MEXTESOL JOURNAL

Spring Issue, 1998

Vol. 21   No. 4

MEXTESOL JOURNAL

MEXTESOL JOURNAL

Volume 21 / Volúmen 21
Number 4 / Número 4

Spring, 1998
Contents/Contenido

From the Editor

At first glance you might wonder what Lebanon, England, Italy and the United States have in common and what authors from these so varied countries are doing in a Mexican journal for English teachers. As you read this issue, you will discover just how small this world is.

Our first article (*Whole Language, Learning Styles, and Multiple Intelligences in EFL: Adapting Traditional Texts to Meet All Learners' Needs*) is by Irma K. Ghosn from the Lebanese American University. Although her students speak a different language than ours do, the conditions they study in are very similar to those in Mexico and ideas that work there, also will work here. This very clear presentation of three themes that are very popular these days will prove to be very useful in Mexican classrooms.

Our second article (*Practical Dictation*) by Jan Nelson of Saint Michael's College in Vermont is just what the title implies—invaluable ideas for using dictation in class, presented in a clear format so you can take them directly from the *Journal* to your classes.

To continue our international theme this issue, the next article (*Making Good Tasks Better*) by Andrew Littlejohn, who lives in Italy and works in England) is the second in a series of three dealing with what tasks are and how to use them in the classroom.

Although our next author works here in Mexico, he is now studying in England. In this contribution, David Camps (*Textbook Analysis and Evaluation*) gives us some practical hints and guidelines on what to do when it comes time to change textbooks.

And to round out our issue, we have a book review of four popular textbooks used to prepare students for the TOEFL exam and a public service announcement about the new computer-based TOEFL exams which will come into use this summer in Mexico.

Enjoy your trip around the world.

                                                                          The Editor

Editorial Policy

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

Refereed Articles: Articles are refereed by members of the Editorial Board and by other experts in a field related to that of the article. The refereeing process is not blind and, if necessary, a referee will be assigned as a mentor to guide the author through the publication process. Refereed article will have a footnote referring to the fact that the article was refereed. The MEXTESOL Journal retains the right to edit all manuscripts that are accepted for publication.

Unreferred Articles: In order to open the publication process to more authors, unreferred articles will also be accepted. These articles will be read and judged by the Editorial Committee and edited by our Style Editor.

Book Reviews: The Journal welcomes previously unpublished reviews of professional books, classroom texts, video- or audio-taped material, computer software and other instructional resources. Reviews are not refereed.

Submission Guidelines: Submissions are accepted by e-mail. If mailed, please include two copies of the manuscript, including all appendices, tables, graphs, references, professional affiliation and an address and telephone/fax number where you can be reached. If you fax your manuscript, be sure also to mail two copies to the *Journal* since fax service in Mexico is not always reliable. Whenever possible include the article on a 3.5" diskettes, prepared to be read with IBM or Apple compatible program, unless the article was sent by e-mail. **Please specify if you want the article to be refereed or not.**

Manuscript Guidelines

1) Articles should be typed, double-spaced and preferably no more than twenty pages long. References should be cited in parenthesis 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. Authors are responsible for the accuracy of their references. This format should be followed:

For books: Jones, D. J. 1984. How to spell. New York. ABC Press.
For articles: Moore, Jane. 1991. "Why I like to Teach." Teacher's   Quarterly. June, 6-8.

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.*

Journal Correspondence: All other correspondence to the MEXTESOL Journal should be sent to Editor at the above address.

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

Advertising: Information on advertising is available from MEXTESOL at the above address.

Whole Language, Learning Styles, and Multiple Intelligences in EFL: Adapting Traditional Texts to Meet All Learners' Needs [1]

IRMA K. GHOSN, LEBANESE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY [2]

Whole language, learning styles and multiple intelligences are all buzzwords that have flooded the educational market with seminars, conferences and instructional materials that claim to cater to these theories. This article does <u>not</u> claim to present "the way to do whole language with learning styles and multiple intelligences", but attempts, by presenting selected strategies, to raise readers' awareness of the many possibilities that may exist and that may facilitate students' language learning, especially within the constraints that EFL teachers often operate.

Whole language

Whole language has been a buzzword for a number of years now and many language arts teachers describe themselves as "doing whole language" while they may not have a clear understanding of the whole language philosophy (Hudson 1994). That is hardly surprising as a number of definitions exist. "Whole language" here is defined as a philosophy about language learning and teaching, not a method or a set of strategies or materials. This philosophy views language learning as a complex process where the learners are actively engaged in using the language in meaningful situations.

The following points are essential in the whole language philosophy:

♦ listening, speaking, reading, and writing are not fragmented into separate skills, but kept "whole". (Rigg 1991)

♦ language functions as a vehicle for communication and sharing of ideas in authentic contexts. (Rigg 1991)

♦ language learning is viewed as a product of an interactive process and thus learners must have opportunities to share and discuss ideas. (Newman 1985)

♦ the learner is in the center of the curriculum and has choices while the teacher is a facilitator and a "collaborator". (Rigg 1991)

Whole language has found its way to many ESL classes as is evident from the numerous publications in educational journals, and some recent textbook series even claim to be whole-language-based. There is also some evidence that whole language philosophy might work even in EFL settings. (Ghosn 1994) "Going whole language" is not, however, simple, and we should not be fooled into believing that we can switch instantly from a more traditional approach to a whole language approach just as easily as we might change the daily schedule or decide to adopt a new textbook. The switch is slow, and, at times, painful, even in L1 settings as has been

---

[2] The author can be reached at the Lebanese American University, Byblos, Lebanon c/o 475 Riverside Drive, Suite 1846, New York, NY 10115. Fax: (USA) (212) 8702762 (Lebanon) (961) 09-944851. E-mail: ighosn@lau.edu.lb.

reported by several teachers. In the EFL setting, it is likely to be more so, because the whole language philosophy essentially calls for a student-centered approach to teaching and learning where the teacher is prepared to provide authentic experiences for language learning and is tuned to student interests and needs. In a truly whole language classroom, the teacher is ready to take advantage of the real learning situations that occur throughout the year—holiday preparations, field trips, school plays—and follow student interests (Snowball 1994), which may range from dinosaurs to career options and politics.

Learning Styles

Learning style is concerned with the ways we perceive and gain knowledge, the ways we think and form ideas and values, and the ways we act when we process information. Some of the learner types identified by the learning style theorists include, amongst other things, the extrovert and the introvert (Myers and Briggs 1977); dynamic, analytic, commonsensical or innovative (McCarthy 1982); global or analytical (Carbo, Dunn, and Dunn 1986); and most recently mastery or self-expressive styles (Silver, Strong and Perini 1997). In addition to the styles, we have different preferred modalities: visual, auditory or kinesthetic (Carbo, Dunn, and Dunn 1986).

Despite the differences in interpretation, learning style theories are concerned basically with the processes of learning and relate the processes to individual personality. (Silver, Strong, and Perini 1997). Learning style theorists argue for instructional strategies that allow learners to use their preferred style—and since several styles can be expected to be present in any given class, the instructional strategies used should vary accordingly.

Multiple Intelligences

The fundamental difference between the learning styles theory and the Multiple Intelligence theory developed by Howard Gardner (1983, 1993) is that while the learning style theory suggests that each individual has a preferred mode of approaching all learning tasks, the M. I. theory proposes that (because of our different "frames of mind") individuals respond and react to different content in different ways. (Gardner 1997). For example, an auditory learner, as assumed by style theories, will prefer that mode in all situations and will presumably not do as well if required to engage in learning activities that are based on movement or manipulation of materials; an individual who is an analytic learner type will prefer to tackle all learning tasks analytically rather than, for example, by being immersed in an experiential learning task. In contrast, the M. I. theory proposes that individuals have different intellectual capacities that facilitate our learning of certain types of content. For example, people high in interpersonal intelligence find it easy to understand the feelings of other people and can act upon that understanding. It is not synonymous to being an extrovert learner type, a common misconception, as Gardner (1995) has pointed out.

