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LANGUAGE TEACHING AND CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION

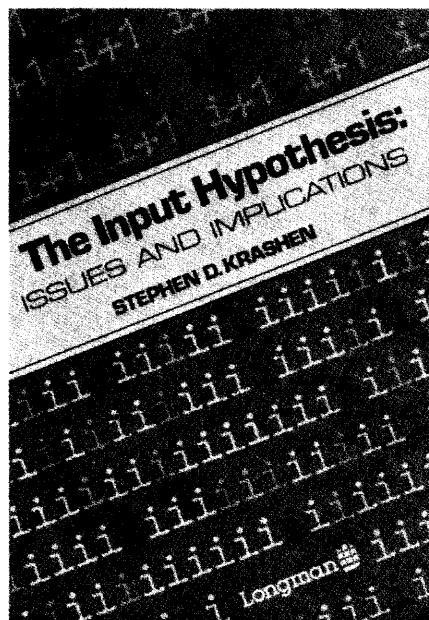


THE LANGUAGE INSTITUTE OF JAPAN

The Input Hypothesis:

ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

STEPHEN D. KRASHEN



In this book Stephen Krashen explains the Input Hypothesis, which is the central part of his well-known theory of second-language acquisition. His theory claims that we acquire language in an amazingly simple way — when we understand messages. The five messages which are basic to the theory include the Acquisition/Learning Hypothesis, the Natural Order Hypothesis, the Monitor Hypothesis, the Affective Filter Hypothesis, and the Input Hypothesis.

The book's three chapters review the evidence that supports the Input Hypothesis, put forward current questions and challenges and, after assessing its implications, sketch some applications of the Input Hypothesis to a variety of teaching situations.

The Input Hypothesis: Issues and Implications will be of interest to researchers and teachers and to all those who study the current trends in thinking about language learning acquisition.

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Volume XIII, Number 1, Fall/Winter 1986

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ABOUT *CROSS CURRENTS*

Cross Currents is a biannual journal published by the Language Institute of Japan in an effort to contribute to an interdisciplinary exchange of ideas within the areas of communication, language skills acquisition and instruction, and cross-cultural training and learning. We are especially interested in articles on: 1) Language teaching and learning, especially regarding English as a Second/Foreign Language and English as an International Language; 2) Language teaching and learning as they apply to the situation in Japan; and 3) Cross-cultural communication issues. We also welcome reviews of recently published books in these areas.

Cross Currents was first published in 1972 with an emphasis on Japan and Japanese students of English. In order to serve the needs of our growing international readership better, we strive to publish articles concerned with teaching methodologies, techniques, and general issues which are multicultural rather than culture-specific. While articles demonstrating solid and thoughtful research are greatly appreciated, always kept in mind is the necessity for readability and practicality for our readers, the classroom teachers. We make every effort to balance abstract and theoretical articles with articles directly applicable to the classroom. Short practical articles are featured in our Bright Ideas section.

* * *

All articles submitted for consideration should be typed, double-spaced, and in duplicate, with references placed in the body of the text in parentheses with the author's last name, date of the work cited, and page number. Footnotes on substantive matters should appear at the bottom of the page on which the footnote occurs. Please include: 1) a paragraph precis of the article, 2) a short biographical sketch, and 3) a bibliography which should conform with *TESOL Quarterly* style. Manuscripts should be 5-20 pages in length. Authors of articles accepted for publication will receive twenty reprints.

Please direct all manuscript correspondence to:

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Summaries of the Articles

A Review of Cognitive Styles of Learning and Their Applications in TESOL

Cathy Duppenthaler

Cognitive style is a term used to describe differences in the way in which we perceive, analyze, and recall experiences. Within this theoretical framework, the five best researched cognitive styles include skeletonization and embroidery, tolerance and intolerance of ambiguity, broad and narrow category width, reflectivity and impulsivity, and field dependence and independence. A familiarity with these five styles will give teachers more insight into students' behavior and provide for more effective teaching strategies in the classroom.

The Progressive Form: Grammar in ESL Learning

Roger J. Davies

The progressive form in English is both more complicated and more useful than we may be leading our students to believe. Several approaches to teaching the progressive are examined and the author concludes that too often students learn only that the progressive is used to express an activity in progress at the moment of speaking. Several other instances of the progressive form in English are presented and the notion of "imperfectivity" is used to link these together. The author concludes that these various uses of the progressive can be taught if the notion of imperfectivity is presented to the students.

Guidelines for Teaching the English Article System

Seth Lindstromberg

Native speakers of languages which have no formal article system often have difficulty learning to use English articles correctly. In this article, the author suggests that one major reason for the persistence of this problem is that teachers use incomprehensible terminology in describing the use of articles. The author argues

that articles can and should be taught, and offers a flow chart of article-use to assist lesson planning. This flow chart analyzes the system according to speech act and presupposition, and is accompanied by a sample exercise.

Using Rock and Popular Music in EFL

N. McBeath

It is no secret that rock and popular music from English-speaking countries have become increasingly popular in the last twenty years among school-age EFL students. With advances in electronics and worldwide tape distribution systems, this music is more accessible than ever. The author argues that rock and popular music can be used in the EFL classroom to stimulate interest among students and to teach vocabulary, idioms, and grammatical patterns. Suggestions are offered for using this music in the classroom.

Bright Ideas

Maintaining Conversations with Open Questions

Marsha Chan and Kathryn Underdal

EFL/ESL students often have difficulty maintaining conversations with native speakers. When conversing, their questions can seem more like an interrogation than a conversation. One reason for this might be inappropriate questioning strategies. Learning to ask "open questions" helps them actively involve their conversation partner. In this Bright Idea, the authors present a definition of open questions, their function in a conversation, and practical suggestions and exercises for teaching students to identify and use them.

Sports Special

Putting English on the Ball: A Collection of Sports-Related EFL/ESL Exercises

Using sports can enhance lessons by making them more interesting to students. In this special section, *Cross Currents* is happy to present a series of sporting EFL/ESL exercises.

Teaching Language through Sports

Keith Maurice

Language learners generally appreciate and respond well to an environment that stimulates and challenges but which is at the same time non-threatening. Introducing friendly competition into the classroom through sports is one way to achieve this goal. The sporting element is used directly in "The Comparisons Tournament" and "Communication Baseball," two games which combine a language focus with the fun of athletic contests. The first game uses individual competition to focus on comparing and prediction. The second game uses team competition for listening comprehension and quick response activities.

Conversational Sports

Beverley Curran and Steve Mierzejewski

The element of playful competition is incorporated into the language learning process in these sporting events which aim at building fluency and accuracy in a relaxed atmosphere. "Conversational Volleyball" was devised for students with good English ability who are reluctant to use this ability in group settings. "Conversational Tennis" helps students improve their fluency through one-on-one conversations and also increases their awareness of conversational strategies. Here are also some suggestions for using "Communication Baseball" (as described by Keith Maurice) with certain variations to encourage accuracy in basic and lower intermediate students.

Rod Baseball

Francis Bailey and Paul Lehnert

In this last activity, the focus is switched from conversation and competition to grammar. Cuisinaire rods are used to set up a baseball diamond and to represent players. Various situations are then played out giving the students an opportunity to use modals of responsibility (could, must, should, might) and conditionals.

ABOUT THIS ISSUE

This year, we here at *Cross Currents* have noticed a definite increase in the number of subscribers from outside Japan and the United States. *Cross Currents* is being read in teacher training programs, English language institutes, and libraries in Southeast Asia, Africa, the Middle East, Europe, Australia, Latin America and Canada. We would like to welcome our new readers and renew our commitment to serving the international "community" of classroom language teachers.

A special constituency of regular readers of and contributors to *Cross Currents* is individual teachers who have no community of teachers near them with whom to share ideas about language teaching and cross-cultural communication. Teachers in this situation who contribute to *Cross Currents* often have no one to critique their ideas and manuscripts before sending them on to us. Some contributors even have problems finding access to a typewriter to type their manuscripts. The editorial board of *Cross Currents* is aware of the special problems faced by such contributors. Some of the articles in this issue have been written by teachers in such circumstances. We would like to thank them for their hard work and patience in answering our questions and making revisions as we prepared their manuscripts for publication. We would also like to encourage others who are teaching languages or representing a foreign culture without a community of colleagues nearby to contribute their ideas to *Cross Currents*. By hearing from you we can better serve our readers.

On that note, we would like to announce a Call for Papers for our next issue. We are preparing a collection of short two-to-three page sketches concerning teaching and/or cross-cultural experiences of teachers who have worked or are working in developing countries. We have already received several interesting sketches and are hoping to hear from those of you who have your own stories to tell. October 15, 1986 is the deadline for submission of manuscripts.

Our lead article this issue, "A Review of Cognitive Styles of Learning and Their Applications in TESOL," by Cathy Duppenthaler will be of special interest to those teachers who are interested in individualizing their teaching strategies to match students' learn-

ing styles. Recent research in the area of perception and learning has shown that people perceive and therefore understand and learn differently. Duppenenthaler outlines the major cognitive styles of learning and suggests that a teaching methodology is more than just a philosophy of teaching—it must also include an understanding of the different learning processes.

This issue also includes two articles which discuss points in English grammar which are often very frustrating to try to teach: the many meanings of the progressive form and the article system. Roger J. Davies in, “The Progressive Form: Grammar in ESL Learning,” argues that the progressive is a very misunderstood tense both among teachers and students. Seth Lindstromberg in, “Guidelines for Teaching the English Article System,” laments that rather than teaching the system most teachers neglect it and hope that the students will pick it up on their own (something that rarely happens). Interestingly, both authors argue that only by breaking these grammatical systems down and presenting them within a situational syllabus whereby attention is paid to meaning rather than form can we effectively teach them. Suggestions for developing lessons are offered in both articles.

In “Using Rock and Popular Music in EFL,” Flight Lieutenant N. McBeath argues that using current songs can be a more successful way to teach vocabulary, idioms, and grammar than using outdated folk songs or specially prepared songs which accompany ESL/EFL texts. Interest is easy to maintain because of the high level of exposure most ESL/EFL students have to such songs via radio and internationally distributed videos, movies, records, and cassettes. McBeath offers some suggestions for using this music in the classroom.

Using games to increase student interest in learning languages has received quite a lot of attention recently in ESL/EFL literature. We are happy to include in our Bright Ideas section a collection of three short practical articles with the theme of sporting games: “Teaching Languages through Sports,” by Keith Maurice; “Conversational Sports,” by Beverley Curran and Steve Mierzejewski; and “Rod Baseball,” by Francis Bailey and Paul Lehnert. Also included in this section is a series of lesson plans, contributed by Marsha Chan and Kathryn Underdal, aimed at teaching ESL/EFL students the art of “Maintaining Conversations with Open Questions.”

We have two book reviews this issue. Steve Mierzejewski reviews Stephen Krashen's controversial book, *The Input Hypothesis: Issues and Implications*, and Michael Lazarin looks at the text, *Basics in Listening*, by Hiroshi Asano, Munetsugu Uruno, and Michael Rost.

This issue will be the last for our Consulting Editor, Laura A. Mayer. There have been few sole editors of *Cross Currents* in its thirteen-year history, due mostly to the fact that this position is in addition to regular teaching duties here at the Language Institute of Japan. We would like to take this opportunity to thank Laura for the many hours she dedicated to the journal as sole editor for three issues and for all the help she has given us as consulting editor on this issue. Laura's dedication to *Cross Currents* has been an inspiration to all of us.

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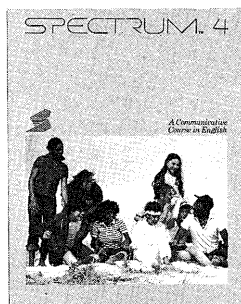
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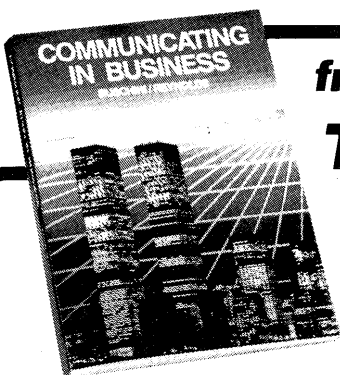
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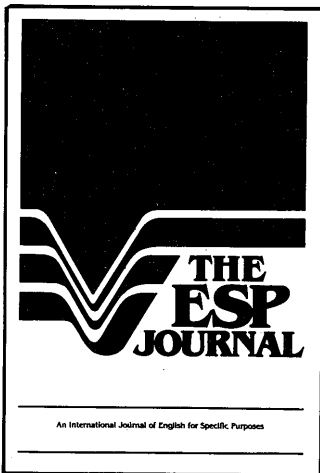
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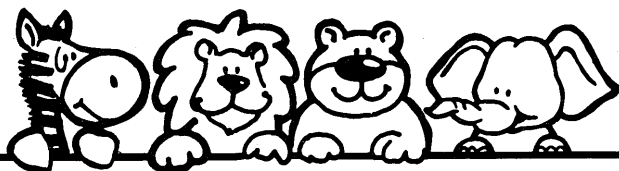
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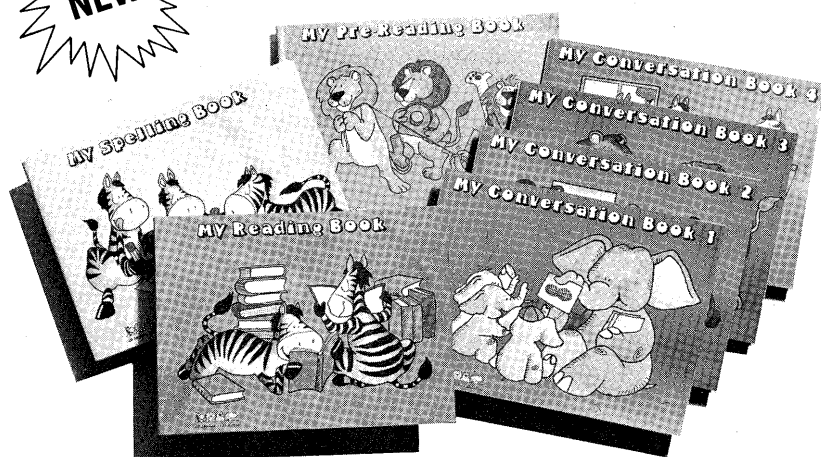
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A Review of Cognitive Styles of Learning and Their Applications in TESOL

Cathy Duppenthaler

In the past 50 years, the TESOL world has been swept with one method after another, from the audio-lingual method to the natural approach. Despite a wealth of research, the superiority of any one method has yet to be established. Bandwagons and gurus have flourished and declined, and teachers are still looking for a method which will work consistently in the classroom.

Perhaps teachers and researchers alike have been approaching language learning from the wrong direction. It is quite possible that the place to start looking for more effective teaching strategies is not with a particular method, but with the learners themselves and the way they perceive and organize their world.

Cognitive style is a term used to describe individual differences in perception. The most comprehensive definition of cognitive style is given by Hansen and Stansfield: "Cognitive style is a psychological term used to describe individual differences in the way one habitually tends to perceive, organize, analyze, or recall information and experience" (1981:350). These differences, in turn, influence behavior. Some educators and researchers, Frank Smith among them, would go a step further and claim, "Cognitive structure is not just a part of the way we interact with the world, it is the basis of all our interaction" (1975:195). Two things must be remembered. First, these styles are generally stable over time in adults. Second, in spite of this stability, a single individual may approach any mental task in a variety of ways, according to the

Cathy Duppenthaler graduated from Humboldt State University with a B.A. in Sociology and received her M.Ed. from Temple University Japan. She has been teaching EFL in Japan for more than 10 years and is currently teaching at Seibo Girls' High School and at Baika Women's College.

type of processing required for a particular task. This flexibility seems to be important. Brown says, "...the person who is more intelligent and more successful in learning is the person who is 'bi-cognitive'—one who can manipulate both ends of the cognitive style continuum" (1980:90).

It is important for ESL/EFL teachers to realize that learners, even those in the same classroom, differ widely in their perception of what occurs in that environment. Even those with the same perceptual style may differ in the manner in which this intake is organized and recalled. Having realized this, the need to vary one's teaching approach to cater to a wide variety of perceptual styles is obvious. Less obvious, but just as important, is the idea that the means teachers now use to evaluate students may favor one cognitive style over another. In fact, some teachers may, without realizing it, actually place more emphasis on cognitive or interactive style than on language ability.

