

MEXTESOL JOURNAL

1993

VOL. 17, NO. 1

MEXTESOL JOURNAL

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Volume 17, Number 1, 1993

The MEXTESOL Journal is a publication of the Mexican Association of Teachers of English.

The MEXTESOL Journal es una publicación de la Asociación Mexicana de Maestros de Inglés

TODOS LOS DERECHOS RESERVADOS POR MEXTESOL, A.C.

Printed in Mexico

Impreso en México

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**Volume 17/Volumen 17
Number 1/Número 1**

1993

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From the Editor

We have some interesting articles for you in this issue. Our first article is by Connie Rae Johnson of the Universidad de las Américas in Puebla. In this paper she advises teachers on the result of research she has conducted into a problem affecting students at all levels and ages: A lack of cognitive learning abilities that results from a weakness in our educational system--students are being asked to memorize and comprehend, but not to analyze, synthesize or evaluate. Prof. Johnson offers a series of exercises that can be used to help students raise their cognitive learning level.

Our second article deals with age and learner independence. This refers to letting the students choose the form part of their educational development will take. The authors, Carlos Barbisan and María Sara Rodríguez, examine many practical questions that commonly come up when when trying to apply the concept of learner independence in our classrooms. They also present some practical techniques that can be used to put their ideas into practice.

The third article addresses the problem that teachers have faced since our theories of language teaching changed in the late 1970's: How can we change from being language experts teaching linguistic forms to "teachers" in the new communicative/humanistic approaches? How can we change from the teacher-centered classroom to the learner-centered methods?

Our *Book Review Section* includes the first part of a review of four textbooks designed to help students improve their pronunciation. The second part of this review will appear in our next issue. The *Teaching Tips* column presents an interesting and innovative way to look at reading comprehension.

Again, we want to encourage you to participate in MEXTESOL, either by submitting an article for the Journal or by writing us a letter to let us know about your opinions about the Journal in general, or about any of our articles in particular. You can also participate by joining your local affiliate and attending local meetings and academic sessions. This year our XX National MEXTESOL Convention will take place in Puerto Vallarta from October 14 to 17, 1993. We hope to see you there.

Editorial Policy:

The MEXTESOL Journal is a quarterly publication dedicated to the classroom teacher in Mexico. Articles and book reviews related to EFL teaching in Mexico and in similar situations throughout the world are accepted for publication. Articles can be either practical or theoretical.

Articles: The Journal welcomes previously unpublished articles relevant to EFL professionals in Mexico. The Editors encourage submissions in Spanish or English.

Reviews: Unsolicited book reviews are also published in either English or Spanish.

Send three copies of each manuscript, including all appendices, tables, graphs, etc. to the following address:

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Colonia del Valle
03100 Mexico, D.F.
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FAX: (525) 575-5473

Journal Correspondence: All other correspondence to the Journal should be sent to the MEXTESOL Jour

nal Editor at the above address.

Membership: For information on membership in MEXTESOL, contact the *MEXTESOL Membership Service* at the above address.

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Manuscript Guidelines:

1) Articles should be typed, double spaced and no more than twenty pages long. References should be cited in parentheses in the text by author's name, year of publication and page numbers.

For example: "The findings were reported (Jones 1979: 23-24) although they cause no change in policy."

2) The list of references in an article must appear at the end of the text on a separate page titled "References". Data must be complete and accurate. The following format should be used:

For books:

Jones, T.J. 1984. *How to Spell*. New York. ABC Press.

For articles:

Moore, Jane. 1991. "Why I like to Teach." *Teacher's Quarterly*. June, 56-64.

Perez, Beatriz, 1962. "El griego antiguo en quince días." *La revista de la universidad*, Vol. 10, No. 2, 136-139.

Note: A copy of these guidelines in Spanish is available on request from *The Editor*.

Si usted quiere obtener la versión de este texto en español, favor de solicitarla a *The Editor*.

Has the Educational System Failed to Meet our Students Needs?

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PUEBLA¹

How many times have you and your colleagues complained that your EFL students failed to understand the instructions on a test, were unable to apply present knowledge to a new situation, were careless in considering details and after making a superficial attempt to understand, would give up and guess at an answer? How many times have you heard teachers say that students were lacking in intelligence because they were unable to logically reason out a problem and reach a conclusion? They assumed that because some of the learners were able to correctly complete the assignment or successfully take the quiz or test, obviously the others should be able to do the same. Perhaps, instead of blaming the students, we should look at our educational system more closely to see why our students tend to have these problems.

