

BLOCK 3.

Back to the past (2).

The 19th century: The century of “methods”

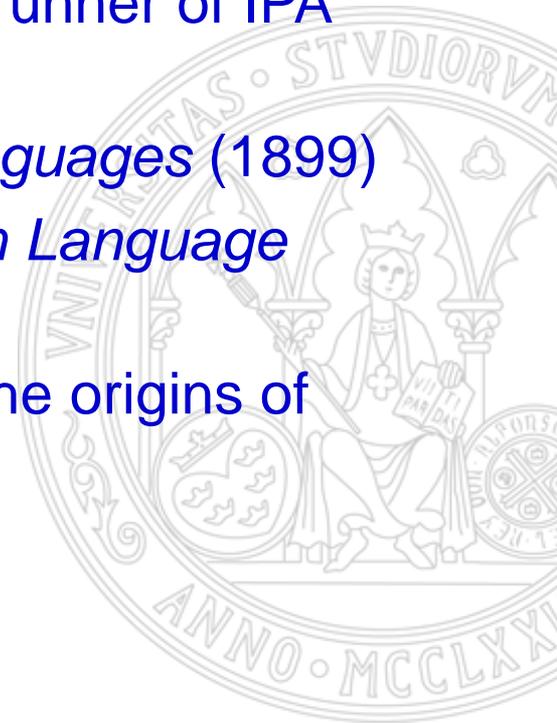
Sub-block 3.2.

The Natural Approach from the 19th century

Unit 3.2.3. The Reform Movement

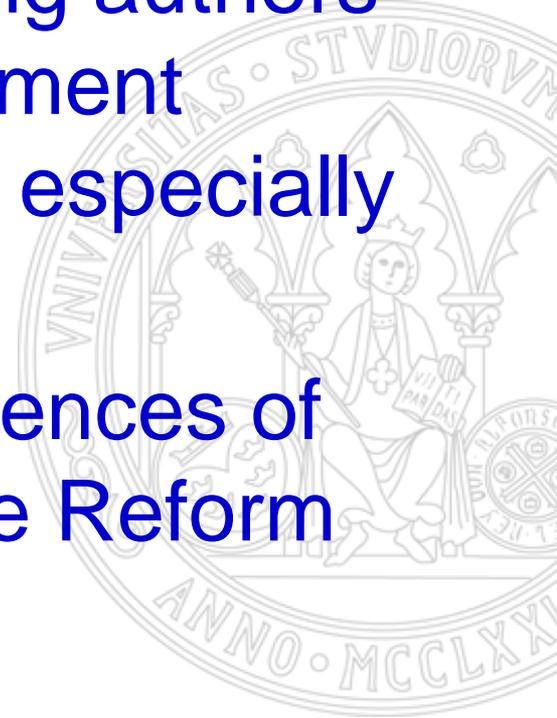
Outline

1. Objectives of this unit
2. Origins of the Reform Movement
3. Main authors and principle events:
 - a) Paul Passy. Founder of PTA (1886), forerunner of IPA (1887)
 - b) Henry Sweet. *The Practical Study of Languages* (1899)
 - c) Otto Jespersen. *How To Teach a Foreign Language* (1904)
4. Basic principles of the Reform Movement. The origins of Applied Linguistics
5. Impact of the Reform Movement on FLT



1. Objectives of this unit

1. Learn about the origin, rationale, principles and most outstanding authors that shaped the Reform Movement (Viëtor, Passy, Jespersen and especially Sweet).
2. Critically analyse the consequences of the pedagogical practice of the Reform Movement.



2. Origins of the Reform Movement

- ✓ The individual pre-reformers of the 19th century had undertaken a remarkable job to promote alternative approaches to the most harmful versions of the G-T. However, their ideas did not receive enough attention.
- ✓ From the 1880s, there appear practical-minded linguists who provided the necessary intellectual leadership to grant credibility and support to the reformist ideas: The English Henry Sweet (1845-1912), the German Wilhem Viëtor (1850-1918); the French Paul Passy (1859-1949) and the Danish Jespersen (1860-1943).

While admitting that they took their inspiration from the Natural Method, they insisted that they added to it a sound theoretical basis and a systematic approach to language problems, especially the phonological.

