# mextesol journal

VOL. I - No. 2 SUMMER - 1976

The journal of the mexican association
of teachers of english
to speakers of other languages

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by
Nicolas Ferguson
Máire O' Reilly
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MEXTESOL, A. C.
Apartado Postal 6-808
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MEXTESOL

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From the Editor . . .

With the second issue of the MEXTESOL JOURNAL we are initiating a regular feature, "Chalk Talk", to be edited by Paul Davies of the Instituto Anglo-Mexicano de Cultura. This section of the JOURNAL will be devoted specifically to methodology and classroom activities, and letters to the Editor on problems of E. F. L. teaching in Mexico. The format will be more informal than the rest of the quarterly. We solicit your comments and suggestions on matters of mutual interest; share with us something you may have developed for handling a particular teaching problem, raise issues that should be brought up, or simply give us information which might have escaped our readers. The "Chalk Talk" editor is waiting to hear from you.

The reception accorded our first issue was indeed gratifying. Some of the encouraging remarks came in letters from former TESOL President Betty Wallace Robinett (". . . fine quality . . . an excellent addition to the rather meager supply of publications produced by our profession."); from Carmela Bernal, Director of the International Department at the Universidad Ibero-Americana ("Congratulations . . . it's great!"); from Ruth Crymes, Editor of the TESOL Quarterly ("Congratulations . . . looks good . . . . . The articles are meaty and practical"); and from Prof. Bernard Spolsky, Dean of the Graduate School at the University of New Mexico ( . . . "most impressive.") We are grateful for this support. This and future issues we hope will live up to this praise. In at least one respect, that of proofreading, we promise marked improvement over the first issue.

Lastly, we again ask for contributions of articles, reviews, letters, or brief comments of interest to your EFL colleagues in Mexico. Please follow the guidelines outlined under "Manuscripts." We are especially interested in material treating EFL teaching to pre-school and primary children, an area receiving too little attention so far in Mexican teaching circles. It is hoped that the brief bibliography on the subject in this issue will elicit some interest and possibly a publishable paper or personal classroom experience for "Chalk Talk."

Acknowledgements . . .

Only through the hard work and cooperation of a great many people can a MEXTESOL JOURNAL be produced. The following persons or organizations contributed either their labor or their critical support in ways without which the journal could not have been printed and distributed.

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Focusing on the special circumstances of teaching and learning English in Mexico, this quarterly publishes articles on linguistic research (dialectology, contrastive, and sociological studies), instructional methods and materials; testing and evaluation; curriculum planning; on research related to teaching and learning English as a foreign or second language (psychology, sociology, anthropology), and articles treating the profession in general. Review-of textbooks and instructional materials are also solicited. In addition, the MEXTESOL JOURNAL publishes notices of meetings, programs and conferences of interest to teachers of EFL in Mexico.

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**Articles should be less than twenty double-spaced typewritten pages. References should be cited in parentheses within the text, giving author, date, and page numbers with complete citation at the end of the article. Footnotes should be placed at the bottom of the page. Articles may be submitted in Spanish, and if accepted for publication, will be translated into English at the author's responsibility.**

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# THE CONVERSATION CIRCLE: A COMPREHENSIVE PROGRAMME FOR CONVERSATION PRACTICE AT ALL LEVELS [1]

Megan Webster
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Mexico City

Up to now, very little interest has been shown in what is perhaps for most students the main objective of the EFL course: to speak the language, to communicate in the language they have chosen to learn. Focus of interest has generally been on methodology, the importance of which cannot be denied when we recall the boredom of the traditional course with no aids other than the textbook, blackboard and uninspired teacher. Thankfully, that is something of the past. However, now that interesting and effective methods of teaching have been devised which transform ELT into an exhilarating learning process, we should review the objectives of the course to ensure they are all being fulfilled.

On the results of the monthly or semestral test, we may be satisfied that our students can read and write in English and feel we have achieved our objectives; but these are only two of the four. Can the same students manage equally well in an oral situation outside the classroom which calls for understanding and active participation? Granted, our job as teachers is to teach the language, but what good is knowledge of a language without training in its use; if the students cannot bring themselves to make simple requests like, "Could you pass the salt?" or "Do you happen to have a spare pen?".

We might believe that our students, through pattern practice are actually conversing, but in fact they are just learning a specific structure in which the demand on them is strictly limited. In conversation practice, the demand is infinitely greater, as they must recall and produce many structures and vocabulary items in a logical manner to express their ideas, and will usually need new vocabulary.

Just as we forget a language we never use, students in a three year course covering all the basic structures, will tend to forget the patterns they learnt the previous semester or the previous year unless they have sufficient opportunity to practice them repeatedly and meaningfully in conjunction with the patterns they are currently learning. How often have you heard teachers making remarks like these: "This student has been

[1] A talk given at Mexico City MEXTESOL Chapter on January 21, 1976.

studying English for four years but he can't speak a word", or "This student writes quite well, but he's hopeless at oral work". And students themselves are usually conscious of this inability.

We aim at having an equal balance of skills, but because of the pressure to cover the syllabus there is a tendency to neglect listening and talking. In the classroom we present new structures; give oral and written practice in them; do some revision exercises; once in a while give a listening comprehension test; and assign reading or written work for homework. What about talking? Students cannot talk to anyone in English at home. In fact, once outside the classroom, their experience comes to an abrupt end as far as the oral skill is concerned. Therefore, when they suddenly find themselves in a situation requiring English, in the company of visitors from North America, seated next to an English speaking person on a train or plane, visiting, or studying in, an English speaking country, and many other similar instances, they are panic stricken as they have not received any practice in spontaneous communication; and as a consequence they feel frustrated at their failure to express themselves after investing so much time and effort in learning the language.

The ESL student is more fortunate, as he has every opportunity to listen to and practice the target language. This needless to say is the ideal language learning environment, but here in Mexico our students are learning in a vacuum. So it is up to us to provide the opportunity for them in the classroom, allowing them to use the language they have learnt, at the same time enriching their learning experience and giving them the motivation to continue studying.

How often do we allow time for conversation in our teaching programme and, when we do, how much talking time does each student have? Let us consider a 60 minute class of 25 students and say we devote the whole period to conversation; suppose the teacher takes up 5 minutes of the time to introduce the subject, occasionally interject a question and make a comment once in a while to keep the conversation going; that would give each student just about two minutes talking time. That is in theory: in practice, a certain amount of time would be lost in pauses, stumbling, and hesitation. A more realistic figure would probably be one minute per student.

To justify the dedication of a period of time to conversation practice, the session should be organized in such a way that students can talk in pairs and small groups. If we observe the communicative behaviour in a very large group, e.g. in a school playground or at a party, we see that people tend to split up into pairs or small groups of three or four. The same pattern should be followed in the conversation session to give every student adequate talking time. The total number of students is not so important, provided the space is ample enough to accommodate the chairs in small circles, and absorb the noise. A buffer zone between groups is desirable

to avoid interference. Obviously, the more groups there are the more demanding is the teacher's task, as he must circulate faster and can afford less time with each group. A total of 18 or 20 would be the most one teacher could satisfactorily cope with alone; however, a monitor might be employed to help a teacher with a larger class.

Many schools plan cultural activities in English, plays, films, and lectures which give the intermediate and advanced student a chance to listen to the language, but the elementary student limited in both structures and vocabulary cannot derive much benefit from these. What would be more beneficial to students at all levels would be programmed conversation time in the syllabus or complementary conversation sessions. Some of the advantages would be the following:

1. Reinforcement of patterns through meaningful structured practice of the language.
2. Extension of vocabulary and use of English.
3. Reduction of revision time.
4. Creative talking experience.
5. Confidence in the ability to communicate orally.

For the student, the last advantage is the most pertinent, as it constitutes the ultimate measure of his success, which justifies all the time he has spent in the EFL classroom. An advanced student who spent last Christmas in the U.S. came back delighted because she had actually been able to communicate with people. She had made several visits to the States before, but this was the first time that she had really been able to talk to people. This, after one semester in the Conversation Circle.

Convinced of the need for conversation practice a team of teachers of the Instituto Anglo-Mexicano de Cultura set up the Conversation Circle for all levels, beginning with 2nd year, and the programme was put into operation in September of 1975. The objective of these sessions is to give students the opportunity to practice the language they have already learnt in a natural and meaningful way. Idiomatic expressions and new vocabulary are given as the need arises, but no new patterns are introduced. The sessions have a duration of 75 minutes and are structured up to 4th year. By structured, I mean that the main stimulus used in a given session lends itself to the use of patterns learnt two or three weeks before according to the textbook, in conjunction with many other patterns covered at an earlier date. Higher levels are, naturally, not subject to these limitations. We have produced a teacher's book and a variety of materials; the students are not given a book to avoid distraction and interruption in the flow of conversation.

The following outline of a typical conversation session has been planned in such a way that each student may have sufficient talking time, our aim being, maximum student talking time and minimum teacher talking time.

10 - 15 mins. GENERAL CONVERSATION
INTENSIVE PRACTICE (in pairs or groups of three.)

15 mins. STIMULUS
LESS INTENSIVE PRACTICE (in one group)
Poster, paper, tape, cut-outs or slides.

35 - 40 mins. TRANSFER
INTENSIVE PRACTICE (in groups of 3 or 4)

5 mins. CORRECTIONS
(in 1 group)

TOTAL 75 minutes.

## GENERAL CONVERSATION

When you have not seen your friends for a week, you usually ask how they've been, what they've been up to and so on, which invariably leads on to other things, such as how they spent the weekend, their troubles at home work or school, or topical themes like inflation, the match between Guadalajara and Toluca, the latest highjacking or Elizabeth Taylor's re-marriage. And we expect the students to do the same when they get together with their classmates after a week's absence.

These few minutes of general conversation give the opportunity for intensive practice and serve as a warming-up period.

## STIMULUS

Although there is less intensive practice in this section, it is a vital part of the session, as it must he sufficiently stimulating to generate the conversation which follows in the transfer. If a poster is used, it should be clear and of a suitable size to enable every member of the group to see each detail: the more detail, the more scope for discussion. Short tapes are preferable at the elementary levels, and they should not be very long at the intermediate or even advanced levels, as the student must be able to remember the dialogue in order to report and discuss the points or prob-

lem involved. Humour, as always, is a valuable asset; amusing materials, we find, are the ones which provoke the liveliest discussions. Slides can be difficult to find but can be made from good quality pictures in magazines or books: the National Geographic is particulary useful for this. Papers may be copies of passages, articles, newspaper reports or can be specially written for this purpose. They should include questions for discussion and be given out in the previous session so that students come prepared to talk on the subject. Cut-outs, which can be readily found in magazines, are mounted on thin cardboard of a manageable size and covered with transparent adhesive plastic, and are used for pair work. Relevant vocabulary or suggested themes can be written on the back to facilitate discussion.

TRANSFER

In pairs or small groups, themes emanating from the stimulus are discussed. Frequently it is a switch from the general to the particular, a local or personal situation. To reduce teacher talking, especially at elementary levels, the themes or ideas can be written on the blackboard, along with key expressions and vocabulary that may be required.

CORRECTIONS

This area cannot be neglected and should be managed with a certain tact and consideration for the offender's feelings. As Acy Jackson has pointed out, "Some students are especially sensitive about making mistakes. The teacher never laughs at a student's mistakes or allows other students to do so. Serious harm can be done to a student whose honest struggles with the language call forth ridicule." The student himself will often realize he has made a mistake and will pause, hoping for correction from his classmates, who more often than not can help; if not, the teacher is there to do so. Otherwise, it is not advisable to interrupt to correct an error and run the risk of making the student lose his train of thought or inhibiting him for the remainder of the session. A more constructive method is for the teacher to make a mental or written note of the major errors (many slips are the result of nervousness) and allow a few minutes at the end of the session for corrections.

EXAMPLES OF CONVERSATION SESSIONS

SECOND YEAR LEVEL ( 80 hours)

| | | MATERIAL |
|---|---|---|
| | | Slides of Mexico |
| 10 mins. | GENERAL CONVERSATION ( in pairs) | |

15 mins. SLIDES ( in one group )

Students are asked to talk about the slides, describe them, say where they've been, when they went, what they've seen, what they liked or didn't like.

Relevant patterns, expressions and vocabulary to be put on the blackboard as a guide:

I think it's . . .
Have you ever been . . . ?
Yes, I've been . . .
No, I've never . . .
Have you ever visited/seen/watched/played/eaten/taken/driven/stopped off at/climbed up . . . ?

only - once - often - several times - stadium - canal - pottery - altar - fresco - pyramid - steps - sculpture - mural

40 mins. TRANSFER ( in groups of 3 or 4 )

Ideas for discussion:

1. What are you going to do in the summer holidays?
2. Where are you going? Have you been there before?
3. Your favourite holiday spot.
4. Do you like to spend your holiday with your family, or do you prefer to be with your friends?
5. Are holidays important? Why/ why not?

10 mins. CORRECTIONS ( a drill might be necessary at this level)

SECOND YEAR LEVEL

MATERIAL

Cards (cut-outs of actors, musicians, pop groups, etc.)

CARDS ( in one group )

Hold up two cards for comparison, and ask students to give their opinion of the people involved.

Some patterns and vocabulary to be included:

He's better than . . .

She's not as good as . . .

She's prettier than . . .

Do you think he/she sings better . . .

actor - singer - musician

TRANSFER ( in group of 3 )

Ideas for discussion:

1. Give your opinion of cars you're familiar with. Compare: appearance, speed, quality, space and comfort. ( faster - slower - better made )
2. Give your opinion of different makes of television sets.
3. Talk about, and compare TV programs you usually watch. ( interesting - amusing - educational - entertaining )
4. Compare schools or universities that you're familiar with. ( discipline - strictness - freedom )

## INTERMEDIATE LEVEL

MATERIAL

Tape (Christmas)

TAPE

Play the whole tape once, then let students listen to it in sections. They can report the conversation, discuss the problems, say what they'd do or would have done.

TRANSFER ( in small groups )

Discuss: a. Mexico City at Christmas (lights, traffic, festivities)

b. Christmas at your house ( food, shopping, customs)

c. How you spent the last Christmas holiday

Transcript of Tape

It's Christmas time and the Robinson family is making plans for their Christmas Eve party.

Father - If we invite some people, I'll prepare the drinks.

Mother - If we have a formal dinner, I'll cook a turkey.

Junior - If I get enough money, I'll buy a car.

Alice - If my parents let me, I'll invite my boy-friend. (Peter)

It's Christmas Eve and everything is ready. The guests have arrived. Suddenly, the telephone rings; it's Junior calling to say he has had an accident. He has smashed his new car and is at the police station. His future brother-in-law is badly hurt. Father, mother and daughter leave the guests and set off for the police station.

AT THE POLICE STATION

Mother - If Peter weren't hurt, we'd go back home.