The significance of the multiple intelligence theory in the EFL class lies in the fact that foreign language learning (at least in instructional settings) requires a certain amount of linguistic intelligence. Obviously, since eight intelligences have been identified, not all learners can be expected to be high in linguistic intelligence, but have many other capacities that may be more developed. One of the myths about the M. I. theory is that all concepts or subjects can be taught using all the intelligences. This, in effect would imply that language teachers can teach their mathematically intelligent students language by using mathematics, or musically intelligent students through music. This has resulted in learners counting letters in words, listening to music while reciting grammar rules, or doing group work, supposedly to accommodate the students high in interpersonal intelligence. (Ghosn 1997) It is, however, a waste of time to try and use *all* the seven or eight ways in all situations. (Gardner 1995) This is where learning styles can help the EFL teacher. By accommodating to the different styles, teachers can provide a learning environment where the learners not high in linguistic intelligence can draw on their strengths, their individual preferred process of learning.

Sample Lesson Sequence

Thematic units are ideal for whole language and learning styles-based instruction and enable the teacher to present a variety of entry points into the key concepts. Yet, they may not be feasible in EFL classes because of the rigidly regulated materials and curriculum sequences common in many ELT contexts. Developing thematic units within the various restrictions would require creativity and energy beyond what can be reasonably expected. There are, however, some relatively simple ways teachers can use to adapt traditional textbook lessons and make them more learner-centered while tapping into learning styles and multiple intelligences.

World in Danger [3] is a reading passage in a fairly typical EFL text, used in grades 4-6, with vocabulary introduced at the beginning, followed by reading and comprehension questions. As the presentation of new structures and the review of previously presented ones are not clearly tied in with the reading passage, the result is a fragmented lesson that does not involve the students in any truly meaningful activities. It can, however, be made much more learner-centered using the following plan. The lesson components are organized around McCarthy's 4MAT Model and the suggested activities attempt to address as many intelligences as feasible within the given context. The format and activities presented can easily be adapted to any lesson and age / proficiency level.

Step 1. Motivational Experience (Innovative learning style)

Put the title on the board, or on a flip chart, and ask students to predict what they think the passage is going to be about. Here students may use their L1, if necessary. If that happens, use "reflective listening" and re-phrase, and model appropriate target language. (Language teachers often underestimate the learners' prior knowledge simply because it exists in L1—yet this is all potential language material!) Ask students to justify and elaborate on their predictions.

Write all the predictions on the board.

Next, display the illustrations from the passage and ask students what they now think the passage will be about, and whether they would like to revise any of their predictions. Cross out those that students want to eliminate. (Do not allow students to eliminate another student's predication.) Put a question mark next to those that cause disagreement or hesitation. Discuss students' rationale for wanting to change their predictions.

Elicit questions by asking "What would you like to know about these fires?" Put the questions on the board.

(This pre-reading activity allows the teacher to introduce some of the key vocabulary in a meaningful context, but more importantly, it provides the students with a motivation to read: they will be checking for the accuracy of their predictions. It also activates the background knowledge and thus facilitates meaning making. Many language teachers like to use videos as a stimulus for an upcoming lesson. I find, however, that viewing a film usually is, without very careful structuring and extreme regulation of "dosage" , a rather passive activity. The prediction activity presented above is more useful in getting all students actively involved. It also draws more on the students' imagination and curiosity. A film could be used later as an additional resource for report writing, for example.)

Step 2. Formulation and examination of facts. (Analytic learning style)

a. Reading / Discussion.

Have students read the passage to check for their predictions and to find answers to the questions raised during the previous activity. After reading, discuss the pre-

---

[3] See Appendix 2A.

dictions that were confirmed and those that were not. Then proceed to discuss the answers students found and guide them to discover relationships between the issues. Allow student interests to guide the discussion, and validate all comments and concerns. During the discussion, reinforce target vocabulary and structures.

b. Vocabulary.

Proceed to teach the target vocabulary and structures using pictures, models, flash cards and so on. Ideally, student interest determines the vocabulary you will emphasize (within the constraints of your syllabus).

Once vocabulary has been introduced and practiced, have students sequence sentences from the passage. For example: "Today elephants are like the dodos were three hundred years ago. Around the world, around 200 elephants are killed every day. Man kills elephants to get the ivory from their tusks. Soon elephants may die out altogether."

Give a group of 4 students 4 sentences, a sentence each, printed on 7-8 cm wide posterboard strips. (Give the class duplicates of the strips, but in smaller size, one set for every two students. This is to keep the class on task.) Students arrange themselves in a line facing the class, so that the sentences can be read from left to right. When the task is completed, the class compares the group's results with their own.

If you write the sentences so that more than one logical order is possible, you can generate a discussion that will require students to justify their decisions, and engage them in more authentic language use. This activity works especially well as an introduction to paragraph writing if the sentences provided will include a possible topic sentence, supporting detail and a possible concluding sentence.

By varying the order of the sentences, students will also begin to see the subtle differences in emphasis that result from the difference in the order of sentences in a paragraph. For example, the different emphasis in *Man kills elephants to get ivory from their tusks. Around the world 200 elephants are killed every day. Soon elephants may die out altogether* compared to *Soon elephants may die out altogether. Around the world 200 elephants are killed every day. Man kills elephants to get ivory from their tusks.* This particular text is quite simplified, but the simplicity can be capitalized on when teaching organization of ideas.

Next, allow students to examine the concepts by one of the following: categorizing the vocabulary words; developing diagrams of erosion, and classifying man's behavior in the selection as beneficial or harmful. Relate the issues to students' experience and environment. Teach students how to create a Venn Diagram to show relationships.

Step 3. Practice and personalization of the concepts (Commonsense learning style)

Omit the textbook questions and the so common teacher prepared cloze exercises. Instead, have students prepare worksheets and write questions for each other. Show them how simple factual questions can be answered directly from the text and encourage questions that require careful re-reading of the selection and critical thinking. Involve students in language activities that allow them to practice the vocabulary and structures of the lesson. Allow students to select from the following assignments:

a. Write a letter to an elephant hunter, telling him what you think about elephants / his job, and ask him to stop hunting elephants.[4]

(This would work in pairs, too.) When students have finished, they trade letters with other students. Now everyone becomes an elephant hunter whose task is to respond to the letter they received:

You have just received a letter from a student in [your country], asking you to stop killing elephants. Write a reply letter, telling the student why you hunt elephants and explaining why you cannot stop.

Have students take turns reading the letters aloud, and their replies. The change of roles in this activity will help students realize that there are different view points to issues. Depending on the resources available, you may want to encourage students to carry out research to find out more about the issue before they write their reply letters.

b. Imagine that you are a sailor who has just visited the island of Mauritius and your ship is now heading home. Write a letter to your family telling about your experiences on the island.

Both letter-writing assignments offer a natural context for introducing the basic format of letters. You will need to have some samples available for students who choose these activities.

c. Imagine that you are the last Dodo. Write a diary entry where you express your feelings as you spend your days in the zoo in England.

This assignment is not as simple as it may seem. It requires the student to re-read the text carefully to establish the facts, and then, by using sophisticated inferential thinking, to imagine what feelings may have been involved in the context.

d. You are a newspaper reporter. Write a report about the death of the last Dodo. [5]

Students choosing this assignment will need to view some newspapers to identify the basic characteristics of news reports. (In an integrated curriculum this activity would involve study of the historical context, and the methods and styles used to pass information to the general public at the time.)

e. You are a TV reporter. Prepare a short report about the problems related to burning forests. You may want to use visuals and music / sound effects to make your report clearer to your audience.

Invite students to form a team to work on this, with different students taking on a different part of the project.

f. Your mother has just told you that she is planning to buy a beautiful table she saw at the gift shop, a table made of ivory and precious wood. Write a dialogue (and present it to class, if you wish) between your mother and yourself about the issue.

Invite students to pair up to write and present the dialogue.

Step 4. Application of the concepts to a new personal experience. (Dynamic learning style)

Ask the students if in [your country or area] there are problems similar to those mentioned in the passage. List the suggestions on the board.

Students now select from the local problems one they are interested in and set up a simulation or debate. Should you be fortunate enough to teach in a context where no environmen-

---

[4] See Appendix 2B.
[5] See Appendix 2C.

tal problems exist (or if the existing issues are politically too sensitive to tackle in class), have students choose from those presented in the passage the one they find most interesting.

Next, students will draw their roles from a hat. For example: an elephant hunter, an ivory merchant, a conservationist, a government official, or a farmer living at the edge of the rain forest, a member of a tribe living in the rainforest, a timber merchant, an environmental activist in another country.