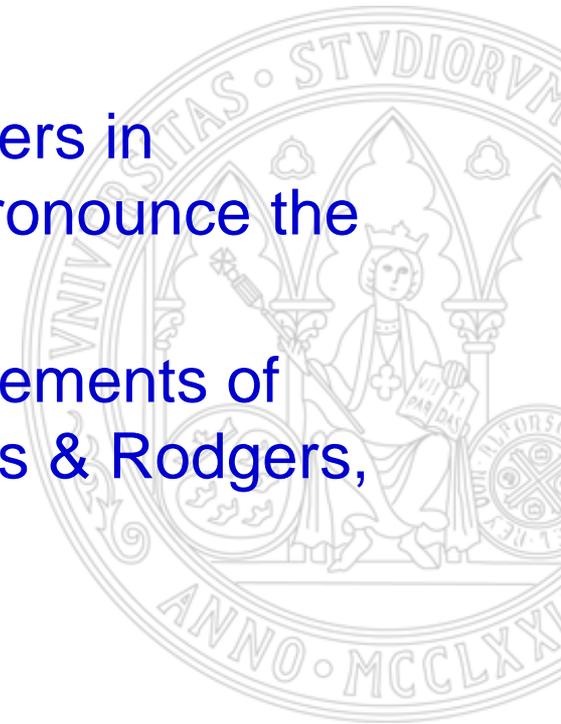
(Kelly, 1969: 41)

The leaders of the Movement were more concerned with the educational implications of the appalling teaching methods of the time, and phonetics offered both a scientific foundation for their reformist zeal and a practical technique for bringing about the improvements in the classroom that they were looking for. The reform of language teaching was a moral issue for many members of the Reform Movement [...]

(Howatt, 2004: 196)

2. Origins of the Reform Movement

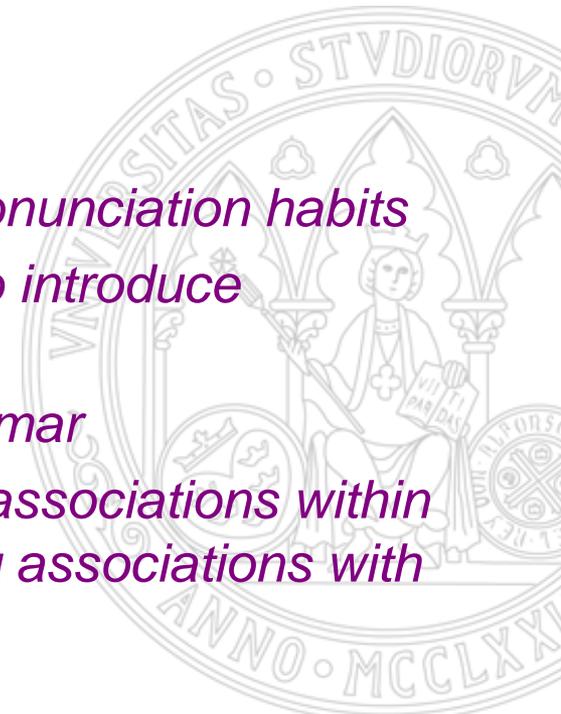
- ✓ The work which sparked the Reform Movement was Viëtor's pamphlet *Language Teaching Must Start Afresh* (1882):
- Strongly criticised the flaws of the G-T
 - Stressed the importance of training teachers in phonetics, which would enable them to pronounce the language accurately
 - Speech patterns were the fundamental elements of language (rather than grammar) (Richards & Rodgers, 2001: 10)



3. Main authors and principle events/works

a) Paul Passy (1859-1940). Founder of PTA (1886), forerunner of IPA (1887)

- In 1886 he founded the Phonetic Teacher's Association which was to become the International Phonetic Association in 1897.
- The IPA designed the International Phonetic Alphabet to enable the sounds of any language to be accurately transcribed.
- The IPA advocated (Richards & Rodgers, 2001: 9):
 1. *The study of the spoken language*
 2. *Phonetic training in order to establish good pronunciation habits*
 3. *The use of conversation texts and dialogues to introduce conversational phrases and idioms*
 4. *An inductive approach to the teaching of grammar*
 5. *Teaching new meanings through establishing associations within the target language rather than by establishing associations with the native language.*



3. Main authors and principle events/works

b) Henry Sweet (1845-1912). *The Practical Study of Languages* (1899)

- ✓ “The man who taught phonetics to Europe” and “the prime originator of an applied linguistic approach to the teaching of languages” (Howatt 2004: 199).
- ✓ Intellectual leader of the Reform Movement
- ✓ He argued that sound methodological principles should be based on a scientific analysis of language and a study of psychology.

