BU linguist innovative

By Michael Tavis

Anyone who has ever attempted to learn a second language knows how tough the job is. Conjugations, declensions and other often-forgotten concepts tend to make the sentences and words degenerate into a mere jumble of sounds.

Now there is a method developed by Professor Ivan R. Dihoff of Boston University (BU) which takes these foreign multipart- ners and makes sense of them to the student. Dihoff doesn’t bother to tell the students what they are saying. He shows them instead. He holds up a coin, for example, and speaks its name in the African language, "It’s not a perfect method," he says. "For instance, when I hold up a coffee cup, how do they know if I am talking about the cup or the cof- fee inside?"

Just as a child babbling for months, repeating over and over the simple phrases he has picked up from his parents, so do Dihoff’s students drill with words they hardly know. Finally, after hundreds of hours, a language ar- rises for both the young child and the student. "There comes a day when the student somehow 'knows' the language," Professor Dihoff says. "I don’t know what happens, but when it does, it is very exciting."

"Just making the words flow from the mouth is the real challenge in learning African languages," Dihoff says. One can have a two-letter word in English that can mean five different things — all depending onintonation."

"When he hears his students start to babble a drill they heard in class, though, he knows that they have reached the mysterious moment in learn- ing that even he doesn’t under- stand."

Professor Dihoff’s method at- tempts to duplicate the process of learning a first language. Rather than translate from English to the new language, he wants his stu- dents to simply the new word for an object and use the English altogether.

The next criteria for knowing whether the method is successful are the students themselves. Many of them have already learned a foreign language by traditional procedures and can compare the two methods.

BU University Student Ttina Watanigsa says, "I like this way much better than the others. It sounds a bit confusing, but it real- ly makes sense in the long run."

Mr. Dihoff works with BU’s African Studies Center, and it is only natural for him to teach African languages. "There is a mystery to learning an African language," he says. Such languages are not com- monly taught in American univer- sities. It was not until Dihoff started teaching Yoruba, Hausa, and Swahili at BU that students in the Boston area had the oppor- tunity to learn any of these languages. (Continued from page 1)

Sun - Sat
7 days until 1am
4 Brookline St. 354-8502
Central Square
Cambridge
MIDDLE EAST
RESTAURANT
Free Glass of Wine with this ad!

If you are graduating BS, MS, PhD?

The MIT Corporation Screening Committee Open Meeting

To answer questions regarding the MIT Corporation and the Younger Alumni Member election process.

Friday, December 1st
4pm, The Marlar Lounge 37-252.
Refreshments will be served.

Are you graduating BS, MS, PhD?

Production Services Corp., an engineering consulting firm in Waltham, MA will recruit at MIT on Friday, December 8th. A small but rapidly growing company, we specialize in automatic testing and seek individuals with digital hardware knowledge for full time or part time employment. We are composed mainly of MIT engineers and offer you an excellent opportunity to learn and grow. Contact Career Planning and Placement Office, Room 12-170. Call x3-4733 to sign up for an interview.

RECRUITING FRIDAY DECEMBER 8th

March of Dimes

TO PROTECT THE UNBORN AND THE NEWBORN
THIS SPACE CONTRIBUTED BY THE PUBLISHER

Look!

Simply the finest
cigarette papers
money can buy

Sole Importer
Leisure Imports, Inc. 220 Lafayette Street, New York 11224

--- End ---