Provide students with informational books and newspaper and / or magazine articles about the topics. Encourage students to interview people knowledgeable about the issues (other subject area teachers are ideal resources!), and show a film related to the topics.

If your situation is like that in many EFL settings where no additional resources are available, guide students to reflect and develop a personal understanding of the topic through a class discussion. Arrange for a class discussion where students examine the issues (e.g., burning of forests) and attempt to identify who may be involved in, and affected by it, either directly or indirectly. You will need to remain objective and not allow personal judgments to influence the course of discussions. (Much harder to do than you might believe!)

During the discussion students will be using the target vocabulary and structures, but the language used is likely to extend beyond that expected by the text as students may need additional language to deal with the topic at the cognitive level desirable.

After the discussion, students prepare for a debate, a simulated press conference, or a town meeting.

This may sound like a very ambitious task, and something that is beyond the students' capability at the age and proficiency level expected by the text book. However, the goal is not to produce "teacher-perfect" performance, but to engage the students in active, meaningful language use through a highly motivating activity.

You may also invite students to prepare booklets about endangered species, or demonstrations and models about erosion and its effects, and so on. Some students might be interested in working on producing a pantomimed, narrated presentation describing the relationships of man and nature. Again, they can use visuals and sound effects and compose a song, a poem, or a rap to accompany their presentation. These activities could also be used to support the simulation.

Naturally, a lesson such as the one described, cannot be covered in two or three sessions, but will probably take several days, depending on how often the class meets and for how long at a time. The idea, however, is not for the teacher to plough through all the suggested activities, but to select the ones that meet the needs and interests of the students and that support the objectives of the given program. This is important to keep in mind since there cannot really be any "whole language lesson plan" as the lessons will take shape based on the learners and their needs, and the teacher acts as the facilitator of their learning. Thus in each given class, the above lesson will proceed in its unique way, different from any other.

Conclusion

What is different here from the typical EFL approach is that students have a more central role. Their interests and experiences are taken into consideration when planning the activities, they are frequently invited to generate ideas, the discussion follows their interests and concerns rather than those of the teacher or the text, and they have *choices.* Language here is not fragmented into skill exercises, but kept "whole" and relevant. When students communicate ideas, share experiences and debate issues, their language is embedded in a meaningful context and very relevant to them. The variety of activities will assure that all students will have an

opportunity, at least to some extent, and at least part of the time, to learn in their preferred modality.

The organization of the activities follows the learning styles cycle developed by McCarthy, assuring that the concepts, vocabulary and structures of the lesson are accessible to learners with different styles.

In all the steps, linguistic intelligence is cultivated through the variety of activities that enable students to draw on their personal strengths. Several of the activities help develop interpersonal intelligence, an intelligence that is very important in the increasingly global world. Logical intelligence is also developed, but no attempt has been made here to access English language through visual / spatial, musical or bodily-kinesthetic intelligences. However, one might say that Gardner's eighth intelligence, the "naturalist" intelligence (Gardner 1997) can be fostered in the context of this particular lesson through the activities that require students to examine the relationship between man and nature. [6]

Final cautionary note

Whole language, learning styles, and Multiple Intelligences should not be seen as the panacea, or cure for all the problems in language teaching, but they can offer the teacher insight into how to structure their teaching to better meet the needs of all the learners. These theories can help the teacher cultivate desirable capabilities and skills (for example, cultivation of inter- and intrapersonal intelligence can serve peace education aims). They remind the teacher that concepts and subject matter can, and should, be approached in a variety of ways, and that key concepts can be examined from a variety of angles. What is fundamentally important, however, is that teachers respect the learner differences and have as their goal the maximizing of each learner's individual potential.

References

Carbo, M., R. Dunn, K. Dunn. 1986. *Teaching Students to Read through Their Individual Learning Styles*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: A Reston Book Prentice-Hall.

Campbell, B. 1994. *The Multiple Intelligence Handbook.* Tandwood, WA. Campbell Assoc.

Christison, M. A. 1996. "Teaching and learning languages through Multiple Intelligences" *TESOL Journal.* 6 (1). Autumn. 10-14.

Dallas, D. and L. Pelham. *Let's Learn English. Book 5*. Longman. 1-4.

Ghosn, I. 1997. "Teaching EFL to Multiple Intelligences." *31st Annual TESOL Convention.* Orlando, FL.

Ghosn, I. 1996. "Whole language EFL with style: Adapting traditional texts to diverse learning styles   and intelligences." *30th Annual TESOL Convention*, Chicago, IL

Ghosn, I. 1994. "Whole language EFL with children's literature: The way it worked in one kindergarten class." *29th Annual TESOL Convention*. Baltimore, MD.

Hudson, Shelly (1994) "Whole language learning: The never-ending journey. Encouraging Literacy." *Teaching K-8 Magazine*. 31.

---

[6] For language activities that help foster the seven intelligences, see Appendix 1.

McCarthy, B. 1982. The 4MAT System: Teaching to Learning Styles with Right / Left Mode Techniques. Barrington, IL. EXCEL.

Newman, J., Ed. 1985. *Whole Language Theory in Use*. Portsmouth, NH. Heinemann. 3-5.

Rigg, P. 1991 "Whole language in TESOL" *TESOL Quarterly.* 25 (3). 521-542.

Silver, H., R. Strong, M. Perini. 1997. "Integrating learning styles and Multiple Intelligences" *Educational Leadership*. 55 (1). 22-27.

Snowball, D. 1991. "Whole language: The authentic classroom." *Encouraging Literacy. Norwalk, CT.*

Appendix 1

Multiple Intelligences in EFL
(Based on Campbell 1994, Christison 1996, Ghosn 1998)

Tap into the existing individual intelligences and aim to "awaken" or foster development of all intelligences.
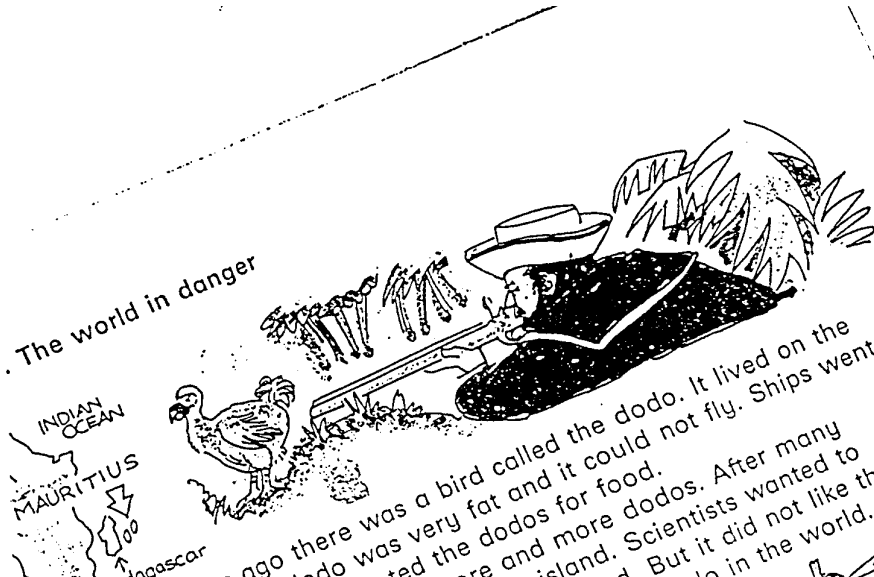
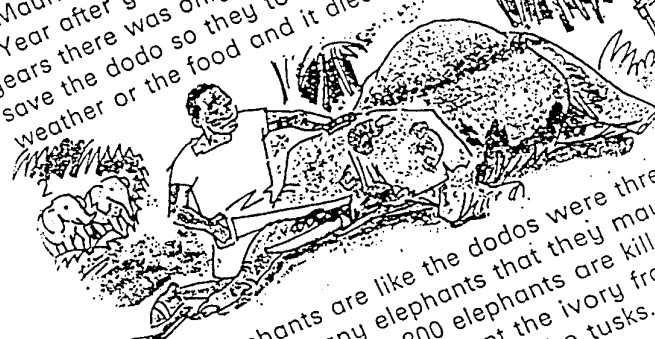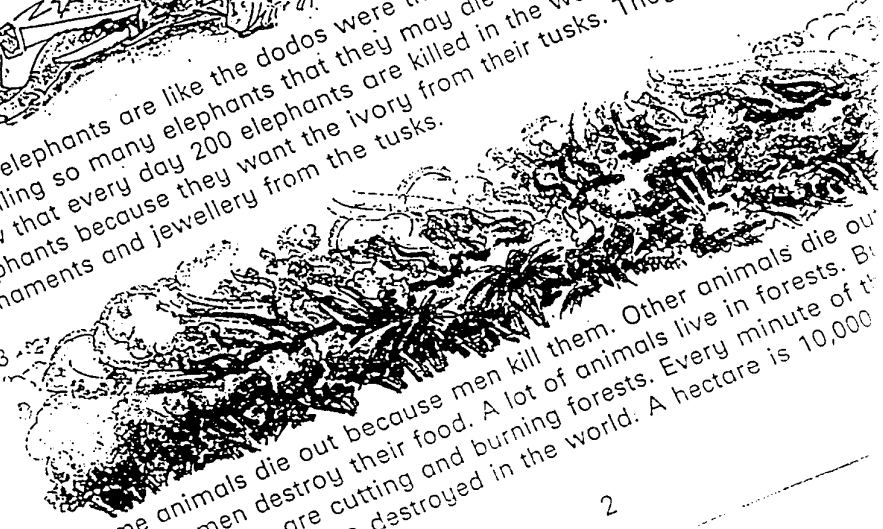|	
Verbal / linguistic	*listen to lectures / stories* *read, write* *tell stories, make oral presentations* *translate*
Logical / Mathematical	*analyze grammar* *create categories for spelling / vocabulary words* *construct Venn Diagrams / flow charts to show relationships* *write story problems with numbers* *use logical support for answers and opinions (oral / written)*
Visual / Spatial	*use graphs and charts to present concepts (story maps / sociograms)* *express ideas / concepts by drawing, painting, sculpting* *create pictorial representations of vocabulary words*
Bodily / Kinesthetic	*hands-on activities* *field trips with follow up Language Experience Activities* *simulations*
Musical	*associate music to story mood* *associate music to story plot / patterns* *use rhythm to learn / present intonation patterns*
Interpersonal	*conflict resolution skills* *intercultural awareness* *literary journals with change in point of view*
Intrapersonal	*activities with self-evaluation component* *personal journals and learning logs* *choice in assignments*