One day the author ventured to ask students why they had difficulty in completing an exercise in their EFL textbook and the discussion that ensued (in Spanish) enlightened my view of students and their problems. Even though I had explained what they were to do, read the example in class and helped them to complete the first item, they had still not totally conceived what I expected of them. The student argued that their problem was neither syntactical nor grammatical, but instead, they simply did not "understand" what the textbook or I expected of them. After discussing that the skills the students needed to solve the exercises were not only language skills but also skills in logic and reasoning. The text and the teacher were presupposing that the students possessed reasoning skills that had not been taught to them, neither in English nor in Spanish.

According to Bloom (1956: 201-207) there is a hierarchy of cognitive learning abilities which should be reflected in teacher objectives and activities. This hierarchy, usually represented as rungs of a ladder, begins with the basic rung *memorization* which most children in the first year of elementary school can achieve, and gradually advances through *comprehension* and *application* before reaching the highest levels of *analysis*, *synthesis* and *evaluation* which are expected of most junior high school students in English-speaking countries.

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When preparing a lesson plan to achieve the institutional goal and general objectives for a course, a teacher must decide upon a series of shorter, attainable, instructional objectives stated in behavioral terms which will progressively enable the student to achieve the course objective. After stating the specific (instructional) objectives, the teacher should choose and sequence, according to Bloom's taxonomy, the appropriate learning experiences to accomplish these objectives and to provide the students with the opportunity to advance cognitively.

It is the author's belief that it is at this point that we have failed our students. A student must be repeatedly exposed to learning experiences which will gradually elevate them to the higher levels of Bloom's taxonomy because no single isolated learning experience can have a very profound influence upon the learner. In other words, adding to your lesson plan an occasional activity in which the student would need to operate on the higher levels will not produce the desired effect if the majority of the activities require the students to function on the lower ones. Changes in fundamental habits, in major operating concepts, and in attitudes and interests occur slowly. Educational experiences must be organized in a horizontal fashion across the curriculum in order to reinforce each other and to produce the desired cumulative effect. Naturally, all this requires time for the affective communication between all (not only EFL) teachers when preparing their objectives and learning experiences but, unfortunately, teachers in Mexico are not at this time being provided with the monetary incentive to motivate them to do this.

Through investigation into the problem, the author found that what the majority of the students had needed until then to function in the educational system was to perform only on the memorization and comprehension levels. For this reason, many were unable to jump to the higher rungs on Bloom's ladder of hierarchy which was what the teachers and the English textbooks were requiring of them. At this point the writer decided that the problem should be approached, not as a problem of intelligence, but rather as one with its roots in the culture of the educational system.

Culture as a word eludes a specific definition. Its meaning is extremely broad and includes all the concepts that make one society different from another. Culture influences our habits, beliefs, customs, values, and ideas. Culture is not overtly taught, but is assimilated by living within it (i.e., through the educational system). Most aspects of our culture are related to language since language is what transmits and molds the culture; language is both a component and a product of culture. Possibly for this reason, students, who were expected to correctly execute exercises in their English books that were produced in an

English culture and that required logic skills that had not been expected of them in their other classes in Spanish, were not able to perform as the teacher or the editors of the book expected.

According to English language culture, *poor thinkers* lack the habit of close analysis, whereas *good thinkers* have developed a logical pattern of working through a problem; they work persistently, drawing on old knowledge to solve new problems and relate, interpret and integrate what they already know in order to develop a logical method for problem solving. These are the skills that textbook writers and publishers expect the student to bring to the classroom. Of course, some students acquire these skills from their home or school experiences, but many others do not. Does this mean that we should not expect them of our students or should we be aware of this possible problem area and work to develop the logic skills necessary to further their education?

Logic is defined by the *Heritage Dictionary* (1975) as "The study of the principles of reasoning, especially...in deductive reasoning; ...showing consistency of reasoning;... able to reason clearly." The verb *to reason* is similarly defined as "...to think logically; ...to determine or conclude by logical thinking." Obviously, one term implies the other and they will be used in this way throughout this paper.

Reading academic material in Spanish or English is not only an exercise in word recognition; it is actually thinking. Learning to comprehend what you read is learning to reason and to associate meanings. Since reading texts written in English is the ultimate goal for the *English for Science and Technology (EST)* students at my university, I decided to not only investigate the problem further, but also to attempt to collect materials to prepare them for the type of logical thinking that would aid their comprehension of all university textbooks and at the same time would help their acquisition of English. The remainder of this paper consists of explanations of important aspects to consider in teaching reasoning and examples of some exercises that can easily be included in any reading component for intermediate and advanced English students.

