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Thomas F. Rogers

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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 conversation (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	a don't
b hope	a become
b worry	a belong
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	see
hear	look at
think	forget
know	notice
believe	find out/learn
understand	agree
remember	read

(3) DISCOURSE

ask (question)	explain
ask (favor)	announce
say/tell	promise
speak	consult with
answer	(agree)

(4) SOCIAL AMENITIES

invite	congratulate
suggest	thanks
introduce	excuse

(5) CIRCUMSTANTIAL POSITION & STATUS

work	stay
make	meet
do	be located
learn/study	give
live	use

(6) LOCOMOTION

arrive	walk
depart	ride
go	fly
travel	swim
bring	sail
enter	run
exit	

(7) CREATURE COMFORTS

sleep	sup
eat	bathe
breakfast	wash
dine	

(8) TRANSACTIONS

get (obtain)	pay
find	shop for
look for	send
buy	receive
sell	accept
order	exchange