Ausubel (1968:171) identified eighteen different cognitive styles. Other writers (Brown 1980, and McDonough 1981) feel that this figure is misleadingly high, and that many researchers have used different names for similar styles. This paper will review the five most-researched styles:

1. skeletonization and embroidery
2. tolerance and intolerance of ambiguity
3. broad and narrow category width
4. reflectivity and impulsivity
5. field independence and dependence

The first of these, skeletonization and embroidery, is the least researched of the five. It refers to the tendency to either minimize or maximize in the oral or written recall of cognitive material. Brown comments that, when recalling a narrative,

Skeletonizing involves pruning out some particulars by retaining a substantive core of general facts which subsume the details; embroidering, on the other hand, involves 'importing,' or adding some material in order to retain original details that otherwise might have been forgotten. (1980:97)

The skeletonizer is concise, the embroiderer wordy. In the classroom the embroiderer would take more frequent and longer turns. As ESL/EFL teachers, we are constantly encouraging our students

to say more and speak more frequently. The tendency is to give the highest grade to the student who speaks the most. The danger here is that it is not language ability but cognitive style that we are rewarding. If so, we are inadvertently penalizing students who are in fact good communicators—students who can organize, summarize, and communicate efficiently—but do not speak out frequently or at great length in the classroom. In the process, we are also reinforcing unnaturally verbose oral behavior.

The student who maintains a low profile in the classroom is not always a highly proficient skeletonizer, of course. He might be someone with low proficiency. The teacher's duty is to provide ample opportunity for small group and pair work (but not with an embroiderer) so that the student will have more occasions to speak out. Teachers must also refine their own listening skills. Close observation not of the frequency of communication, but of its quality, will enable the teacher to discriminate between students who say what is sufficient and then stop speaking, and those who lack the proficiency to communicate what needs to be said. Chances are that the student who is wordy in his native language will carry this behavior over into the second language. Discrepancies between first language behavior and second language behavior might also help the teacher discriminate between low proficiency and skeletonization.

A more serious problem faces teachers who must evaluate oral proficiency for placement purposes. They must make decisions based on minimal contact with the student. It is here where the skeletonizer is most apt to be mislabeled. Many placement tests require that a subject retell a previously heard/read story. Such tests, Brown feels, could be "biased toward embroiderers, who appear proficient if only because of the sheer quantity of output" (1980:97). Evaluators should be careful to try to differentiate between true proficiency and the greater (natural) output of embroiderers who may be bringing in material extraneous to the original passage. One way to adjust for this bias is to use a checklist to evaluate the quality of the responses on the basis of whether or not they were complete (touched on the main points of the original story) and accurate (both factually and grammatically). The interviewer might also want to set a time limit to "force" the wordy student to restrict himself to what is necessary.

The second cognitive style, tolerance and intolerance of ambiguity, is defined by Brown as the willingness to "tolerate ideas and propositions that run counter to your own belief system or structure of knowledge" (1980:94). The tolerant person is open-minded and accepting, while the intolerant person is less willing to accept unfamiliar or ambiguous ideas and tends to compartmentalize what is perceived. The intolerant learner would reject items that did not fit neatly into existing compartments, while the tolerant learner would reserve judgement on items that could not be classified. Support for a relationship between this cognitive style and language proficiency comes from the Toronto Good Language Learner Study (Naiman, Frolich and Stern 1975) which found that tolerance of ambiguity was positively related to French (second) language ability among Anglophone students of French in Canada.

Tolerant learners would seem to have an advantage any time new information is introduced into the classroom or when students are required to interpret or interact with the unknown. One would assume that these learners would have the advantage in second language learning where they are exposed to different (and often irregular) syntax, phonology, and lexicon, to say nothing of the strong influence of the foreign culture on the language under study. Intolerant students would be less able to deal with unknowns, and would probably be more dictionary dependent. Specifically, tolerant EFL/ESL learners would seem to do better in situations where they are asked to infer the meanings of new words from the context, an ability which Rubin (1975:41) cites as one of the seven characteristics of a good language learner, and Grellet (1981:4), in a list taken from John Munby's *Communicative Syllabus Design*, calls one of the most important skills in reading. If guessing is good, then the intolerant student must be encouraged to guess, but special care must be taken to ensure that reading passages are redundant enough to ensure that the guesser has a high probability of being correct. Incorrect guesses will simply serve to reinforce intolerant behavior.

The third cognitive style concerns broad and narrow category width.

Broad categorizers tend to accept a wide range of items or instances as belonging to a category, thus risking the inclusion of items that do not really fit the category and narrow categorizers

tend to accept a much more restricted range, thus risking the exclusion of items that do in fact fit the category.

(van Els et al. 1984:114)

Category width is measured by a test known as Pettigrew's Width Scale (Pettigrew 1958) which contains questions such as the following:

It has been found that the average height of a redwood tree in a certain forest is 20 meters. What do you think is the height of the tallest redwood? The shortest redwood?

Broad categorizers would give answers indicating a wider range, supplying a maximum of 30 meters and a minimum of 10 as opposed to the narrow categorizers' answers of 22 and 18, respectively. What does this mean to the language learner? A broad categorizer might tend to overgeneralize, applying -s endings to all nouns to form the plural, for example, or -ed endings to all verbs to form the past tense. We see some of this happening in young English first-language learners who go through a stage in which irregular past tense verbs are formed correctly. But these forms are soon replaced by non-standard verbs formed from regular part formation rules (i.e., "went" is replaced by "goed"). That stage is followed by one in which the past formation rules, both regular and irregular, are applied in a more conventional manner: "Goed" is discarded and "went" once again returns to use.

Narrow categorizers, on the other hand, go too far in the other direction, creating rules for each separate case. This would seem to handicap them in storing and recalling information. The ability to apply rules in unfamiliar situations functions as an aid to understanding. Not seeing this phenomenon as rule-governed would limit the learner to words for which he has memorized each part of speech.

For example, the optimal categorizer (OC) is able to recognize within unfamiliar words certain characteristics which help him to understand their meaning. That is, an OC learner hearing the Japanese word *yonde* for the first time, would be able to recognize it as belonging to the category of -*mu* verbs by virtue of the fact that it ended in -*nde*. From this, he would be able to recognize the dictionary form as *yomu* and be capable of looking up the meaning for himself. The narrow, or case-by-case categorizer, would only recognize this word if he had previously learned that it was the command form for *yomu*.

The optimal learning style might be a balance between both categorizing styles. It is now thought that second/foreign language learning is a feedback process of hypothesis making, testing, and revising. The learner must be willing to apply and test the limits of the rules he has hypothesized. On the other hand, it could also be argued that all language learners do this, and that hypothesis testing is a process which is part and parcel of language learning, and is independent of individual differences in category width which would in and of themselves not influence the efficiency of the process. Indeed, Brown mentions the Toronto study (Naiman, Frolich, and Stern 1975) which "examined category width and found virtually no statistical support for a relationship between this style and success in French as a second language" (1980:96).

The fourth cognitive style is reflectivity-impulsivity. Messer suggests the following definition:

Reflectivity-impulsivity describes the tendency to reflect on the validity of problem-solving under a very special condition, namely, when several possible alternatives are available and there is some uncertainty over which one is the most appropriate. Tasks used to measure reflection-impulsivity usually present the subject with several highly plausible alternatives, only one of which is correct.
(1976:1026)

According to these researchers, reflectives are significantly more field dependent (see below) than impulsives. This trait is usually measured by the Matching Familiar Figures Test (MFFT; Kagan et al. 1964), which asks the testee to choose from among several similar figures the one that most closely resembles a model figure shown in isolation. Those who have a shorter response time and make more than the average number of errors are designated as impulsives, those who are slower but more accurate as reflectives. It would seem that the latter are more concerned with the quality of their responses, reluctant to make a response unless they can be sure of its accuracy. These learners take the time to work out all the different parts of a problem and gather additional information before committing themselves, while the impulsives either seem to feel they are capable of making a response based on less information or are less worried about making mistakes.

Finally, research by Doron (1973) has shown that reflective adult second language readers are slower but more accurate than

their impulsive counterparts. This same behavior is also seen in young readers in their native language: Kagan's research (1966) on first grade first language readers shows that even at this age reflective readers read more slowly but make fewer errors than impulsives.

Teachers should be aware that these two different cognitive styles require different responses on their part. The natural tendency in the classroom is to call on the first student who raises his hand, and most teachers value quick responses over slower ones. However, a reflective learner must, lest he be frustrated, be allowed more time to answer. If language is an ongoing hypothesis testing process, the reflective learner must be given a longer time in which to test the validity of his hypothesis. An impulsive would be likely to answer more quickly, but his correct response would be ambiguous: Is it to be interpreted as a lucky guess based on an incorrect hypothesis or as a correct response based on an accurate hypothesis? As with embroiderers and skeletonizers, further observation on the part of the teacher is necessary in this case to ascertain whether the impulsive student is consistently providing correct answers.

Impulsive students who are consistently wrong can be helped by asking them to verbalize the mental processes they go through in reaching their answers. This should enable the teacher to slow them down and pinpoint the cause of the errors.

The fifth and best-researched cognitive style is field independence and dependence.

Field independent style [is] the ability to perceive a particular, relevant item or factor in a 'field' of distracting items....Field dependence is, conversely, the tendency to be 'dependent' on the total field such that the parts embedded within the field are not easily perceived, though that field is perceived more clearly as a unified whole.
(Brown 1980:90)

Brown's description of how this ability is measured will help to clarify this definition. The test most often used is the Embedded Figures Test which asks the testee to look at a single figure and then identify it when it is presented again, embedded within a complex background. In other words, one is presented with a picture of the proverbial forest and is classified according to whether one perceives the forest as a whole or as being composed

of discrete trees, one of which he has been asked to isolate. A similar test is given to the blind. In this case, the testee is asked to touch a pattern of raised bumps and then to identify it when it is presented again as part of a larger pattern. It is felt that this restructuring skill carries over into any cognitive operation with verbal or symbolic material.

As this test implies, field independent (FI) people are more analytical than global in their perceptions. They rely more on internal rather than external frames of reference. The literature suggests that these learners are better able to concentrate and to screen out interference from the environment. They are generally more independent, competitive, and self-confident. On the other hand, field dependent (FD) people perceive globally, tend to be more social, outgoing, emphatic, and perceptive, and tend to "derive their self-identity from those around them" (Brown 1980: 91). The former show a strong "impersonal orientation," while the latter show a strong "social orientation" (Witkin et al. 1977:11-13). Other writers describe FI people as individualistic and "less aware of the things by which others are moved" (van Els et al. 1984:113). They seem to derive their identity from internal standards, while FD people derive theirs from external sources such as the people around them.

Stansfield and Hansen comment:

Theoretically, field dependence nurtures greater cognitive restructuring ability on various perceptual and intellectual tasks....Psychologists believe that FD individuals develop a greater degree of connection between the self and external stimuli than do FI individuals...[who] have a greater boundary between themselves and the world.
(1983:263)

Restructuring can be done in several ways such as viewing parts of a field as distinct from the background, structuring a field which lacks structure, or restructuring a previously structured field. This cognitive restructuring ability has great implications for the classroom. One would expect an FI learner to be better at isolating important linguistic items and to be able to isolate and restructure material presented without a definite or (as in the case of a foreign language) familiar structure. An FI L2 learner, for example, should find it easy to recognize a clause or phrase in a given context, to isolate it, and to use it again in other contexts.

An FI learner would use the details of the foreign language to decode its meaning. He would be able to decide whether a name he had never heard before belonged to a man or a woman by listening carefully to the sex of the following pronoun, as in the passage, "Kelly entered the room quickly, hoping that she hadn't been seen." The FD learner, one assumes, does not have this option.

Following closely from this, Brown (1980:91-2) has suggested two conflicting hypotheses connecting this cognitive style with L2 learning. The first is that the FI person would be a better language learner because he is able to focus on relevant variables in a language exchange. Van Els cites the Toronto study of the "good language learner" (Naiman et al. 1978) in support of Brown's hypothesis. In the Toronto study involving Anglophone learners of French, "field independence was found to correlate positively and significantly with L2 learning success in the classroom, specifically with better performance on imitation and listening comprehension tasks" (1985:113-4). In addition, van Els mentions other studies (Tucker et al. 1976, Genesee and Hamayan 1980, Hansen and Stansfield 1981), in which "field independence was found to correlate positively with L2 learning success in the classroom" (1985:113-4).

Brown's second hypothesis is that the FD person would be a better language learner because he is more socially oriented. Brown's own research on adult ESL learners in the United States shows a high correlation between language proficiency and field dependence. Brown overcomes the apparent contradiction between his two hypotheses by concluding that FI learners would do better in a formal classroom setting while FD learners would do better in a natural setting. Krashen might make the distinction that FI individuals would 'learn,' while FD individuals would 'acquire'. Support for this comes from studies which show that children are more field dependent than adults. Krashen feels that children use more acquisition strategies, while adults, with their (field independent) attention to forms, use more monitoring strategies.

One important warning from Stansfield and Hansen concerns cloze testing. In their research on the relationship between FI and language proficiency among college students of Spanish as a Second Language, they found a very high correlation between FI and cloze test scores. Among students who had similar test scores in linguistic, communicative, and integrative competence, in other words, similar

language abilities, the FI students had much higher scores on the cloze tests. They warn that "such measures [cloze tests] may call forth cognitive restructuring abilities not readily available to more FD individuals. In turn, it implies the need to use caution when employing or interpreting cloze tests for placement or achievement purposes" (1983:29).

On the other hand, FD students, according to research in 1974 by Krashen, Seliger, and Hartnett, (Hartnett 1985), do much better in inductive learning situations, as opposed to methods which teach grammar deductively through memorization of rules and their exceptions.

In conclusion, all these cognitive styles are in operation in the classroom, and they determine to a large degree what the student learns and how his performance is perceived and evaluated by the teacher. The ESL/EFL teacher must be careful not to confuse language proficiency, or the lack of it, with cognitive style. The lower output of skeletonizers should not be confused with low proficiency, to cite one example. In addition, classroom exercises should be designed to encourage more tolerance on the part of the intolerant learner and structured so that there is a high probability of successful guessing. Teachers must also be sure that the reflective learner is allowed a longer response time. Teaching approach must be varied enough to appeal to field independent as well as field dependent learners.

We must, as good teachers have instinctively done, approach the teaching/learning acts from all possible sides in order to accommodate all possible learning styles. We must stop hopping from one method to another in the search for the ultimate teaching strategy and learn more about our students' learning strategies.

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The Progressive Form: Grammar in ESL Learning

Roger J. Davies

Classroom and textbook presentation of the progressive may well be responsible for the common assumption that it is a relatively insignificant part of English grammar. Nothing could be further from the truth. The fusion of the *to be* auxiliary with the *-ing* participle has provided the language with a means of expressing "nice distinctions and logical precision [that] in many cases have emotional value" (Jespersen 1954:177 and 213). In fact, nothing distinguishes the English language today from other members of the Indo-European family as clearly as the progressive form. It is one of the richest forms in English for subtle distinctions of sense.

Nevertheless, in spite of its extensive use today, the progressive remains a difficult form to grasp for most ESL students, and an enigma for many teachers, who barely remember its existence after having presented it at early levels of language instruction. Most modern teaching grammars and manuals which follow a structural syllabus introduce the progressive simply as a means of representing an action in progress at the moment of speaking. It is thereafter usually forgotten. The fact that this approach is at variance with numerous examples found in English is generally ignored. Intermediate and advanced students are usually obliged to discover the complexities of the progressive for themselves (if, indeed, they ever succeed in doing so), and in the process have to correct what was previously learned.

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In the hope of shedding some light on the dilemma, this article will present a wide variety of examples of progressive use found in English speech and literature, briefly examine the nature of ESL instruction as it relates to the progressive, suggest an approach to teaching the progressive which seems able to reconcile the complexities of usage with the demands of the ESL classroom, and conclude with an examination of the role of grammar in ESL learning.

A Historical Perspective

One of the major achievements in the evolution of the English language has been the development of the progressive form.¹ In Early Modern English, where the progressive was rare or non-existent, the simple form alone was used. Thus, in Shakespeare, for example:

Polonius asks Hamlet (Act 2, Scene 5): 'What do you read my Lord?' Today of course we should say: 'What are you reading?'
(Hornby 1984:172)

In Modern English the progressive form has been steadily gaining ground. Dennis (1940:855-865) examined this growth in a study of English literature designed to tabulate the frequency of progressive use. She notes that although the progressive is often used in conversation where contraction conceals its length, it has a more restricted use in literature. For example, it is often avoided in formal writing, where contractions betray a certain informality; in poetry, where it tends to be too lengthy and unwieldy to sound well; and in the passive forms, where it appears clumsy and heavy. It seems, however, that novelists who are masters of a colloquial style, or who wish to obtain a vividness or descriptive force in their writing, are very familiar with the progressive. Writers preferring a more formal style tend toward use of the simple form. Thus, as Dennis points out, Galsworthy might be expected to use the progressive more frequently than Conrad, Mark Twain more than Daniel Webster.