Levels of Comprehension

Academic texts are not as easily read as magazines and newspapers. The student is not only concerned with the facts that are written (**literal**), but also with what was intended (**interpretive**) and how it can be applied to other situations (**applied**). University professors assume proficiency on all three of the following levels for class discussions, assignments and exams.

1. **Literal**--At this level our students have fewer problems because comprehension depends on their understanding of the syntactic and linguistic organization of the sentence. It is at this level that the students can find the correct answer explicitly written in the text, memorize and repeat it without ever understanding its importance. For example: *When did Columbus discover America?*
2. **Interpretive**--At this level students begin to have problems. In order to interpret meaning they need a number of skills. They must relate what is said in the passage to either other passages or to facts they already know. They must figure out what the author means, but does not directly state in the passage. For example: *How did the discovery of America change the course of history?*
3. **Applied**--Now, the students must apply the message that they interpreted to a new situation or experience. This level involves analysing, synthesizing and evaluating. For example: *If the discovery of America had been postponed for 200 years, would the results have been the same? What changes would have occurred in the history of the world and why?*

The following is an example of the type of exercise you can give to your students to reinforce the three levels. They must read the passage and the three statements that follow it carefully in order to decide which level (literal, interpretive or applied) each statement represents. If the teacher lacks Xerox or other types of copying facilities, a student can write the passage on the board. Similar passages can be found in almost any introductory history, biology, psychology, etc. textbooks.

No one knows what causes aging. However, scientists have pointed out possible contributing factors. Some emphasize genetic inheritance. Certain genes are thought to direct deterioration, just as others direct development. That is, at a certain point in life, these genes naturally cause deterioration, no matter how healthy the individual may be. This may be why each animal has a definite potential life span, characteristic of its species. Fruit flies may live for up to fifteen days, frogs as long as twenty years. But they very rarely live much longer. And, although medical science has increased the average life expectancy of individual humans, it has not changed the potential life span of the human species. The latter remains about 70 to 80 years, as it has been for centuries (though there are small, rather isolated groups among which a life span of 100 years or more seems to be common.) (Greulich 1977: 115)

1. Medical science cannot accomplish everything.
LEVEL? _____
2. Fruit flies may live up to fifteen days.
LEVEL? _____

3. All animal aging is probably caused by genetic inheritance.
LEVEL? _____

Extension Practice

As students increase their proficiency for correctly recognizing levels of comprehension the instructor should begin to have students in small groups or pairs write statements representing the various levels. These can be interchanged among groups and returned to the original authors to check for correctness.

Bloom and Broder (1950: 76) studied both academically successful and unsuccessful university students at the University of Chicago. According to these researchers, the poor thinkers lacked the habit of analyzing, whereas the good students had developed a logical and sequential pattern of working through difficult material. The academically poor thinkers collected facts, but were unable to see relationships while the better students were good problem solvers and were able to relate, interpret and integrate knowledge to draw logical conclusions.

Experiments have been conducted with good and deficient college readers, the result of which exemplify two features of the poorer reader.

First, there is one-shot thinking rather than extended, sequential construction of understanding; and second there is a willingness to allow gaps of knowledge to exist, in effect, an attitude of indifference toward achieving an accurate and complete comprehension of situations and relations. (Whimbey 1975: 55)

Whimbey believes that the *poorer thinker* can learn many of the qualities of the *good thinker* through exposure to problem-solving activities which will increase their analytical reasoning. Some examples of problem-solving activities which will help our students to become more like the *good thinker* and at the same time motivate and advance their level of English are provided below.

Problem-Solving

Word problems can seem confusing when you first read them but if they are broken down into small, sequential steps the answers become quite clear. Also, you can advise students to draw a diagram if they have problems. You may recognize that many of these types of exercises are used on psychological exams to test intelligence and on standardized college entrance tests, such as the S.A.T. Begin your students' experience with problem solving with some of the simple ones.

1. According to the pattern, what numbers and letters should come next in the series and why?

G H 2 K L 3 P Q 4 _____

2. According to the pattern, what numbers should come next in the series and why?

1 2 3 6 4 5 6 15 7 8 9 24 10 _____

3. Which set of letters is different from the other three sets and why?

a. GHIF b. MNOK c. RSTO d. CDEB

4. Tim, Larry and Dave got different scores on a history test. Tim got higher than Larry, but less than Dave. Their last names, not in order, are Lewis, Davis, and Connors. Davis got the lowest score and Lewis got the highest. What are Tim and Larry's last names?