Father - If I had enough money, I'd give them a bribe.

Alice - If I knew a good lawyer, I'd call him.

AT THE HOSPITAL

Peter - If I'd known Junior was such a careless driver, I'd have driven myself.

Alice - If you'd remained at home, nothing would have happened to you.

Father - If I hadn't given Junior the car, he wouldn't have smashed it.

Mother - If it hadn't been for the accident, we would all be very happy now.

## ADVANCED LEVEL

MATERIAL

Paper - 'Ask No Questions' (from the "Manchester Guardian Weekly")

DISCUSSION ( in one group)

Discuss the tone, content, and vocabulary.

Did you enjoy the letters? Why / why not?

Do people like reading about other people's problems?

TRANSFER ( in groups of three )

Students, in turn, state their problem (imaginary or true) while others in the group act as counsellors.

KEY EXPRESSIONS

If I were you I'd . . .

Have you tried . . ing . . .

What about . . .

You could always . . .

I once had the same problem and I solved it by . . .

The only thing you can do is . . .

## ASK NO QUESTIONS

The Jill Tweedie Agony Column

(Extract)

Dear Joan,

I'm sure that horrid modern invention, the trannie, is responsible for the "voices" you say you hear Goodness knows, it is becoming almost impossible for any of us to get any peace these days. And I'm convinced your troubles have partly to do with this bothersome Common Market as well. All conscientious Europeans must be worrying a bit, one way or the other, until the referendum is over. As for your preference for men's clothes, well, quite honestly my dear, what woman doesn't wear men's clothes these days? Don't give it another thought. A nicely tailored pair of trousers and a neat sweater are perfectly acceptable anywhere and there's no need to feel unfeminine in them. Take no notice of those who tease you. People like that just like to play with fire.

Dear Cleo,

I'm sure you are quite unnecessarily selfconscious about what you call, so disparagingly, your "schnozzle." Many people think a good-sized nose indicates leadership and character. But as you feel so strongly about it, I am enclosing details of how to contact a good plastic surgeon in your area, since you are obviously intent on having a "nose job" done. Do remember though, that feelings of inferiority may not disappear (like your nose) overnight, so be prepared for the fact that your shorter nose will not exactly change the course of history.

A useful idea for all levels is the "magic circle" adapted for ELT. As the name suggests, students sit in circles, of three or four and talk about a personal theme. After a student has spoken, other members of the group are encouraged to make appropriate comments, and frequently a brief discussion will follow. As extension (particularly at the elementary and intermediate levels) students can be asked to choose one of the incidents narrated and report it. This exercise, as well as providing practice in reported speech, trains students to listen carefully and remember what they have heard.

Some themes that have proved successful in the magic circle are these:

| Themes | Possible comments |
|---|---|
| The change you'd like to make in your life | If you could only do that?<br>That would be fantastic!<br>I wouldn't like that.<br>Do you think that would be fair on your . . . ?<br>One learns from experience. |
| The happiest moment of your life | How nice! / wonderful!<br>Fantastic!<br>What a lovely thing to happen! |
| The nicest thing that has happened to you this month / year | Life is full of surprises.<br>How lucky you are to . . .<br>What a delightful . . . |

## THE TEACHER'S ROLE

For the success of the Conversation Circle, the principal quality needed in the teacher is patience, his role being rather like that of a good host at a cocktail party, circulating, listening, and sometimes suggesting new themes. But to allow maximum student talking, he should refrain from intervening to express his own opinion, however interested he might be in the subject. "The atmosphere should be relaxed and there must be no tensions between student and teacher, or student and student, if the spontaneous use of the language is not to be inhibited." 2 To foster the right atmosphere for spontaneous rapport, the teacher should be friendly, flexible, and unobtrusive.

There are many excellent books available on conversation practice, but as they normally concentrate on one type of conversation whether it be dialogues, situations, skits or topics, we have, chosen to use them as source material only. Being realistic, we have endeavoured to stimulate all the different kinds of talking which occur in every day life, using materials from existing books, along with ideas of our own to prepare a comprehensive and altogether more interesting conversation programme. As a result, students are showing a marked improvement in their communicative competence.

## FOOTNOTES

1 Acy L. Jackson — 'The Conversation Class.' FORUM - Special Issue. Volume XII, 1 & 2, 1975. P. 99

2 Wilga M. Rivers — The Psychologist and the Foreign Language Teacher. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964.

# TEACHING COMPOSITION IN MEXICO

## Part I: Some Theoretical Considerations [1]

Elizabeth Anne Elmer,
Language Institute,
University of the Americas.

Teachers of EFL in Mexico, as well as their students, often encounter much frustration when attempting to teach and to learn to write English compositions. Although most of our students have studied English from five to fifteen years, these same students often receive papers returned with comments such as " illogical", "awkward", or " disorganized". True, some of the problem arises from the students' poor grasp of English grammar and/or vocabulary; yet, more accurately, the reasons for these difficulties are the following: ( 1 ) differences between accepted ways of written "logic" or argumentation in English and Spanish; and ( 2 ) inadequate methods of teaching composition in both the Spanish-Language and the EFL classrooms.

### CULTURAL ORIENTATION IN WRITING

The way in which an opinion or argument is presented is, to a large extent, culturally determined. As Robert Kaplan has pointed out in both " Cultural Thought Patterns in Intercultural Education", as well as in his Anatomy of Rhetoric, " . . . rhetoric is a phenomenon tied to the linguistic system of a particular language as that logic." (Kaplan, 1972, p. x) and " . . . logic, per se, as well as language, is a cultural phenomenon." (Kaplan, 1972, p. 6). One can verify this by reading or listening to educated Spanish speakers. Native speakers of English often find themselves criticizing the former group for "not sticking to the point." While it is acceptable for Spanish speakers to digress or introduce extraneous material, in English, we "come to the point" and, thus, become impatient with those who do not. Thus, what is preferable in Spanish is not acceptable in English. Students need to know this important difference. Kaplan illustrates the differences in logic and rhetorical approach between English and Spanish in his now famous graphic representation:

Figure 1

English Spanish

(and other Romance Languages)

Survey of Teaching Techniques and Points of View. (Kaplan, 1972, p. 64)

All teaching of compostion reflects assumptions as to what writing is or should be. What teachers say about professional writers, what they say about the process of writing, how they plan their lessons and assignments, how they evaluate writing; all these imply a definition of compostion and its role in the classroom. Although the understanding of these factors may be vague for the teacher, it does affect what techniques are employed.

Numerous suggestions as to how to teach composition in the EFL classroom have been made. Here in Mexico composition is not emphasized, as it is in the United States. (If anything, the only "method" used is Free Composition, where students are expected to learn how to write by writing. This approach will be discussed in detail later.) Therefore, the approaches outlined here are ones from EFL classrooms and relevant programs in composition for native speakers of English.

As an aid to understanding the major philosophies to be discussed, the chart below illustrates these composition writing processes as analysed by Vivian Zamel:

Figure 2

| Total Control | (Increase in complexity ——) | Free composition |
|---|---|---|
| Substitution, manipulation or transformation of sentences & patterns | Imitation & differentiation of stylistic patterns | Frequent, uncontrolled writing practice |

TOTAL CONTROL

Most foreign language teachers have belonged to a group that

emphasizes order. While they believe that grammar, as such, has little to do with the ability to write well **nevertheless,** they are deeply concerned with control. At the beginning and intermediate levels, writing usually consists of mere translations of oral pattern practices. While there is nothing wrong with this, it is not the creative act of composing, but, rather, another grammar drill.

Another major theme of this group has been influenced by the Audio-Lingual Method. The belief is in a strict hierarchy of skills, culminating in writing. (Writing is dependent on the first three: listening, speaking, and reading.) The fear is that students, when asked to write too early, only give ungrammatical semi-translations. Thus, in accordance with another Audio-Lingual tenet, all language instruction should be so carefully controlled so as to avoid any possibility of student error. Some of the many language methodologists who propose postponing composition instruction include Allen and Valette ( 1972, pp. 217-238), Rivers (1968, pp. 240-260), Finocchiaro (1958, pp. 156-162), and Chastain ( 1971, pp. 220-238). One sound criticism of this thinking was presented in a recent TESOL Quarterly article on composition. There, Zamel writes that "While I do not argue with this approach in terms of the kind of preparation ESL students need, I take issue with the fact that the exercises described are identified with the skills of composing. Teachers are aware that their students must have a basic linguistic competence in order to write creatively." (Zamel, 1976, p. 69 ).

Also on the theme of control are a series of exercises called Controlled Composition. There are usually used in the intermediate level of language learning and consist of grammatical manipulations or transformations of sentences or passages. Writing is still seen habit-formation and the careful avoidance of errors. Also, it still involves grammatical proficiency. ( Pincas, 1963, p. 183) In controlled composition, guided, restricted activities are imposed. In this step-by-step process, an examination and specific transformation is made of a model paragraph. Dykstra explains that the program can be seen as one of

> . . . changing models into products that are less and less like the models, until they are, in effect, new creation, and until the models are no longer directly or consciously used . . . The steps include substitutions, transformations, reductions, expansions, completions, additions, revisions, commentary and creations. ( Dykstra, 1972, p. 208 ).

When most of the controls are relaxed, "free" composition is finally appropriate. Some of the best-known controlled composition programs have been organized by Dykstra ( 1972 ), Paulston ( 1972 ), Pincas

(1963), Robinson ( 1965 ), and Slager ( 1972 ). Again, this very controlled method does provide a needed system to composition teaching, yet that same emphasis on systematic syntactic and lexical exercises is not directly related with the complexities of the organization of thought that is reflected in genuinely "free" composition.

## IMITATION OF STYLISTIC PATTERNS

A second group that still insists on control, changes the emphasis from sentence manipulation to model imitation. Restraints are still put on compositions, and writing continues to be seen as habir formation. However, this group moves closer to true writing as an expression of real thoughts and feelings, within a given rhetorical structure. The two major variations are ( 1 ) The Rhetorical Method and ( 2 ) The Literary Analysis and Imitation Method.

In the first method, The Rhetorical Method, organization is a very important aspect. Special consideration is given to a set of paragraph "Types" such as comparison, cause and effect, analogy, etc. Models representing these types of development are presented, analyzed, and finally, imitated.

Finding examples of these "most common" and "most useful" paragraph types is just one of the problems encountered when using the rhetorical method. As many scholars have pointed out, few paragraphs or multi-paragraph compositions employ one method of development. Instead, most writing, except possibly that done especially for composition textbooks, combines various methods, (Goreman, 1973, p. 4) Perhaps a limited number of relationships do exist, but the variations are innumerable. Therefore, the usefulness of teaching an artificial schema of paragraph types is doubtful.

A second objection to the rhetorical method is concern whether knowledge of paragraph organization will actually improve a student's compositions. Perhaps it would be more beneficial to put an emphasis on the basic concepts of writings, such as unity, coherence, and the selection and arrangement of supporting details. Those details may or may not conform to a particular type of development. Best-known for employing this method are: Arapoff ( 1969; 1971), Baumwoll (1965 ), Carr ( 1967 ), Kaplan ( 1963 ), and Pincas ( 1964 ). The second prominent approach within this philosophy is called The Literacy Analysis and Imitation Method. Here, the teacher presents extracts form the works of well-known, "good" writers. Together with the students, these passages are analyzed, and eventually

imitated. The assumption is that some of the stylistic characteristics of the original will be transferred to the written work of the students. Although some professional writers claim to have learned in this osmosis-like fashion, most experts today do not recommend this use of literature in the EFL classroom. ( Goreman, 1973, p. 3 )

Although fictional models are generally considered unsatisfactory, they, along with non-fictional examples, can be effectively used to illustrate a particular stylistic or rhetorical feature or to provide subjects for discussion. An oft-used technique in EFL classes is to take composition topics from readings. The subject matter is limited, but the organization is left to the student. This is an example of the Free Composition approach, which will be analyzed and critiqued below.

## FREE COMPOSITION

Free Composition is probably the most-used, as well as abused, approach to teaching writing. Two basic variations exist.

The first view is that students only need help in finding something to say. The teacher only needs to stimulate the student's mind through literature, visuals, music, research, speakers or any other means. Beginning with these experiences, the student organizes and reorganizes the material numerous times until a "meaningful" pattern arises. Experiences are considered more important than an externally imposed structure that the student is expected to conform to. "True structure is something that we have worked out to give shape to our material." (Guth, 1972, p. 35) Usually, the teacher corrects these papers marking only grammatical or lexical problems, but not organizational weaknesses.

In the second method, all controls are eliminated. It is felt that " . . . language is a self-correcting and self-expanding system and that the more it is used the greater the facility there is in the use of it." (Erazmus, 1960, p. 25) Quantity is prized over quality of expression. The students are " . . . pushed and motivated to produce extensively with little regard to the number and type of errors made and directed to write rapidly with little revision." (Erazmus, 1960, p. 25) In one view, no writing is corrected by the teacher; in another variation, the students write with little instruction, but their finished writing is corrected. Briere's famous study seems to indicate that this emphasis on writing rather than on error correction improved student writing. (Briere, 1966, p. 146 )

Much criticism is directed at this method. Such freedom results in undesirable word-for-word, often ungrammatical, translations. There is, in fact, no convincing evidence that requiring students to write freely and at length under circumstances in which

their work is not corrected is likely to produce spectacular results. Evidence to the contrary is presented, for example, in Braddock's classic Research in Written Composition. One study reported in that book showed that students whose papers are graded, marked, criticized, and revised improve more than those students not receiving this type of attention. (Goreman, 1973, p. 2 ) Although this free expression approach is beneficial in that it provides the necesary practice component of any writing program, the problem of ungrammatical semi-translations, perhaps compounded with the cultural writing patterns mentioned earlier, has prompted many to continue searching for more effective methods of composition instruction.

## WHAT NOW?

The major teaching techniques have been reviewed and each found to be partially inadequate. Rather than approaching writing from a view of correct grammar usage, having our students imitate artificial models, or allowing uncontrolled writing practice, as EFL teachers, we must find another way. If must be remembered, though, that the composing process is a very complex one, which we are only beginning to understand. Added to this are the difficulties of composing in another language. Not enough is known about either writing or second-language acquisition to offer simplistic solutions. Nonetheless, Part II of this paper will attempt to offer guidelines and procedures which have been effective at The University of the Americas program in Cholula. It is believed that those suggestions can be adapted successfully to other types of EFL programs here in the Republic of Mexico.