An investigation of twentieth century literature shows a greatly expanded progressive use, particularly in American prose

¹ Jespersen's description of the progressive's origins seems unchallenged. He suggests that the verb form arose as a result of the union of the preposition *on* with the gerund after the verb *to be* (e.g., he is (was) on hunting). The reader is referred to Jespersen, 1954:164-177, for detailed study.

(cf. Dennis, Scheffer). Nevertheless, the highest frequency of usage in modern times occurs in Irish-dialect prose, (making the Irish, as one wit put it, the most progressive of all peoples). In fact, as Dennis notes, use of the progressive has been increasing steadily since the fifteenth century. In the twentieth century, this rapid growth has sky-rocketed, perhaps reflecting an expanded American sphere of influence in the English-speaking world and the resulting acceptance of informal style and colloquial usage.

The Problem

The crucial problem for any adequate description of the progressive is that the form has an enormous number of expressive effects, many of which seem contradictory.² Research into the literature provides a view of the progressive that is somewhat bewildering in its complexity and variety: it can be used to express an action in progress, duration, temporariness, limited recurrence; it can provide a time frame for other events; it can be used with future reference; it is likely to admit to the use of some verbs but avoid others; it imparts a certain descriptive force to narrative style; and it is associated with innumerable emotional nuances, many of great subtlety. Note however, that certain verbs are said to avoid the progressive use: "I'm feeling that I got an A" (Pollock 1982:4). Consider the following examples of progressive use:

Action in Progress: Now I'm *sitting down*.

Duration: Day by day we *are getting nearer* to death.

(Leech 1971:29)

Temporariness/Limited Duration: I *am living* in Wimbledon.

(ibid., 16)

Limited Recurrence: I *am getting up* at six in the morning.

(Hirtle 1967:49)

Temporal Framing: He *was writing* when I entered.

(Jespersen 1954:180)

Future Reference: I *am taking* four courses next semester.

(Azar 1981:102)

Emotional Connotation/Pejorative Emotional Coloring: He *is always acting up* at these affairs.

(Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman 1983:63)

²Not only has the progressive been labelled in a number of other ways (e.g. continuous, expanded, definite, etc.), but there is continuing debate as to whether it should be defined as a tense, an aspect, or a form. Resolution of these problems is not the intent of this article. Quotations will be presented in the terminology of the author cited. In the body of this work, the term "progressive form" will be used exclusively and refers to the present time sphere unless otherwise stipulated.

Emotional Connotation/Politeness or Modest Inquiry: *I'm hoping*
 you'll straighten it out for me. (Jespersen 1954:223)

Each of these approaches to the progressive has an undeniable validity, but none of them is comprehensive enough to provide the overall view essential to effective teaching. Certainly, advanced students should be exposed to some of these effects, but before they can begin to appreciate the nuances involved, they must be given a general basis on which to view and understand the progressive, one which can guide them through the different stages of second language learning as they encounter usage of increasing variety and difficulty. Unfortunately, however, the most widespread approach to presenting the progressive in ESL instruction today does not appear capable of providing such a guide.

Action in Progress

Teaching grammars and those teaching manuals that deal overtly with grammatical structure are practically unanimous in presenting the progressive as a means of expressing an action in progress at the moment of speaking. (cf. Alexander 1973:6; Azar 1981:81; Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman 1983:63; Dart 1978:76; Dixon 1973:38; Lado 1977:6-12; O'Neill 1978:6 and 13; Pollock 1982:2; Seidl 1981:31.) Most textbooks also contrast the progressive with the simple form, which is said to express habitual events. This notion is well-illustrated in *Practice and Progress* (Alexander 1973:6), which is perhaps typical of this type of approach:

Actions which are in progress at the moment of speaking are expressed by the present continuous. Regular or habitual actions are expressed by the simple present.

For example: Why are you cleaning the car now? Because it's Sunday. I always clean the car on Sunday.

Moreover, classroom and textbook presentation of the progressive characteristically links it to time (the present moment = NOW) and to ongoing activity (cf. Richards 1981:399). Teachers are encouraged to act out and describe everyday activities as a means of demonstrating the form, and to verbally reinforce this explanation with the cue word NOW. For example:

Now, *I'm washing* my hands.

Now, *I'm making* a meal.

Of note, as well, is that teaching manuals always introduce the progressive as an action in progress at very early stages of ESL instruction—it is *never* reintroduced in any other way at intermediate and advanced levels. Teaching grammars, which are generally designed for more advanced levels of study, often buttress ‘action in progress’ with lists of verb classes that avoid progressive use, in addition to referring on occasion to secondary meanings such as temporariness, emotional comment, or repetition in a series (cf. Dart 1978:76; Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman 1983:63).

Yet although the action-in-progress approach is surprisingly widespread, it has by no means solved the problem of presenting the progressive. There are, for instance, numerous examples in English of the simple form expressing actions going on at the moment at speaking. For example:

Walker *swings* a right at the West Indian—he *ducks* and it *glances* harmlessly off his shoulder. (Leech 1971:2)

Now I *put* the cake-mixture into this bowl and *add* a drop of vanilla. (ibid., 3)

In fact, presentation of the progressive in the ESL classroom based on the notion of ongoing activity has come under considerable criticism from educators and grammarians alike. Richards (1981:399), for example, points out that restricting the progressive to ongoing activity and insisting on a fixed association with the cue word NOW may be responsible for students assuming “that the progressive is a kind of narrative present. By analogy the past progressive is then assumed to be a narrative past.” This gives rise to the following type of progressive misuse all too familiar to ESL teachers:

*Last Sunday we *were going* to a party. We *were leaving* the house at six o’clock, and we *were taking* a taxi to our friend’s house.

(ibid.)

In a similar vein, Palmer (1965:62) argues that this method of teaching the progressive

causes difficulty to the teacher of English at least if he tries to illustrate the verb form situationally; for in order to illustrate the use of the present progressive, he is likely to perform actions and describe them:

Now I *am opening* the doors.

Now I *am writing* on the blackboard.

The natural reaction of a native speaker in these situations would be use the simple form, not the progressive.

Close (1958:59) agrees in stating:

If I as a native speaker of English wished to report an act performed at the moment of speaking, I should instinctively use the Simple Present. . . 'I put my pen down at this point, get up and walk over to the window.'

He adds that:

You can say, 'I'm going to the door' while you are on your way there, but it would be ridiculous to snap your book shut, declaring 'I'm closing my book.'
(ibid., 61)

As was mentioned earlier, some teaching grammars do mention additional meanings of the progressive. Yet none of these additional meanings is ever linked in any way with the notion of an action in progress. Accepting 'action in progress' as the basic meaning of the progressive thus makes it necessary to explain additional meanings as secondary ones which have no recognizable relation to the primary meaning. As a result, presentation of the progressive breaks down into a random and fragmented series of individual facts of undeniable validity, but which do not show the whole pattern. How, indeed, can 'action in progress' account for temporariness, or emotional comment, or repetition in a series?

Most teaching grammars also attempt to supplement their presentation of the progressive with lists of verb classes which deny progressive use. Unfortunately, "exceptions to the rule" are ubiquitous, and as Close (1958:62) notes, verb classification as a means of teaching the progressive has definite limitations once students get beyond the controlled contexts of simplified usage:

All verbs in English, except the pure auxiliary and modal verbs, can take both the simple and continuous forms. Moreover, a statement like 'There are certain verbs which only take the simple form' is unfortunate as it leads...to delay in introducing words like *see, hear, want, know, understand*, etc. that eager pupils want to know.

Moreover, the astute ESL student may well inquire as to *why* certain verbs are supposed to deny progressive use. Why, indeed, are so many verbs compatible with the progressive in some contexts and not in others?

'Action in progress' thus lacks precision and is misleading when used in the classroom. Though it is undoubtedly true that the progressive represents an action in progress in a great many instances, this precept is *not valid* in numerous cases. More importantly, with this limited approach to presenting the progressive, advanced ESL students are often denied exposure to real-life English and have no guide through the pitfalls of more subtle and complex usage.

Imperfectivity/Incompletion

In our search for a theory of the progressive sufficiently general to account for all the facts of usage, and yet sufficiently accessible to meet the demands of the ESL classroom, another approach needs to be examined: that of *incompletion*, or in its more abstract form, *imperfectivity*. A number of grammarians allude to incompletion in discussions of progressive meaning: Quirk et al. (1972:93) describe incompletion as a "concomitant...overtone"; Leech (1971: 15) as a "separate aspect of meaning." Close (1975:244) argues for incompletion as a primary meaning of the form: "The progressive...conveys the idea of activity which has begun but is not completed." However, none of these grammarians explore the implications of 'incompletion' in any detail, and this meaning is rarely linked in the literature with the form's diverse expressive effects.

Two authors have proposed a similar but more abstract notion of progressive meaning, that of imperfectivity. Comrie (1976:26) describes the progressive as a "category to express imperfectivity." Hirtle (1967) has written extensively on the imperfective character of the progressive and is perhaps one of the earliest sources to link the progressive with imperfectivity. His work thus provides a good basis for examining 'imperfectivity' as a means of accounting for progressive use, and more specifically, the implications of such an approach for ESL instruction. Hirtle's notion of imperfectivity, however, has been developed within the framework of linguistic theory, certain key assumptions of which must first be clarified:

1. Language has two levels, two constituent elements. There exists not only a physical side to language, known as connected speech or discourse, but also an underlying mental organization, a highly coherent, unconscious *system* from which linguistic forms arise.

2. Because it necessarily requires at least two components to form a system, linguistic forms are found in obligatory, *binary opposition*. Of importance here is the assumption that the progressive exists in permanent and necessary opposition to the simple form.
3. Any linguistic form has a *single, underlying meaning*, which gives rise to a wide range of contextual meanings and expressive effects when actualized in discourse.

The above principles, then, suggest that the progressive, like the simple form, expresses one underlying impression, one position in a mental system, and that one can account for the diverse contextual meanings and expressive effects found in discourse on the basis of this underlying, basic meaning. In grammatical terms, the simple/progressive opposition can be described as follows: "The simple form is *perfective*, the progressive form *imperfective*" (Hirtle 1967:27). In other words, the simple form expresses an event which strikes the mind as being *complete*, as permitting no further additions or changes; the progressive form expresses an event which is perceived as being *incomplete*, as lacking something, as leaving room for something to come.³

Finally, of fundamental importance to understanding how the simple/progressive dichotomy functions is the fact that the verb in English can express two types of events: states (e.g., *The pen is black*) and actions (e.g., *He painted the house*):⁴

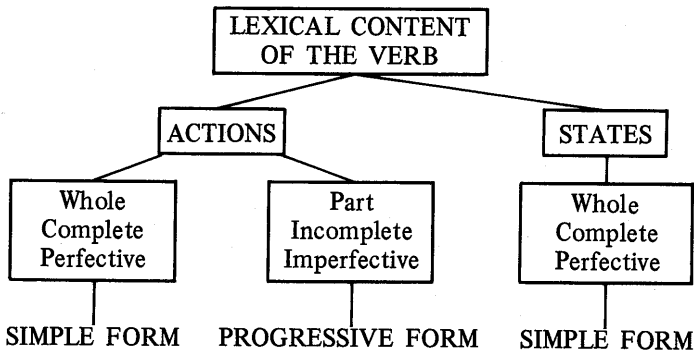
A *state* involves no change; its material content remains constant from one moment to the next; it has no defined limits on its extension into the past or future; every instant of a state is identical to every other and the whole of a state exists in any instant of its being; a state is seen as complete whatever its duration.

An *action* suggests some change, some development; it has a beginning and an end; every instant of an action is different from every other and each involves the subject in a slightly different activity; an action requires a certain stretch of time to be carried out, and may be seen as complete or incomplete.

³ Of importance here is the fact that notions such as completion or incompleteness must be understood on the basis of how the speaker or writer represents the experience he wishes to express. Linguistic forms such as the simple and progressive express mental reality; i.e., "our impressions of external reality and not the external reality itself" (Hirtle 1967:27). Thus, a given external reality may be perceived in different ways and so "poured into different grammatical moulds" (ibid.).

⁴ Also described as "stative and dynamic uses of verbs" (Quirk et al. 1972:93-95) and "state and event meanings of verbs" (Leech 1971:4).

Consequently, a state, which is necessarily whole and complete in any instant of its existence, can only be expressed by the simple form. An action, on the other hand, can either be depicted as a part, or incomplete, in which case it requires the progressive, or as a whole, or complete, in which case the simple form is called for. Thus, as Hirtle (1967:27) notes, "...the progressive is limited to the expression of imperfective actions; the simple can express either a perfective action or a state." These relationships are clearly illustrated in the following chart which has been borrowed from Hirtle (1967:31) and Richards (1981:394) and slightly modified:



Imperfectivity in Discourse

We have seen that virtually all teaching grammars and manuals propose 'action in progress' as the basic meaning of the progressive form, in spite of the fact that this approach presents considerable complications for ESL instruction. We will now examine progressive use from the point of view of 'imperfectivity' in the hope of supplying an adequate explanation capable of encompassing the facts encountered in teaching the form.⁵ We will begin, therefore, with the use of the progressive and simple forms to express actions going on at the moment of speaking (current actions), then turn our attention to a number of examples of progressive use which cannot be accounted for on the basis of an action in progress.⁶

⁵ For our purposes, 'imperfectivity' necessarily includes the perfective/imperfective opposition underlying the simple and progressive forms.

⁶ No attempt will be made here to deal with all the issues surrounding progressive use. Representative examples have been selected which shed some light on many of the problems detailed earlier, and which, it is hoped, are of some interest to the reader.

Current Actions and the Progressive

Perhaps the most frequent use of the progressive in English is to express current action. For example:

It's *snowing* quite heavily.

The baby *is sleeping* soundly.

The simple form, however, also describes actions occurring at the moment of speaking. How, then, can these seemingly contradictory facts of usage be reconciled? The problem, it seems, lies not with the action-in-progress approach itself, but with the perspective from which it is viewed. The answer can be found in a closer examination of the nature of the *present moment* as it relates to the notion of imperfectivity.

The moment of speech, the present moment, is an extremely short stretch of time which coincides with the instant of actual consciousness. As a result, most actions involving the present instant must be represented as incomplete since the whole of the action cannot be represented. That is to say, in most circumstances the present moment is simply not long enough to contain an action in its entirety. Being seen as incomplete or unfinished, it demands, as a consequence, the progressive form. *Snowing* or *sleeping*, for example, would both normally be felt to have a somewhat lengthy duration, one that overflows the present moment. The speaker thus represents the event as divided, as having an accomplished portion and leaving room for further accomplishment, the necessary condition for progressive use.

Because the present moment has such a pervasive influence on all aspects of human experience, one of the most frequent, concrete, and easily understood effects of imperfectivity is an action in progress. It would be a mistake, however, to consider the action in progress definition found in so many textbooks as the form's basic meaning. An action in progress is, in fact, only one of the effects of progressive use, one of the numerous manifestations of the underlying meaning of the form.

Current Actions and the Simple Form

The distinction between the underlying meaning of a form and its expressive effects in discourse is also essential to an understanding of how the simple form, as well, can be used to express current actions. Close and Palmer have commented on such uses and Close

(1958:59) touches on the perfective/imperfective opposition when he states:

...the simple form is selected because of a desire to relate acts as completed at the moment of speaking...rather than a description of unfinished activity.

In fact, there are numerous instances in English of the simple form expressing actions which coincide with the moment of speaking. These examples, which contradict the "rule of usage" found in most textbooks, forcing one to view them as "exceptions," are, of course, important to teaching as they are clearly appropriate for students at more advanced levels of instruction.

Commentaries are one such example. Sports broadcasts, for instance, make use of the simple form in describing extremely rapid actions:

Ryan *winds up* and...*throws!* Curve ball misses. Ball three.
Ewing *jumps, shoots*...It's a basket!

In these cases, because of the rapidity with which the actions take place, the commentator does not have time to mentally divide the event into an accomplished portion and a prospective accomplishment as would normally occur in describing actions in progress. The speed at which they occur forces the commentator to view these actions as a whole, necessitating the use of the perfective. When the progressive is used with such verbs, it may imply repetition:

He's *throwing* with a lot of confidence.
She's *shooting* 60% from the floor.

For actions which are less rapid and take a longer time to complete, the progressive form is normally used, as the commentator sees the event as incomplete and has time to divide it like any other action in progress:

He's *going back* into shallow left for the pop-up.

In fact, a tabulation of the two forms in sports broadcasts (cf. Leech 1971:15) seems to confirm this evaluation. It was found that there is a tendency to use the simple form in describing sports such as football, tennis, and boxing, whereas the progressive is more frequent in the description of rowing, cricket, and golf.