Appendix 2

Student Examples

A. The text:

. The world in danger

INDIAN OCEAN

MAURITIUS

Madagascar

ree hundred years ago there was a bird called the dodo. It lived on the sland of Mauritius. The dodo was very fat and it could not fly. Ships went to Mauritius and the sailors hunted the dodos for food. Year after year the sailors killed more and more dodos. After many years there was only one dodo left on the island. Scientists wanted to save the dodo so they took it to a zoo in England. But it did not like the weather or the food and it died. That was the last dodo in the world.

Today elephants are like the dodos were three hundred years ago. Men are killing so many elephants that they may die out altogether. Did you know that every day 200 elephants are killed in the world? Men kill elephants because they want the ivory from their tusks. They make ornaments and jewellery from the tusks.

Trees are roots of . live if t soil. E the s Eve b

Some animals die out because men kill them. Other animals die ou because men destroy their food. A lot of animals live in forests. B the world men are cutting and burning forests. Every minute of t ...tares of trees are destroyed in the world. A hectare is 10,000

3

2

B. Student Letters to Hunters.

Dear Hunter

I Read about animals and I knew that four Job Is killing elephant (on) to take the Ivory from the tusks to be rich or to have much money. If You want to make money You can take a good Job or do something that is clean and (without) get thing without taking thing without killing I hope you understood what I meen I like animals so much. I hope you will finiske killing animals.

② Dear brother

I can't stop hunting elefants because theirs too much peop are buying ivordy and they are paying to much mon how nice I am getting to much money they are. we are making from them rings and tables and so manny things its so nice and if you like to wor with me come I am everyting for you. good luck

DAD

C. Student Article and Letter about the Death of the Last Dodo.

④

I am scared I am in the zoo of England the weather is too cold
And I heat the food I am the last dodos and in Mauritus
the Elephants are going to die so I am scared I am not
hungry the people came to sea me and all of the
people are wants buy me but they sea no sell they
put my vext to the snakes the sciencetist come with
And they do speriments with my body they give my drugs
if I don't eat then they open my cage
catch my and give it to one I dont no what I am
eating but I don't have to much time I am to tier
so I am Not Hungry so I will die And No more
dodos in the world good bye

And this is how the last dodo die

3. Dear Mother From your fathful son Maroun.

Hi, how are you; I miss the days I used to spend
with my Brother and sisters. I will be Returning
home after one moth. we had alot of fun
while hunting Dodoes, and Fishing, Last week we
cought more then 20 Dodo beirds and ate them
but I hatted seeing the dodoes dieing so they
killed and I ate, bye for now I have to retu
to my work. Love AMaroun.
          O X O X O X O X

Practical Dictation

JAN NELSON, SAINT MICHAEL'S COLLEGE, VERMONT [1]

Dictation is a simple teaching technique that can provide much-needed structure and reinforcement for language learners. In addition, it can provide the focus to quiet a restless class or to pull together a distracted one. The dictation-based activities below are easy to prepare and correct and, because they have specific language objectives, are useful when it seems that you will never get through the syllabus and also get in the review and repetition that students need.

A pedagogical justification for dictation is found in *Dictation* by Paul Davis and Mario Rinvolucri (Cambridge University Press, 1988). The activities in this teacher resource book generally lead to pair and group work. A source of dictoglosses, as well as pedagogical justification for their use, is found in *Grammar Dictation* by Ruth Wajnryb (Oxford University Press, 1990).

Recall and Repeat (Davis and Rinvolucri)

In this exercise, the students themselves do the dictating.

Preparation:
1. Select a short passage (5-8 sentences) from reading materials which students have studied or will study. There should not be too many unknown words.
2. Make enough copies of the passage so that you have about one for every ten students.
3. Post the copies on the walls around the room. Students should have to walk in order to reach the copies.

Procedure:
1. Divide the students into pairs. Choose (or have students choose) one to be the messenger and the other to be the writer.
2. Make sure all writers are prepared to take dictation and that all messengers can move freely in the classroom.
3. Explain that the messengers will go up to the passage posted on the wall, remember as much of it as possible, and return to the writer to dictate it. The messenger repeats this as often as it is necessary to complete the dictation. The teacher only observes during this stage.
4. Ask the pairs to raise their hands when they finish. At this point, the teacher can examine the completed passages for errors while other students continue to work.
5. When the pairs are mostly done, refer students to the passage in the book, have some quick students write it on the board, give them copies, or show the passage on the overhead.
6. If it is a known passage, ask students what parts they found most difficult. If it is a new passage, discuss words or structures they had trouble with.

---

[1] The author can be reached at 864 Stage Road, West Halifax, Vermont 05358, USA, between May and November and Apdo. 4, Terán, Tuxtla Gutiérrez 29100 Chiapas, between November and May. E-mail is: jnelson@sover.net.

Objectives:

1. Review structures and vocabulary from a previous lesson or introduce topic or vocabulary for a reading to be coming up.

2. Encourage students to pay attention to their pronunciation.

3. Have fun.

Observations:

1. Students may feel frustrated with their partners. Each role has its difficulties. They can change roles midway if they seem to want to.

2. Remind students that the ability to concentrate while others are making noise around them is an important skill.

3. Moving about the classroom in a purposeful way can give students a sense of responsibility.

Suggestions:

You might use this technique with the second stanza of a poem, with an interesting news story, or even with instructions or notices from you or the administration.

Dictation for Writing Practice

This exercise combines dictation and free writing to give structure to writing practice which will make it more satisfying for students and easier for teachers to correct.

Preparation:

Prepare a short dictation which introduces a situation such as in the examples below.

Procedure:

1. Read the first section through first to give students a chance to think about the dictation.

2. Re-read it (the first section only) one or more times at dictation speed.

3. Give students the instructions about what to write next.

4. When about half of the students have finished, interrupt. Tell the others there will be time to finish later. (You need to walk the fine line between some students losing interest and others feeling rushed.)

