

make it clearer to non-technical minds. This usually means merely that the writer did not sufficiently realize that he was writing in his own jargon. In this we attribute to Basic a simplification of expression which should have been the true style of the author in writing for people who do not use his jargon.

It is the mind of the writer that is the parent of the expression; it is the purpose which creates and informs it. Mr. Richards does not believe the mind matters very much, by the way. He says, "Man is not in any sense primarily an intelligence. He is a system of interests."

However, it is demonstrable that every individual creates his own language, and if he does not find in the common vocabulary the expressions which fit his intention he invents new words which seem to express it more clearly. A language grows from within and cannot be imposed on human thought from outside, like a glove or a corset. The narrower the general vocabulary is, then, the more likely it is to be distorted by individual expressions to suit special needs.

The evidence of the history of language shows that it is lack of education—that is, lack of a wide vocabulary—which helps to produce differences of dialects. Where there is a uniform education in a rich language, local dialects do not develop as strongly as where the common tongue is possessed fully only by a small class. Contrast, for example, the comparative uniformity in the U.S.A. of "American," based on a wide common education, with the many dialects of Latin in the later Roman Empire, where education was confined to the aristocracy and the people created regional dialects. Individual needs will make their own forms of expression, but if education in the common tongue provides people with a wide vocabulary, they, as well as foreigners, will find the words they need. On the other hand, if the common vocabulary is meagre, all will distort the few words they know, and many words will be used with vocational or regional meanings. In this lies also the peril of muddled thought, because no man can

think clearly unless he has sufficient clear words at his command.

Some advocates of Basic may object that these arguments regard Basic as a substitute for English, while they hold it merely as an easier approach to the real language. But *is* Basic a direct road to a knowledge of English or just a by-pass to objectives such as correspondence and converse between foreigners? Do we wish to teach an artificial language, in which Poles and Chinese may communicate, but only those English who know Basic?

For Basic is not English, since it turns aside from the root principles of English. For example, one of the characteristics of English is the adaptability of its grammatical forms—nouns can be used as verbs, and often as adjectives—a step, to step, a step-ladder, to step up production; a bomb, to bomb, to dive, a dive, a dive-bomber, to dive-bomb. If you limit the verbs to eighteen, you exclude many possible combinations with every word you avoid.

Think, too, how much of English is founded on speech sounds, carried in a peculiarly poetic way into visual and active ideas. Do we wish to teach a bloodless substitute which swamps our vivid native tongue in a dubiously international currency? This is not the road to any kind of English which has ever been spoken, and it will certainly not help the student to appreciate good English.

The inventors of Basic have concentrated on one aspect of language only—its practical utility. Do we try to simplify chess or bridge, do we simplify a fugue of Bach or a Beethoven symphony? Yet the Basicists have "translated" Shakespeare, as if the "meaning" of his lines in Basic is the essence of his work! They forget that when a foreign student bends his mind to the study of English he absorbs its spiritual qualities, realizes the beauty of its inner rhythms and appreciates its ordered precision. And so with any language, the student absorbs a great deal more than just basic operations, he absorbs the larger understanding and freedoms expressed in its literature and living tongue.