Demonstrator's English is another type of usage in which the simple form is the norm. It can occur with an English teacher in front of a class or in the patter of a magician or in a cooking demonstration, as on television for example.

I *close* my eyes and *take* a card...

I *add* two teaspoons of salt and *mix* thoroughly...

In these circumstances, the demonstrator, having practised the routine or recipe on numerous occasions, can foresee the event's completion as a matter of course, and so, requiring a representation of this perfective image, selects the simple form. Of interest, as well, is the fact that an observer, not being familiar with the outcome of the trick or recipe, would likely view the event as imperfective, and make use of the progressive in describing the action:

He's *closing* his eyes...and *taking* a card...

Emotional Connotation

It is rare to discover a grammarian, modern or traditional, who has not commented on the use of the progressive in the field of emotional connotation. Dennis (1940:865), in fact, argues that the continuing expansion of progressive use in modern times will occur chiefly in this very area. It is a construction which is often charged with feeling or colored with some emotion. Pejorative emotional coloring, for example, is an effect often associated with the progressive:

He's always *reading* at meals.

They're continually *arguing*.

Though many grammarians have readily recognized the intended effect (i.e., irritation, annoyance, indignation, etc.), few have offered an explanation as to how this effect arises. It seems, however, that these impressions are the result of *hyperbole* (cf. Kruisinga and Erades 1953:257). In these cases the progressive represents a series of recurrent actions continuing over time. This series is considered imperfective and, being seen as incomplete, as having no end in sight. The combination of this impression with temporal adverbs such as *always*, *continually*, *forever*, not only emphasizes the endlessness of the series, but also has the effect of suggesting that, at any moment in time, the subject is involved in the action—quite

obviously an exaggeration. This feeling of something excessive gives rise to certain emotional nuances of a generally unpleasant nature.

Leech (1971:24) has commented on another common impression associated with progressive use: "The Progressive is a more tentative, and hence more *polite* method of expressing a mental attitude."

I'm hoping you'll give us some advice.

We're wondering if you have any suggestions. (ibid.)

In fact, the past progressive is felt to be doubly self-deprecatory:

What were you *wanting*?

I was hoping you would look after the children for us. (ibid.)

In these examples, the progressive, presenting an imperfective image, creates an impression of a request or hope that is not completely formed, leaving the person addressed with a greater option for refusal. The simple form, on the other hand, would evoke a perfective image, in which the notion represented by the verb would have been completely formed, the result of which might be considered too demanding or coercive:

What do you *want*?

I hope you'll look after the children for us.

Verb Classes

It is certainly true, as numerous grammarians have stated, that some verbs (i.e., verbs of sensory perception, verbs of mental activity, and verbs of having and being) are usually found in the simple form:

I see a butterfly.

I understand your problem now.

I like this book.

I am hungry.

(Azar 1981:82)

However, examples of "exceptions to the rule" are widespread. For example:

I've only had six whiskies and already *I'm seeing* pink elephants.

(Comrie 1976:37)

I'm understanding more about quantum mechanics as each day goes by.

(ibid., 36)

The crowd *is loving* it. (Olympic Games Commentary, Women's Field Hockey, Los Angeles, 1984)

He's *being* good/useful/helpful/a nuisance/an angel...

(Leech 1971:25)

In fact, such examples are quite normal given the lexical content of these verbs. Usually these verbs reflect a lexical content which is homogeneous, complete, and unchanging. Having this perfective image, they are represented like all verbs of state by the simple form. From time to time, however, this lexical content is felt to be heterogenous, incomplete, and open to change. The resulting imperfective image requires the progressive form. In other words, the lexical content of these verbs allows them to be expressed as either perfective or imperfective, as a state or an incomplete action. An explanation as to why is provided by Hirtle (1967:70), "In general, when one of these verbs expresses an *operation* it may be used in the progressive; when it expresses a *result* it is used in the simple form."

To think and *to forget* are perhaps representative of verbs that are said to be incompatible with the progressive:

I *think* he'll come. (Palmer 1965:76)

I *am thinking* of going to America.

(Kruisinga and Erades 1953:259)

The verb *to think* can be expressed as an opinion fully formed or as a process of thought, a pondering or contemplating. In the first example above, the result of a mental process is expressed. The pros and cons have been weighed and the speaker has formed an opinion. The process is complete and the resulting state requires the simple form. The progressive form, in the second example, denotes the mental operation of forming a decision, which is not complete until the desired result is obtained. This incomplete action thus calls for the progressive form.

It is true that the verb *to forget* is normally found in the simple form, but it would be incorrect to suggest, as do many teaching grammars, that it cannot be used in the progressive, where it is certainly not exceptionally rare. It can take the imperfective when the forgetting is a gradual process that takes place over time; the operation can be represented at mid-course when, of an acquired body of knowledge, some will still have been retained, some forgotten.

I *forget* his name.
I'm *forgetting* my French.

(Azar 1981:82)
(Close 1975:243)

At this moment, the process of forgetting is incomplete and the progressive is called for. The moment the process of forgetting is finished, which can generally occur rapidly with single pieces of information, the resulting state requires the simple form.

Imperfectivity in the Classroom

English grammars, both traditional and modern, approach the problem of the progressive in a number of different ways, many of which appear to have serious drawbacks for ESL instruction. It is obvious, for example, that any attempt to teach the progressive by describing all the circumstances in which it is found is an impossible task. The generality of the notion of imperfectivity gives rise to such a staggering number of effects that any such attempt is doomed to failure. An approach based on the classification of verbs is equally self-defeating. Taken to the nth degree, this approach necessitates the learning of one or more classes for every verb, as verb classes break down into individual cases with increasingly advanced levels of usage. This approach entails an impossible feat of memorization for students as exceptions are myriad. Simply listing all the contextual meanings of the progressive (i.e., duration, temporariness, temporal framing, etc.) also has obvious limitations. None of these proposed meanings is comprehensive enough to deal with all the progressive's uses, and more importantly, among these meanings there are those that are mutually contradictory. As Goldsmith and Woisetschlaeger (1982:82) note, this approach necessitates assigning two contradictory meanings to a single grammatical form, a task that provides "little understanding of how sentence forms and meanings are associated," and one that "makes it hard to understand how the meaning of the progressive could be learnable."

As a result, most teaching grammars and manuals have adopted a simplified approach to teaching the progressive, one based on the form's most concrete and frequent use: action in progress. This approach may well provide a good approximation to usage at an elementary level of instruction, but students often find that intermediate and advanced level material is simply a revision or repetition of elementary work. When rules for advanced usage are given,

they often contradict rules already learned or are so numerous and contain so many exceptions that they are impossible to assimilate.

Sound teaching practice dictates that for an approach to be valid for teaching purposes it must be valid for all types of examples. In particular, it must provide a basis for the students' progress through the different stages of second language learning as they encounter usage of increasing variety and difficulty. It appears that 'imperfectivity' is capable of meeting these requirements. However, ways must now be found to communicate this understanding to students. What is needed and remains to be accomplished, is the construction of carefully designed, graded exercises to guide students through the various stages of progressive use as examples become more rare and varied. A battery of graded exercises in order of difficulty of effects, from the most concrete to the most abstract, must be provided, with care taken to demonstrate the link between imperfectivity and its various effects in discourse. In this way each use can be taught as an expression of meaning. Through carefully developed dialogues and situational models, through sequenced exercises contrasting the progressive with the simple form, the various uses of the progressive can be understood as arising from a single, underlying meaning, whatever the particular level of instruction. At an elementary level, for instance, students can be shown that the progressive indicates an action that is incomplete in time at the moment of speaking. At an advanced level, the notion of imperfectivity can be linked to many of the more subtle distinctions associated with progressive use.

This approach to teaching grammar based on the underlying meaning of a form has the advantage of supplying a single basis of explanation for all levels of instruction. Since there is no shift in the basis of explanation for every new use, students are not required to memorize a theoretically endless list of rules, sub-rules, and exceptions. At an advanced level, students, observing the various nuances arising from a single, underlying meaning, can view language as a coherent whole, rather than a mass of disparate, individual facts. In addition to helping advanced students become aware of the subtle distinctions provided by the progressive, this approach permits the learning process to be simplified at an elementary level. The notion of an action in progress and hence incomplete in time is a concept easily grasped, as it is common to the experience of all people.

In conclusion, it should be pointed out that this approach to the progressive is applicable to the teaching of all grammatical forms. Grammar teaching has been traditionally seen as a listing of rules of usage. Even today, the common, limited view of grammar is that of a prescriptive set of rules. In fact, however, a speaker uses a particular grammatical form not because of some rule, but because of the meaning of the form, which shapes the lexical meaning of the word in a certain way within a particular context. When the teaching of grammar is based on lists of rules, it simply does not correspond to reality in language. The rules and exceptions to the rules become endless, and the learning process itself becomes a tedious task of labelling and memorization. To make grammar teaching effective, grammar must provide access to meaning. Having students relate usage to meaning within controlled contextual situations, sensitizes them to English, makes use of their intelligence, not just their memory, and permits the learning of grammar to become a satisfying and even enjoyable experience.

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Guidelines for Teaching the English Article System

Seth Lindstromberg

Introduction

Native speakers of languages which have no formal equivalent of the English articles often seem to have profound difficulties with this part of the language. This is especially apparent when the learners in question have to rely on just a few hours of class time a week for their English input. Where these difficulties are attended to at all in an organized way, a common course of action involves adopting a deductive approach and having learners attempt fill-in-the-blank exercises. The exercises are usually preceded by some sort of explanation or rule presentation and followed by some discussion of the work done. But there is reason to doubt that the nature and complexity of the task facing learners have been at all well appreciated in this regard. In this paper it is argued that teacher descriptions of article use hinge on terminology that is of too high a level to be comprehensible regardless of what language these descriptions are given in. A version of Wittgenstein's language-as-a-game analogy is used to illustrate and support this argument. As a step toward helping teachers to shift to terminology of a lower, more comprehensible level, an informal flow chart is presented. This flow chart is based substantially on an analysis of article use in terms of presupposition and speech function and is

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compatible with a communicative approach to teaching. It is suggested that learning about the article system can benefit certain intermediate and advanced learners even if it is indeed the case that learning never becomes acquisition.

Benefits of Teaching Articles

First, it seems to me that ignorance of the article system must prevent a learner from getting beyond a certain point in interpreting discourse, however advanced that point might be. Articles make important distinctions between the definite/indefinite contrast in English and serve to clarify referential murkiness. Furthermore, a knowledge of article use could help strong intermediate and advanced learners avoid the reproof and stigma that repeatedly making so-called simple errors can cause.

Second, learning the article system may aid acquisition of the article system. Even if it is true that conscious, articulable rule knowledge (the result of learning) never evolves in the mind directly into the all-important unconscious, perhaps unarticulable rule knowledge (the result of acquisition); it may indirectly aid acquisition by making it possible for learners to comprehend more of what they hear and read (Steven Sternfeld, cited in Krashen 1985:42). Thus, any sort of accurate learning could contribute to acquisition to a greater or lesser extent. Furthermore, learning may lower the affective barriers in some students by fostering feeling of satisfied intellectual curiosity (Krashen 1985:42). This could be especially true of students finally grasping the sense of the ubiquitous articles.

Third, learning can occasionally substitute for acquisition. In a class of highly motivated, academically oriented students who are interested in language for its own sake, discussion of the article system can provide an occasion for provision of comprehensible input just as discussion of anything of interest can provide this input (cf. Krashen 1985:58, 73-74). Indeed, I have found that language learners tend to be particularly interested in features of their target language that evince quite different emphases from their first language in grammaticalization of basic concepts like definiteness/indefiniteness, animacy/inanimacy and so forth.

Learning a System

There is a sense in which mastering the English article system should be easy. It is a closed system learnable in its entirety—

something that cannot be said of some other language sub-systems like the lexicon. It is even true that the very terms *definite* and *indefinite* say a great deal about the function of the articles. Unfortunately, it is not likely that an unarticled learner (a learner whose first language has no formal equivalent of the English article system) will be able to understand what these terms or any translations of them are meant to convey about that function. After all, since different languages grammaticalize definiteness in different ways and to different degrees, one might wonder how the unarticled learner is supposed to guess what these terms mean for us. And it is at this point that we may begin asking ourselves if acquiring, or even just learning, the English article system is so easy after all.

Perhaps an analogy might help. Everyone knows the rigamarole that can be involved in explaining an only moderately complicated game to someone who in fact knows a game quite similar. Consider the difficulty of explaining a more complicated game like bridge to someone who knows nothing about any sort of card game whatsoever. Naturally, before much progress can be made, both parties must come to grips with details on a fairly low level. What a playing card is and how they are ranked must be understood before sense can be made of higher level terms like *trick* and *slam*. Conversely, having an idea of the sense of the ranking derives to some degree from having an idea of the sense of a trick (cf. Wittgenstein 1972: 47, 108 and 1980: 25). And, of course, it can take some time before all the various details take shape in the mind of the learner as the elements of a multi-level system. There is something satoric about comprehending a game or any other multi-level system. And yet, there appears to be no way of constructing an accurate mental model of a system that does not, at some stage, involve confronting the details in their pre-satoric messiness.

It follows from this view of the problem that one of the ways in which a teacher can help the unarticled learner understand the article system (if not to actually acquire it) is at some time to approach it on a low level of description (cf. Wittgenstein 1972: 47, 109).

Past Problems

It does not appear to me from the materials I have looked at and the teaching I have discussed and observed that teachers and

materials writers have approached the problem with a sense of system. Perhaps for this reason the whole enterprise is treated as being at once too simple and too complex. One of the problems is that teachers seem very often to count on learners being able to see examples as examples of precisely what the teacher wants the learners to see them as examples of. But, as Wittgenstein pointed out, wanting someone to see something as an exemplification of a certain concept is totally insufficient as a guarantee that this person will not see the same something as an exemplification of some other concept (1972:34-35). This often results in fill-in-the-blank exercises where, from the learners' point of view, the groups of examples given will seem a mish-mash of what are quite different uses of the articles and will therefore be of little or no help when it comes to doing the exercises. Furthermore, there is an awareness that if the high-level explanations do not work, things get confusing pretty fast. The result is either 1) that attempts to teach the article system are never made or are soon abandoned or 2) reliance on high-level explanations is insisted upon and teaching is carried on despite the confusion manifested by learners. I am reminded in connection with the latter case of certain floating fishing lures which have eyes and spots painted on top—clearly attractive to fishermen but of doubtful effect on fish.

Teaching the System

According to Dulay:

The definite/indefinite *a/the* distinction seems to resist explicit instruction. The rules governing *a/the* are so complex, they are not stated adequately in many grammar books. This distinction will have to be learned subconsciously or not at all. (1982:267)

On the other hand, Krashen has observed that:

Even very advanced acquirers . . . have gaps, and it is not desirable to wait for acquisition to fill all of them; quite often errors on late-acquired items are stigmatized. When they can be learned, they should be. (1985:75-76)

It is my contention not only that the article system should be taught, if possible, but also that it is possible. First of all, teachers need to keep in mind the difficulties involved in comprehending a multi-level system and realize that the complexities cannot be

swept under the carpet. Second, I hope that the decision sheet will show that the complexity is, in any case, manageable. I believe the essence of the system can be resolved into some twenty low-level teaching points such that they 1) can be clearly related to examples of use and 2) direct the learner toward eventual, simpler, higher level understanding of what the system does. And that is what the decision sheet is an attempt at. It is based on an earlier version which I used in Japan as an aid in planning my teaching of the article system.