5. Mary is shorter than Carol but taller than Kathy. Sue is taller than Mary but shorter than Carol. Which girl is the tallest?

6. Which letter is as far away from M in the alphabet as R is from P?

7. In how many days of the week are there more than three letters and less than 5 letters preceding the part of the word that is the same in all seven?

8. Face the south and turn to your right. Make another right turn and then an about-face (180 degrees). In which direction are you now facing?

9. Ellen, Carolyn and Betsy each finished the road race at a different time. Their last names, not in order, are King, Wilson, and Harris. Wilson finished before Harris but after King. Betsy came in before Carolyn and Ellen was last. What are Betsy and Ellen's last names?

10. Fran, Sally and Marsha collected old books from different countries. Together they had a total of 18 books. Six of the books are from Spain with one more than that being the total from the Orient and one less being the total from Holland. Sally has two books from Spain and Fran has an equal number from the Orient. Marsha has twice as many books from the Orient as Fran has. Both Marsha and Fran have only one book each from Holland and Fran has only one from Spain. How many books does Sally have and how many does Marsha have?

The problem-solving skills that students use the successfully to complete the above types of exercises are the same as those used in the successful reading of university texts. In other words, a confusing point in the text should be simplified and broken down into smaller, more manageable ideas--the same as must be done to answer problem-solving activities.

a. wood	b. fuel	c. house	d. glass
Relationship _____.			
3. <i>Kind</i> is to <i>considerate</i> as <i>courage</i> is to _____.			
a. soldier	b. bravery	c. fear	d. fighting
Relationship _____.			

This exercise allows the student to supply a word without providing any possible answers. Since multiple answers are possible, oral checking of responses can provide interesting classroom discussion.

1. <i>Soft</i> is to <i>pillow</i> as <i>humid</i> is to _____.
Relationship _____.
2. <i>Work</i> is to <i>success</i> as <i>study</i> is to _____.
Relationship _____.
3. <i>Towel</i> is to <i>absorb</i> as <i>oven</i> is to _____.
Relationship _____.

As a follow-up to these exercises, allow students to design their own exercises to be given out to other members of the class to answer. And remember, even though the students are enjoying themselves, they are not only learning English, but also thinking more logically and increasing their reasoning power.

Main Points and Details

The main ideas of paragraphs, short passages and articles has been included in EFL programs for decades, but we as teachers are still amazed when many students are unable to offer even a remotely close-to-correct main idea for a simple reading. They have problems in distinguishing details from the main points which is also reflected in their outlines. As we know, outlining is an important academic skill for students planning on furthering their education, but it requires a good understanding not only of English. but also of main points and details. Again, the author would like to suggest that the acquisition of these seemingly simple skills entails more than mastery of the second language; the students must be prepared to recognize the logical organization of written texts, be they in English or Spanish. The following is a series of sample exercises. These are only suggestions for the types of exercises that are useful in teaching main points vs. details. Teachers can easily use the formats to design more exercises based on available passages or better yet, once students have been exposed to one or two practice activities let them write their own exercises based on material you are using.

Example 1

The first is a simple exercise in identifying the main topic from a list of specific ideas related to this general idea. Students circle the most general term in the list. These practices are easy to make or find in books.

corn	wheat	grain	oats
------	-------	-------	------

Example 2

Since main ideas of passages are more often stated as phrases rather than as single words, the next exercise is meant to expose the student to main ideas (which are to be circled) as well as more specific points. This exercise can also be useful when initiating the study of general and specific ideas or when teaching the different grammatical forms for expressing phrases.

walking in the surf
riding the waves
picking up seashells
vacationing at the beach

Exercise 3

In textbooks and journal articles students receive an overload of details; therefore, they must learn to differentiate between the major and minor details so as to concentrate on only those that support the main idea. In the following exercise three details are provided for the main topic provided as a title at the top. The student determines whether the details offer minor or major support for the topic; in other words, which details are needed to prove or explain the main point? As soon as the students understand these types of exercises they should be able to write their own in small groups.

<i>Quality Control in a Restaurant</i>
Cleanliness is checked by periodic inspections which include making sure the floor is mopped daily.
In selecting an appropriate restaurant location, the site should have easy access to main highways.
The meat for hamburger must contain 100% beef with no substances to add extra weight.

Exercise 4

Each of the following groups of sentences relate to a general topic. The students must circle the phrase (of the three that follow the sentences) that best

describes the main topic and then circle the letter of the sentence that best expresses the main point.