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# UNDERSTANDING WRITING AS AN APPROACH TO READING COMPREHENSION

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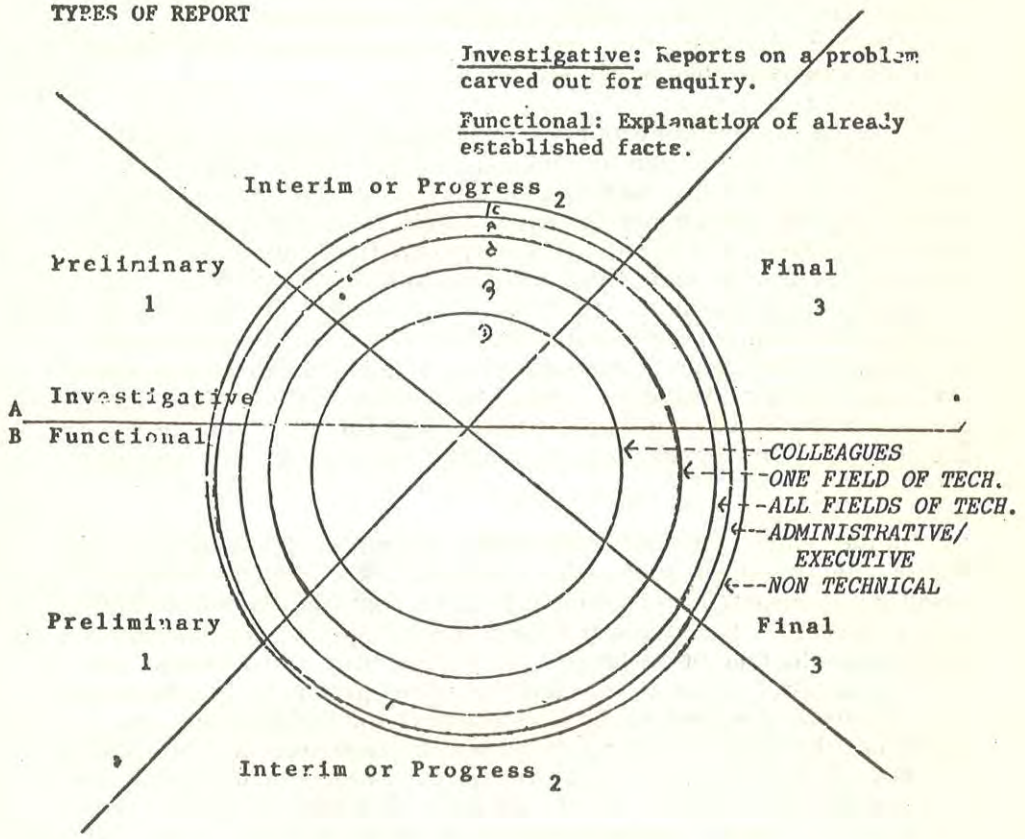
As teachers of English as a foreign language or second language - we appreciate the fact that although many students master the elementary stages of reading skills, which are generally taken to be recognition and structure of words and sentences, they are frequently not taught to develop the skills required to read long stretches of continuous text. This skill, called the skill of interpretation may be described as the ability to recreate the entire message of the writer in some way other than by simple repetition.

The purpose of this papér will be to suggest that, for teachers of English for science and technology, insights can be obtained by focusing on the writer, the way in which he organizes and transmits information and the kind of language he selects, rather than by focusing on the reader and the text as seen purely from the reader's point of view. Given that we are concerned in this paper with texts relating to science and technology, it is not unreasonable to assume that an examination of an instructional manual on the technique of scientific writing will provide us with insights into some of the problems which confront a writer writing for a given readership. From these insights we may be provided with ideas which can be of help to us in the development of teaching materials for reading instruction. (Mackay and Mountford 1974.)

In the reader - writer relationship, the writer is the predominant figure. He produces, the reader receives. He makes the choices about the information to be included and he controls the way in which it is presented. The kind and amount of detail the writer presents depends on the type of audience he is writing for. For example the kind of report a technical or scientific writer produces, is determined by three basic considerations; the nature of the information to be reported, the scope of the information to be reported, and the readers to which the information is to be reported. These considerations are not unrelated. (Marder, 1960 ) Selinker, Trimble, and Lackstrom (ref.) (E.T. Forum ) maintain that many of the decisions made by writers are made on the basis of presuppositions regarding the amount of information the writer believes the reader will bring to the material.

The readership of technical literature can be divided into two groups, the technical and non/technical readership. The technical readership includes four broad categories; administrators and executives, readers in all fields of science and engineering, readers in one field of science and engineering, and supervisors and other colleagues. The non/technical readership is made up of people who are not employed in fields of technology and read technical information. The interests of non/technical readers are too varied for useful classification. In such cases, the writer assumes that the reader is reading for personal profit. Because the background and particular interest cannot be determined, communication with the non-technical audience usually requires writing techniques that are greater than average. ( Marder, 1969 ). Thus, in this paper, our perspective will be an interactional one, writer-reader, to study the discovery procedures used by communicators. (Jacobovits and Gordon, 1974).




(from Daniel MARDER: *The Craft of Technical Writing*, Macmillan, N.Y., 1960).

As Diagram I shows the writer is constantly forced to consider the reader while he is writing, and to facilitate his reading by predicting and eliminating possible points of difficulty. In "The Craft of Technical Writing" Marder points out that scientific writers follow precise organization principles when presenting information in order that their written exposition will reflect the procedures of enquiry used by the science or technology which they are reporting. It is important to point out at this stage that the structure of science as knowledge is not our direct concern; what is our concern is the communicative methodology of science. (Mountford, 1975) What we have just called the communicative methodology is a collection of expository techniques which the writer employs in order to render his information into a written form which is accessible to the readership he has in mind. Once this communicative methodology has been identified we can use it to examine texts more closely in order to teach students the principles upon which the information has been organized.

Again, I repeat it is not unlikely that the communicative methodology used by scientific and technical writers will be explained in writing manuals which purport to teach scientist and technician how to communicate in writing. The expository techniques used to illustrate this approach to writing as proposed by Marder, (a professional technical writer) are the following: Definition, Classification, Analysis, Description, Narration (technical) and Illustration. All of these expository techniques can be broken down into sub-categories. For our purposes we will concern ourselves with these major headings.

By offering this list we are not implying that these are the only possible techniques used for the organization of scientific writing nor that these expository techniques are characteristic of scientific writing alone. Indeed it would appear that authors employ different expository techniques and combinations of expository techniques in order to communicate their information in writing. (Cao-Romero, 1976) Nevertheless, we will make use of Marder's inventory in this paper since we feel that it is the most thorough and professionally informal detailed account of the organization of information that we encountered.

Let us look at these expository techniques and observe how they correspond to specific questions asked by scientists and technicians in the course of their professional work.

1. Definition — What is it?

| | |
|---|---|
| 2. Classification | Where does it belong? In what group with what other items. |
| 3. Analysis | How is it put together? What are its component parts? |
| 4. Description | What is it like? What are its characteristics. |
| 5. Narration (Technical) | What happens? i.e. in a series of related activities, processes or events. |
| 6. Illustration | What is its appearance? |

According to Marder, " The Writer Introduces his subject and tells what his purpose is in speaking about it. Then he develops that purpose by showing what has happened to the subject and what facts about it he has to offer. He concludes by drawing generalizations from the facts and applying them to the original purpose." The organizational principles which guide the writer in this task of presenting information in the most appropriate way are the principles of rhetoric, the fundamentals of organizing any form of written communication. Let us look at these principles which writers like Marder mention. These are:

1) Unity that is the relation of materials to the subject.

2) Coherence, the manner of relating, or organizing the material to give a continuous development of the subject, without coherence there will be no unity.

3) Emphasis which means giving the correct relative weight to each element of discourse.

We must examine their importance in the teaching and learning situation we aften confront in the classroom.

Both the principles of rhetoric and the expository techniques employed by the technical writer can serve as guidelines for the teacher trying to teach reading comprehension. However, they are to some extent inadequate from the teacher's point of view, in the sense that they do not provide us with a description of the language realization of the exposition techniques. That is to say on the one hand we are presented with the writers point of view which is a concern for communicating scientific information through the principles or rhetoric and expository techniques. While these ase fairly expli-

cit, their application is a matter of intuition. No specific instructions as to the actual language use is given. This is not surprising since Marder is writing for native speakers. He assumes that what he has to teach is not the language itself but the principles which permit the reader to organize the language, which they already know, in the service of scientific communication.

There is on the other hand, the applied linguists point of view which is to some extent a concern with description. That is to say the applied linguist who has non-native speakers in mind is concerned with the linguistic realization of the expository techniques themselves not only with these techniques as instruments of organization of information. He needs to know the specific code features lexical, grammatical and structural which formally make a stretch of text a definition, or a classification, etc. He needs to know this in order to be able to provide the teacher with instructional materials. We as teachers need more adequate descriptions of language which lend themselves to application in the TESOL classroom and hence, the pertinence of the applied linguist's concern with precise language description of these expository techniques.

Nevertheless, these resulting linguistic descriptions may also be inappropriate for immediate application for teachers who possess little linguistic knowledge. The descriptions may consist of little more than numbers or involve linguistic terminology with which the TESOL teacher may not be familiar with. What we as teachers are looking for in focusing our attention on the writer and the way in which he conveys his message are specific clues that enable us to teach the way language fuctions in order to realize the necessary expository acts.

In order to be able to do this, we must undertake a closer analysis of relevant text, and the specific features and functions of the language that must be identified and categorized to make our teaching material succesful for student learning. We must describe how sentences in combination interact with one another and develop some operational framework which will enable us to define more clearly how each section of a text can be accounted for in communicative terms. We should point out that one linguistic form may fulfill a variety of expository techniques, and equally one communicative function my be fulfilled by a variety of linguistic forms.

Ex.

Def. A barometer is an instrument which measures atmospheric pressure.

Gen. A barometer measures atmospheric pressure.

English In Focus - Physical Science
Allen - Widdowson

Des. When the liquid reaches 100° it must be removed to a second tube.

Conclusion. This specimen has six legs, therefore it must be an Insect.

2 different structures realizing the same function
You must always use a file with a handle on the tang
A file must always be used with a handle on the tang

English In Focus - Workshop Practice
A. Mountford - Oxford

The engine, unlike the earlier one, has six cylinders.
This engine as against the 4 cylinders of the earlier one has 4 cylinders.

One cannot simply substitute one form for another form without taking into consideration how the information carried by any particular sentence relates to the co-text, that is, the text of which it forms an integral part.

The Structure of Technical
A. J. Herbert - Longman

Before we begin this description we wish to make it clear that we are considering the paragraph as the basic rhetorical unit in the writing of English for science and Technology, as it has been described by Selinker, Trimble, Lackstrom (Forum, P. and Marder) himself. We shall define it as a unit of discourse that presents a selected amount of information on a given subject for a given purpose. Now having said that, we will examine the aspects of cohesion within a paragraph, this will lead to the examination of cohesion between paragraphs. It has already been stated by Bormuth that a knowledge of textual cohesion is something we ought to teach our students in order to improve students' reading comprehension ability. By a knowledge of textual cohesion we mean relation both between and within sentences.

Example of cohesion:

> DDT is a man-made organic chemical released into the environment as a pesticide at a rate of about 100,000 tons annually. After its application by spraying, part of it evaporates and is carried long distances in the air before it eventually precipitates back into the land or into the ocean. In the ocean some of the DDT is taken up by plankton, some of the plankton are eaten by fish, and

> some of the fish are finally eaten by man. At each step in the process the DDT may be degraded into harmless substances, it may be released back into the ocean, or it may be concentrated in the tissues of living organisms. There is some time delay involved at each of these steps.
>
> The Limits to Growth
> Donella H. Meadows et. al.

The features of cohesion include the features of equivalence, or co-referentiality, of lexical items and of pronominal expression; connection, or the system of adjunction and conjunction by which the sentences cohere; and thematization, the ordering of information within and between sentences so as to provide an orderly flow of given and new information in the text as a whole. (Halliday, 1970) We can then say that cohesion devices include all the characteristics of a text as distinct from an unrelated collection of sentences.

Let us now move on to another principle of rhetoric which is emphasis. Emphasis enables the writer to shape his sentences for conveying the author's thought. Misplaced emphasis can distort the focus of information in the sentence, which can lead to a misinterpretation in the reading, which in turn can lead to complete confusion on the part of the reader. A technical writer, who wishes to remain objective need not resort to the use of the passive voice. It is frequently said that recurrent use of the passive in scientific literature is a result of the scientist's desire to remain objective. This is an inadequate explanation. A more adequate one would be to point out that a passive construction permits the focus of information to fall on one element of the sentence rather than on another; and it is the need to emphasize certain pieces of information rather than others which leads to the frequent use of the passive voice. For example we can say, "We heated the liquid in a test tube". The emphasis is on we. Or can say " the liquid was heated in a test tube", the emphasis is on liquid. Voice is used in the service of emphasis not because a certain type of writing demands the use of a particular voice but because the flow of information demands that the focus of information be upon one word or phrase than another. Hence, we can say it is emphasis not voice which affects the appropriateness of the writing.

At this point we must indicate how all of this can contribute to the teaching of reading comprehension in English for science and technology, that is to say the level of ability which permits the student to use the language as an auxiliary skill in his academic studies. We believe:

(1) Better and more detailed description permits the possibility of better and more informed teaching materials.

(2) More aware teachers result in better informed students.

Making the students aware of the expository techniques used by the scientific writer and providing him with precise information on all points which are important and then exercising this knowledge is far more effective than having the teacher ask questions such as, "Can't you see where the emphasis lies? Why do you think it's coherent". What we must do is increase the student's functional knowledge of the language. This functional knowledge of how language works is an important component of advanced reading comprehension ability.

What we have suggested here is not a methodology in itself, it is simply a way of approaching the problem. We feel that there is a great deal that can be done. Examination of reading materials is important because part of what is communicated is the way in which it is communicated (Mountford, 1975). If science is concerned largely with description and explanation, the methodology of such description is reflected in the language use associated with these. A course synthesis of the type suggested here, focusing on the written message and how it is conveyed could probably be exploited by the English Language teacher in achieving specific reading comprehension goals in the reading for science and technology. Relying too much on student intuition or the fact that a student who reads and understands scientific and technical books in his own language will be able to do so in English is a rather naive approach on the teacher's part. Logic which is the basis of rhetoric, is evolved out of a culture; it is not universal. Rhetoric, is not universal either, but varies from culture to culture and from time to time within a given culture. (Kaplan) Our concern as E. S. T. teachers is not to contrast the language uses related to two different cultures but to contrast the ways in which language is employed to communicate information in reader-writer situations with different characteristics eg. scientist-general public, scientist - peer group.

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# Say it with Gestures ( Part II )

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MEXTESOL JOURNAL
Washington, D. C.