The Decision Sheet

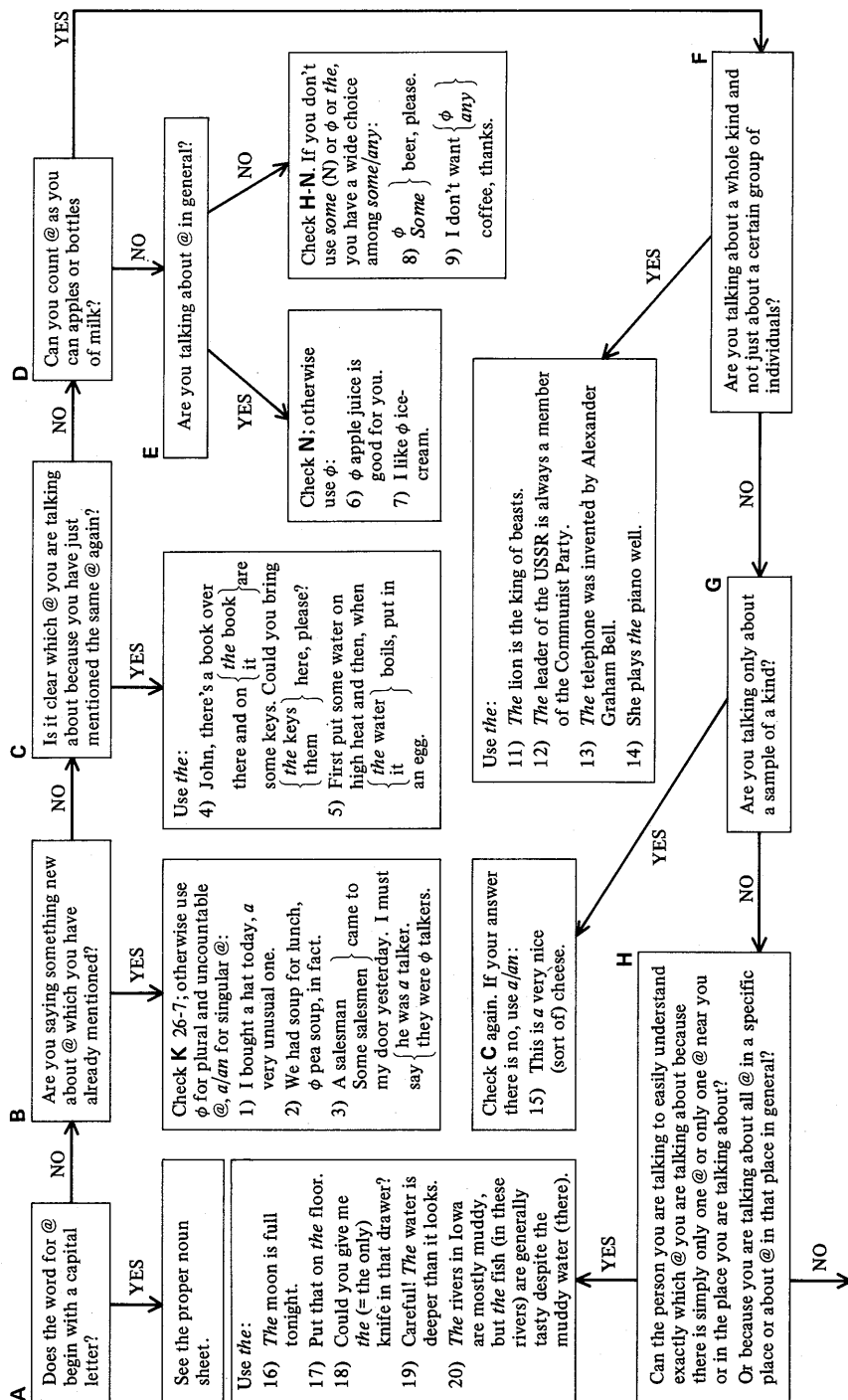
The decision sheet was composed with the aim of separating out as many different strands of the problem as possible so that teachers might get a better idea both of the complexity learners are faced with and of a possible approach to helping learners resolve this complexity. This format will hopefully make more digestible the complexity which arises from preference for low-level descriptions.

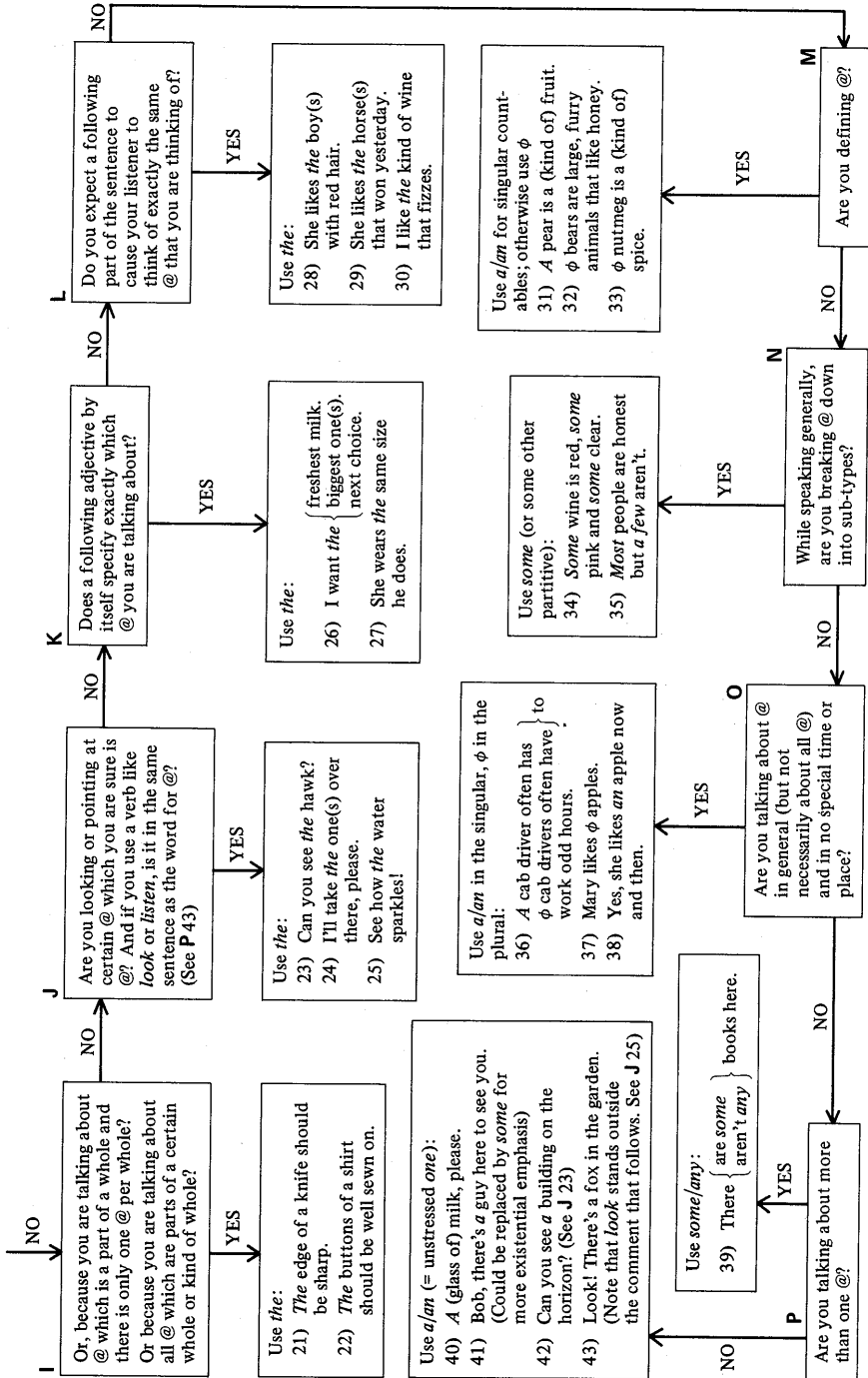
The sheet is intended as a guide to teaching interested, well-motivated upper-intermediate or advanced level learners whose needs include being able to avoid or, at least, self-correct article errors in certain situations. It should be used in conjunction with solidly contextualized examples and tasks (see appendix). The sheet is not intended to be used in the classroom. It is meant to be an aid to teachers in planning the teaching of the article system and in composing worksheets. Keeping the number of different uses of articles to a minimum in one session works best, as this avoids mixing up teaching points and thus possibly confusing the students.

It has been stated that the logic behind the various uses of the article is straightforward if viewed in terms of speech acts (Hawkins 1978:18) rather than grammatical categories such as definite and indefinite. Since the decision sheet does break the system down according to speech act divisions and we assume that a large part of the meaning of an article depends on speech function and presupposition, it follows that a communicative program would be the best context for teaching the article system in the fashion suggested.

Coping with the sheet presupposes command of the mass/count and singular/plural distinctions as well as of the common quantifiers (*some, any, most, and so on*), to name only three prerequisites. The symbol @ means any of the following: *a/an thing, the thing,*

The Decision Sheet





the things, things and stuff or substance. It has been employed so as not to prejudge the yes/no questions and also to enable brevity of expression. I do not advocate its use in the classroom. The same goes for ϕ (no article). *Some* and *any* stand for any quantifier that might fit.

A partitive is any quantifier except *all, every, no, and not . . . any*; that is, *some, a few* and so forth. I have tried to include as few quantifiers in the sheet as possible while at the same time wishing to alert the teacher to the fact that quantifiers will come up from time to time.

Reference is made to a Proper Noun sheet in Step A of the decision sheet. I have not included this here as it might be a good experience for teachers to draw up their own Proper Noun sheet in order to clarify in their own minds certain questions they may have regarding article use in these instances. Teachers may consult the following sources for information on this: Jespersen (1974: 544-579), Quirk (1974:160-165) and Sloat (1969:26).

The start position is where the circle has been broken down so it can be gotten into. This point may have been chosen somewhat arbitrarily, but I could think of no principled way of deciding where to begin. Given the various interdependencies, I am not sure this matters much.

I have encountered only four uses (or non-uses) of articles which I consider exceptional according to a strictly synchronic (ahistorical) view, which is, of course, the learner's view: 1) phrases like *the more the merrier*, 2) omission of the article before phrases like *go by car*, 3) use of *the* before wrong (for example, *the wrong way*) even in cases where there might be an infinity of possibly wrong ways and 4) expletive phrases like *what the hell*.

No claim is made that all high-level terms have been eliminated from the sheet. Thus, taking question K as an example, one might well ask how specifying an adjective has to be in order to require *the*. All I can say here is that it would be up to the teacher to indicate the cut-off by means of solidly contextualized examples. It might be worth noting here that it is not the case that all superlatives are preceded by *the*: for example, "There's a biggest city in every country" (cf. Grannis 1972:286). The difficulty of finding a formal rule even for uses like this serves to highlight the apparent inadequacy of formal rather than pragmatic description of article use (cf. Grannis 1972:288). At any rate, the sheet certainly does

not offer the ultimate solution to the problem of giving the clearest possible explanations but only a possible approach to a solution. Teachers are invited to improve it.

APPENDIX

A Sample Exercise

Teaching point: H/yes.

Reviewed: B/yes, C/yes and the forsakable rule of thumb that singular countable nouns are introduced into conversation with *a/an* while uncountable and plural countable nouns are introduced with ϕ or a quantifier.

I was late for breakfast one morning because I had put my driver's license in the house somewhere but *just* where I couldn't remember. I spent some time trying to find it. Finally, my wife came in and asked me what I was looking for this time and said I was going to be late, as usual. This is what I said:

I'm looking for my driver's license. Where could I have put it? Why can't I ever remember where I put anything? It wasn't in any of my pants pockets so I looked under *the* bed. No luck. Then I looked behind *the* chest of drawers, in each of *the* drawers, behind *the* bookcases, on *the* bedside table, all over *the* floor . . . I've looked everywhere. What a hassle! Have you seen it?

Notice that every time I mentioned something in our house, I said *the*. Well, naturally, my wife knows our house well. She knows everything that's in it. So, of course, when I mention something like the bed or the bedside table, she knows exactly which bed and which bedside table because she knows which bedroom I mean. When I mention the floor, she knows which floor. Because I know she knows which thing I'm talking about, I say *the*. In other words, you don't always have to introduce something into your conversation with *a* or *an*. But when don't you have to? Let's look at another bit of conversation. You see, later on . . . on the same day I couldn't find my driver's license . . . I met a friend, and this is part of what I said:

Guess what. I had to take the bus to work today. I lost my driver's license in my own house. I looked for it everywhere . . . under *the* bed, behind *the* bookcases, all over *the* floor . . .

Well, the conversation was pretty much the same. I still said *the* every time I mentioned one of the things in my house. Why? He has never been in our house and doesn't know it at all. Then how can he know, for example, just which bed I am talking about? After all, there are a couple more beds in the house in the other bedrooms. Well, it's easy for him to know this really. I must sleep in my wife's and my room. Most married people only have one bed in their room. So that's the bed I mean. And he knew that all the other things I mentioned were things in my house so then he knew which things I meant even though he hadn't seen them. They are all things one expects to find in a western style house.

But let's go back to my unlucky day, the day I lost my driver's license. Later I met another friend and told him about one thing in my house that I had forgotten to mention to my other friend. This is part of our conversation:

Me: I looked under *the* bed, on *the* bedside table, under *the* iguana . . .

Him: Uhh? Wait a minute! Under the what?

Me: Oh, under the iguana. Didn't you know? We have *an* iguana. It takes care of the mice and bugs.

So you see, when there is a possibility someone won't know what you're talking about, you shouldn't start with *the*. My friend was confused because very few people have iguanas in their houses. By saying *the* iguana, I was talking as if he should know about our iguana. But he didn't. It wasn't natural for him to think "Ah, yes. *The* iguana in his house" like he might think "Ah, yes. *The* floor and *the* bookcases in his house." He knew I was talking about a particular iguana because I said *the*, but he didn't know which iguana. So he interrupted me. In order to avoid confusion I should've started differently. Maybe like this, ". . . and we have *a* pet iguana and I even looked under it."

Have you got the idea? OK. Give this a try, but don't forget the other rules for using *a* or *the* (or nothing) that we've already talked about.

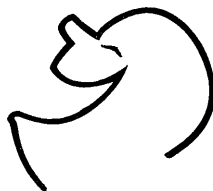
"I had _____ dream last night about driving _____ car, not my car, somebody else's. It was _____ sports car. There was _____ old man sitting in _____ driver's seat. I was in _____ other front seat and in _____ back there was _____ large, spotted frog. _____ frog wanted me to open all _____ windows so it could catch _____ bugs. I refused because _____ man said _____ wind would blow his hat off.

Suddenly I was at home. _____ TV was on. _____ frog was sitting beside me on _____ sofa. It wasn't _____ same frog. It was reading _____ magazine about bugs. 'This is _____ silly dream,' I thought. And then I woke up."

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Using Rock and Popular Music in EFL

N. McBeath

In recent years the use of song as a teaching tool in EFL classrooms has come to be generally accepted—so much so that most new EFL courses will automatically include songs on their accompanying cassettes. Other than a general agreement that song is a good thing, however, there appears to be little consensus on the type of song to be chosen, or the way in which such songs should be used. A further complication is that many teachers appear to forget that students' exposure to English, and particularly to English songs, does not end at the classroom door. This article argues that rock and popular music are easily accessible sources of material that can be used for teaching vocabulary, structure, and idiomatic expressions in the EFL classroom.

Prime reasons for using rock and popular music in the classroom are the worldwide accessibility and popularity of this kind of music. Murphy (1984) has estimated that "Swiss adolescents are in contact with one or two hours of English Language Music per day in their natural environment, or an average of more than 12 hours a week" and the amount of time spent listening to English music is likely to be just as high in other parts of Western Europe.

Ironically, at a time when there is a growing awareness that radio broadcasts have an immediacy and authenticity that pre-recorded material may lack, there still appears to be a reluctance to accept the music that is broadcast. It is somehow felt that these songs are inappropriate for class use. McCready (1976) has urged the use of "communication songs" as a substitute. He believes that these songs avoid the problems involved in teaching both lyrics and

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music, and then finding that the students are unable to transfer a structure learned as part of a song into spontaneous speech. This may be a problem if one only intends the students to sing the song, but if the song is treated as an aural stimulus then the main part of McCready's argument falls flat. The examples of "communication songs" that he gives, moreover, are both grammatically inept and of such simplicity that it is hard to see any but the very youngest children deriving any benefit or satisfaction from them.

Take the number *four*
 Since it is so small
 Multiply it fast by *two*
 Answer now to all. (1976:7)

To be fair, Santibanez (1979) reports that she was able to use these communication songs successfully in Chile, but I have the gravest reservations about this type of material, mainly because it is so openly and heavily didactic. One example of this genre comes from Kabila-Mututulo (1978) in Zaire:

Do you know the major American authors?
 If not, here they are.
 Bradford, Broadstreet, Sewell, Taylor,
 Mather, Edwards, Wheatly, Kemble-Knight,
 Poe, Melville, Emerson, Thoreau,
 Fitzgerald, Faulkner, Hemingway, Thomas Wolfe,
 Gass, Barth, Updike, Oates.

Fernando (1978), teaching in Sri Lanka offers another example:

I myself and you yourself,
 He himself, she herself,
 We ourselves and they themselves,
 That's the way we sing.

In both these instances the communication achieved is virtually nil; the lyrics have become a meaningless collection of phonemes that can be sung without any understanding.

Slightly different, and of considerably improved quality, are those songs which have been produced commercially and are designed to accompany core textbooks. One example of this is the *Skyhigh* cassette by Abbs and York (1975) which accompanies the *Strategies* series. Mathews (1984) has analysed one of the songs

from this collection and has shown how it can be used to introduce or reinforce the conditional of impossible condition.