The fundamental objection to the “natural method” is that ‘it puts the adult into the position of an infant, which he is no longer capable of utilizing, and, at the same time, does not allow him to make use of his own special advantages ... the power of analysis and generalization- in short, the power of using a grammar and a dictionary.

(Sweet, 1899: 75)

3. Main authors and principle events/works

b) Henry Sweet (1845-1912). *The Practical Study of Languages* (1899)

✓ *The Practical Study of Languages* (1899)

- “All study of language must be based on phonetics” (Sweet, 1899: 4).
- Careful selection of what is to be taught (Richards & Rodgers, 2001: 10). 3,000 common words as a suitable number for general English (Howatt, 2004: 205)
- Imposing limits on what is to be taught (Richards & Rodgers, 2001: 10)
- Arranging what is to be taught in terms of the four skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing (Richards & Rodgers, 2001: 10)
- Grading materials from simple to complex (Richards & Rodgers, 2001: 10).

Sweet’s system of grading was based on a functional typology of texts, starting from descriptive ones, moving to narratives and then to dialogues (Howatt, 2004: 205).



3. Main authors and principle events/works

b) Henry Sweet (1845-1912). *The Practical Study of Languages* (1899)

✓ Main tenets underlying Sweet's philosophy of teaching:

- 1) Support for the psychological theory reigning at the end of the nineteenth century: *Associationism*.

The student's main task was to form and maintain correct associations both between linguistic elements with the language, and between these elements and the outside world.

(Howatt, 2004: 203)

- 2) Derived from 1), the use of the text as the unit of teaching as opposed to the sentence.



Do you remember which authors had favoured the sentence as the unit of teaching before Sweet?



The non-contextualised isolated sentences prevented the students from creating the right associations because of the 'the arithmetical fallacy'

Do you remember what is 'the arithmetical fallacy' and a related example?

3. Main authors and principle events/works

b) Henry Sweet (1845-1912). *The Practical Study of Languages* (1899)

3) Derived from 1 and 2), an inductive approach to grammar: Only after the complete study of a coherent and connected text on the students' part could they start to inductively infer the grammar rules and lexical senses since these were contained in such texts, resembling the natural methodologies (Sánchez, 1997: 123).

3. Main authors and principle events/works

c) Otto Jespersen. *How To Teach a Foreign Language* (1904).

- ✓ Summarised the practical implications of the Reform Movement for the classroom teacher (Howatt, 2004: 188)
- ✓ Used a variety of exercises, even some translation for testing understanding (Lado, 1988: 14)
- ✓ Gave the learners names in the second language and wrote them on the board in phonetic transcription in order not to mar “the run of the language” (Lado, 1988: 14).

4. Basic principles of the Reform Movement.

The origins of Applied Linguistics

From Richards & Rodgers, 2001: 10:

1. *The spoken language is primary and that this should be reflected in an oral-based methodology*
2. *The findings of phonetics should be applied to teaching and to teacher training*
3. *Learners should hear the language first, before seeing it in written form*
4. *Words should be presented in sentences, and sentences should be practised in meaningful contexts and not be taught as isolated, disconnected elements*
5. *The rules of grammar should be taught only after the students have practised the grammar points in context – that is, grammar should be taught inductively*

4. Basic principles of the Reform Movement.

The origins of Applied Linguistics

From Richards & Rodgers, 2001: 10 (cont'd)

6. Translation should be avoided, although the native language could be used in order to explain new words or to check comprehension.

The rejection of translation is partially explained by the text principle. Translation is connected with non-contextualised sentences and thus results in 'cross-associations' (Howatt, 2004).



Associationism and the German psychologist Franke (Unit 3.2.4). The concept and the foreign word should be directly related, without going through the native word.

These principles reflect **the beginnings of Applied Linguistics** – that branch of language study concerned with the scientific study of second and foreign language teaching and learning (Richards & Rodgers, 2001: 11)

5. Impact of the Reform Movement on FLT

The Reform Movement was encouraged by conferences held at Vienna in 1898 and at Leipzig in 1900. Gradually textbooks took on a different pattern:

Phonetic instruction loomed large in the earlier chapters. The mother tongue was entirely banished. Vocabulary and grammatical forms were to be assimilated inductively or intuitively (by mime or gesture, by pictures, drawings, illustrations, by definitions in terms of the words and expressions already mastered, or from context). The reading passages consisted mainly of simple modern prose designed to introduce the pupil to an understanding of the life and customs of the foreign people and to their history and geography. Speech first, reading second, writing last of all became the established order in elementary instruction. Translation into either language was forbidden.

(Titone, 1968: 38-39)



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