibson, they were "forced" to get the knowledge of Basic English, said Barbara Reutlinger, the last Director of Language Research, Inc. when I saw her in 1992. Without the knowledge of Basic English, you may not get the complete picture of what Richards had in mind in making *English Through Pictures*.

This is not a place for discussion about "chair or seat" or "home or house." But those whose mother tongue is English have to make some control of their own language so that international exchange goes on clearly and smoothly. Users of English as a second language up to now have been working much harder and longer time than the happy users of English as their first language. Do not give us any more trouble by changing without good reasons like: "These are windows -> the windows(EP1, 26)"; "The dog is in a(-> the) room (EP1, 56)"; "We make clothing of (-> from) cloth. We make cloth of (-> from) threads (EP2, 100. IBC only)."

There is one clear error in the new print EP2, 276. Question 3. "Is the woman than _____ the man?" is impossible. The old print says, "Is the woman _____ than the man?"

There is another point about answering questions on pages 53 and 56 of EP1. To the question "What do you see?"

new answers are:

- a I see a clock.
- b I see a man.
- c I see a woman.
- d I see a baby.
- e I see two books.
- f I see two girls and a book.
- g I see two babies.
- h I see a chest of drawers.

old answers:

- a I see a clock. The time is four.
- b I see a man's face.
- c I see a woman's face.
- d I see a baby. He is on his hands and knees.
- e I see two books. One of them is open. The other is shut.
- f I see two girls. One of them is giving a book to the other.
- g I see two babies. One of them is on his hands and knees. The other is on his feet.
- h I see a chest of drawers.

Do you see how interesting the old way of answering was, and how uninteresting the new way is? In the new print, answers are given in an automatic way, while in the old print there were additions from the side of the learners, making use of what came on earlier pages. The pictures of the questions naturally let learners say more than the automatic answers. This is the third purpose of the book, "Making the business of language learning in general brighter," as Richards said in his Note in the first print of the book in 1945, or as the back cover of some later prints says, "The book makes learning seem more like play than work."