5. Dictate the second and then the third section giving time between them for students to write.

6. Have students exchange and read each other's papers.

7. If students are willing, have them share the best or most interesting responses.

8. Allow students to take the work home to finish and/or improve their first efforts or give them time to do it in class.

Example 1 (Intermediate):

> My best friend smokes marijuana. I think that taking drugs is dangerous. 1 want her/him to stop. I told him/her that it is not a smart thing to do.
>
> (Write the first few sentences of what you said to him/her.)
>
> He / She was angry with me.
>
> (Describe your friend's response.)
>
> I felt sad. I went home and put on some music.
>
> (Describe the music.)

Example 2 (Beginning):

> I like to eat in restaurants. Sometimes, I go with my family.
>
> There are many things I like.
>
> *(Write your favorite foods to eat in a restaurant.)*
>
> There a many things to drink, too.
>
> *(Describe what you like to drink.)*
>
> I don't like everything. For example, I don't like ...
>
> *(Describe something you don't like to eat.)*

Objectives:

1.   Give a specific focus to student writing.

2.   Allow students of varying abilities to complete the assignment.

> *Note:*   While I am in favor of using English in the classroom even when giving instructions, it might reduce the frustration if the instructions are given in Spanish the first time that this technique is used.

> *Suggestion*:   You can set up situations in which the students have to write all future tenses, imperatives, etc.

Dictogloss (Grammar Dictation)

Students do not write the dictation word for word in this exercise. The content is given through the dictation and they provide the grammatical structures. Many passages for dictoglosses are found in Ruth Wajnryb's book, but I think you will find it more useful to create your own.

Preparation:

Prepare a short paragraph (4-6 sentences). Factual information is the easiest to begin with.

Procedure:

1.   Divide class into pairs or small groups.

2.   Briefly introduce the topic of the passage.

3.   Have students just listen (pencils down) while you read the passage.

4.   The second time through, students TAKE NOTES. Tell them they will NOT have time to write every word in the dictation.

5.   Have the pairs/groups pool their notes and work together to write a paragraph that contains the same information as the original dictation. Emphasize that they do not need to use your exact words.

6.   You can collect the passages to correct them for content and grammar, but you also can do it in class. Emphasize first the content, and then the grammar - not both at the same time.

7.   To correct for content, you might have one group write up its first sentence. Ask if students see omissions in or changes from the original information.

8.   After content has been dealt with, have students question sentences they feel might be grammatically incorrect and discuss. For more elementary students, you can walk around and identify incorrect sentences to be put on the board and discussed so that the grammar does not get too complex.

9.   If you have students rewrite the passages, you should see improvements in structure inspired by other students' work.

Objectives:

1.   Practice the use of the structural words, such as articles, prepositions, and auxiliaries.

2.   Practice paraphrasing.

3.   Focus on close reading (comparing exact meanings).

Example (Intermediate):

The Panama Canal

During the 19th century, settlers often traveled by ship from the east coast of the US to San Francisco. The ships sailed around South America, a distance of about 13,000 miles. The fastest ship took more than 120 days to make the trip. By the 1840s, the United States was interested in developing a shorter sea route. A canal was built across the narrow isthmus which connects Central America and South America. The 44-mile Panama Canal, completed in 1914, reduced the length of the trip to 5300 miles.

Dictation for Coherency (Davis and Rinvolucri)

This kind of dictation requires students to reassemble a story or other text which has a sequence. This develops a critical skill for reading –the ability to recognize the logical order of a reading, that is, its coherency.

Preparation:

1.   Prepare a passage that has an internal order. For example, a story, a recipe for preparing scrambled eggs, an historical account or the directions to get from A to B. The first text you try with this exercise should have clear sequence signals. Number the sentences in a random order.

2.   Prepare blank slips of paper. Each student should have one strip for each sentence in the dictation. If you can tolerate it, have students tearsheets of paper.

Procedure:

1.   Distribute the slips of paper.

2.   Randomly dictate the sentences of the passage WITH their numbers.

3. Have students reassemble the passage. You might have them work in pairs or even begin individually and check with a partner later.

4. As they finish, check their work. For good students who have made a mistake, simply shake your head. For students who have more difficulty, you can indicate specifically where they have made errors.

5. Early finishers can write the passage in their notebooks or search for alternative orders.

6. Try to get them to talk about why they made the decisions they did. This metalinguistic analysis helps them read better. If they can justify another order, all the better. Don't be in-flexible.

Example 1 (Intermediate or introductory activity): A Bad Day

> 1. The afternoon was hot.
> 2. The teacher was angry.
> 3. I was late for school because there was an accident on the highway.
> 4. My mother turned it off and made me do my homework.
> 5. I was too tired to do my homework, so I started to watch a movie on TV.
> 6. After school, I played soccer, but we lost.
> 7. At lunch, I argued with my friend.
> 8. Because of that, I fell asleep in history class.
> *Suggested order - 3, 2, 7, 1, 8, 6, 5, 4*
> *Note: Placement of sentence 2 may be after either 3 or 8.*

Example 2 (Advanced): The Long Arm of the Law

> 1. After that, Mr. Robinson stopped using drugs.
> 2. The Los Angeles police took him back to California.
> 3. In 1990 the Los Angeles police department started to use a computer to identify fingerprints.
> 4. He moved to another city and worked hard.
> 5. The police found the fingerprints of the killer, but they weren't able to identify him.
> 6. He was tried for the murder and was sentenced, to life in prison.
> 7. When the police found him, he was a successful businessman.
> 8. They searched for Mrs. Rose's killer.
> 9. They found the fingerprints belonged to Mr. Robinson.
> 10. In 1963 Mr. Robinson was using drugs and was later sent to jail.
> 11. In 1963 Mrs. Rose, a 43-year-old woman, was killed in her home in Los Angeles, California.
> (Suggested order: 11, 5, 3, 8, 9, 10, 1, 4, 7, 2, 6)

This is a real case and can lead to a discussion of justice. What should have been Mr. Robinson's punishment? Would it matter if we knew that Mrs. Rose had five small children? Or that she was an alcoholic with no family? or if Mr. Robinson had turned out to be a homeless bum instead of a successful businessman?

Suggestion:

This type of exercise can also be used at the sentence level. Individual words are dicta-ted and students reconstruct sentences - maybe something for the beginning of class on Mon-day morning. Be prepared, however, for some students to finish while others are still spreading out the words.

The following are general recommendations for dictation activities:

✳   Become familiar with the procedure before trying it out. Rehearse mentally what you will do and try to anticipate questions or problems.

✳   Read the text aloud before doing it in class. Mark any problems you might have. I like to read the punctuation marks.

✳   Be interested in the text. Let the students hear your interest. Make eye contact.

✳   Walk around the room while dictating. Give the students in the back some attention for a change.

✳   Plan ahead about what you will do with unfamiliar vocabulary. I write difficult proper nouns on the board as I dictate them. For common nouns, I sometimes use a "hangman" approach, that is, I put a dash for each letter of the difficult word and let the students guess.

✳   Try to limit the scope of the correction to specific points. It is easy to spend too much time on correcting dictations in class and this can become boring.

✳   Have a second activity to occupy the students who finish first.

✳   Remember - try to find some way to use the dictation again now that students are familiar with it.

Conclusion

These dictation exercises are designed to give you a tool to present the language that students need to learn in yet another form. Students should be able to see the connection between the exercises and what they need to know. I hope you will enjoy using these activities in your classroom.

References

Davis, P. and M. Rinvolucri. 1988. *Dictation*. Cambridge University Press.

Wajnryb, R. 1990. *Grammar Dictation*. Oxford University Press.

Making Good Tasks Better

ANDREW LITTLEJOHN, INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION, UNIVERSITY OF LONDON [1]

In an earlier article in the *MEXTESOL Journal* [2], I described some ways that I use to choose the most appropriate task for classroom work. I began by comparing two tasks which it will be useful to describe again here. The tasks were:

At the museum

Students work in pairs. Student A wants to find out when the museum opens, when it closes, etc. Student B has information about the museum. Student A then asks Student B.

A question poster

The students look at pictures of some animals and learn their names. The teacher then draws a circle on a large piece of paper, writes 'Animal World' in the centre, and adds a question on a line from the circle, 'What do whales eat?'. The teacher then says to the class:

 "Look at the pictures in your book. What questions do YOU have about the animals?"