- a. Although newborn infants seem unresponsive, new research shows that they sense more of their environment than previously thought.
- b. Infants show preferences to sweet-tasting liquids as opposed to salty at only two days of age.
- c. An infant can recognize its mother's voice from a group of female voices at one week of age.

Infant Taste Preferences
Early Infant Responsiveness
Mother's Sweet Voice

Exercise 5

The student is now ready to write his own topic (in a phrase) or main point (in a sentence) for a group of related sentences.

- a. The United States' largest manufacturer, The Ford Motor Company, is changing to the metric system in designing new parts.
- b. Many canned and packaged foods carry metric equivalents on the labels, and some are sold in metric bottles.
- c. In several states road signs show kilometers as well as miles, and weather is being reported in Fahrenheit and Centigrade.
- Topic? _____

Exercise 6

An exercise that helps students to advance gradually from main points and details to presenting them in an outlining format is shown below. Lists of main ideas and supporting details have been mixed together as a list of words. The students must think about how the ideas should be organized and rewrite them in the outline form provided.

grapefruit, tomato, food sources of vitamins, vitamin E, green peppers, vitamin C, whole grains, cod-liver oil, vitamin B, wheat germ oil, liver

_____ Title _____.

I.

- A.
B.
C.

II.

- A.
B.

III.

A.

B.

Conclusion

The purpose of this paper was not to downgrade the present educational system nor to insinuate that it is sub-standard in comparison to that of English-speaking countries. The purpose of this paper was to advise teachers of the results of a study conducted by the author concerning a problem affecting students and to provide some exercises which have proven useful in improving students' logic and reasoning abilities as well as perfecting their EFL reading skills. Many times it is very easy for teachers to place the blame on the students for their problems in our class but if we ask ourselves and the student *Why?* we may be surprised by the answer.

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Learner Independence: Is age a factor?

CARLOS BARBISAN, HEINEMANN INTERNATIONAL²

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Introduction

The concept of Learner Independence is now generally accepted in the EFL profession. The amount of research and experimentation so far carried out in this field has undoubtedly contributed to a deeper understanding of the processes involved in learning a foreign language and the insights we have gained will certainly result in more informed and, hopefully, more effective classroom practice.

There are, however, a number of aspects related to the concept of Learner Independence that, as teachers, we feel still need further discussion. We are mainly referring to the practical implications of trying to apply the concept of Learner Independence in our classrooms. Questions such as "How exactly can we promote Learner Independence?", "Is it justified to implement activities that, although they may promote Learner Independence, can only be carried out in L1 at lower levels?", "How should we interpret the often contradictory feedback we receive from learners?", "Is the concept valid regardless of the age of the learners?". It is precisely this last question, the question of age in relation to Learner Independence, that we would like to discuss in this paper.

The paper is divided into three sections. In the first section, we outline the concept of Learner Independence as we understand it. In the second section we address the question of age in relation to Learner Independence. Finally, in the last section, we propose a number of classroom activities that, in our view, may promote Learner Independence with very young learners, aged 7+.

The Concept of Learner Independence

In our view, there are two basic notions embedded in the concept of Learner Independence: confidence and capability. An independent learner is somebody who is first of all confident that he/she has the ability to learn, in our case, a foreign language. Secondly, an independent learner is somebody who has

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been made aware of their full potential for learning and who has been encouraged to make use of that potential inside and outside the classroom, both during the period of formal instruction and, hopefully, once that period is over.

The main concern is therefore with the issue of how to promote certain processes, e.g., processes that will result in learners gradually feeling more confident about their learning ability, rather than with the final outcome. In other words, we shall be more concerned with finding ways in which we can encourage learners to move towards independence rather than with providing a description of how an independent learner behaves.

Age and Learner Independence

The practical application of the concept of Learner Independence in our everyday classroom practice involves making a series of decisions in areas such as classroom management, selection of materials and techniques, etc., some of which may at first sight look somewhat unorthodox. To give but one example, in order to encourage learners to discover different learning strategies we may decide on an activity which can take up half a lesson and which may need to be done in the L1.

Having to make this type of decision not only forces us to constantly reassess our view of the learning process and its implications for teaching but can also often make us very worried as to whether we're really doing the right thing.

Of the many issues that we tend to worry about perhaps the one that we have heard the most about from colleagues is the question of age, which can give rise to rather contradictory views, for example:

"Learner Independence is OK but it will only work with adult learners because of the type of reasoning it requires."

"I agree with the concept of Learner Independence but I don't think it can work with adult students. They would reject the kind of activities involved because of their previous learning experience. They are no longer flexible the way children are."