It is probable that prehistoric man used sign language before he could speak. Humans, like animals, communicate with each other by noises, body movements and postures, but these activities usually accompany spoken language. Each culture has its own gestures to express various ideas or thoughts, and students enjoy learning these gestures and explaining the feelings behind them as part of the learning process in the target language. By getting to know the gestures in the target language and by making them an integral part of their speech, students can avoid misunderstanding and embarrassment. (After all, what may be considered a harmless gesture in one culture may be considered rude or even obscene in another.)
Studies in the field of kinesics have shown that the lexicon of human gestures includes more than 700,000 distinct and expressive movements of the hands, arms, fingers and face.[1] As a result of the research in kinesics and the use of "natural" contexts in dialogs for teaching in the target language, more and more teachers are utilizing gestures in the target language to help the students with the spoken patterns being taught. From the very first class day the teacher can teach his/her students to use gestures. The teacher, too, should use gestures in the classroom for economy and efficiency in eliciting responses, to avoid giving instructions in the native language, and to provide a time-saving device when using cues and changing from one type of activity to another. The teacher can train his/her students from the very first day of class to respond to his gestures by giving the students the gesture together with the verbal expression which will elicit the desired response. In this way, the student will become accustomed to the use and meaning of the gesture when it is used in isolation.

Some gestures that can be used in the classroom are:

Listen (carefully) !
Speak louder !

1. Cup palm of hand behind ear.

Be quiet !
Silence !
Don't repeat.

2. Hold index finger vertically across both lips.

1. The Origin Of Language, Life Education Reprint #25, Life International, Oct. 19, 1964 and Nov. 2, 1964, N. Y., p7.

| | |
|---|---|
| Listen carefully. Don't repeat. | Combine gestures 1 and 2. |
| Repeat after me. | 3. Bend arm at elbow. Curl fingers into palm of hand, index finger extended, palm facing inward. Make small circles with index finger in front of mouth. |
| Repeat again. | 4. Bend arm at elbow, palm facing inward, fingers of hand together. Wave hand toward you. |
| The whole class. | 5. Make a circular sweeping motion with both arms, extend arms straight out first, then bend arms at elbow and circle toward your body. |
| The right side of the room. | 6. Same movement as 5, but use the right arm only. |
| The left side of the room. | 7. Same movement as 5, but use the left arm only. |
| The whole class repeats. | Combine 4 and 5. |
| The left side repeats. | Combine 4 and 7. |
| This group repeats. | Combine 4 and 5. (Use one arm only and make a smaller sweeping motion.) |
| You recite. | 8. Point with index finger at individual student. (This gesture should be explained beforehand since in some cultures it is considered an insult to point at a person.) |
| Think ! | 9. Tap temple with index finger. |
| Wait a minute !<br>Take it easy ! | 10. Bend arm at elbow, palm facing out, move hand back and forth. (Can be done with one hand or with both.) |

| | |
|---|---|
| Who knows the answer? | 11. Raise eyebrows slightly, lift chin upward. (Use same movement and bend arms at elbow, extend arms outward, palms facing up.) |
| Change to a question. | 12. Pass right hand over left hand or vice-versa. |
| Answer in the negative. | 13. Shake head from side to side. ( No ) |
| Answer in the affirmative. | 14. Shake head up and down. (Yes) |

When presenting the verb tenses, the following gestures can be used:

| | |
|---|---|
| Present of Custom (Simple Present) | 1. Make a circular motion with index finger of left hand going away from your body. |
| Present of Moment (Present Continuous) | 2. Slap table or desk with palm of hand. |
| Simple Past | 3. Curl fingers into palm of hand, stick thumb out. Point with thumb behind you over your shoulder. |
| Future | 4. Point with index finger straight ahead, arm extended in front of you. |

When teaching the students how to pronounce certain sounds, some of the articulatory positions can be portrayed through gestures:

| | |
|---|---|
| / i y / | To show the students the tenseness of the / i y / sound and how the tip of the tongue presses against the lower front teeth. |
| | 1. Bend left arm at elbow, hold hand up sideways palm facing up and fingers of left hand straight up. Press tips of fingers of right hand into middle of fingers of left hand. |

| | |
|---|---|
| / I / | 2. To show the students that there is no pressure of the tongue against the teeth for / I /, use the same gesture as above except pull the fingers of the right hand slightly away from the fingers of the left hand. |
| / t / and / d / | 3. To show the students the position of the tongue in the alveolar ridge behind the upper front teeth. Bend arm at elbow, turn hand sideways, palm of left hand facing down. Press tips of fingers of right hand into palm of left hand where fingers and palm are joined. |

When teaching the intonation patterns, the following hand movements can be used:

| | |
|---|---|
| 3<br>2 Where are you going this weekend?<br>1 | To indicate normal, high, and low pitch (2, 3, 1), move left hand horizontally across your chest to your left, palm down (normal pitch). Move hand up a step for high pitch. Let left hand fall down to left side for low pitch (falling intonation). |
| 2 Are you going alone? 3 | Repeat the same movement for normal intonation, move hand up a step for high pitch and glide to left. |

When presenting the personal pronouns and possessives, gestures can be used in the following way:

| | |
|---|---|
| I (me, mine) | 1. Slap chest with palm of hand or point to chest with index finger. |
| You (yours) | 2. Point to an individual or individuals. |

| | |
|---|---|
| He (him, his) | 3. Point to a male. |
| She (her, hers) | 4. Point to a female. |
| We (our, ours) | 5. If 2 individuals are involved, combine 2 and 1, or 3 and 1, or 4 and 1. To indicate the whole group use a sweeping circular notion and No. 1. |
| They (them, theirs) | 6. Bend arm at elbow, palm facing outward and to the side. Make a waving motion away from your body and toward the group of people you wish to designate. |

Gestures can be used in teaching dialogs and in role playing.

They can be used to motivate the students to express themselves both verbally and non-verbally so that they can become involved and stimulated in their desire to communicate. We must remember that to acquire the ability to use the target language, the learner must use that language in a more meaningful situation and be able to interact with other people. Therefore, the students should be taught the gestures and the verbal utterances that accompany these gestures so that they can use them in a specific situation for creative and original response, whether it be in a dialog, role-playing or drama. How much more effective anger and frustration can be portrayed through words and gestures ! Have you ever become angry at some incident while traveling in another country and felt frustrated at not being able to express this anger in the language of that country or with the appropriate gesture? Sometimes people who are afraid to express in words what could be quoted verbatim use gestures to convey meaning, because with gestures no one can quote them for what the gestures are saying ! In dialogs and plays, gestures plus words make the situation more realistic and help give the speaker a feeling of spontaneity.
After the teacher has demonstrated and taught the various gestures and the verbal expressions which accompany these gestures, he/she can have the class form groups of from three to six students. Within each group the students work up a dialog or play using the gestures and expressions they were taught. The teacher and/or the students may suggest situations such as:

The scene of an accident
Girl's (boy's) first date
Family situation--the teen-age son wants to get married
the teen-age daughter wants to get married

A surprise party
A Cocktail party
A birthday party
A housewarming party, etc.

The students write about the situation they choose and assign roles to each other. The teacher circulates and serves as a resource person. The written dialogs or plays are handed in to the teacher to be corrected and suggestions are made. Then the groups get together during another class period ( or outside of class), and they practice their roles.
Each group presents his production to the entire class along with the appropriate gestures. After the presentation, the teacher should encourage comments and discussion and he/she should foster an understanding of the gestures used in the target culture.

How can the teacher get the students to be aware of gestures and how are they used? As an assignment, the teacher can instruct the students to leaf through a magazine and to find a picture which illustrates a gesture. They are to think about the situation in which this gesture is used, decide why the person is using that gesture, and what the person is probably saying. In class the following day, student A shows his picture to the class. Then he calls on student B to tell him what he thinks the situation is, why that person is making that particular gesture, and what he is probably saying. After student B finishes, student A tells the class whether or not he agrees with student B. If student A disagrees or wants to add more information, he tells his version of what the situation is, why that gesture was used, and what is probably being said. The class can discuss whether or not they agree with what has been said.

Students are sometimes very shy about using gestures in front of the class or group when this activity is presented for the first time. In this case it is advisable to begin with a gesture per week to reinforce meaning in a dialog or in situations and to try to incorporate each gesture and its verbal expression as part of the lesson.

Very little attention has been paid to the nonlinguistic aspects of human communication. Paralinguistics and kinesics should be included and considered in the preparation and training of both foreign language teachers and students. If gestures are used when teaching dialogs, they can speed up the learning process, especially if a nonnative teacher of English learns to use the target gestures to convey meaning to the class. By using gestures, the teacher injects more authenticity into the learning situation and portrays the nonlinguistic behavior of the native speaker of English. Moreover through the use of gestures, the student is motivated to learn and an interest in another culture is stimulated.

# AN ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY ON ESL AT THE ELEMENTARY LEVEL [1]

By Josefina Vargas O'Keefe.

1. Motivator Activity Card Kits (Singer: SVE - Society for Visual Education, Inc. 1345 Diversey Parkway, Chicago, Illinois 60614)

| | |
|---|---|
| Short Vowels | - No. 1008 |
| Long Vowels | - No. 1007 |
| Final Consonants | - No. 1006 |
| Initial Consonants | - No. 1005 |
| Consonant Blends Bingo | - No. 1011 |
| Consonant Digraphs | - No. 1012 |

I found these kits very useful for beginning students of English with very limited proficiency. It is also most helpful to students who have some English but need reinforcement in correct pronunciation. in simple spelling, and vocabulary. Students in groups of two to eight can use the kit by themselves in the regular classroom with the guidance of a reliable "buddy" as a volunteer aide, or a teacher. Included in the above list are kits that proved helpful to Spanish-speaking students. They are attractive in color and erasable with tissue paper.

2. The Reading Helpers: Levels Two through Seven by Gloria Orlick ( The Book-Lab, Inc. 1449 - 37th St., Brooklyn, New York 11218)

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Level 7 | - No. 2170 | Level 4 | - No. 2140 |
| Level 6 | - No. 2160 | Level 3 | - No. 2130 |
| Level 5 | - No. 2150 | Level 2 | - No. 2120 |

Most useful for classroom teachers of non-English speaking students with varying levels of proficiency.
Conceptual in approach, each lesson teaches basic skills incrementally. A "buddy" or aide can use this easily because there are explicit directions for both the teacher and pupil on the left hand page. Each exercise can be detached and duplicated on dittoes for classwork or homework. Used originally in New York for Puerto Rican students and second dialect students.

3. Welcome to English by Thomas Lismore - Revised Edition, 1974 (Regents Publishing Co., Inc. Two Park Ave., New York, New York 10016)

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Level 5 | - No. 18077 | Level 2 | - No. 18074 |

[1] Reprinted from the WATESOL Newsletter.

Level 4 - No. 18076 Level 1 - No. 18073
Level 3 - No. 18075

Useful to student who is taking ESOL classes. He can take the book home for review and reinforcement of grammatical structures and vocabulary already learned. Attractively illustrated, it provides the student with help in reading and writing comprehension.

4. The Miami Linguistic Readers: ESL. - The First and Second Level Program, twenty-one separate student books and twenty-one separate workbooks (D. C. Heath and Co., P. O. Box 3172, Richmond, Virginia 23205)
Specially designed for Spanish speakers. Field-tested in Florida and California. Starting one step before the usual reading program, it helps students gain oral/aural mastery of the materials they are expected to read in the regular reading program. It also provides new grammatical patterns and handwriting practice. I found this to be very useful to the Spanish-speaking and Korean students because it concentrates on overcoming the phonological and morphological problems encountered by a majority of these students. The story contents are of interest to varying levels and are of multi-ethnic orientations.

5. Bill Martin Reading Series: published by Scott Foresman and Company.
For students of varying proficiency levels and for different age levels containing books of different topics and interesting to all ages. An important feature is reading with rhythmic and musical accompaniment.
Can be used as a short listening activity as well. There is plenty of vocabulary and grammatical reinforcement. Fifty books with cassette tapes. I found these books very popular among elementary children aged six through twelve: can be used as individual or group work to culminate a TESOL lesson or language arts lesson.

6. Bowmar, Inc.
Thirty books and records are in this set. For elementary grades, but can be used with junior high students. Small, handy books with records in the back pockets. The readings accompanied with music, plus rhymes and poems for supplementary activities. Can be used for short listening activity. About ten of the books are also in Spanish edition. Popular with Kindergarten through third grades.

7. English Around the World published by Scott Foresman.
Used to supplement the Bowmar books and records. Series includes flash cards, tapes, records, reading cards, posters, a teacher's manual, student books, workbooks, practice pads and test pads. Can be used for junior and senior high students as well as elementary students depending

on the proficiency levels. The posters and flash cards are quite useful, particularly for the teacher who has no time to develop and collect visual aids. The visual materials have been chosen to develop conceptual skills as well as English language skills. However, this is a huge series and one must pick and choose what would work in a particular program.

8. Learning Basic Skills Through Music by Hap Palmer Educational Activities, Inc., Freeport, New York 11520.
A collection of original and simple game songs and rhythmic movement activities on phonograph records for children in elementary grades. Both fun and educational. Designed for use with Head Start and special education programs, but particularly effective with ESOL young children. Topics include sizes, colors, foods, home activities, etc. I found these records very useful in reinforcement of vocabulary and grammar by means of musical and manipulative activities.

9. Capitalization and Punctuation: Programs for Individualized Instruction. A. B. C. by Richard Boning (Barnell Loft, Ltd. 958 Church Street, Baldwin, New York 11510)
I have used these materials with ten and twelve year olds who have been in the United States for a year or so and who need help in the basic mechanics of writing and spelling. The exercises develop the writing comprehension skills in an incremental way. An important feature is a self-testing exercise at the end of each lesson.

10. The First Talking Story Book; The Second Talking Book published by Scott Foresman.
Excellent stories for listening and reading. I use both stories in our "TESOL Library" in the ESOL classrooms. Each series contains twenty-one lively, interesting stories: folk tales of various countries, popular stories of topics of interest for elementary school children. Attractive illustrations in color; each book with a 33 1/3 record on the back pocket. Giant "library" cards which show all the titles of the books in the series and space for the child to check his reading accompany each series. TESOL students of varying levels of proficiency can profit from this material.

Those students of extremely limited proficiency can listen to the teacher or an aide as the story is being read, or if he can decode and understand to some degree, he can listen and follow the story on the printed page.

Johanna Guccione, from the Prince Georges' County Public Schools, also suggests The Jacaranda Individualized Language Arts Program for ESL in the elementary level. It is advertised on the

back copy of the September 1975 issue of the TESOL Quarterly. For information and a brochure, you may contact David Rouen, Jacaranda Press, 8267 Main Street, P. O. Box 31, Ellicott City, Maryland 21043.

# DEVELOPING READING SKILLS:

## A Synthesis of Methodologies

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## PURPOSE

The purpose of this paper is to explore the various theories on learning to read a foreign language, principally those of the Audio-lingual Method and the newer cognitive approach, to test these theories against classroom experience, and to arrive at a synthesis of methods for teaching Spanish speaking EFL students to read English. Further, as we are interested not only in theory, but in application in the EFL classroom, we will point out what this synthesis of methodologies implies in our classroom techniques for teaching reading. In effect, we will be discarding what does not work and adding other newer, techniques that seem viable in the EFL classroom.