Students suggest questions and the teacher adds them to the circle. When quite a few questions are on the paper, the teacher says:

 "Look at these questions. I want you to try to find the answers. Ask your friends, look in books, ask your parents, ask your other teachers - see what you can find out. At the end of every lesson, we can spend 5 or 10 minutes to see what answers you have found."

Over the next few lessons, the teacher asks the students what answers they have found. A student or the teacher writes these answers in simple English on piece of paper, and sticks them next to the question on the Question Poster.

Comparing the two tasks, I showed how we can judge how much 'value' a task has by asking ourselves four questions:

> *Does the task have value beyond language learning?*
> *Are students personally involved?*
> *Is the students' personal contribution significant?*
> *Will the task produce 'a unique classroom'?*

With the first question, we can see that, in addition to language, the question poster task also has *educational* value since the students will be learning many other things at the same time–information about animals, library skills, working with others, formulating hypotheses and so on—something that is missing in the first task. We can also see that the question poster task makes the students personally involved as it is *their* questions which are the focus and *their* answers which are important. In this way we can see that the question poster task is likely to produce a 'unique classroom', in which the outcome of the task will change depending on who the

---

[1] Further articles by Andrew Littlejohn and a complete A-Z of ELT methodology are available at the following web site:
http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/A_Littlejohn. Personal email: a.littlejohn@ioe.ac.uk

[2] Vol. 21, No. 3. Winter, 1998. pp. 59-63.

students are. We can contrast this with the 'standardised classroom' of the museum task, which is likely to lead to the same results regardless of who the students are, their culture, or the country they are in.

Dimensions of tasks

Looking closely at the museum task and the question poster task, we can see some important differences. We can draw these together in what I call 'dimensions' of tasks which will help us to see what a task offers—and how we can improve it.
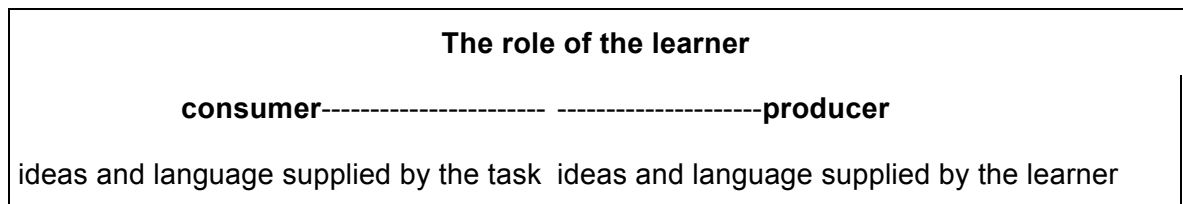
Value beyond language learning

The first dimension measures the value that a task might have in addition to language learning. At one end, we can place 'language specific goals'—that is, the students will mainly be learning language—so much so that if they are already proficient in the language area of the task (e. g., question forms) then *the task will have no value.* At the other end, we can place a much broader value: 'wider educational goals', which will mean that even if the students are proficient in the language area of the task, *the task will still have value.* Tasks might fall anywhere between these two points, although in the museum and question poster tasks we can see examples of each of the end points - if the students are already proficient in the question form, for example, then there would be no point doing the museum task but the question poster task would still be worthwhile.

Value beyond language learning
Language specific goals --Wider educational goals.
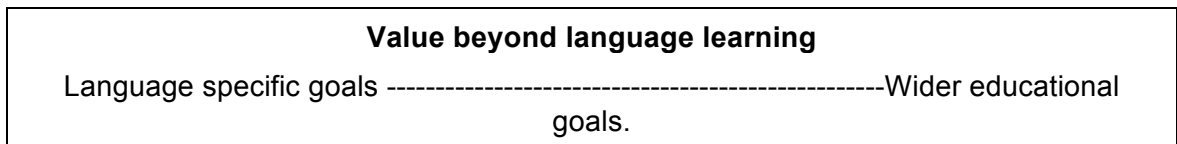
Looking at tasks in this way, we see clearly that we can improve a task if we can give it educational value. We might do this, for example, by using more educational content (instead of a fictional museum, for example, students might be asking about important real places) or by making students search for answers.
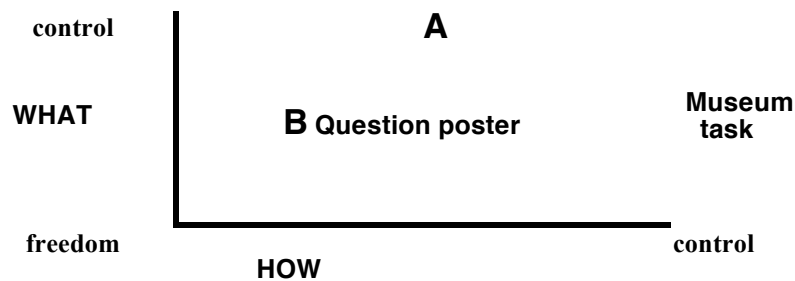
The role of the learner

One of the most striking things about the museum task, is that the students hardly have to think at all. Everything is supplied by the task and all the students have to do is apply a grammatical rule to make questions and read the information from the book. In contrast, the question poster task asks the students to supply almost everything. Thinking of the tasks in this way, we suggest two more points to analyse tasks.

The role of the learner
consumer----------------------- ---------------------**producer**
ideas and language supplied by the task ideas and language supplied by the learner

Again, we can see immediately that we might be able to improve a task if can increase the amount of ideas and language that the students are expected to produce. In the museum task, for example, instead of giving the students everything, we might ask them what questions they would ask and ask them to invent the information. We could also say, "Imagine you are going to a big city tomorrow. Where would you go? What questions would you need to ask in each place?".

Free and controlled work

My final two dimensions look more closely at the design of a task. Every task has two elements: *what*, that is, the content or topic (e. g., museums, animals, etc.) and *how* (e. g.,, information gap in pairs, brainstorming with the whole class). For each element, we can see how much 'freedom' or 'control' there is for the student. We can then we put these two elements next to each other, and build a graph, like this:

control   **A**

                              B **Question poster**   **Museum
WHAT   task**

freedom   **control**
                    HOW

Thinking about the museum task, for example, we can see that there is a lot of control over *what* the students say and *how* they work. This means that, on the graph, we can probably put it at point A. The question poster task, however, is rather different. There is still some control over what they say (they must ask about animals, for example) and some control over how they produce the questions and find the answers, but the task gives the students a lot more freedom. We might then say that the task is probably about point B on the graph.

The aim of language teaching

At this point we can ask ourselves an important question: *What is the ultimate aim of language teaching?* There are many ways in which we can answer that question but most teachers would probably agree that we hope that students will be able to understand and produce the language that they want or need to. In other words, we can say that the ultimate aim of language teaching is *to develop the student's autonomy in language use.* If we think about this in terms of the graph, we can see that what we are aiming for is 'freedom' in language use in terms of both 'how' and 'what'—that is that the students can use and understand language without the need for any external control or support.

The implication of this is that in the classroom we need to be working towards the bottom left of the graph—'freedom' in language use. Rather than focusing on ways of controlling the language and ideas that students produce we should always be looking for ways to 'free things up'. This also means that we should be looking for ways to move the students from a role as a 'consumer' in the classroom towards a role as 'producer'. In doing this, we are also likely to move away from 'language specific' work and instead involve the students in broader educational processes.

Practical ideas

To end this article, I want to show five simple ideas that begin to make these changes in classroom work. These are summarised in Table 1.

Table 1: Practical ideas

1. Do a task, make a task
After doing an exercise, students write a similar exercise for other students (for example, a matching exercise). They can exchange exercises or the exercises can be kept in box so that students can take one if they have time to spare.

2. Do a test, make a test
After doing a simple test, students can write part of a test themselves. With the teacher, they can agree what they have covered during the last few lessons. Different groups can take responsibility for writing different parts of the test. The teacher can collect the parts of the test, correct them, put them together and give them back to the students as their test.

3 Stimulate the students questions first.
Before reading or listening to a text, the students can suggest questions that they would like the text to answer—i.e. they can produce their own 'comprehension questions'.

4 Stimulate answers first
If a text comes with comprehension questions, the students can try to answer the questions *before* they read the text. Usually this means that they will have to invent details. They can then read the text to compare ideas.