These songs differ from those previously examined because they tend to be more professionally produced. They are designed as ancillary material to a commercial package, and so they tend to echo the rhythms of popular music. Except in the case of songs recorded specifically for young children, there is less emphasis on their being used as an oral activity. The very fact that they are pre-recorded suggests that they will be listened to several times even if an attempt is finally made to sing them. This is a sensible approach, especially if dealing with Middle or Far Eastern students, who tend to have some difficulty with Western harmonics.

The fact remains, however, that at a time when western music is reaching a far larger audience than ever before (200 million for the Live Aid concert alone) it is paradoxical that we should still be attempting to manufacture special teaching songs. In the past decade the global landscape has been transformed by new forms of technology, and this, in turn, has produced new patterns of cultural behaviour. One of these new patterns is the easy availability of music on cassette, and throughout the Middle East and Southeast Asia this music has the additional advantage of being exceptionally cheap.

The idea of capitalizing on the availability and popularity of rock and popular music brings us to the use of this music for teaching vocabulary. It is not at all uncommon for students to approach a teacher with a request that he or she clarify the lyrics in one particular song. Often the lyrics have been learned, but not understood. In some cases it could be argued that the lyrics of many rock songs are not the best material for teaching vocabulary, but that strikes me as a very thin argument. If the language of a song does not meet our requirements, the obvious thing to do is to reject it in favour of something better. We have no qualms about rejecting textbooks or simplified readers if we feel that they are inappropriate, but it is not a corollary of such decisions that we reject all textbooks and simplified readers. Furthermore, if we accept McClean's statement that there are "a number of songwriters of the past ten years or so, men and women who in another age would have written poetry but who nowadays express themselves through the medium of popular song" (1983: 44), then a blanket rejection of popular song automatically involves rejection of material that is both well phrased and intellectually satisfying.

A case in point is the first verse from *The Rose*:¹

Some say love, it is a river
That drowns the tender reed.
Some say love, it is a razor
That leaves your soul to bleed.
Some say love, it is a hunger,
An endless, aching need.
I say love, it is a flower
And you its only seed.

In this example, the wealth of imagery and alteration of tone leave no doubt that we have a case of McClean's "Rock as Literature." The abcbdbb rhyme scheme makes it suitable for a prediction exercise based on rhyming phonemes, but the internal counterposing of the river/reed, razor/bleed, flower/seed raises this basic prediction to an exercise in semantics. This is, of course, advanced vocabulary study, but song can also be used at an elementary level. Firth reminds us "At the level of everyday spoken intercourse all languages are equally primitive and in a sense they are all holophrastic" (1964:83). Command of the holophrase gives a rewarding sense of fluency to most students, but this is especially the case with students at an elementary level, and few popular songs are without holophrastic elements. Typing the lyrics and leaving blank spaces where these holophrases occur will produce a simple aural comprehension exercise for students to complete while the record or cassette is being played. Two very recent popular songs that can be used in this way are Cyndi Lauper's *Time After Time*—the very title is a holophrase—and Lionel Richie's *Stuck on You*. Multiple examples also occur in the songs of Jim Croce, as in, *Dreaming Again*:

I'm not the same.
Can you blame me?
Is it hard to understand?
I can't forget.
You can't change me.
I am not that kind of man.

A similar use of song to generate response to prediction exercises has already been mentioned, but in the example of *The Rose* this was based on rhyme. Western European and South American

¹ *Cross Currents* was not provided with the name of the author of this song.

students tend to find these exercises quite simple, as the search for a rhyming word necessarily limits the choice. Not all languages have the same rhyming conventions, however, and so what could be an easy prediction exercise for an Arab could be very challenging for a Yugoslav or a Chinese. Under these circumstances, it is perhaps best to vary this work with exercises that demand semantic prediction. An example here is Eric Clapton's *Wonderful Tonight*:

It's late in the evening,
She's wondering what clothes to wear.
She puts on her makeup,
And brushes her long blond hair,
And when she asks me
"Do I look all right?"
Then I say "Yes,
You look wonderful tonight."

Here the very banality of the scene described allows for the successful prediction of almost any word deleted.

Regarding the teaching of grammar, many rock and popular song lyrics offer valuable structure practice also. In the case of the conditional structure being taught by the above-mentioned *Skyhigh* cassette, for example, a song by the '60's group Bread has as its chorus:

I would give everything I own
I'd give up my life, my heart, my home;
I would give everything I own
Just to have you back again.

This verse exemplifies the conditional of impossible condition far better than the rather aimless speculation of the *Skyhigh* authors, Abbs and York: "If I lived on that tropical island . . . I would" The universality of the poignancy of loss gives the Bread song an immediacy in any part of the world, while dreams of idyllic tropical islands may run thin in the poverty of Sri Lanka or the West Indies.

A further advantage of this song, and of the other songs quoted earlier, is that all conform to the accepted rules of "good" grammar. Grammar is an important consideration when we use rock and popular music to teach idioms. Sekara (1985) has used this music to teach idiomatic expressions to Malaysian students. This can be very beneficial, provided the students are cautioned that

idiomatic expressions often have a limited lifespan and may quickly become dated. Teachers should remember, however, that lines like Springsteen's,

I act like I don't remember,
Mary acts like she don't care

are positively counter-productive in that they reinforce a non-grammatical pattern that elementary students are notoriously prone to use. Attention must be paid to this point, for otherwise the teacher is reinforcing error, and a careful distinction should also be made between the idiomatic and the uneducated vernacular.

Teachers have therefore been given a source of authentic teaching material and can select what is best fitted to their present teaching needs. Here I feel that the important factor ought to be the authenticity of the music rather than its contemporary flavour. McClean (1983) has some harsh things to say about "those tedious 'protest songs' which many liberal-minded teachers still regard as the epitome of topicality," but if a song of this genre suits a particular lesson then it ought to be used. To paraphrase Docherty, it is more important to be real than to be recent.

Many times the appropriate choice of a song can stimulate and enhance students' interest in the cultures and societies of English-speaking countries. For example, in the Arab Gulf, *English for Oman Book 7* includes the song *My Darling Clementine* as an incidental item in a unit devoted to gold. This, I feel, is an acceptable use of what would otherwise be a very questionable song. I have used the same technique in playing John Lennon's *Woman* to a class of Gulf Arabs who had just completed the *Kernel Lessons Workbook* unit on Lennon. In this way, material which is culturally weighted against certain groups of students can be made slightly more accessible to them.

Sometimes a song introduced with a different purpose may spontaneously stimulate interest in a special topic. An example here is the song *Don't Cry for Me, Argentina*, which I originally introduced as a reinforcement exercise with idioms. In this case, the class demanded further information about Eva Peron, analysed the lyrics closely to see how they reflected the historical facts and later produced some photographs that they had found in Arabic magazines. Why this response should have occurred in this instance I do not know, but it clearly opens up the possibility of using

song to begin project work or as a basis for individual or group research. With advanced students, moreover, it is possible to combine study of rock songs with study of the videos that so often promote the music. This involves students in discussion of both their own conceptions of the song and whether these differ greatly from the commercial artists' conceptions. This method of teaching can be based on a theme, as in the case where reggae music is used as a source material for a project on the Caribbean and the forms of English spoken there, or in the case of the Michael Jackson *Thriller* video which engendered the spin-off *Making of Thriller* video.

Popular music is a rich source of material for class use, and it would appear from the literature that this music is acceptable to students in all parts of the world. I feel that McClean is correct in regarding the lyrics of some popular songs as a new, and perhaps not yet entirely accepted, form of literature. In this respect, the songs of Elton John, Jim Croce, John Lennon and Bob Dylan are perhaps the most obvious examples. Leonard Cohen walks the uneasy line between popular musician and published poet, and his work is probably too complex for classroom explanation to EFL students below a very advanced level. There can be little doubt, of course, that much popular music will always be unsuitable for use in the classroom because it relies on repetitive phrasing, naive imagery, or because the lyrics are frankly inaudible. However, the best of this music, selected with care, can rise to the level where it becomes intellectually satisfying, and it is this material that we can introduce to our students.

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Bright Ideas

Maintaining Conversations with Open Questions

Marsha J. Chan and Kathryn L. Underdal

We have probably all experienced difficulty in maintaining a conversation. A dialogue that starts successfully may stop abruptly when it does not blossom into a conversation. Our ESL students often feel more shut out of conversations than we do because they lack certain strategies for developing and maintaining a conversation. By learning how to make effective use of *open* questions, ESL students can experience more success in carrying on conversations in English.

In this Bright Idea we will define what we mean by *open* and *closed* questions, explain how we teach open questions, and provide sample activities for classroom use to help students learn how to use open questions.

By *open* question, we mean the type of question that allows the conversational partner a chance to expand on his or her topic or to express his or her ideas. An open question gives the other person a choice of how to answer, whereas a *closed* question tends to be factual and can often be answered with a "yes" or a "no" or a short answer. A closed question often indicates that specific information is desired.

The following interaction is a typical conversation between native speakers and ESL students. It illustrates the dead end nature of closed questions:

Suci : Have you been to Indonesia before?

Mary: No, but I've been to China.

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Suci : When did you go to China?

Mary: Oh, two years ago.

Suci : Did you teach over there?

Mary: Yes, I taught English.

Suci : When did you come back?

Mary: Last July.

In this interaction, Suci uses questions which are easily understood, but she seems more like an interrogator than a friendly conversationalist. Her aim is probably to keep the conversation going, but she lacks the strategies necessary for doing this effectively. Suci might have been more successful in this interaction if she had been able to involve her partner more actively in the conversation. One way she could do this would be by using open questions.

We find that teaching students to use open questions early in their language development really pays off later in their ability to maintain or continue a conversation. Grammatical accuracy, though desirable, is not necessary in order to converse. As soon as students understand the usage of such question words as *how*, *what*, and *why*, we introduce the concept of open and closed questions.

We define open and closed questions through the use of paired questions such as the following:

1A: How many brothers and sisters do you have?

1B: What do you enjoy doing with your family?

2A: What is your favorite hobby?

2B: What do you like about fishing?

As the students give possible answers to each of these questions and others like them, we write their answers on the board. This oral practice and visual reinforcement helps them see the differences: the closed questions (1A, 2A) tend to elicit a single answer, whereas the open questions (1B, 2B) are apt to get multiple and varied answers.

In the next stage, students distinguish between open and closed questions such as the following, marking each question *O* or *C*:

Driving Cars

1. Do Americans drive their cars a lot?
2. Why do Americans drive cars so much?
3. What do you have to know about driving a car before you can get a license?
4. At what age can teenagers get a license to drive in California?
5. How long have you been driving?
6. What do you enjoy most (least) about driving?

When students are able to distinguish between open and closed questions, we let them see the results of an interaction in which open questions are used. We present a dialogue on audio tape, followed by visual reinforcement on the blackboard, on a handout, or on an overhead transparency. In the following conversation, Kathie finds out what sports Marsha is interested in and then gets her to elaborate on why she is interested in one of them:

Kathie : What kind of sports are you interested in, Marsha?

Marsha: I like jogging, swimming, skiing...

Kathie : Skiing? What is it you like about skiing?

Marsha: It's lots of fun, it's exciting, you get to breathe fresh air, and the scenery is so beautiful!

Kathie : Where do you usually ski?

Marsha: Mostly at Heavenly Valley.

Kathie : What's special about Heavenly Valley?

Marsha: Well, my family has a cabin near there, and it's where I first learned to ski. I like to go back there because it's got great slopes, and besides, the view of Lake Tahoe is terrific!

It is useful at this point to discuss conversational topics. ESL students often have trouble deciding on topics (Hatch 1978) so we do a brainstorming exercise in which the students think of topics that they would feel comfortable talking about when getting to know someone. We write a list of these topics on the board as they call them out. After compiling a list of fifteen or twenty topics, the class selects one topic and composes questions that they might ask a person about this topic. No questions are answered; they are merely written on the board. Although all questions are included, students are encouraged to ask open ones.

When the class has done one example together (one topic, ten questions), the students are asked to generate questions for several more of the topics on the board. After they have written their questions (usually as a homework assignment for the next day), the students go to the board and write one of their questions under each of the assigned topic headings. Here are some of the questions students have generated on the topic of sports:

1. What's the difference between soccer and football?
2. How do you play baseball?
3. Did you play tennis last weekend?
4. How come the 49ers lost the last game?
5. Do you feel bad if your team loses a game?

When all the students have written a question under each topic, the class analyzes each question to determine if it is open or closed. This encourages discussion because the class discovers that while most questions can be clearly distinguished as open (1, 2, 4) or closed (3), some are on the borderline and can be interpreted as both (5). After analyzing the questions together, the students work in groups of three or four to review the questions that they each wrote. They read their questions to their group mates, determine if they are open or closed, and mark each question with an *O* or *C*. We circulate to help them with the task of analyzing the question types.

This type of small group work has multiple benefits: students have a concrete topic to discuss, they learn to distinguish between open and closed questions, and they learn from each other different ways to ask questions. After this, the class examines the kinds of questions that tend to be closed and the kinds that tend to be open. By this time they have discovered that closed questions often ask for specific information while open questions do not.

Now the students are ready to practice using open questions. To prepare them for this small group activity, we model the procedure first in front of the whole class. The teacher chooses a topic such as "my trip to China" or "Thanksgiving." The students are then responsible for helping to develop the topic by asking open questions. In this way, everyone has a chance to hear, if not use, open questions in context.

The class then breaks into groups of three or four. Each student chooses a topic that he or she wishes to talk about. The others in the group ask him or her five to eight open questions on the topic. We circulate to guide and evaluate the students. We repeat this activity the next several class periods to help the students learn the open question strategy.

As a follow-up to the in-class, structured activities, the students, alone or in pairs, use the same strategies outside of class in interviews of about ten minutes with friends, school personnel or co-workers. Knowing that ESL students are sometimes reluctant to approach native speakers on their own, we provide an opening gambit, such as: "In our English class, we are learning how to improve our conversation skills. For homework our teacher asked us to talk with an English speaker on one of these topics (the student presents a list of five topics). Would you talk with me(us) for a few minutes?" Following the interviews, the students make

a brief oral report to the class, stating who they talked to, what they talked about, which questions generated the greatest response from the speaker, and how they felt about the interaction as a whole.

This systematic procedure of introducing students to open questions helps them see the effects that various kinds of questions have on conversational interaction. There are many variables involved in a successful conversation (Richards 1980); using open questions is only one of the many strategies that can assist students in their conversations with native and non-native speakers. Knowing how to use open questions provides ESL students with a useful tool for maintaining conversations in English. We have found that teaching students how to use open questions helps them keep the door to conversation open.

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Sports Special: Putting English on the Ball

Teaching Language through Sports

Keith Maurice

When learning a foreign language, people generally yearn for a stimulating context in which to stretch their skills while, at the same time, being protected by a comforting and accepting atmosphere. Whether they are businesspeople who need language for occupational reasons or students who need to pass exams, they all share a common desire for both stimulation and acceptance within the classroom. The use of games, when handled with humor and humanism, has long been recognized intuitively by many teachers as a valuable way of getting learners more actively involved in classroom activities. Games can release learners from the drudgery of attending class by serving to make learning activities exciting 'events' shared by all.

Sports have a universal appeal. The Olympics and other major sporting spectacles tend to draw out all sorts of passions from people who are otherwise calm and collected. In many countries, where competition is a way of life in education and business, sport serves as a release from daily pressures. It relieves the mind while offering pleasant stimulation and instant thrills.

In ESL, many types of sporting activities can be adapted and utilized. These range from 'one-on-one' activities to large team contests. Two will be explained here: *The Comparisons Tournament*, which is original to my knowledge and *Communication Baseball*, which was developed anonymously over 10 years ago with variations made since that time.

The Comparisons Tournament

This technique was devised as a way of introducing and reviewing the use of comparatives and superlatives in ESL classes for

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businesspeople. Later, it was found to serve as an effective ice-breaking activity in intermediate classes and as a complement to other activities in intensive courses. The basic idea is to have the learners compete in an elimination tournament, using any activity imaginable, until one person emerges as the winner and 'champion.'

