

Re: History of French

Source: <http://sci.tech--archive.net/Archive/sci.lang/2004-09/2539.html>

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Herman Rubin writes:

- > *My children could not make the German umlaut sounds until I*
- > *told them how. A short explanation and a small amount of*
- > *practice sufficed; how many hundreds of tries does a child*
- > *have to make to produce a speech sound?*

I can teach adult learners to produce any sound in English in a few minutes, without an accent. The difficulty is not in producing the sounds, but in doing so automatically, so that the articulation needed to pronounce them correctly is not a conscious mental distraction. Most students are surprised to discover that they can actually pronounce these sounds without an accent. It's easy, though, once the manner of producing them is explicitly explained to them (instead of "listen and repeat").

Children learn by practicing a sound thousands and thousands of times, until others stop ridiculing the way they say it. That could work for adults, too, but usually time constraints and social conventions make it impractical. Why do these things the hard way when easier ways are available?

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Transpose hotmail and mxsmanic in my e-mail address to reach me directly.