5 Do a task, share outcomes, make a questionnaire.
If the students produce a short text about something (e. g., a paragraph about their favourite animal), they can write a few questions about it (e. g., 'Where does my parrot live?' or 'What is the name of my cat?'). The teacher can then collect these questions and put them on the board ('Where does Cristina's cat live?' etc). The students' texts can then be stuck on the wall and the students can move around the classroom trying to find the answers to each question.

Each of these ideas involves very small changes in classroom work but we can see that in each one, the students are making a step from 'consumer' towards 'producer', from 'language specific' work towards 'wider educational' goals', and are moving from the top right of the graph towards the bottom left - from control towards freedom. None of these ideas implies a 'revolution', but they each offer significant changes in classroom work. In a future article in this journal I will take some of these ideas further and show how we can strengthen the 'educational' value of language teaching.

Textbook Analysis and Evaluation

DAVID CAMPS, INSTITUTO TECNOLÓGICO DE ESTUDIOS SUPERIORES DE MONTERREY [1]

Frequently EFL teachers at the Mexico City Campus of the ITESM[2] (*Instituto Tecnológico de Estudios Superiores de Monterrey*) receive many samples of new series or textbooks from different publishers. These new publications need to be checked and compared with those currently used in order to consider them for use in our classes. For this reason, a method for evaluating their appropriateness was created and applied by this author.

The following method is recommended to analyze and evaluate textbooks and series so that EFL teachers may apply it, and may correctly choose the best option for their teaching needs when choosing a new series or textbook.

The method utilized in the Mexico City Campus studied the four language skills, plus the activities in each of the books analyzed.

Once the presentation of language skills is taken into account, teachers need to elaborate a checklist for each skill (see sample), and choose categories they deem pertinent which will be used as headings in the checklists and which are listed as follows:

1. *Skill* or the ability to be developed by the student.

2. *Activity* or the principal exercise to be executed in order to develop the required skill.

3. *Place* or the location the activity is being carried out.

4. *Accomplishment* or the objective to be fulfilled through the activity.

5. *Activity to test acquisition stage* or the task to be performed to verify whether the skill has been effectively developed or acquired by the student.

After including these categories in the checklist, the teachers must write a list of activities for each of the language skills that, through their experience and knowledge, they have found to be successful in their classes. Then, each language section of each language skill in the textbook or series is revised by marking the activities that concur with the teacher's activities in the checklist.

Criteria must be established considering whether the textbook contains activities that help the student to develop each skill, as well as natural situations or settings with communicative activities for the speaking and writing skills. The criteria for evaluation used by this author are to some extent related to Harmer's specialist skills (1993: 183-184, 188) and Littlewood's (1981: 20) types of communicative activities to develop the language skills.

Harmer's specialist skills consist of predicting what is going to be heard, extracting specific information, understanding the general information, recognizing function and discourse patterns, and deducing meaning from context. Readers and listeners use these specialized skills when they read or listen and their comprehension of content is successful only if they master

---

them. Furthermore, teaching these skills must be done in real-life like situations, and the tasks the listener or reader must carry out need to be realistic and motivating in order to have a useful purpose for text study (188).

Littlewood's types of communicative activities deal with functional and social interaction activities. For an adequate teaching-learning process, it is necessary that textbooks suggest the corresponding communicative activities to accomplish the communication planned for the practice. Littlewood (1981) points out that "the most efficient communicator in a foreign language is not always the person who is best at manipulating its structures. It is often the person who is most skilled at processing the complete situation involving himself and his hearer, taking into account what knowledge already exists between them . . . , and selecting items which will communicate his message effectively". (p. 4) Thus, students need to be exposed to situations or contexts in which they may develop skills to communicate what they want in the most effective way possible.

Students may be asked to do practice activities. For instance, if students are required to speak, they may carry out a conversational activity by working in pairs, in groups or role playing (Harmer: 132-133). If students are asked to write, their activities may vary from organizing ideas, writing an outline, writing sentences, applying new vocabulary, developing syntax in order to write in a coherent and understandable way, writing an informal letter, or from taking notes up to writing a report or essay.

Once the checklists are elaborated, the activities in each chapter of the textbook or series analyzed are revised.

Afterwards, criteria for evaluating must be done. The criteria chosen were the following:

1. Criteria for evaluating the listening skill:

   a. Understanding the main idea in a conversation.

   b. Emphasis in pronunciation (stressed words, intonation, word ending, reductions, etc.).

   c. Summary of the main idea in a conversation.

   d. Execution of practical tasks.

   e. Exposure to a situation. This means that the language to which students are being exposed (input) provides a setting or situation.

2. Criteria for evaluating the reading skill:

   a. Understanding the general idea in a reading text.

   b. Improving vocabulary by finding the meaning of words.

   c. Understanding the meaning from context (what comes before and after a word, phrase, sentence, etc.).

   d. Understanding the reading structure of a text.

   e. Scanning the reading.

   f. Discussing the reading.

3. The criteria for the speaking skill:

   a. Presentation of a setting or situation.

   b. Pair or group work.

c. Realization of communicative activities (if the students express their thoughts, feelings, opinions by speaking out).

4. Criteria for evaluating the writing skill:

a. Exploring ideas.

b. Organizing ideas.

c. Improving vocabulary.

d. Developing syntax.

e. Punctuating.

f. Writing a draft.

g. Editing.

h. Executing communicative activities (if the students express their thoughts, feelings, opinions in writing).

In this way, by going through each language skill section of the textbooks and marking its activities in the checklists, the data may be gathered, described and analyzed. Then, based on the results and criteria for evaluation, teachers may decide what textbooks or series best suit their students needs in order to develop their language skills to the fullest.

References

Harmer, J. 1993. *The Practice of Language Teaching.* London, England: Longman.

Littlewood, W. 1981. *Communicative Language Teaching: An   Introduction.* London, England: Cambridge University Press.

Book Review: TOEFL Preparation Textbooks

Building Skills for the TOEFL Test, Carol King and Nancy Stanley, Longman 1966. 469pp.

Cambridge Preparation for the TOEFL Test, Jolene Gear and Robert Gear, Cambridge University Press 1966. 555pp.

Longman Preparation Course for the TOEFL Test: Skills and Strategies, Deborah Phillips, Longman 1996. 412pp.

The Heinemann TOEFL Preparation Course, M. Kathleen Mahnke and Carol B. Duffy, Heinemann 1996. 600 pp.

M. Martha Lengeling, Universidad del Guanajuato [1]

Imagine this scenario: You have just received your schedule for next semester and you find to your delight or horror that you have a TOEFL (*Test of English as a Foreign Language*) preparation course. What do you do? Even if you are an experienced instructor, the responsibility of teaching this class may seem overwhelming. One consolation: the number of books on the market is small. Hopefully the following review of four TOEFL preparation books will assist the veteran teacher or the new teacher who is in the above situation.

The above four books were specifically written to help students who are thinking of taking the TOEFL test from the ETS (*Educational Testing Service*). The majority of people who want to study at a university in the United States are required to take this test and receive a score of 500 to 600, depending on the requirements of the university.

At first glance these four texts seem overwhelming due to size, number of pages and lack of drawing or pictures. A closer examination reveals they vary only slightly in set up and organization. All four texts follow a consistent four-part structure: "Listening Comprehension", "Structure and Written Expression", "Reading Comprehension', and the "TWE" (*Test of Written English).* Cassettes accompany each book to accustom the learner's ear to the vocal style used on this test. The books include several tests which are useful for diagnostic purposes or just for practice.

All of these texts offer strategies or tactics which are helpful for teacher or student. They are intended either for the classroom or for home study. What then are the deciding factors in choosing a TOEFL book? I will cover several student considerations first.

Classroom students frequently want more practice tests; the Phillip's and the Heinemann books offer extra material with practice exams, cassettes, answers, and tapescripts. Both of these books have appendices with extensive exercises and explanations for the four sections.

---

[1] The reviewer can be reached at the Universidad del Guanajuato, Lascurain de Retana 5, Guanajuato, Guanajuato. 36000. Fax: (473) 27253. E-mail: lengelin@redes.int.com.mx.

The home-study student faces unique problems in a preparation course outside the classroom environment. Both the Cambridge and Heinemann texts offer answer keys at the back of the book, and cassettes which are a must for the independent learner.