## WHY THE NEW INTEREST IN READING?

There are several good reasons why we are hearing more about reading in the seventies than we did in the sixties. They are the following:

1. Student-oriented EFL learning. There is a general feeling in educational circles that we should be more oriented to student needs and interests, rather than to materials, as has been the focus, especially in Audio-lingual teaching. One way this has manifested itself is in the needs of students to read, and to read interesting materials. They were bored with the pattern drills and "over-learning" of the Audio-lingual Method and the little attention it paid to reading. Relevance to student needs has made us realize that skill in reading EFL is somehow a more realistic and perhaps attainable goal than trying to give the student competancy in all four skills. The likelihood of a student having to read English is much greater than of his having to speak English or write English.

2. Individualization and Grouping. Related to these general considerations of student-oriented learning is the boom in individual-ization. Individualization and grouping lend themselves very well to

reading. It is no secret to EFL teachers that beyond the most basic instruction in reading, there is a wide variety of reading aptitudes present in the typical classroom: some are slow learners, some fast; some read their native Spanish well, others not; some can speak English with some facility; others have never heard it spoken by a native; some have adequate grammar; others have no formal grammar training, all factors in determining individual progress in reading. But individualization and grouping can handle most of the differences in kind in quantity of progress; and, in addition, it often means that there is less boredom in reading, as we can let the student select materials of interest perhaps only to that one student (in the class), an important factor in maintaining enthusiasm and motivation in the reading program.

3. Questioning of Audio-lingual Methodology. The current questioning of the Audio-lingual method has had a salutory effect on attention to reading skills in the EFL classroom. Audio-lingual teachers seldom spent much time on reading and the reading itself was decidedly seen as occupying a second place to hearing-speaking skills. Moreover, second language methodology had little to say about inculcating reading skills. If we take Nelson Broks as representative of Audio-lingual Methodology, he has almost nothing to say about reading in his influential book, Language and Language Learning, (1964). Cognitive learning theory, on the other hand, does give a prominent place to reading: concerned with the analogical and creative thought capacities of man, rather than with his habit-formed behavior there is a natural affinity of this learning approach to the development of reading skills.

4. English for Special Purposes. Another important reason why reading is getting more attention today is the new interest in ESP, English for Special Purposes, English for Specific Purposes, or EST, English for Science and Technology. Programs and materials for such courses are usually centered on reading. It is felt that instead of trying the impossible, that is, teaching the ability, to speak, read, and write English in a given number of hours, usually all too few, we ought to concentrate on what these students really need. This is often, very clearly, a reading knowledge that will equip them to read their textbooks, to read specification manuals, stock order catalogues, technical journals, and the like. In most cases English for Special Purposes is actually "Reading English for Special Purposes". It might be added that this interest in technical reading and writing is producing research and materials that are extremely useful to the teaching of reading in general.

## THE AUDIO LINGUAL APPROACH TO READING SKILLS

The Audio-lingual approach to reading skills is worth reviewing

because, while Audio-lingual theory has been questioned for several years now and some of the excesses and dogmatism of this approach discarded, there is still much that is useful in Audio-lingual techniques. Moreover, if one talks of a cognitive theory of learning in opposition to Audio-lingual, it must be pointed out that this newest theory of language learning as yet has given us no new coherent language learning/teaching methodology to rival the former position of the Audio-lingual Method. Cognitive theorists have shown convincingly that some of the premises of audio-lingualism are simply unsound and some of the techniques are ineffective, confirming what many classroom teachers already know. Rather, a better way of looking at the methodology controversy is to see revisions of the old theory and a synthesis emerging. (See James Ney, "Toward a Synthetization of Teaching Methodologies", Hispania, Sept. 1975, Pp. 424-429).

What did the Audio-lingual Approach mean in terms of teaching/learning reading? The following points, gathered from a variety of sources can be said to constitute the Audio-lingual theory on reading.

1. Learning to read in the first as well as the second language was merely changing the mode of perception from ear to eye, so that audio-lingual control of language was emphasized first, before reading. (Bloomfield, 1933; Fries, 1963).

2. Reading first what had been practiced audio-lingually meant an initial gap of weeks, or even months before the written word was introduced. (Northeast Conference, 1967, p. 1,; Politzer, 1963, p. 99) William Moulton stated in 1961, "The student should first be taught to speak the foreign language; teaching him to read it was a totally separate process if, indeed, there was time for it at all." (Mohrmann, C., ed., 1961, p. 86).

3. Reading and not translating, as practiced by the older grammar-translation method. That is, the direct perception of the meaning without reference to native language equivalents. (Politzer, 1963, p. 98; Rivers, 1964, p. 17-18)

4. Reading for content and not necessarily for building vocabulary, (Chastain, 1971, p. 18).

5. Reading without looking up the unknown words until the whole text was read. (Moulton, 1961, p. 18).

6. Sensible guessing. Inferring meaning from context. Carry over from first language ( L 1 ) reading habits. (Moulton, 1961, 18, Northeast Conference, p. 41-42).

7. Reading taught with other skills of hearing-speaking, and writing. Integrated into an Audio-lingual program with its emphasis on pattern drills, repetition, and "over-learning" for automatic control. (Northeast Conference, p. 10.)

8. Reading the selection two or three times, rather than giving it one careful reading was emphasized. (Chastain, 1971, p. 184).

9. Reading large amounts, necessary to gain a wide recognition vocabulary. (Northeast Conference, p. 43).

10. Lastly, materials edited as to vocabulary, syntax, style. The student moved from controlled to completely liberated reading. (Northeast Conference, p. 10).

## CRITIQUE OF AUDIO-LINGUAL PRACTICE AS RELATED TO READING.

In general, it can be said that reading played a secondary role in the foreign language learning process of the Audio-lingual approach. It was a neglected skill, along with writing. There was little written about inculcating reading skills and very little produced in the way of materials which reflected the audio-lingualists advice on handling the reading skills. The usual reading lesson focused on vocabulary building, with translations at the back of the book or at the bottom of the page, followed by a series of often detailed questions on the reading in the target language. Advice on the teaching and learning of reading skills was not often followed by text writers, teachers, or students. There were, for example, no exercises designed to promote sensible guessing, so that the student would not look up every word. Little attention was paid to what was read, or to what students might want to read. Much of the reading material produced in the Audio-lingual hey day assumed that the purpose of reading was to enjoy works of literature. Nelson Brooks, for example, has no chapter on reading in his influential book on language teaching and learning, but he does have a chapter on "Language and Literature". (Brooks, 1964). He seems to have adopted the grammar-translation goal of reading for cultural enrichment. Albert Valdman claims that the "true primary objectives of foreign language teachers are still today those that they were in the 1930's: the ability to understand literary texts and to compose grammatically correct sentences." (Lugton, ed., 1971.)

## THE COGNITIVE APPROACH TO READING

If we look now to some of the newer theories, there are several points that would seem to have application to reading. Chastain maintains that "achievement in reading has been one of the strengths of the cognitive approach. Most of the studies have found that traditional students read better than AL students." (Chastain, 1971, p. 195).

It should not be difficult to discern why this is true. The whole emphasis of cognitive theory is on the thinking process and on grammar analysis, both of which lend themselves to the development of reading skills: it is the problem-solving approach, rather than the habit-forming goal of Audio-lingual teaching, that supports the development of reading skills. Meaning has an important role in cognitive theory, as it does in theories learning to read. And, of course, cognitive theory assumes that reading is introduced from the beginning, so that students in these programs have at least a time advantage over strictly Audio-lingual programs. Cognitive theoreticians do not recognize the hierarchy of hearing-speaking-reading-writing, in that order, but give reading equal importance with the other skills. For all these reasons cognitive approaches seem to produce better readers.

Cognitive theory, however, has produced nothing new or startling on the subject of reading: it is more a matter of giving reading a new priority and seeing the student's potential in this area in a new light. Rather than programming the learner's mind to recognize increasingly more varied patterns, as Audio-lingual theory advises, a cognitive approach to reading stresses the creative and cognitive powers of the reader which go beyond the linguistic forms. The process of deriving meaning from the printed page and the challenge of the unexpected which this often involves is seen as a valuable end-product in itself. And not only the student's reasoning powers, but his total life experiences are called upon to help him in this task.

Updated guidelines for the teaching of reading skills.

If we look again at the ten previously outlined points of audio-lingual theory on reading, and revise them in the light of the cognitive approach with specific applications to the teaching of EFL reading to Spanish speakers, have an updated guide to the teaching of reading.

1. To make the point that reading is merely changing the mode of sensual perception from the ear to the eye simply does not go far enough: it ignores the reading habits acquired in the first language

experience. The techniques of reading have already been mastered, so that students can transfer the approach used to reading, in L 2. In the case of Spanish to English, this is a tremendous advantage: both have alphabetic written languages based on a sound system in which phonemes are represented--imperfectly, of course--by letters, and both use the Roman alphabet and read from left to right, horizontally. The two languages have similar morphology systems for word formation and similarities in syntactical structure (English showing a predominately subject-verb-object ordering that corresponds to the most common pattern of several in Spanish). Considering vocabulary, there are reported to be 50,000 cognate words, that is, 50,000 words whose printed representation and meanings are similar in the two languages. (Ramsey & Spaulding, 1956). These advantages, on the other hand, must be balanced against the sometimes widely different character of the written language when it is compared with the spoken language. Audio-lingual methodology assumed that somehow Audio-lingual control of a language prepared the student for reading. But the reader often encounters a language that is in a sense a different dialect of the standard spoken form he is learning: a great deal of the vocabulary syntax, and rhetorical devices he will find in reading are not common to the spoken language. Defining these divergences from the spoken language and offering some kind of exercises in them is one of the tasks of a reading skills specialist.

2. The insistence on a pre-reading gap of time is not, apparently, well founded.

It has not been proven that there is, in fact, a "natural order" of foreign language presentation, hearing-speaking-reading-writing. It has been suggested that possibly the reading skills be taught first, or both the passive skills, reading and hearing, before the active skills of speaking and writing, (Chastain, 1971).

3. The dictum to teach reading and not translation is probably well founded. As suggested above, already acquired reading skills in L 1 can be applied to L 2.

4. Reading for content, focusing on general meaning and away from the words themselves seems advisable. This also follows the model of learning to read L 1. Chastain speaks to this point in the following passage:

> Students need to be encouraged to read for the content of the material as they do in their own language. Meaningful reading recquires concentration upon important elements which convey the message. Constant attention to each word presents such an overwhelming amount

> of information that the mind cannot process it all, even in the native language. Just as in listening comprehension, the students must learn to focus their attention on message-carrying, manageable units of language in order to avoid being bogged-down in a mass of detail.
>
> (Chastain, 1971, p. 185 )

5. Reading without looking up the unknown words until the end of the passage seems, then, to be a good strategy. It is more efficient because it avoids the inevitable interruption in the train of thought that accompanies this traditional attack on reading L 2.

6. Sensible guessing, making use of a problem solving approach, likewise, is effective. It calls upon all of the student's reasoning. cognitive powers, and on his total life experiences.

7. Teaching reading with the other Audio-lingual skills may not be a sound approach. It may not be at all practical. In situations of limited time and resources, merely teaching reading skills may be the only solution to a problem. Concentrating on one skill will certainly be less frustrating than trying to deal with the four-pronged attack in our usual EFL programs.

8. Reading the passage several times, rather than laboriously working over the assignment word by word is a good technique. From this writer's experience, the students retain more by concentrating on the total meaning of the reading assignment.

9. Reading large amounts of material, rather than focusing on limited materials to be treated in depth, may still be a debatable point. Certainly, exposure to large amounts of reading material is important to building up a large recognition vocabulary, but this does not preclude the reading of selected materials with great attention, in order to bring out patterns in rhetorical structure and grammar.

10. Lastly, the Audio-lingual technique of moving from very controlled reading matter to liberated reading is sound. This merely follows the learning principal of going from the known to the unknown.

## IMPLICATIONS FOR READING PROGRAMS

The foregoing synthesis of the reading skills methodology implies certain goals and techniques for teaching these skills. Without treating

the research being done today in defining the problems of teaching foreign language reading or in determining the most effective learning strategies, we can suggest approaches and techniques that arise form our renovated guidelines for a methodology of teaching EFL reading.

One of the most important implications for the EFL classroom is simply to focus more attention on reading as a valuable skill in itself, and not merely as supportive of the goal of audio-lingual communication. This means that teachers must develop a more enlightened approach to the teaching of reading, beginning with a determination of the needs of the students. Questionnaires and interviews should tell us what demands exist for reading, and further, what type of reading material is preferred by each individual student. With this knowledge, the teacher can tailor individual or group packets to the precise needs of the students, not a technique which derives from our revised reading methodology, but one which can be employed to great advantage in the reading program. No longer depending on standard reading texts, the teacher is called upon to do a great deal more work in materials development but this is necessary in any case for an effective reading program.

Beyond selecting reading materials appropriate to the student's interest; and reading level achievements, the instructor will also have to isolate problems in reading techniques and provide exercise materials prior to the reading of the assignment itself. Here the cognitive approach comes into play in that we are now spending more time on explanation of materials, on analysis, rather than merely plunging into some kind of controlled reading matter, to be followed by the usual comprehension and composition work. One type of pre-reading exercise, which can be very effective, consists of a passage of connected discourse in the students' native Spanish.

A number of key words are left out ( or indicated by blanks), followed by a similar passage in English. Both are designed to show that educated guessing, using a variety of linguistic, contextual, and l semantic clues will give the reader an over-all comprehension of the reading selection without knowing the meaning of the omitted words. Once the student understands that the procedure for gaining an acceptable level of reading comprehension does not involve looking up sometimes hundreds of new words, he can focus on the meaning of what he is reading, rather than on the vocabulary. This problem-solving approach conforms to the advice on reading methodology of the congnitive theorist Kenneth Chastain.

Other valuable exercises are those which expand the student's recognition of cognates and the regularities in word formation, which

may be similar to those corresponding to his native Spanish. Certain exercises can show the correspondences between suffix endings, for example in nación - nation, sentimiento - sentiment. The process of adding morphemes, to generate a new meaning for already-learned English words which may not have a common reflex in Spanish is another useful learning activity (For example, forming the word "motherly" form'mother" using the -ly morpheme segment to indicate manner, or "bothersome" from appending the suffix "some", indicating a quality, or cause, to a simple noun). Such activities can give students much more ability and confidence in recognizing a vast number of new words. Another approach involves analysis of sentence, clause, and paragraph structures common in a particular reading selection prior to its reading by the students, particularly where structural patterns are at variance with the commonly found Spanish patterns. (A sentence such as "They don't like the idea of leaving the party early", for example, would present several syntactical and morphological problems to a Spanish reader that could be discussed and dealt with prior to the reading assignment.) These kinds of pre-reading activities help expand the student's abilities to understand new reading materials before he encounters them on his own, either in the text to be read, or in the comprehension questions at the end, which usually put the student in a testing situation rather than in a learning one, as is proposed here.