"It does not work with children. They are not mature enough."

The view that we would like to put forward in this paper as regards this issue is that, if we agree that Learner Independence is the result of a long-term process--a process about which we still do not know very much--and if we also agree that trying to promote Learner Independence may have a beneficial effect on the learning process, then the earlier we start the more likely we shall be to achieve positive results. In other words, we believe that we should start

trying to promote Learner Independence from the very beginning of the learning process, regardless of the age of the learners.

This view implies looking at the student as an individual that is embarking upon a process where different aspects of his personality will be at play and not just as a student of English who is there to learn the intricacies of a new language. The learning process is then not solely the responsibility of the teacher, i.e., it does depend only on whether one is a "good" or a "bad" teacher, but is the result of the interaction of a variety of factors which include students' personalities, interests, etc. In order to build these considerations into our teaching we need to devise activities which take into account learners' interests and opinions, so that they can feel that they are contributing to their own learning and not just responding to the stimuli or directions provided by the teacher.

In the final part of this paper we have included some activities we devised to that effect and which can be implemented with very young students regardless of the coursebook being used.

Sample Activities

These are some suggestions for activities that we believe would help promote learner independence with students aged 7+.

Activity 1

Aim: To give students the opportunity to give their opinion about the materials that they use in class.

Procedure: Refer students to three texts you have already dealt with in class. Give each student a set of cards like the one below and a piece of blue tack.



Ask them to stick the cards on top of the texts according to how they feel about them.

Students compare what they did and suggest ways in which the texts could be made more interesting.

Activity 2

Aim: To encourage students to identify differences/similarities between their tongue and the L2.

Procedure: Students are given the transcript of a spoken text, e.g., from the text-book they are using. Ss underline any new words they find in the text and decide how they would pronounce these words if they were speaking their mother tongue. Ss then listen to the text and tell you what differences they have noticed.

Activity 3

Aim: To give students the opportunity to give their opinion about the activities done in class.

Procedure: At the beginning of the lesson give Ss a worksheet as follows:

CODE
VG = Very Good I = Interesting B = Boring
Activity 1: _____
Activity 2: _____
Activity 3: _____

Explain that during this lesson, after each activity they do in the classroom, they will have a little time to think about it and they will have to write the letter that expresses their view about the activity in the spaces provided.

At the end of the lesson find out what the majority of the class seems to think and why.

Teacher Expert or Expert Teacher?

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For many years the teaching of languages has been considered to be different from other sorts of teaching. Language teachers have suffered from the view that their discipline is highly specialized, and little attention has been paid to the broader educational context in which they operate.

This view was largely the result of language teaching being informed almost exclusively by theoretical linguistics, which led to prescriptive models of language broken down into language items (structures, functions, etc.) to be taught in a particular order. This led to the *teacher expert* view of English language teaching in which the teacher was an expert technician, trained to develop skills for controlling and organising language input so that learners would be carefully guided through the various stages required to learn the target language.

Nearly 20 years of research into second language development has shown us that learning is not a linear process. Rather, language learning is developmental, largely subconscious, and a learner- (and learning-) oriented activity. The focus of the debate in language teaching has moved from language (and the influence of linguistics), to the teacher (and the influence of methodologies, textbooks and teaching strategies), to the learner (and the importance of understanding the learning process).

This change in focus has been paralleled by a refocusing of attitudes, components, and methodologies in teacher training courses. Effective teachers need to be able to relate to their learners as individuals, to acquire skills and knowledge of an educator rather than a specialised technician. We have, therefore, developed a view of the *expert teacher*, who not only possesses the linguistic expertise required, but also manages learning by understanding the learning environment. Although we can continue to help teachers develop the skills to tailor the content of their courses to the specific needs of their learners by, for example, using and adapting appropriate materials creatively and by focusing on a specific *product* (language and communication skills), we can go further and agree on common objectives for educating students at all levels and in all sectors to become more effective learners by focusing on the *process* (learning skills). The following "ten most common misapprehensions of the *teacher expert*" are offered as a starting point.

1. What is taught is learnt.

The teacher does not exercise total control over what the learner learns. You cannot force learners to learn--only help them to learn.

2. The teacher knows best.

The teacher is responsible for managing input into the activities in the language class, but teaching also needs to be a learning process for the teacher, who must adapt to the language and learning needs of the students.

3. There is only one way to learn.

Learners need to be encouraged by the teacher to experiment with different ways of learning and to become aware of their preferred learning strategies.