At the beginning of the activity, the teacher announces what the competition will entail and then introduces a few new words and phrases that relate to sports and to betting, a common adjunct to sports enjoyment. The words and phrases include:

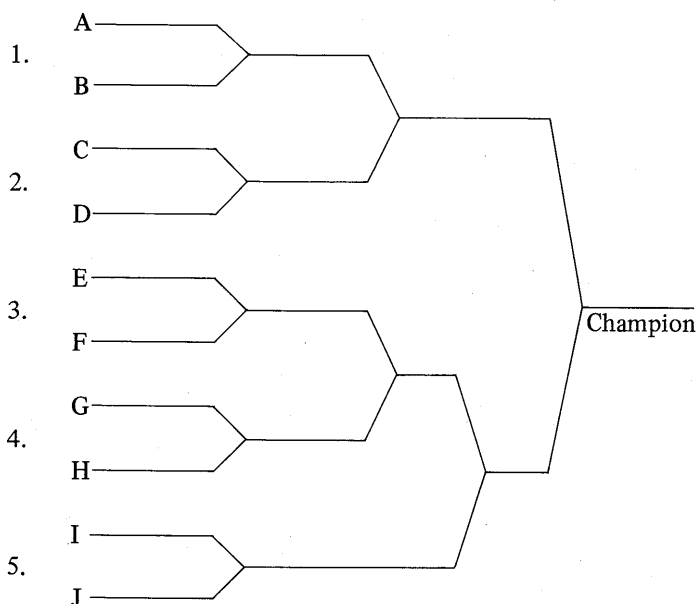
- the odds
- in favor of (6 to 4 in favor of)
- against (6 to 4 against)
- the favorite (slight favorite/heavy favorite)
- the underdog
- upset (as a noun, active verb, and passive verb)

Many learners will also be interested to know that such words and phrases are often used in politics and business as well as in sports. In fact, business in the West incorporates much terminology from the world of sports and games and it could be argued that those learning language for business reasons need as much of this kind of language as they can pick up.

After these phrases are introduced, basic structural patterns such as *is . . . than* and *is not as . . . as* are presented. For example, if a running race is held, the patterns would be *is faster than* and *is not as fast as* whereas if a wristwrestling contest is held, the patterns would be *is stronger than* and *is not as strong as*. Names are placed on a tournament chart to keep track of who is competing against whom. The chart can be used for any number of participants; the following one is set up for ten.

Once the tournament order has been decided, the competition can begin. The first two participants come to the front and bets are placed. The teacher or one of the students asks the other members of the class for their opinions on the comparative talents of the contestants and their predictions on the outcome of the match:

- Who do you think is faster, A or B?
- Can C run faster than D?
- A will win because he is faster.
- C is stronger than D.



After each student has given his or her prediction, the number of people supporting "A" or "B" are tallied and the odds, the favorite, and the underdog are quickly announced. For example, the teacher might say something like "The odds are 7 to 5 in favor 'A' so 'A' is the favorite and 'B' is the underdog." Then the two contestants compete and the results are put on the chart. The teacher can also reinforce the patterns and vocabulary by stating the results: *The underdog upset the favorite; A was faster than B.* As the tournament progresses, the statements can be changed into questions for the students to answer. The teacher can increase student involvement by selecting students to announce the matches and ask for opinions and predictions. The final match of the tournament uses both the comparative form and the superlative form. It also gives the teacher the opportunity to introduce other useful terms, e.g., champion, runner-up, second-best, and so on.

Several notes: First, students seem to enjoy it if the teacher becomes a contestant as well. This helps to break down the status barrier in the classroom and aids in allowing some natural humor to come forth. Secondly, the physical activity involved sometimes seems to help to arouse enthusiasm for other activities later in class. I have seen reserved Japanese businessmen transform themselves

into rugged wrestlers for the tournament and consequently become more enthusiastic about the whole learning environment. Finally, the tournament needs to move quickly or else the activity can become a slow moving drill. It takes about twenty or twenty-five minutes to run through one tournament activity, including explanations, for a class of 10–15 (40–45 minutes for a group of 30). If two such activities are planned, the second can be completed in half the time, since everyone is already familiar with the patterns and the procedure.

Various activities can be used. The two that I use most frequently are wristwrestling and penny pitching. The first is very physical and has been a welcome event whenever it has been used. The second activity, penny pitching, involves throwing a small coin toward the wall—the student whose coin is closest to the wall is the winner. This can serve as a nice complementary activity to wristwrestling since one utilizes strength and quickness and the other emphasizes accuracy. Other alternative activities could include a running race (is faster than), comparing loose change (richer than), and so on.

Communication Baseball

This technique is designed to help students practice listening comprehension and speed up their responses to questions. The class is divided into two teams, with a minimum of four per team. Each team takes turn 'batting,' i.e., answering questions from the pitcher. The questions can be adapted to fit a wide variety of content needs. They can come from specific lessons or be general checks on grammar, vocabulary, phonology, culture, current events, technical matters, or whatever the focus of the English course and interest of the students happen to be. Because baseball is popular in the U.S., Japan, Taiwan, and certain parts of Central and South America, the activity tends to be most successful with language learners from these regions. In my experience, Japanese businessmen widely perceived the activity as an enjoyable way to practice their listening and responding skills.

Before class, it is necessary for the teacher to develop an extensive set of questions, divided into four categories of escalating difficulty (single, double, triple, and home run). A set of 40 'single questions,' 40 'double questions,' 25 'triple questions,' and 15 'home run questions' is usually sufficient for a game. (Sample

questions are listed in the Appendix). A set of rules and guidelines also needs to be determined. The following variation, with the teacher serving as 'pitcher' has worked well:

1. Each batter chooses the difficulty of the question that he or she will answer. The pitcher first asks "What are you trying to hit?" and then, when the batter decides, asks the question from the designated category.

2. No question is repeated; the batter only gets one chance.

3. The batter has six seconds to formulate an answer.

4. If the batter answers correctly, he or she goes to the designated base; if the batter answers incorrectly, he or she is 'out'; if the batter fails to respond at all in six seconds, a 'double play' is recorded and the team is penalized with an extra out.

5. Sometimes batters may get second chances. For example, if a batter has answered incorrectly, the pitcher may ask the team 'in the field' to answer; if nobody from the other team can answer, the batter may be asked another question or may be allowed to go to first base 'on an error'.

6. Whenever a question cannot be answered correctly, the pitcher announces the answer.

Many variations are possible. Some teachers may choose to repeat questions for the students. This can be particularly helpful in giving students practice in using "I beg your pardon," "Could you repeat that again, please?" or some other device for asking for repetition or clarification. In another variation, teachers may choose to shorten or lengthen the time given to fit the needs of their own students. The idea of having a time limit is valuable, however, in that it forces students to respond within a socially acceptable period of time. If no time limit is given, some students may take 15-20 seconds to answer, which turns the activity into a deadening drill and the moment into one of painful embarrassment for the one who can not answer. The extra penalty given for silence reinforces that it is better to say "I don't know" than it is to remain silent and slow up the game (and communication).

Setting up the activity

1. Explain the activity's purpose, its rules and the roles of the players.

2. Choose two team captains.

3. Have a coin toss to see who chooses the first player, after which each captain alternates in choosing players.

4. Draw a scoreboard on the blackboard, and perhaps choose team names.

5. Physically arrange the room to allow a baseball diamond to be simulated. Having people physically up and moving seems to help generate a sporting spirit in the students.

6. Have a second coin toss to determine which team will bat first and which will bat last.

7. Have the non-batting team take their places in the field, or at least separate from the batting team, with one player in charge of keeping score for the other team.

8. Begin play, with the teacher taking the pitcher's 'mound'.

The game should have a time limit and move quickly; there is rarely time to play a complete nine-inning game. A game can be a set number of innings (3 or 5) or a set amount of time (40 minutes). The tempo of a game can be increased by initiating a series of fastballs (questions asked rapidly) and/or curveballs (trick questions). These can also be used to make sure that one team does not take an overwhelming lead.

There are many other variations that can be used to make this activity fit the purposes of particular classes. Students can be assigned to take the role of 'pitcher' or the pitcher can give commands as well as ask questions. In one intensive course for businessmen where the video/text of *English for Business: The Bellcrest Story* was used, changes were made in the technique of asking questions. Instead of the usual format, the *Bellcrest* comprehension questions were used in the game, which helped to enliven the classroom atmosphere while covering the same material.

Final Remarks

Using sports as a framework for activities in the classroom can aid in maintaining motivation and energy and dispelling boredom. When students are given challenges in a comfortable context, they usually react enthusiastically. Of course, for these activities to be effective, the teacher needs that energy and enthusiasm as well. The teacher will find that students welcome such activities as part of their language program. Used appropriately, language sports encourage communication and make organized language learning more satisfying.

APPENDIX

Sample Questions for Communication Baseball

(Note: the difficulty of questions will depend on the students' proficiencies)

Single questions

1. Is 17 larger than 50? (no)
2. What is the sixth letter of the alphabet? (f)
3. What is the opposite of dark? (light)
4. Shake my hand. (a command requiring an action)
5. How old is your wife/husband?
6. How long have you worked for _____?
7. What do you like to do in your spare time?
8. What is your boss' name?

Double questions

1. Show me your driver's license. (a command requiring an action)
2. Show me your wife's driver's license. (a 'curveball': the correct response would normally be that he doesn't have it)
3. With what do you blink? (your eyes)
4. What is an antonym of 'love'? (hate)
5. What is a synonym of company? (corporation, firm...)
6. Complete this proverb: "Time is _____." (money)
7. What should I do if I say something rude to you? (apologize)
8. Can you read a book with your ears closed? (a curveball)

Triple questions

1. Sit down, put your right hand on your right hip and your left hand on your right shoulder. (a command requiring action—good at the regular pace and as a fastball)
2. Can you read upside down? (if the student says yes, make him or her prove it)
3. Explain the difference between prejudice and discrimination. (The former refers to an attitude or frame of mind while the latter describes an action)
4. Is the next sentence grammatically correct? "If I was you, I would buy a computer." (no, though 'was' is sometimes used in place of 'were' in casual spoken speech) If the teacher wants to make it more difficult, he or she can have the student correct the sentence.

Home run questions

1. Is this room lit by incandescent or fluorescent lights? An additional question might be to describe the difference between the two.

2. What is the smallest room in the world? (a mushroom—any riddle fits very well here)
3. What does the proverb “Don’t count your chickens until they’re hatched” mean?
4. What are the three biggest problems in your company or country?
5. How would you solve one of those problems?

Conversational Sports

Beverley Curran and Steve Mierzejewski

The following three ideas all have the same goal—to get students talking. The first game, Conversational Tennis, is played one-on-one. The object is to improve fluency and conversational strategies. The goal is the same in the next game, Conversational Volleyball, but it is played with teams, rather than individually. Finally, we would like to present some variations on Keith Maurice's previous Bright Idea, "Communication Baseball."¹

Conversational Tennis

Conversational Tennis is designed to increase fluency in one-on-one conversations and to give students an awareness of conversational strategies. It can be used with students at all levels.

Before playing, it should be stressed that the purpose of the game is to help them respond more quickly in English and learn conversational strategies. The procedure is as follows:

- 1) Each student writes two or three topics on separate pieces of paper. If they have trouble thinking of topics, they may write simple nouns. When the students have finished, the teacher collects the pieces of paper. These are the topics to be used in the game.

- 2) Two students of equal ability are chosen to play an exhibition game. One student is given a topic, and he or she serves by starting a conversation on that topic. The other student must reply within 5 seconds, or the opponent gets a point. A *non-sequitur* response also scores a point for the opponent. A game is generally played to three points. The value of the topic can be changed (three, four, or five points) to make the game more exciting and provide for the possibility of a come-from-behind win.

- 3) The time limit is arbitrary. It can be adjusted according to the level of the class.

¹ See "Communication Baseball" (Keith Maurice) in this issue.

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4) The teacher is the referee. If the conversation becomes 'unnatural,' the referee stops the contest and awards a point to the opposition.

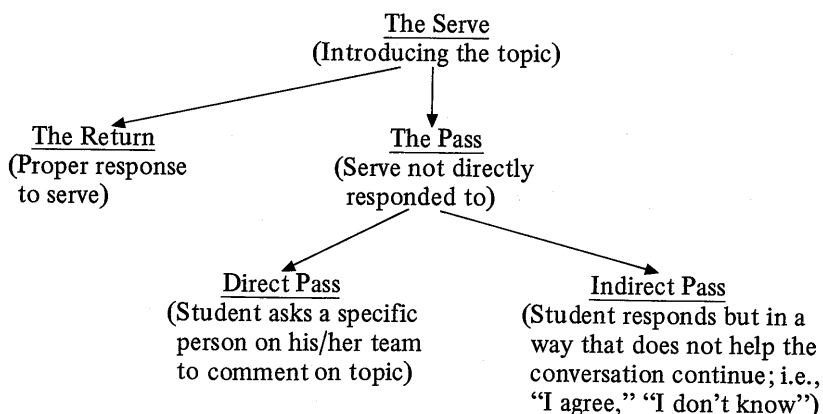
5) The referee can adjust the difficulty of a game by using discretion when judging whether a conversation is 'natural' or not. The time clock can also be ignored to help keep the underdog in the game. For large classes, a third student may serve as referee and time keeper. This student may also make comments and suggestions concerning conversational strategies after the match.

It is helpful to explain that the server should not continue to ask questions which are easy for the opponent to answer.² The students should be reminded that in natural conversations there are patterns other than question-answer, question-answer.

Conversational Volleyball

Conversational Volleyball was devised for students who have good English speaking ability but are reluctant to use this ability in group settings. It provides conversation management within a competitive team setting. This setting prepares the students for fast-paced conversations by speeding up their responses.

If students have a clear idea of the game of volleyball, the teacher's explanation of this activity will be greatly simplified. In volleyball there is the serve, the pass, and the return. These elements are directly transferred to the conversational game. The following diagram presents the game in its basic form.



²For a discussion of questioning strategies, see "Maintaining Conversations with Open Questions" (Marsha Chan and Kathryn Underdal) in this issue.

Time Limit: All responses (returns or passes) must be made within a previously agreed upon time limit. Once a student is speaking, time is not a factor and a student can speak for any length of time. Time limits should be adjusted to class level. Advanced students may want to attempt time limits approaching the pause length found in native speaker conversations (approximately two seconds). The teacher should use visible hand signals to count the seconds so that students are aware of the amount of time that has passed.

The Serve: Initially the teacher should serve the topic to one team. Anyone on that team may respond. The first topics should be simple (for example, "I think the most beautiful place in Japan is . . .") but may, once the game is learned, become as difficult as "What is your opinion on capital punishment?" Eventually, each team can devise their own topics to serve. Certainly these topics should not be so esoteric as to prevent a return (for example, "What do you think about the current plight of the semiconductor industry?"), and students should realize this limitation. The teacher is the judge and must determine if any serve is "out of bounds."

The Return: Any proper response, comment, or question on the topic constitutes a proper return. Conversationally speaking, the return should in some way contribute to the continuation of the conversation. Again, the teacher should judge which are or are not proper responses. A student may single out a member of the opposing team to "hit" his return to (for example, "I think Kyoto is the most beautiful place in Japan, what do you think Mr. X?").

The Pass: 1) Direct Pass—One member of a team, unable to think of a response but desiring to continue the conversation (to prevent his team from losing a point), may "save" the conversation by asking a fellow teammate his or her opinion. This should be done using phrases such as "I'm not sure. Could you answer that, Toshi?" The person chosen may return the ball or pass it to another teammate. As in volleyball, only three hits are allowed on a side, so the second person passed to must respond in a way which returns the ball or a point is lost.

2) Indirect Pass (save)—This is a true save in that one person merely keeps the ball alive so that someone else may hit it or pass it. Comments such as "I don't know," "I agree," or "Let me see,"

simply save the conversation but do not contribute to its continuance.

The teacher should point to the side which has the ball. This enables the respondents to see whether what they said returned the ball or not. Once the students get the feel of the game, the teacher will find that he or she is, in reality, guiding the conversation through simple use of a series of hand signals. Points are scored when one team fails to respond appropriately within the allotted time. A game can be from three to five points.

Variations on Communication Baseball

"Communication Baseball" was adapted for an upper basic/lower intermediate class to encourage fluency, practice listening comprehension, speed up responses to questions, and to encourage grammatical accuracy. To do this, the use of the time limit was changed. The time limit was useful to encourage the use of conversational gambits such as "Could you repeat that please?" in place of silence. However, a time limit was not used after the question was repeated or clarified because the pressure of answering quickly inhibited accuracy.

The game can be played effectively with three per team, with the teacher playing the role of pitcher. This arrangement makes it necessary for at least one player to request an "extra base hit" in order to bring his teammate home. If the game is played with four persons per team, one of the students should serve as pitcher. Questions and answers can be written on colour-coded cards and placed in a box. Thus, selection is random and the correct answer is readily available to the pitcher.

When both the batter and the opposing team are unable to answer a question correctly, the pitcher should announce the correct answer. A "foul ball" rule can also be established which allows the teacher to act as an umpire and which gives the students a chance to self-correct an error in grammar or syntax.

As a follow-up to "Communication Baseball" students can write as many questions and answers as they can remember. Alternatively, they can be given a list of the questions for review.