The synthesis of reading methodologies above also implies clearly stated and realistic goals in reading skills development. If we want to de-emphasize vocabulary in favor of over-all comprehension, this must be reflected in our stated goal. It might be added that often the goals are higher in comprehension tests in foreign language reading than in the native language. Reasonable, acceptable results, especially if we are emphasizing content, over vocabulary, might, at least in the beginning, be only 60%, 75%, or 80%, rather than 100%. (Which is probably not an attainable score on a timed reading comprehension test if the student were reading in his native language.)

Another implication of this composite reading methodology is that in selective ways Spanish can be used in the classroom. Certainly in vocabulary study, involving cognates, in analysis of structural elements where a contrast is beneficial, and often in explanations, the use of Spanish is entirely appropriate. Another place where Spanish could be used effectively without unduly affecting classroom English language discipline is in comprehension testing. As we are not teaching new material at this point, but merely trying to determine the level of comprehension attained, using Spanish in some kind of objective testing might be the best medium of communication.

## SUMMARY

This article has aimed at refining an up-to-date methodology for teaching reading in the EFL program. A synthesis of the audio-lingual and the cognitive approaches to the subject has been made. Then, in an effort to make practical applications of this methodology, suggestions, not at all exhaustive, were made in the area of classroom goals and techniques which also combined features of general educational trends, not necessarily concerned with language teaching such as individualization and grouping. Thus the approach taken here has been theoretical, but also pragmatic, ultimately aimed at giving us the tools to do an effective job of teaching reading in an EFL program.

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# TRAINING FOR HUMANIZING SKILLS IN A BICULTURAL AMERICAN SCHOOL IN MEXICO [1]

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Can Rock Hudson and Celia Rodriguez and Tom Feng find success and happiness in an American school in Mexico City with bilingual and bicultural goals and a multinational student body?

Well, maybe, if we have the humanizing skills with which to achieve positive, cross-cultural encounters: this means the teachers, the students, their parents and the administration in a tossed salad mix where the flavor of each ingredient is maintained, but the salad is a new and richer taste treat. Otherwise the ingredients wilt and the whole salad goes soggy.

It's not easy to have a positive cross-cultural experience. Meeting someone different, off your own turf, can be devastating. You have to be a certain kind of a person to be able to manage certain situations and relationships. Margaret Mead says a good interactor has:

communication skills

adaptability

a nonauthoritarian personality

empathy

social displacement from family

She suggests that cross cultural situations require flexibility in symmetry relationships. One needs to recognize and manage situations which each culture role plays differently:

the role of host and guest

the role of giver and receiver

the role of dominance and submission

the role of men and women

1 An address given at the National Convention of ASCD

relative physical size

deference to age or class

language style: oratory vs. simple statement

face-saving devices

frankness vs. circumlocution (1)

and I would like to add intimacy styles and body language communications.

Some other things also get in the way:

The J Curve: reaching a balanced picture of the second culture, neither gushing over its local color, nor deploring its Alice in Wonderland upside-downness.

The sense of betrayal of your own "mother" culture when you adapt too well to a new one: Dr. Luis Feder, a Mexican psychoanalyst who studied the effect of long term residence in a second culture, found that "To defend one's own object is psychologically equivalent to holding on to one's mother. To renounce it is equivalent to losing her." Rejection of the new culture becomes the equivalent of a vote of loyalty to one's own culture. (2)

How you view your own culture as being seen by the other culture, flavors your view of the second culture. If you feel that yours is appreciated and given equal status, you like the second culture; if not, you turn against it.

Ramirez and Castañeda's new research on field-independent and field-dependent teaching and learning styles, helps us understand why some teachers and students work well together, and some don't. The Anglo-type teacher who is task oriented and expects students to work for work's sake, and the Latin-type teacher who is relationship oriented and expects them to work "for me" and for their relationships' sake, find the Anglo and Latin student counterpart either accepting or rejecting them and school on the same terms.
How much this field independent, field dependent work style is cultural, and how much it is class, we are trying to find out in the American

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(1) Mead, Margaret, The Selection of Personnel for International Service, World Federation for Mental Health, Genova, 1963

(2) Feder, Luis, "Psychogenesis and Phenomenology of the Encounter' Proceedings of the Third World Congress of Psychiatry, Canada, pp. 346-351

schools of Mexico City working with middle class children whose parents, like all middle classes everywhere, are achievement and task oriented. (3)

How can the school give the insights and humanizing skills which make such encounters positive? At the American school we try in many ways, at all levels. At present we are using some of these strategies:

Magic Circle: At the primary level we believe that helping children express feelings will improve their personal and social communication skills, show them the community of mankind, give insight into how others feel and evaluate, and make the children less authoritarian and more open personalities.

Kohlberg's States of Moral Development, using especially his discussions of moral dilemmas: Both parents, high school students, and teachers have been working in a variety of groups towards building "the just and moral community" at school. These discussion groups bring their own personal and cultural dilemmas which help them gain insight into how most values are culture related and serve the social realities of that culture, but some basic few seem to belong to a hierarchy of universally cherished values, which after values clarification, sift down to essence.

Second Language classes: English and Spanish are both taught as second languages to students coming into the school with only a first language. These introductory courses are a blend of language and culture, and all language lessons are based on interpreting the culture to the student, eg. The beginning lessons in greetings are taught as culture capsules of how to relate to the people in the new culture... how to address peers, older people, and even the new maid.

In-service culture capsules: Introductory discussions with new staff, interne teachers, and parents help reduce culture shock. They help interpret such mutual communication conflicts as that which exists between the gringo's terse " No " and the Mexican's polite and round about in-order-not-to-hurt-you " No." They provide historic background for why things are as they are and how people manage with things as they are.

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(3) Ramirez and Castañeda, Cultural Democracy, Biocognitive Development and Education, 1974. Academic Press, Inc. New York.

A values clarification and comparative approach to curriculum: Many of our content courses are taught with a comparative approach: eg. comparative economic systems not only looks at Fenton's Marxism vs. capitalism, but also at Mexico's famed "Mixed economy." We take comparative looks at the 1848 war between Mexico and the U. S. as seen by both sides, then and now. We look at the work ethic as it relates to Northamerican settlers coming into a country where there was no labor force at hand, and Spanish conquistadores finding whole villages to do their heavy phsycal labor for them. Clarification of cultural and individual values as they relate to issues is the classroom teacher's role.

Cross cultural problem solving groups: We are now working with our guidance counselors as humanistic discussion leaders to open up the areas of conflict between groups of Mexican and American students and teachers. Such problems as having all the gringo's on the American football team and all Mexican boys on the soccer team divide the student body. Talking things through seems to work when there is time and leadership. But it never seems enough.

Role playing and values clarification strategies are used in all these experiences, everywhere we can put them to work in opening up conflicts and contradictions to build insights, appreciations, understandings and acceptance.

"Teacher training"? I believe we are working more with "Everybody" training: parents, students, and teachers, as well as administrators are all involved in all the activities described. Our guidance counselors play an important part in all of this as group interaction skills builders, and we bring outside workshop people to train us to carry on: Fenton inquiry people, Magic Circle people, humanistic psychologists from college campuses, local psychoanalysts, economists, anthropologists, parents who have lived abroad, United Nations officials, etc.

Any help you can give us, we welcome.

# CHALK TALK

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## INTRODUCTION

This section of the MEXTESOL JOURNAL will be reserved largely for the presentation and discussion of practical teaching ideas, activities, the use of materials, equipment, and so on. I will not normally have a lengthy introduction as in this first edition of the section.

It is fashionable and reasonable now to say that language-teaching methods have come and gone as passing fashions, and that there can be no such thing as "the perfect method". Language-teaching methods certainly have both come and gone, sometimes in the wake of developments in the related disciplines of linguistics and psychology, where each new theory has tended to attack rather than modify and add preceding theories. However, there has been some accumulation of knowledge and basic principles in linguistics, psychology, psycholinguistics, and sociolinguistics, and one of the more important bits of knowledge is that we know we don't know exactly how languages are learnt, though at the same time, we are not totally ignorant about what conditions may favour language learning. The message is, therefore, that we should not put all our eggs in one methodological basket, but should take a fairly broad-based approach, guided by a few rather general principles rather then governed by a set of very precise principles and taboos.

This message can be rather disconcerting for the teacher who yearns for a single, simple, strict method. We sympathize ( and reserve some of the sympathy for ourselves), but that's life and language-teaching for you. Many teachers, especially those who have been converted to a new method, do not have this perspective of language teaching.

Such is the case of teachers who are converted by a short and perhaps slightly doctrinaire training course; they may have been converted from total inexperience, or from years of struggling, unguided efforts, or from another approach which the new training course has thoroughly discredited in their eyes (many a grammar-translation teacher has become a fervent audio-lingual or audio-visual teacher ready to turn scornfully on any remaining grammar-translation teachers). The simple line taken by many training course instructors may be justifiable and realistic under the circumstances, and the trainees are often

much more effective in the classroom than before taking the course, they are more methodical, following a clear and coherent sequence of steps, using a clear and coherent repertoire of techniques, and, above all they approach their teaching with confidence and enthusiasm. The price they have paid may be that they are inflexible and have acquired a little bigotry, and, for a time at least, this may inhibit their further development as teachers and make it almost impossible for them to incorporate certain ideas into their teaching.

We are not suggesting that "anything goes" in language teaching today (it is probably impossible to find a teaching situation in which you could justify requiring beginners to give spontaneous 15 minute talks after only 15 hours of classes, or giving choral repetition of all the verbs that double the final consonant before adding-ing, or requiring students to give a translation in Spanish of one English preposition after another in a long list). There are some general principles clearly suggested by theory and practice. David Wilkins in Second Language Learning and Teaching (Arnold, 1974) gives three basic principles:

1. Objectives should be clearly defined.

2. Learning activities should be representative of the learning objectives.

3. Learners should model their own language performance on significant instances of target-language behaviour ( i.e. not on random sentences in the target-language, but on selected sentences that represent significant generalizations about the structure of the language)

These principles require amplification, of course. Principle 1. may seem hard to apply in teaching situations in which it is difficult to predict what the future English-language needs of the students will be (or, indeed, if the students will have such needs at all). This is the case of English-language teaching in public secondary schools in Mexico. The realities of the situation (big groups, little time, etc.) demands that the objectives should be modest (or never achieved if they are too ambitious, no matter how much the militarily predictive "will" is used - "The students will understand university textbooks in English". Sorry, but they won't !). Few, very few secondary school students are destined to translate Spanish into English in their future lives, whereas a significant number may need to write letters and read texts in English; therefore it is reasonable to try to lay the foundations of written composition and reading comprehension in public secondary schools, but not to attempt to teach translation skills. The new secondary school programs do, in fact, set reasonable general-purpose objectives. Wilkins also says: "The fact that precise behavioural predictions are not pos-

sible does not mean that the teacher himself should not have thought carefully about what his objectives in teaching the language are.

He may be forced to express them in the most general terms, but they are no less valuable for that. He cannot logically take decisions about methods if he does not first know what the methods are intended to achieve". He puts the horse rightfully before the cart: methodological decisions are determined by objectives, not viceversa, i. e. we should not give aural-oral skills immense prominence because we are audio-lingual teachers, but we may use an audio-lingual approach because our students primarily need aural-oral skills. If the students already have a rudimentary knowledge of English and desperately need help in improving their ability to understand technical books, very different methodological decisions may be taken.

The major objective of most English-language courses will be that students should acquire the ability to use English effectively in some form or forms of communication.
Principle 2, therefore, will require that such courses should include "communicative activities". The genuineness of the communication is, of course, dependent on many factors: a game can give elementary students a reason for communicating, but, if they have the same native language, it cannot give them a genuine reason for communicating in English (unless it can only be played in that language e. g. a word game). The real reason why students use English in an English-language class is almost always that they are trying to learn English; most students seldom forget this entirely and want to see results. Nonetheless, communicative, quasi-communicative, and (why not?) pseudo-communicative activities can switch the focus of attention from language form to language use (and hopefully produce results closer to the objectives). Many of the activities presented in "Chalk Talk" will fall into the (prefix-) communicative category.

Principle 3 applies to the efficient teaching of linguistic competence (pronunciation and grammar, principally), though it could be applied also to the teaching of the language for specific communicative functions. "Teaching Miscellany" will also contain ideas for supplying "significant instances of target-language behaviour" (i. e. ideas for presenting and giving practice in new language items, including ideas specifically for teaching pronunciation and grammar). The teaching of language structure may not be enough alone, but there must be interim objectives as well as final ones.

We have suggested that a teacher needs objectives and an available repertoire of materials and activities to achieve those specific objectives much more than he or she needs "a method" (in fact, we suggest that a teacher is better off if he or she is not devoted exclusively to a single,

strict method.) The objectives in one class may be different from those in another; for example, compare the following teaching situations:

1. A group of 60 young adolescents spending 3 hours a week over 3 school years on a general-purpose elementary course.

2. A group of 30 young adult "false beginners" spending 5 hours a week over 2 school years on a course expected to give them basic competence in reading and understanding technical and scientific texts in English.

3. A group of 20 intermediate students with ages ranging from 18 to 50 spending three hours a week on an open-ended general-purpose course.

4. A group of five biochemists with intermediate English spending 10 hours a week for a period of 2 months before taking post-graduate biochemistry courses in the U. S. A.

Not only will objectives vary, but also the features of the teaching situation (the number of students, their age, their educational backgrounds, their study habits, their interests, and perhaps their native language; also the intensiveness of the course, the level, the available materials and aids; and so on). No single method can cope with such a variety of teaching situations; but individual teachers with clearly defined and realistic objectives, with a knowledge and understanding of their students, with a variety of materials and activities to choose from, especially materials and activities which leave different learning options open, can manage pretty well. We hope "Chalk Talk" will help. We hope you will help us by sending your own ideas or discussing your own teaching situations with us.

Little space is left in this edition of "Chalk Talk" to actually produce what we have promised. But here is a little, and there will be more next time.

## I. RIDDLES IN CLASS.

We are not referring again to all those problems of English-language teaching that have yet to be solved, but to Olde English riddles or conundrums.

Level: Intermediate or advanced (i.e. with students who can use the basic structures of English and have a fair range of vocabulary).

Purposes: 1. to have a laugh in English.

2. to get students to listen to, think about, and suggest answers to English riddles.