4. Language teaching is special and different from other disciplines.

Language learning is closely related to other types of learning. As educators, language teachers share common objectives with, and can learn from, teachers of other disciplines.

5. The teacher cannot change the power situation in the classroom without causing chaos.

This is a matter of educating students to understand that they can learn more effectively if they take some responsibility for their own learning. Changes in teacher and student roles need to be introduced and managed carefully.

6. Minimize risks.

Risktaking can motivate and benefit learning. Learners (and teachers) who do not take risks are likely to atrophy.

7. Language learning is a linear process.

Languages are not learned item by item, and teachers need to take this into account when designing courses and developing learning input.

8. Learners have little or nothing to offer from their own experience.

It is impossible (and undesirable) to separate learning from the learners' knowledge of the world and wider educational experience. The teacher needs to seek out opportunities for learners to relate the content and methodology of activities to their own experience and to other areas of the curriculum.

9. Real-world texts are too difficult for learners.

Real-world texts can help to motivate learners and remove the idea that language learning is divorced from reality.

10. The written word is sacred (especially as far as textbooks are concerned!).

Following a coursebook slavishly will certainly not lead to effective learning by all learners. Teachers need to develop the confidence to apply their own principles for evaluating coursebooks and using them creatively.

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Reprinted from TESOL Matters.

Book Review Section:

Minimal Pairs and Beyond:

Current Pronunciation Textbooks, Part 1

For many years pronunciation was relegated to secondary importance in language teaching. The communicative approach told us that what was of primary concern was the ability of the student to communicate his/her ideas--grammatical errors and poor pronunciation could be ignored, so long as the listener could understand the message. Textbooks concentrated on functional activities with, at times, little attention given to either grammar or pronunciation.

Recently the world of English language teaching has been changing. Textbooks are being directed at the teaching of grammar communicatively and pronunciation textbooks are reappearing. This issue of the MEXTESOL Journal will include reviews of two that are easily available and the Summer Issue will review two other pronunciation textbooks books.

We hope that these reviews will help you find a book to meet your needs, whether you just want some exercises to include in your regular classes or whether you are looking for a text to be used as the basis of a pronunciation course.

Ann Baker and Sharon Goldstein. Pronunciation Pairs: An introductory course for students of English. Cambridge University Press, 1990. 152 pp.

Pronunciation Pairs is an American English adaptation of the British English version, *Ship or Sheep?* (Baker 1977). It is designed for beginning to intermediate level students and includes a Student's Book, Teacher's Manual and a set of four cassettes.

The text is divided into two major sections: vowels and consonants. The Vowel Section includes twenty units covering the major vowel sounds of English, as well as three review lessons. The Consonant Section is made up of forty-six units.

A typical unit includes diagrams of the lips and a cross-section of the mouth showing how the sound practiced in that unit is produced, along with a brief description of its production. Practices begin with isolated words, some illustrated with drawings representing the vocabulary words. This presentation is followed by a dialogue including the targeted sound. After the dialogue, there is a

section dealing with intonation, stress or joining sounds. All of these practices are recorded on the accompanying tape.

After the suprasegmental practice, there is a conversation practice, game or reading. These activities often give the student communicative practice using the sounds and intonation patterns studied. Examples of how the sounds are spelled usually closes out the unit.

In general, the text could be very useful in a course dedicated to improving pronunciation or, specific activities could be taken out and included in any four-skills course to allow students to practice with problem sounds. The book would be especially useful in a low-intermediate to intermediate level course where the grammar and vocabulary presented would not be so difficult and would allow the students to concentrate on correct pronunciation.

The only obvious weakness found in the book is the lack of any systematic explanation and practice of intonation and word stress beyond the brief practices offered in each unit. These aspects need to be dealt with in a more organized and concentrated fashion.

Gertrude F. Orion. Pronouncing American English: Sounds, stress, and intonation. Heinle & Heinle Publishers, 1988. 320 pp.

Pronouncing American English: Sounds, stress, and intonation was written for beginning, intermediate or advanced level students and consists of a Student's Book, Answer Key and sixteen accompanying cassettes.

The book is made up of four major parts: *An Overview: Sounds of American English* (3 Units), *Stress and Intonation* (4 Units), *Vowel Sounds* (12 Units) and *Consonants* (16 Units).

The *Overview* includes a very general discussion of the English spelling system, speech mechanisms and a rather confusing unit on long and short sounds.

Part Two is dedicated to stress and intonation and includes both syllable and words stress, a unit dedicated to content and function words and, finally, one dealing briefly with intonation. All of the ideas presented in this part are recycled in each of the following 28 units.