A conversion scale is useful for students to monitor their progress and gain an understanding of where they stand. *Building Skills for the TOEFL Test* does not include a conversion scale or explanation on how to score a practice text. The conversion scale is excellent for promoting the home study for the classroom student.

A deciding factor in choosing a TOEFL book for the teacher is the answer key to the exercises and practice tests. The answers for whatever book the teacher decides to use is absolutely essential, whether in the back of the book or in a stand-alone volume. If a book gives an explanation or even a reference to what the question is related to, this aids the teacher in explaining and understanding the principles of TOEFL. Several times I began a course without the answers, and I experienced problems. Sometimes even colleagues or native speakers could not provide clarification.

I have used both the Cambridge and the Heinemann texts, answers included in the back, in a classroom situation. I see no problem in using books that provide questions and answers in the same volume. Having answers included at the back has actually helped students. I believe this encourages learner autonomy and self-confidence.

The Heinemann and the Cambridge books include valuable explanations to help the teacher better understand the answers, and explain to the students why one option is chosen. The Phillip's book gives explanations for the section of 'Structure, and Written Expression".

These four books do not offer much recommendation for the teacher. Answers and explanations are provided, but little is said on how to actually teach a class on a day-to-day basis. Deborah Phillip's book has a so-called 'teacher's manual'; a misleading term for the perspective teacher. In my own opinion, this teacher's manual is an answer key with a few general recommendations for the TOEFL teacher. It is lacking information to be called a teacher's manual; in fact, all four books lack this valuable information.

I have used all four books for one semester each. Of the four books my class did not finish Carol King and Nancy Stanley's book. This book is filled with an ample number of exercises, especially in the section of "Listening Comprehension". These exercises are extensive and encourage in-depth preparation in the four sections.

Most of the four books use traditional methods including: correct/incorrect, multiple choice, error correction, and identification of the grammatical parts of a sentence. *Building Skills for the TOEFL Test* contains several activities with non-traditional classification tables. These activities are a welcome relief to the TOEFL teacher because they are not available in most TOEFL preparation books.

I recommend any one of these four texts but I would suggest that whatever book you use that it not be the sole source of material. Changing a text every semester offers a way for the TOEFL teacher to find the strengths and weaknesses of each book. A variety of exercises found from other books, authentic readings, speaking-listening activities and vocabulary building methods are a few ideas that can be incorporated when using these books. These books are academic and often seem dry; however, pre-activities and follow-up activities can be used to stimulate the student's use of English. As always, the text chosen should not dictate what the teacher must do everyday. The instructor should make a wise decision on what book to use by considering the teacher's goals, the needs of students and the institute's expectations. In conclusion, the success of a learner in preparing for the TOEFL test relies heavily on the learners themselves. If they are highly motivated, they can systematically go though any one of these four books and succeed.

Computer Era Arrives For TOEFL in 1998:

Mouse To Replace Pencil For International Students [2]

Beginning in Summer, 1998, students taking the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL®) in many countries will leave their No. 2 pencils behind and use a computer instead. This change is part of an evolutionary effort to create a new and better generation of English proficiency tests.

The transition of TOEFL to computer is part of a project called *TOEFL 2000* which began in 1993. It reflects the beliefs of the TOEFL Policy Council and Educational Testing Service (ETS®) that the computer offers new opportunities for better English proficiency assessment that is more responsive to test takers and score users. Use of performance-based questions will also provide schools with better information about an international student's ability to understand and use English.

The computer-based TOEFL will be administered in four sections: Listening, Structure, Reading and Writing. Most sections will have new or improved question types by using computer technology.

The Listening section will continue to measure the test taker's ability to understand English as it is spoken in North America, including frequently used vocabulary, expressions and grammar. With the computer-based version, test takers will now listen to dialogues, talks and group discussions through personal headphones while they see context-setting visuals on the computer screen.

The Structure section will measure the ability to recognize language that is appropriate for standard written English. The Reading section will still use passages to measure the ability to understand non-technical reading material, but new tasks that require the test taker to become more closely involved with the text have been developed. The Writing section will measure the person's ability to generate, organize and support ideas using standard written English in an essay. In order not to disadvantage people who lack keyboard skills, test takers may handwrite or type the essay. The essay rating will now be combined with the Structure section score to create a compiled Structure/Writing scaled score. The essay rating will constitute one-half of the Structure/Writing scaled score.

Another improvement is that the Listening and Structure sections will be computer adaptive. Test takers receive questions that are appropriate for their performance level. The section begins with a question of average difficulty. If the

---

[2] Information supplied by the Educational Testing Service, P. O. Box 6155, Princeton, NJ 08541-6155, U.S.A. For updated information on the computer-based TOEFL, please check the TOEFL Web site at www.toefl.org.

test taker answers the question correctly, the next question will be one that fulfills the test design and will typically be of the same or higher difficulty level. If the test taker answers incorrectly, the next question will be one that fulfills the test design and will typically be of the same or lower difficulty level. Thus, all subsequent questions presented are based in part on the test taker's performance on previous questions and in part on the test design.

Computer-based TOEFL will be offered worldwide at Sylvan Technology Centers®, specified university test centers, ETS field offices and other locations worldwide. Testing will be available year-round at more than 300 test centers around the world. Test takers will make appointments by calling either their local test center or Regional Registration Center. The appointments can be made within a few days of testing. However, test takers should consider admission deadlines and call early to maximize chances of getting preferred test dates at the most convenient center.

The entire testing experience will also improve as test takers will sit in private carrels where they will use volume-controlled headphones. Score reporting will also be faster—students will see partial scores on the screen at the test center and official score reports will be sent usually within two weeks of testing.

Because the content and format of the TOEFL test have changed, scores on the computer-based test will be reported on a new score scale. This new score scale has been designed to distinguish scores received on the computer-based TOEFL from those received on the paper-based test. For the computer-based test, the examinee will receive four scaled scores: Listening (O to 30), Structure/Writing (O to 30), Reading (O to 30), and a total score (000 to 300). The three section scores and a total score will be reported on the score report. The essay rating will be integrated in the Structure/Writing score; in addition, the score on the essay will be reported as an independent rating on this form. To assist score users in setting new score standards on the new scale, work has begun to produce a concordance study and table that will relate scores on the computer-based test with those on the paper-based exam. Results of the concordance study and table will be available in the Spring, 1998.

The TOEFL program has taken steps to assure that an individual's test performance is not influenced by a lack of computer experience. A tutorial, designed especially for non-native speakers of English, has been developed to teach the skills needed to take the computer-based TOEFL. The results from a study conducted by ETS indicate the tutorial is effective because there was no practical difference between the performance of test takers who were familiar and unfamiliar with the computer. Additional information on this computer familiarity study will be available in early 1998.

Although the United States, Canada, Latin America, Europe, the Middle East, Africa, Australia, Malaysia, Singapore, Sri Lanka, the Philippines, and Indonesia will make the transition to computer in 1998, the paper-based test will

continue to be administered in the other areas in Asia. However, once computer-based TOEFL is introduced in a country, the paper-based program will be eliminated. ETS plans to complete the transition to computer by the year 2001.

ETS will provide preparation packages that allow candidates to review the tutorial and to practice using sample test questions on the computer. In March, 1998, The TOEFL Sampler, a free CD-ROM with a tutorial and sample questions will be available worldwide; the package will also be downloadable from the TOEFL Web site at **www.toefl.org.**

To schedule an appointment for the computer-based TOEFL starting July, 1998, in the following countries or areas, test takers should use the International Test Scheduling Form (found in the center of the *TOEFL Information Bulletin for Computer-Based Testing). The* International Test Scheduling Form can be faxed or mailed to the appropriate Regional Registration Center (RRC). The test taker can also register by phone with the Regional Registration Center using a VISA, MasterCard or American Express card. Please refer to the *TOEFL Information Bulletin for Computer-Based Testing* for additional registration information.[3]

---

[3] Latin American and Caribbean (For candidates testing in Antigua, Argentina, Aruba, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Bermuda, Bolivia, Brazil, British Virgin Islands, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Netherlands Antilles, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Surinam, Trinidad and Tobago, Uruguay, and Venezuela): Sylvan Learning Systems International Ltd., P.O. Box 38502, Baltimore, Maryland 21231, USA. Telephone: 1-410-843-8160. Fax: 1-410-843-8569.