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A LIST OF VERBS MOST NEEDED
FOR COMMUNICATION IN A FOREIGN LANGUAGE CONTEXT

Thomas F. Rogers

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A LIST OF VERBS MOST NEEDED FOR COMMUNICATION IN A FOREIGN LANGUAGE CONTEXT

Thomas F. Rogers

While in Yugoslavia recently I kept a list of those verbs most frequently required in particular verbal transactions or communication contexts. My needs and activities were those, I believe, of the average foreign tourist.

I was pleased to learn that, over an entire summer, I could express most every personal need by learning some ninety verbs which appeared to fit eight or nine distinct semantic categories. In the process, moreover, I was surprised to discover that a number of verbs commonly encountered in most every language grammar-- i.e. "to sit," "to dress"-- while describing actions common to us all, were not normally called for in rudimentary conversational (and, when so, mostly in the imperative).

It is my contention that my ninety "indispensable" verbs would, with but slight variation, prove essential for most any foreign traveler in any language culture. As verbs are the "heart" of expression in any language, moreover (and often the most difficult part of speech)-- I further contend that, by mastering the forms of those represented by my list, one could at least "make himself understood" in any particular language culture after only weeks or even days of grammar and lexical study. This would also enable the traveler to move within brief periods from one unfamiliar language culture to the next and learn enough of each particular language code to "communicate" to the natives on a fundamental level.

My list is admittedly subjective and pragmatically arrived at, and--as far as a paper is concerned-- I have relatively little more to say than this prospectus already explains. However, I would be pleased to provide copies of that list in the form of a handout and to entertain the response of those who would care to look at and discuss it with me.

BASIC LIST OF VERBAL SEMEMES (FOR ALL LANGUAGES)

(1) MODALS-- (a) EXISTENTIAL, (b) ATTITUDINAL and EMOTIONAL STATES

a have to/must
b hope
b worry
b fear
a try
a remain
a begin
a end
b like
b love
a need
b want to
a can
a repeat
a continue

(2) PERCEPTION & COGNITION

listen
hear
think
know
believe
understand
remember

see
look at
forget
notice
find out/learn
agree
read

(3) DISCOURSE

ask (question)
ask (favor)
say/tell
speak
answer

explain
announce
promise
consult with
(agree)

(4) SOCIAL AMENITIES

invite
suggest
introduce

congratulate
thanks
excuse

(5) CIRCUMSTANTIAL POSITION & STATUS

work
make
do
learn/study
live

stay
meet
be located
give
use

(6) LOCOMOTION

arrive
depart
make
travel
bring
enter
exit

walk
ride
fly
swim
sail
run

(7) CREATURE COMFORTS

sleep
eat
breakfast
dine

sup
bathe
wash

(8) TRANSACTIONS

get (obtain)
find
look for
buy
sell
order

pay
shop for
send
receive
accept
exchange