Parts Three and Four deal with the sounds of English, either individually or in pairs of difficult sounds (i.e., /s/ and /z/ or /θ/ or /ð/). Many are related to previously practiced sounds which are in some way related to the targeted vowel or consonant sound (i.e., in the unit on /a/, the vowel is compared to both /æ/ and /ε/. which were practiced in preceding units).

A typical unit in Parts 3 and 4 includes a section explaining how a specific sound is produced, illustrated by a cross-section of the head. These explanations are often so detailed that they are hard to understand or reproduce. Following the *Producing* Section, the sound is contrasted to some already presented sound using isolated words, a listening discrimination section based on isolated words often follows. In the fourth section, the sounds from the second section are contrasted using minimal sentences, "rejoinders," (Bowen 1972) illustrated through pictures or with spaces so students can illustrate them on their own. All of these sections are on the tape.

Each unit includes a taped *Stress and Intonation* section in which the student reviews the ideas presented in Part Two of the book as they practice the sounds presented in the unit. After this section, there is a taped dialogue and students are asked to mark stress and intonation and to practice it in pairs. All units wind up with a Home Assignment designed so students can review the ideas presented in class at home.

One of the strong points of the textbook is the inclusion of stress and intonation practice in every unit, reinforcing the theory presented at the beginning of the text. The tapes are also helpful, especially for the non-native teacher. However, since there are a total of sixteen tapes, the price is quite out of reach for an average classroom teacher or interested student.

The book does have some theoretical flaws that can confuse the student. The unit on *Long and short sounds* is not clearly presented and not followed up adequately either. Often the speakers on the tapes do not quite understand the purpose of the practice and occasionally make errors in stress or exaggerate reductions. Also, stressed syllables in words of more than one syllable are written in capital letters. This is often confusing since the students are attracted to these syllables in a sentence, even though a word written in lower case may be marked as having the sentence stress. By the way, this sentence stress is marked with an accent mark over the stressed word, but this accent mark is placed in the middle of the word, often over a consonant, which is distracting to Spanish speakers.

|MaRIE and Paúl| |went to the muSÉum | YESTérday| .

| I'm not IN térested in GOing | .

| MáRIE | have you séen | the PAINTings by PiCASSo ?| (p. 34)

Another misleading trait is the following decision: "doubled letters [are] syllabized phonetically and stress in such words is indicated as in 'aNNOY' and 'suPPOSE.'" (p. xx) Therefore, on page 25, students see the word *immediately* divided into syllables as i-MME-di-ate-ly. If this were to carry over to a student's writing, the result would be very different from accepted word division: *im-me'di-ate-ly*.³

In general, this text has more weaknesses than it does strengths. A future revised edition could improve the book and an addition of more communicative practices would be welcome.

--JoAnn Miller

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³Webster's New World Dictionary of the American Language. Warner Books Edition, 1971.

Teaching Tips:

Reversed reading comprehension

BY SU CROLL, BODWELL COLLEGE

Materials:

- Reading comprehension text.
- Comprehension questions based on the text.

Main Objectives:

- To direct the student's reading using the comprehension questions.
- To ensure that students are using correct question/answer formation.
- To allow the students to use their imaginations.

Methodology:

Divide the class into groups of two or three students. Hand out the comprehension questions. Tell the students that even though they have not read the article, they must answer a series of questions on it. Tell them they must make up the answers to the questions. Tell them they must use their imaginations. This might be difficult for adult ESL students who are often overly concerned with making mistakes. Assure them that the "correctness" of their answers is not as important as the inventiveness. The teacher may move from group to group checking question/answer formation, verb tenses, syntax, etc. Have all of the groups compare their answers to the questions, some of which might be quite similar.

Finally, the students read the article. Their reading is thus directed by the questions and the invented answers. After reading the article, the students compare their initial answers to the answers they come up with after reading the article.

Variation:

A variation on the above reading/writing exercise is purely a writing exercise. The teacher supplies a series of reading comprehension questions for a text that doesn't exist. The students, again divided into groups of two or three, must write a story based on the questions supplied by the teacher. In other words,

the students must write a story that can answer all the questions. The teacher may move from group to group, checking grammar and sentence structure. After the students have written their stories, each group may read their stories out loud looking for similarities and differences.

Examples:	1) What did Ellen do after the accident?
	2) How long did the operation last?
village?	3) Do you think Ellen should have gone back to the Why or Why not?

Reprinted from the OKTESOL Newsletter