Procedure:

| | |
|---|---|
| Teacher: | You know what a swallow is, don't you? |
| Student: | Yes, it's a kind of bird. |
| Teacher: | What's it like? / How is it different from a duck? |
| Teacher: | Right. Swallows fly south in winter, don't they?<br>English swallows fly to Africa. Who can tell me why? |
| Student: | Because it's warmer in Africa. |
| Teacher: | That's true. But it isn't the answer. |
| Student: | They'd die if they stayed in England. / etc. |
| Teacher: | All right. Do you give up? |
| Students: | Yes. |
| Teacher: | Well, the answer is that swallows <u>fly</u> south in winter because it's too far for them to <u>walk</u>. |
| Students: | Ha, ha ! / Oh no ! / This is the last class I come to. / Why don't you fly south? / Etc. |

If students complain that you didn't stress "fly" originally, congratulate them on their observation, and explain that you would have given the joke away if you had. If they don't comment, you may pretend you did stress "fly" and show them how "English swallows <u>fly</u> to Africa." You could probably stress the sentence correctly in the first place without giving the riddle away, in fact.

Here is one more:

Riddle: What has four wheels, and flies in summer?

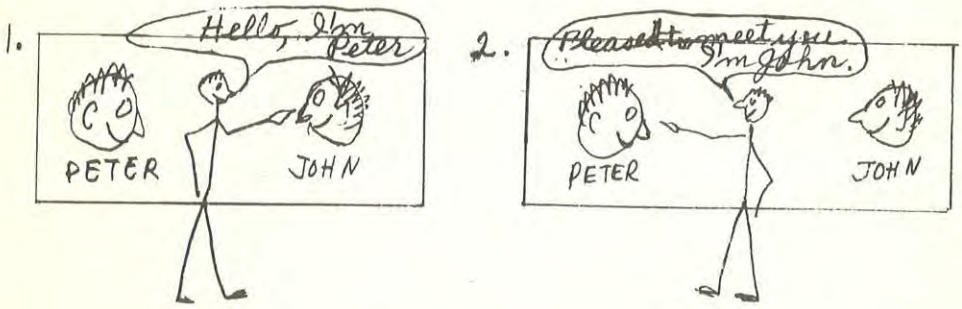
Answer: A garbage truck.

## II. PARTY PRACTICE.

Level: beginners (i.e. students with a fair command of the verb "be" in the present only.)

Purposes:
1. to mix structures in a natural sequence.
2. to create a feeling of real and successful communication.
3. to teach and practice how to introduce oneself in English and how to excuse oneself from a conversation.
4. to give students the chance to use English "communicatively" without the teacher breathing down their throats.

Procedure: the teacher establishes the situation of a party with lots of people who don't know one another (this can be done fast in Spanish and with a picture of a party scene). The teacher then acts out a dialogue between two of the guests at the party, pointing at the face of each speaker ( on the blackboard or in the picture of the party) as appropriate:




The complete dialogue would be something like this:

Peter: Hello. I'm Peter .

John: Pleased to meet you. I'm John .

Peter: Hello, John. Where are you from?

John: Liverpool. And you?

Peter: I'm from London. What's your job?

John: I'm a doctor. Oh, excuse me. That's my wife.

Peter: Sure. Goodbye.

John: Goodbye.

The teacher gets the class to repeat the dialogue, first in half-class chorus (one half as Peter and the other as John), then individually. Finally two, three or four pairs of students act out the dialogue at the front of the class, with names, cities and jobs changed.
The teacher then gives each student a card with a name, a city and a job on it ( ones already known or easy to pronounce when given a model of pronunciation by the teacher).
The teacher then gets the students to stand up and start conversations with their neighbours. The teacher must make sure students break off the conversations as in the model dialogue, circulate and open new conversations.
The teacher can join in as just another guest at the party. Glasses of pop (or, better, gin and tonic) can help.

# R E V I E W S

Nicolas Ferguson and Maire O'Reilly, ENGLISH BY OBJECTIVES, with drawings by Josef Stojan, CEEL (Centre Experimental pour l' Enseignement des Langues,)Geneva: Palais Wilson, 1974.

## TEACHER MANUAL OVERVIEW

English by Objectives is an audio-visual course ambitiously prepared by its authors. It is highly innovative, making use of situational dialogs and story-telling pictures. Methods and strategies, such as programmed exercises, phonetic exercises, listening exercises, writing exercises, and reading skills exercises aim at optimum student involvement.. Mr. Ferguson's system is geared towards small classes (25 maximum) broken up into smaller study groups, thereby making individual responses of pivotal importance.

Mr. Ferguson states that the course is "behaviourally oriented". At the beginning of each lesson, there are listed a number of objectives which describe not what the student will know at the end of the lesson, but what he will be doing when he is demonstrating his achievement. (p. 14) Briefly, these objectives consist in motivating the student to perform within the framework of structured dialogues which run the gamut from relating everyday experiences to giving personal opinions. Students are also required to listen to a dialogue and give a simultaneous commentary on what the two persons are saying. Specially prepared tapes go with the package and much stress is given to competence in proper pronunciation and intonation patterns.

Being eclectic in scope, this work does not minimize the need for developing reading and writing skills. Ferguson states that the student must be able to write what has been learned in the spoken language with no more than 3% incorrect words. (p. 15) Further, the student must read and understand anything that is within the limits of the spoken language, with 5% unknown vocabulary, at a native speed of over 250 words per minute.

The text has been programmed to be complete in itself. The teacher need not search for supplementary aids as there is a plethora of materials already contained within the course proper.

The content of the method has been organized in such a way as to provide a variety of activities and techniques. The material is individualized, thereby allowing the teacher to adapt same to his or (her) personality as well as to that of the students.

Ferguson's basic tenet is that in order to judge whether or not a student

knows something, he must be observed under the following behaviors: doing things, answering questions, speaking. ( p. 67 ) Each unit carries a description of the full objective expected in regard to performance and structure. Evaluating objectives are to be determined by "correctness, fluency, hesitation, pronunciation, spelling and punctuation (in the case of writing), reading speed (in the case of reading)..." ( p. 67 )

The course is outlined into five "progressions". These are syntactic, lexical, phonological, morpho-graphemic and the progression of objectives.

The methodology adhered to by the author is that of the transformationalists. His structural progression is couched in the generative grammar approach.

1. verb forms )
2. auxiliaries ) base rules
3. noun forms )
4. transformations, embeddings and conjunctions. ( p. 62 )

The course has been programmed for a 400 hour time-span. It is divided into 20 units. Each unit is delineated as follows:

| | |
|---|---|
| Base sketch | 5 - 6 hours |
| Cartoon | 1 hour |
| Phonetics Exercise | 1/2 hour |
| Dictation | 2 - 2 1/2 hours |
| Listening Exercise | 2 hours |
| Reading | 1 - 1 1/2 hours |
| Case Study, games and free discussion | 2 - 2 1/2 hours |
| Tests | 1/2 hour |
| Programmed exercises | 1 hour (plus 3 hours outside class) |

( p. 58 )

The Base sketch is usually presented on tape. It is in dialogue form. The vignette is often of a humorous nature. The tape is accompanied by corresponding pictures, which the students later use in order to re-enact the dialogue. The base sketch is used as a repetition drill as well.

Programmed Exercises have been devised so as to require:

active responding
immediate knowledge of results ( p. 28 )

At the onset of each laboratory exercise there is a sentence depicting the situation. Example:

Imagine a conversation about Susan's morning. ( p. 28 )

The exercises have been recorded at a fast clip. Concentrated effort is required if the students are to keep up.

At any rate the stimulus and response form a meaningful whole.

Example:

1. Logical inference:

It's 8: o'clock in the morning.
Where do the Jackson children go?
To school.

2. Question response on information that has been given:

Where does Susan live?
In London.

3. Instruction response:

Ask Susan where she lives.
Where do you live?

The responses do not appear in the student manual. The students are to do them in writing after having done them in the lab.

Each teaching unit has a cartoon or cartoon strip for further development of the spoken form of the language. There are individual instructions for each cartoon.

There is a cartoon or cartoon strip for each teaching unit. These give more practice in the spoken language. Individual instructions are included in each unit.

Each writing exercise is recorded on tape. The exercise is presented in narrative or dialogue form. Key sentences are given. Then the students work with these clues, building their own questions and answers, improving on their pronunciation and intonation patterns, and finally, the tape is played again so that students can take down the dictation and score their mistakes.

The listening exercises are, ofcourse, also recorded. These are usually short narratives giving extra practice on the structures found in the base sketch. A small amount of new vocabulary is introduced at this time. Again, with this type of exercise, much stress is given to repetition drills and to question-answer exercises.

The purpose of the reading exercises is to train the students to read silently. The students are not required to read aloud. In the reading process, the visual and the intellectual aspects have been taken into consideration. ( p. 43 )

The reading texts and exercises are included in the Student Manual.

Students are trained to read for inferences, reasoning cause and effect, anticipating endings, discovering relationships, and so on. The aim is to teach students to read faster, as well as to enhance their comprehension of the printed word.

Case Studies included in each unit are classified into three types:

1. a language game
2. problem solution
3. role playing

The case study is the final development of the teaching unit. The purpose of it is to demonstrate whether the teacher has helped the student to reach his objective. ( p. 51 ) Each case is different and individual instructions are given for each one. It is an exercise in free group discussion. The teacher's participation is held at very low-key. A description of the problem case is included in the Student Manual.

Each unit contains nine control tests. There are three tests for listening comprehension, three tests for the mechanics of writing, and three tests of written expression. ( p. 54 )

Teaching English by Objectives presents a vigorous challenge. The project would probably demand a well-oriented team of instructors and a good stock of present-day electronic equipment in the language department of your school or college. Nevertheless, the text whets the pedagogical imagination and forges deep into the realm of super-motivating vehicles.

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TEACHING ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE.
Nicolas Ferguson ( Foma, Lausanne, 1972. )

Although the author admits certain changes in more recent years in some concepts of teaching English as a foreign language, this general guide for the classroom teacher deserves a prominent place on our reference bookshelves.

Some important basic premises on the teaching and learning of a foreign language were taken into account when presenting suggestions for improvement of classroom teaching. Of utmost importance is the realization that unfortu-

nately the ability to speak and write a language are still held as being synonomous with the ability to teach it even though linguists have long since proven otherwise.

This book aims at introducing teachers to methodologies which carry language teaching beyond individual common-sense principles into the realm of specialized technology designed to meet real needs.

The content includes an analysis of developments in foreign language teaching during the period 1920-1970, some fundamentals in methodology, the English phonetic system and suggestions for correction by means of the Verbo - Tono System, the structure of English and the use of comprehension questions for clarification instead of traditional explanatory methods. Special guidance is given to teachers in preparation of audiovisual lessons. Sound psychological principles dominate in Ferguson's discussion of criteria which should be used in developing reinforcement exercises to obtain maximum effect and efficiency in learning. Naturalness of response is emphasized for all exercises, including language laboratory material. An ample bibliography aids those teachers interested in motivating students at all levels through the use of games, rhymes and songs as well as references for furthering technical linguistic knowledge.

The availability of Ferguson's book is somewhat limited in Mexico but it is distributed in the Mexico City area by Sistemas Educativos, S. A.

Linda Anthony
Instituto Harmon Hall
de México, S. A.

Papers On Language Testing 1967 - 1974. Leslie Palmer and Bernard Spolsky, co-editors, Washington, D. C.: Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, 1975. Pg. v. 228

It is often difficult for the teacher of English as a foreign language in Mexico to obtain access to information about new ideas and trends in our field, and about the results of research going on in other parts of the world, or, indeed, in other parts of the Republic of Mexico. Such is the case with language testing, an area of concern to all EFL teachers because it is such an integral part of teaching. It is one of the areas of our profession which is undergoing a great number of changes and which has been under continual investigation and research in recent years. One way to find out some of the things that have been happening in the area of language testing recently is to read the collection of articles in Papers On Language Testing 1967-1974.

This volume contains twenty-two papers on various considerations and

aspects of language testing, presented or published during the seven-year period between 1967-1974. The majority of the papers in this collection was selected from those published on language testing in the TESOL Quarterly during that period. The other five papers were selected from those presented at the International Seminar on Language Testing, sponsored jointly by TESOL and the Commission on Language Tests and Testing of the International Association of Applied Linguistics, which took place at San Juan, Puerto Rico in May 1973.

Palmer and Spolsky have divided their collection into two parts. Part One, under the heading of "Test Development," includes sections on "Techniques," "Oral Tests," and "Specific Test Instruments." Part Two is entitled "Theory and Interpretation of Language Tests," and here are included sections on "Validation," "Sociolinguistic Aspects," and "Cultural Considerations."

The EFL teacher in this country is more often than not left to his own devices to develop tests for his programs. Even those few published or "standardized" tests which exist in other parts of the world may be either unavailable here, or too expensive to obtain. Therefore, a major concern of the EFL teacher in this country in the area of testing is in the actual development of tests. In Part One of the collection, the reader finds a number of papers dealing with test development, from general approaches to testing to the description of some specific test instruments.

Francis A. Cartier's paper, "Criterion-Referenced Testing of Language Skills," contrasts the criterion-referenced approach to testing with the more traditional norm-referenced approach. In the former, the test is essentially a statement of course objectives ( the criterion ) and the student is expected to perform well on the entire test. In the second case, the test content is merely a sampling of the course content, and the student is rated in relation to how he compares with the class average ( the norm). Cartier describes some of the problems involved in applying criterion-referenced testing to language evaluation, and discusses those aspects of language training for which it has been used successfully. Teachers in schools where the curriculum is determined by the Secretaría de Educación Pública or by the universities with which they are incorporated, as well as teachers who are concerned with the evaluation of achievement as a basis for student promotion, will find the issue of criterion-referenced testing an important and vital one.

Several of the papers in Part One report results of experiments with techniques. David P. Harris, in "Report on an Experimental Group-Administered Memory Span Test," describes an experiment with a controlled "dictation test in which the students were asked to write down each of sixteen sentences of increasing complexity after one hearing. Harris writes that while, as a test, this type of exercise has limitations, it "shows considerable promise" as a classroom tool for the teacher. In a paper by John W. Oller, Jr.

and Nevin Inal entitled " A Cloze Test of English Prepositions, " support is offered for the use of the much-debated cloze technique, a technique whereby words are systematically or randomly deleted from a passage, and the examinee is required to restore the missing words. The authors present evidence to support their view that this technique is useful for measuring skill in the use of English preposition. In another paper, "Assessing Competence in ESL: Reading." John W. Oller, Jr. discusses techniques which measure reading skill, and presents correlations between these and other tests, such as grammar, listening comprehension, and vocabulary. He argues that test instruments should measure more integrative skills, and urges teachers to look into and experiment with devices such as cloze tests and dictations.

A number of papers deal with oral tests. Because such tests are used so widely in Mexico, at all levels and for many purposes (placement, proficiency, progress, achievement, diagnostic, etc.), the reader will find these papers of interest to him. One of these is John A. Upshur's "Objetive Evaluation of Oral Proficiency in the ESOL Classroom." The author strongly supports the desirability of classroom testing by the teacher, even though standardized tests may be available, because the classroom teacher can thus provide the student with the feedback about his performance which is necessary for him to learn. Upshur describes what he believes testing entails, and suggest several ways to improve general oral proficiency tests.

Specific test instruments are described in several papers in this collection. Among them, is E. A. Levenston's culture-loaded oral proficiency test, which seeks to measure the examinee's "ability to function in face-to-face speech situations." This test is described in his article entitled "Aspects of Testing the Oral Proficiency of Adult Immigrants to Canada." Although the author describes an instrument which was created for use in Canada, many of the ideas presented and questions raised are applicable to the EFL teacher in Mexico. In another paper, entitled "Three Functional Tests of Oral Proficiency," Bernard Spolsky, Penny Murphy, Wayne Holm, and Allen Ferrel describe two tests designed for six - and seven-year olds, and one oral placement test for nonliterate adults. These three experimental proficiency tests were designed to classify students by their "ability to operate in a specific sociolinguistic situation with ease or effect," and to be used by relatively untrained examiners. In "Structure Placement Tests for Adults in English-Second-Language Programs in California," Donna Ilyin describes the procedures used and many of the problems encountered in the development of placement tests of English structure for adults. Peter J. M. Groot, in "Validation of Language Tests," describes the development of still another test of communicative competence, in the area of language listening comprehension, which makes use of "authentic, lifelike testing situations." He discusses the problem of validating tests which purport to measure communicative competence.

One of the central issues in language testing today is how to measure

language proficiency. There are two quite different views of language proficiency testing. One view holds that language proficiency should be determined by measuring an individual's knowledge of specific isolated linguistic components (discrete points), that is, by measuring skills and definable phonological, lexical, and syntactic elements separately and one at a time, and then considering the results of these measures to characterize over-all language proficiency. According to the other view, language proficiency is a measure of an individual's ability to communicate, to function appropriately and adequately in defined communicative situation (communicative competency). This debated issue is discussed by several of the writers in Part One of this collection (see above, Oller, Upshur, Levenston, Spolsky, et al, and Groot), and is treated again in Part Two, "Theory and Interpretation of Language Tests," in a paper by Bernard Spolsky entitled "Language Testing -- The Problem of Validation." In this paper, Spolsky divides language tests into two categories: those which are used to control instruction (e.g., achievement tests) and those which are used to make judgements about an examinee's future ( e.g., proficiency tests). Spolsky argues that while discrete-point tests "are obviously of very great value in the control of instruction, whether as diagnostic or achievement tests," an integrative, functional approach to testing is more promising in the measurement of language proficiency. He suggests a strategy for the development of such tests of communicative competence, and discusses the problem of establishing their validity.

Other issues in Part Two of this collection are of interest to the EFL teacher in Mexico. Among them is the question of language attitude in second language learning, and is treated in "Some Issues in the Theory and Measurement of Language Attitude," by Robert L. Cooper and Joshua A. Fishman. In T. H. Plaister's paper on "Testing Aural Comprehension: A Culture Fair Approach." the problem of the influence of culture on test results where pictures are used is discussed, and a test is described which attempts to reduce such picture-reading cultural interference.

The value of this collection of papers lies not only in giving the reader a good idea of recent research and trends in language testing, but in suggesting ideas for further research. Hopefully, Papers On Language Testing 1967 - 1974 will encourage the EFL teacher in Mexico to try out his own ideas on testing, to investigate areas of interest and question, and to report his findings to all of us.

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WORK AND LEISURE: Composition Practice for Proficiency, Peterson, Botton, Walker and Hagens (London, England, Heinemann Educational Books Ltd., 1972. )

WORK AND LEISURE is the first of two books for advanced students aimed at stimulating interest in British and American writing. The selections, which are ideally short for work within the normal one or one and a half hour class, were taken from a wide variety of sources such as journals, magazines, novels and advertisements so as to familiarize students with multiple writing styles.

Carefully graded, the selections become progressively more difficult, leading on to the second book Our Environment.

Of special interest to the classroom teacher is the development of comprehension questions, vocabulary exercises and suggestions for discussion and composition activities related to each unit. Tests for checking reading comprehension with a special emphasis on interpreting vocabulary from context facilitate the teacher's preparation.

Student response to the content of the book is excellent due to a realistic treatment of universal social problems, especially those related to work endeavors and employment of leisure time. The text is well suited to adolescent and adult users.

Linda Anthony

Ann Baker, English to Get on with: A Situational, Structured Approach to Phrasal/Prepositional Verbs. (New York: Heinemann, 1976.)

To teachers who often feel at a loss when dealing with multi-word verbs in English, Ann Baker's English to Get on with offers a course that is certainly worth trying. The idea behind this book is that these verbs deserve separate handling. Intended for "mature" intermediate students from secondary school through adult level, it presents the most common phrasal, prepositional and phrasal-prepositional verbs based on go, put, make, come, call, run, turn, break, get, look, and take. The course can easily be completed in a semester of daily classes by teaching one unit per week while the regular textbook is being covered, or it could be extended over a year's time. The book contains thirteen units, as well as review sections in the middle and at the end. Each unit covers from eight to ten multi-word verbs and contains a reading passage, exercises and tests.

These verbs are presented in the context of a single serial story which

runs through all thirteen units. On the one hand, this feature compares very favorably with such texts as Dixson's Essential Idioms in English, which simply offers a number of (usually) unconnected example sentences for each item presented. On the other hand, one wonders if a single story line throughout the course would not become boring to student and teacher alike. Whether or not this is so, the reading passages themselves are sometimes forced and repetitious, as in the following example from Unit Two:

> The party was very successful. George went in for hunting, and later in the evening he had a shooting competition for his guests. Everyone except Fred went in for it. Monica had never used a gun before, but she hoped that she would win a prize. She was very excited about it and she shouted so loudly that one of George's dogs went for her. It didn't bite her, but she cried a lot and asked Fred to take her home.

Another question concerning the text is if multi-word verbs would really occur so frequently in formal prose. If this is not the case-- and I believe that it is not -- then we must ask ourselves why we should, at this level, furnish students with prose that is atypical of what they will soon be required to read in or out of school.

A point very much in favor of the book is its structured presentation. Not only is there a theme-verb (go, put, make, etc.) for each unit, but the multi-word verbs are usually grouped according to pattern (phrasal, prepositional, etc.). The different patterns are handled separately in the initial units before such problems as passivization and object pronoun variations are approached. Synthesis of patterns comes in the test sections of each unit and in the final review unit.

The way in which the material is exploited also reflects close attention to structuring. The exercises, which are preceded by a repetition drill intended to familiarize the student with the stress patterns involved, are grouped according to the class of multi-word verb to be practiced. They are varied in type, consisting of different sorts of substitution drills, tables for sentence formation, completion exercises and other frames. If a multi-word verb appears in more than one meaning ( as is the case of run into and run down, for instance), its different meanings are exploited separately in the exercise section. All of this ensures maximum avoidance of the confusions which so often arise in teaching these verb forms, and it discourages the teacher from requiring students to make up their own examples -- an activity which should be postponed to a far more advanced level.

Another very positive feature of the book is that it gives the student

an introductory unit in which he is enabled to learn the basic theory of multi-word verbs in English. After years of grappling with these structures in the classroom, I am convinced that it is a virtual impossibility to teach them in any systematic and efficient way unless the student is provided with some theoretical orientation.

One word of caution must be offered to teachers using Ann Baker's book in this hemisphere, especially if English is not their native tongue. When multi-word verbs are presented to the student in a strictly British context, he will often find them to be a source of confusion if he goes to the United States. This is due to the discrepancies in meaning and usage between British and American multi-word verbs, which become apparent even when we consider the title of the book. An American would probably call it "English to get along with" since the meaning of the phrasal-prepositional verb here is obviously to "succeed" rather than to "proceed"-- "to get on with" normally being restricted to the latter meaning in American English. From a random search, I was able to find such divergences as the following in one unit alone: "put up the price of butter" (Am.: "raise the price of butter"); "they're putting back the clock" (Am.: "they're setting /turning back the clock"); "put on the light" (Am.: "turn on the light"). The book is, of course, replete with other Britishisms such as "in hospital" for "in the hospital", "round" for "around","super" for "great/terrific", and "doing the washing-up" for "washing the dishes".

All in all, I believe the book is sound in its fundamental principle that multi-word verbs require special treatment and material. If I were to attempt integrating it into a regular intermediate-level course, I would also avoid using it as a reading text. With these reservations, it should prove very helpful as a supplement to a general English course.

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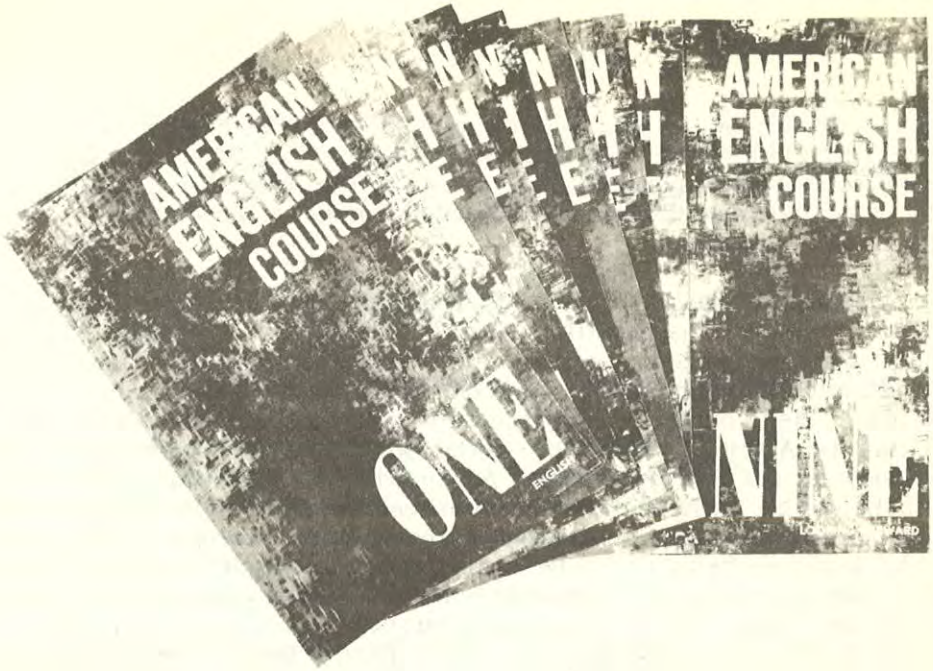


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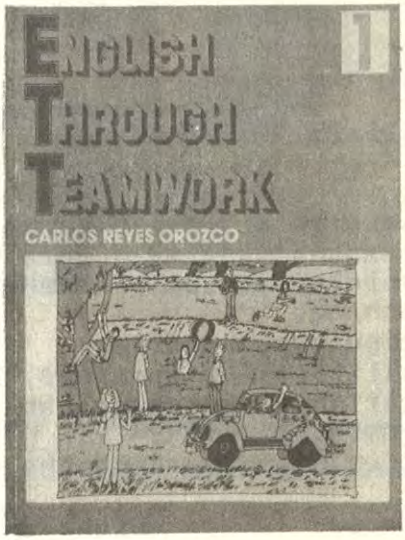


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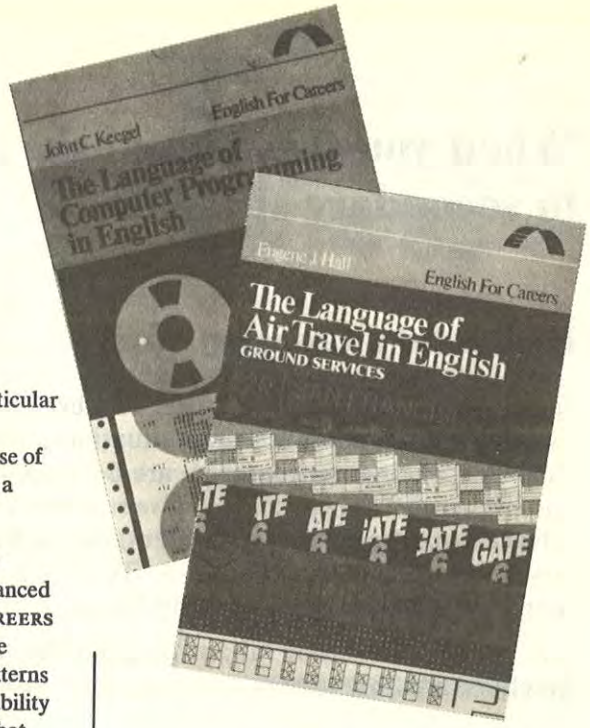


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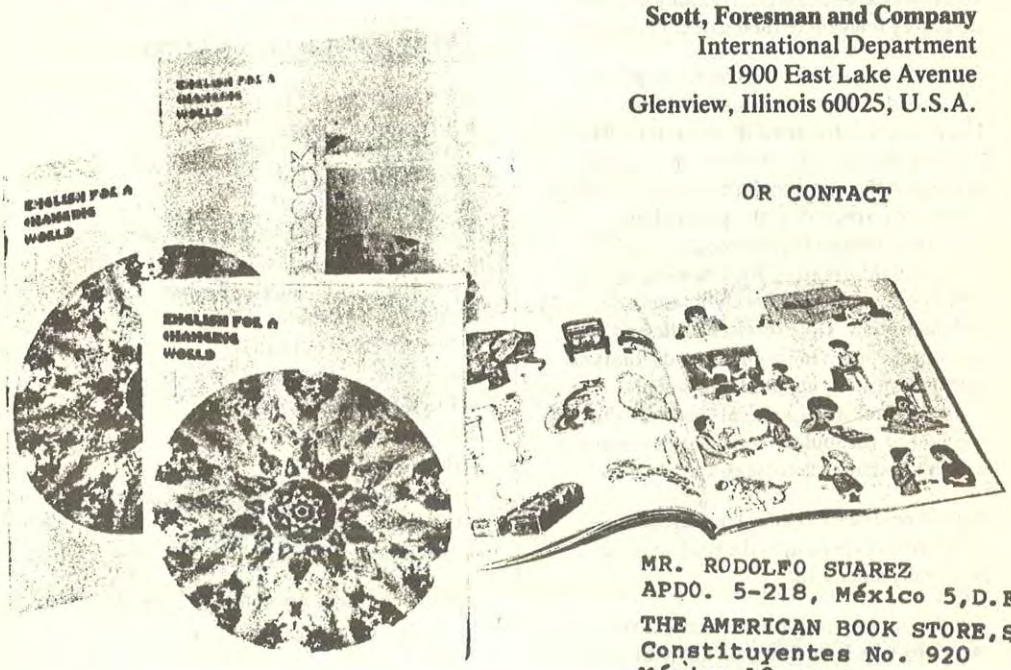

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