Rod Baseball

Developed by Francis Bailey

Written by Paul Lehnert

Purpose

Rod Baseball is an activity designed to give students the opportunity to practice using modals and conditionals. Cuisinaire rods (colored pieces of wood in different sizes) are used to represent a baseball field and players. Situations (literally, baseball plays) are then set up that require students to use modals that suggest obligatory (must/have to), optional (can/could/might), or recommended (should) behaviour. Situations are also set up in which conditional structures (with modals embedded) can be used.

Rod Baseball has been used in small classes of lower to upper intermediate students. The exercise can be used to either introduce modals or to reinforce them in conjunction with conditional structures. Because it has been used in Japan where the majority of the students are familiar with baseball, it was not necessary to go over the rules of the game. In a different situation the teacher would either have to elaborate on the rules, or adapt the exercise to a game known to the students.

Procedures

The teacher begins by laying out the rods in the shape of a baseball diamond with a team in the field and one at bat. For example, white rods can be used to represent the four bases. Yellow rods can be the base lines. Red rods can represent the team in the field. A pink rod can be the batter. As the teacher is setting up the field, it might be beneficial to go over relevant baseball vocabulary (position names, bases, base runner, left field, bunt, intentional walk, and so on) because having to introduce or clarify these terms later can slow down the "game" considerably. As many students

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are very familiar with the game, they usually understand the implications of various situations. The teacher then explains the first situation and illustrates it by moving the rods around the field. Students are then asked questions about the situation. They reply using the target structures:

- T: A runner is on first base and a long pop fly is hit into left field.
What can the batter do?
S: He must run to first base.
T: What could the runner do?
S: He could run to second base. He might wait at first base.
T: What should he do?
S: He should wait at first base.

From this modal usage students can usually see the differences in meaning between the modals. The teacher then sets up a few more situations (for example, a long fly ball with a man on third, a squeeze bunt, or a double play situation) and asks the same type of question as in the previous example. When the teacher feels that the students understand, they are asked to set up their own situations. Students familiar with baseball can usually think of many good situations. Even if the teacher is not familiar with baseball, the activity is able to progress smoothly.

Similar situations can be used with the conditional:

- T: There is a runner on first and one out. If the batter hits a fly ball, what will happen? If he hits a grounder, what will happen?
S: If he hits a ground ball, the shortstop will/could/might/should/would catch it and go for a double play.

Students can also be asked to develop their own strategies by putting them into the position of manager:

- T: If you were the manager of the team in the field, what would you do?
S: I'd move the players for a right field hit.
T: If you were the manager of the batting team, what would you do now?
S: I'd have the batter try a squeeze bunt.

This continues, with the two managers giving a strategy to counter the opposition. Past modals can also be practiced by putting the entire exercise into the past tense:

T: Yesterday, there was a game between the Tigers and the Whales. The Whales won, 2-1. With two outs and a man on base, the lead batter popped out to center field. What might have happened if he hadn't popped out?

S: The Tigers might have been able to win. The second batter might have got a hit.

If you are teaching in a situation where not everyone is familiar with baseball, you can ask the students who understand the game to explain it to those who do not (or to a teacher). If there are enough students, they can be divided into two groups: one group works on the basic rules of baseball and the other group prepares an explanation of an inning of baseball. They can use the rods to explain the general outline of the game. This gives the students the opportunity to explain something in a realistic situation and also to practice using gambits of clarification and repetition. It could also be used to teach sequence:

First the shortstop throws to second base. Then, the second baseman throws to first base, and the result is a double play.

This exercise has been used extensively and with great success. The students have a chance to use authentic language in a situation which they understand and are interested in. Although the target language is modals and conditionals, other structures such as probability and passives often arise. Batter up!

Book Reviews

THE INPUT HYPOTHESIS: ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS.
Stephen D. Krashen. New York: Longman, 1985. Pp. 120.

This is the latest in a series of articles and books by the originator of perhaps the most well-known theory of second language acquisition. Krashen calls the Input Hypothesis "the most important part of the theory" (p.vii). Briefly, it states that language is acquired only through the understanding of meaningful messages or "comprehensible input." Other hypotheses linked to this theory are the Acquisition-Learning Hypothesis, which separates conscious learning from subconscious acquisition; the Natural Order Hypothesis, which states that the rules of a language are acquired in a predictable sequence; the Monitor Hypothesis, which proposes that a learner consciously concerned with language production relies more on learned rules; and the Affective Filter Hypothesis, which states that all input is modified by the emotional or psychological state of the learner.

The book is divided into three main parts; "The Input Hypothesis," "Some Current Issues," and "Implications." There is little differentiation between parts one and two, however, as both, in essence, present support for the Input Hypothesis against counter claims. The first part, though, does present a detailed look at the hypothesis in the light of what is known about language acquisition, while the second more directly answers research which is said to be evidence against the Input Hypothesis. The third part, Implications, moves the hypothesis into the classroom and presents a program for its application to various teaching situations.

The tone of the book is decidedly defensive. From the beginning, it is clear that the book was written in an attempt to defend the Input Hypothesis and Krashen's second language acquisition theory from increasing attack. There is nothing particularly wrong with this approach, of course. The critical reader must only shift his focus and be guided by the question: Is the position adequately and fairly defended? That is, are the opposing views clearly and accurately given and is the defense made in a logical manner? Unfortunately Krashen's defense does not meet this criteria.

One soon finds that neither Krashen's defense of his own theory nor his attacks on contrasting theories are adequate. When he attacks the "learning becomes acquisition" theory, more commonly known as the information processing model of learning, Krashen claims that the proponents of this theory "provide no real evidence for it" (p.41). Yet, in reality, there has been a great deal of evidence provided in support of the information processing model dating from before its formulation by Craik and Lockhart in 1972. (See also LaBerge and Samuels, 1974, Shiffrin and Schneider, 1977, as cited in Byrnes and Wingfield, 1981; and as related to Krashen's theory, McLaughlin, 1978, McLaughlin, Rossman, and McLeod, 1983, cited in Krashen, 1985.) But Krashen either is not aware of this evidence, refuses to recognize it as "real evidence," or chooses not to talk about it.

Krashen's argument is laden with contradictory statements. As another reason for rejecting the "learning becomes acquisition" model, Krashen states that "it violates Occam's Razor, the principle in science that the simplest solution to account for the data is the best solution and closer to reality" (p.41). In terms of the Input Hypothesis, Krashen states that "There is no need to add anything to it . . . there is nothing the current theory cannot handle on its own" (p.41), implying that the Input Hypothesis conforms to Occam's Razor. Yet Krashen weakens his own argument when he immediately contradicts Occam's Razor himself by adding another hypothesis to his already heavily laden theory of second language acquisition. The new hypothesis is called the Output Filter, which Krashen felt was necessary to "strengthen" the Input Hypothesis (p.14). "When current theory is unable to accommodate phenomena in a satisfactory way, however, strengthening is required" (p.44). But it is never made clear why Krashen called the Output Filter a "strengthening," while the uniting of acquisition and learning in the information processing model is demeaned as a violation of Occam's Razor.

Maintaining the acquisition-learning dichotomy forces Krashen to take other positions that are becoming more and more untenable in the face of mounting empirical evidence to the contrary. There is, for example, simply too much evidence against Krashen's position that a learner's first language does not affect his learning of a second language. Language transfer in all linguistic domains has been shown to exist, despite Krashen's assertion in the glossary that

“this term does not exist in current theory” (p.102). Krashen admits, however, that if transfer exists then pure acquisition of a second language becomes an impossibility. Some learning via the application of previously learned rules must be taking place. In addition, language transfer supports hypothesis testing as perhaps a more viable theory of language learning. That is, one tests hypotheses about the target language through structures and strategies already learned in the first language. When these hypotheses test positive, they are retained in the learner’s interlanguage.

Hypothesis testing also explains the concept of fossilization. If a particular hypothesis appears to be understood by a native speaker, it is retained in the learner’s interlanguage even though it may contain linguistically incorrect elements. Most native speakers are reluctant to correct each and every mistake made by non-native speakers (Day et al. 1982), and they do so only when meaning is in question. But without such close correction, errors will stabilize in the learner’s interlanguage. In time such errors will be ineradicable, and the student is then said to have fossilized in that linguistic area of his interlanguage.

Thus, the question of error correction in the classroom becomes an important issue. Krashen discourages error correction. For him, communicative competence is the most important goal of instruction. But Krashen seems to disregard the opinions of other researchers such as Vigil and Oller (Vigil and Oller 1976), who suggest that perhaps fossilization can only be destabilized by bringing those errors that are out of conscious awareness directly to the learner’s attention, thereby forcing the learner to monitor the production of certain linguistic components. Eventually, through mechanisms suggested by Information Processing Theory, such monitoring will become automatized and deviant forms will be replaced.

The intricate linking of all of the above elements is based upon the conscious use of hypothesis testing to develop one’s speaking ability. Krashen, however, accepts hypothesis testing only as a “subconscious” process that “does not require production, nor does it involve communicative success” (p.36). It is not clear why Krashen would retain the concept of hypothesis testing at all, since he has chosen to give it such a useless role.

If hypothesis testing does not lead to fossilization, how is the phenomenon explained? In *The Input Hypothesis*, Krashen does

deal with the fossilization issue, but he explains it as being caused by a "lack of good comprehensible input" (p.48). Thus, nothing is really explained. Question: Why does a student fossilize? Answer: Due to a lack of comprehensible input. Question: How do I know what is comprehensible input? Answer: When the student fossilizes you will know that the input to him has not been comprehensible.

Krashen uses this circular reasoning throughout the book wherever he tries to counter research which tends to detract from his theory. For example, Krashen states "other methods that have been compared to traditional approaches and demonstrated to be *significantly* and *clearly* better are Terrell's Natural Approach . . . and Lozanov's Suggestopedia" (p.14) (emphasis mine). Yet research conducted by Wagner and Tilney in 1983 which compared Superlearning (Suggestopedia) with more traditional classroom methods found that "those subjects taught by traditional methods learned significantly more vocabulary than those taught according to Superlearning principles" (Richards 1984). Krashen's comment on this research (found in the footnotes at the end of the chapter) is that "this study does not, in my opinion, provide any kind of test of Suggestopedia or Superlearning. The most obvious flaw was that only vocabulary was involved, while the essential ingredient for language acquisition, comprehensible input, was completely lacking." Yet, Suggestopedia's main claim is its ability to teach a large number of vocabulary items in a relatively short period of time. It would seem to me that to challenge Suggestopedia on one of its strongest points is more than fair. Using Krashen's logic, the implication must be that since more learning took place through traditional methods, those methods and not Suggestopedia contained more comprehensible input, at least in the area of vocabulary.

In fact, this is exactly how Krashen explained a study conducted by Higgs and Clifford (1981). "Higgs and Clifford note that individuals who have had formal classes are less prone to early fossilization. The theory predicts that these classes helped because they provided good comprehensible input . . ." (p.48). If learning takes place in a way that is not predicted by the Natural Approach, Krashen claims that there really *was* comprehensible input. But if learning does not take place as expected, then Krashen claims there was simply not enough comprehensible input. Thus, there is no escape from Krashen's circular reasoning. Comprehensible input can apparently be used to explain the results of any research.

These questions bring us to the true crux of the matter. Just what precisely *is* comprehensible input? Krashen defines it simply as "messages the acquirer is able to understand" (p.101). But how does this help us as teachers? How can we be sure that what we teach lives up to this standard? The problems of delineating comprehensibility or meaningfulness have been dealt with in other places and I do not wish to go into much detail here other than to say that the elusive nature of its description renders the concept itself empty and meaningless. Even with frequent needs analysis, we sometimes fail to touch the meaningful chord. This is due to the unfortunate fact that our students do not always know what messages will carry the most meaning (hence learning) for them. Witness the fact that a store clerk's "What did you say?" will often produce a far greater impact on our learners than all our best laid lesson plans.

There are other drawbacks to *The Input Hypothesis* as well. Krashen's inability to give us a useful definition of comprehensible input is only one of them. Furthermore, Krashen does not offer the reader any proof that "acquisition is . . . the only path to true competence" (p.55). Krashen admits that proof "may be impossible." However, he suggests that this is no reason for not applying the theory: "I think it would be unwise to wait for this kind of progress before considering application of the Input Hypothesis and the theoretical constructs associated with it" (p.68). Krashen then refers to Reynolds (1971) in support of the view that proof need not be necessary. However, I cannot imagine another field in which such an idea would gain credence. If a surgeon informed you that he was trying a new but unproven technique on your kidney, you probably would not like the idea. Of course, the analogy is extreme, but we, as teachers, *are* dealing with the human mind and as true professionals we want to reach that mind in the best ways that we can find, that is, in ways that have been empirically found to be the most effective in producing learning.

In the last section of the book, Krashen deals with the implications of his theory for teachers and specific teaching situations. The suggestions are modest in the light of the anti-grammarian tone of some parts of the book. In fact, one may be surprised to see grammar playing such a strong role in Krashen's programs. This, for example, is the outline for a university ESL program:

- I. General language teaching (often done in home country)
 - A. Natural Approach: focus on topics of general interest
 - B. Grammar study for Monitor use
- II. Sheltered subject-matter teaching
 - A. Early: short courses in areas of interest e.g. computer operation, maths review, typing
 - B. Grammar study
 - 1. continued study for Monitor use
 - 2. as subject matter (linguistics)
- III. Partial mainstream: courses in area of specialization (p.76)

The program seems practical and well-balanced. I do, however, question its claims that "an adult foreign-language student, for example, who completes a year of Natural Approach Spanish at the university will be able to converse comfortably with a native speaker (who adjusts his speaking a bit to the level of the student) on a variety of everyday topics" (p.71). Krashen then qualifies this. "But our student will have limitations: he will not be able to use the telephone easily, read the classics with comfort, and will certainly not be in a position to study at the University of Mexico. *And it is not clear that more language teaching, even if it is enlightened, will help the situation*" (p.71) (emphasis mine). If this is true, then one might reasonably ask if the program has, indeed, been a success. That is, will an adult student be satisfied with a limited ability to converse on a limited number of everyday topics? If the situation is impervious to further instruction and cannot be improved, have we, in fact, succeeded as teachers? For it is success that is the criterion for judging the practical value of a theory. As Krashen himself notes, "if attempts to apply the theory in practice are not successful, we have good reason to doubt its validity" (p.69).

The Input Hypothesis stems from a theory which states that there is an acquisition/learning distinction and that acquisition is better. Krashen has attempted to fit scientific and empirical data to his theory rather than having the scientific and empirical data supply the momentum for his theory's alteration. This lack of a dynamic communication between research and Krashen's ideas appears to have led to the current plight of the Input Hypothesis.

But even beyond this problem of research interpretation, Krashen and other pure acquisitionists will continue to be haunted by the problem of totally separating acquisition from learning.

For in order to make acquisition distinct from learning, some subconscious mechanism of language intake must be posited. But by its very nature, a pure subconscious process is impossible to prove. Conscious learning is undisputed even by Krashen. But what is "subconscious learning" or acquisition, and how does it work?

This book never attempts to delve into an explanation of the mechanics of acquisition. Though the key to this type of learning is said to be comprehensible input, it is not explained how such input is subconsciously processed or why it is critical. No connection is made to current brain research. Much is left to be accepted on faith. In the glossary, for example, one may be surprised to find that applied linguistics is "of limited value in pedagogy" (p.100), yet one is never told why we should accept this sanction.

This brings up an important point. The reader is well-advised to read both the footnotes and the glossary in this book. Much of the "battle" is waged in these zones (of the 99 pages of the text, 30 of them are in the form of footnotes in fine print). Again, the reader should be cautious of the interpretation of some of the research mentioned here. Personal scrutiny of the original research is advised.

With all its limitations, what is the future of the Input Hypothesis? If Krashen continues to hold to untenable positions, he will be forced into more and more extreme defenses. Such defenses would complete the undermining of his theory's credibility. If comprehensible input is a key element in language learning, then the reason for this must be clearly explained. It is not axiomatic. Instead of attaching new hypotheses to the theory to explain conflicting data, perhaps it might be better for Krashen to fill in the gaps in the theory as it now exists. Can it be connected to neuro-linguistic data? Can it incorporate language transfer? Can it fit into a model of conscious learning while maintaining its distinct flavor? A consolidation of the elements of Krashen's theory with the more viable elements of other theories would be an important advance in second language learning and teaching.

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BASICS IN LISTENING: SHORT TASKS FOR LISTENING DEVELOPMENT. Hiroshi Asano, Munetsugu Uruno, and Michael Rost. Tokyo: Lingual House, 1985. Student Workbook. Pp. 77; Teacher's Manual. Pp. 148; and 3 Cassettes.

Basics in Listening is the latest in a series of listening courses from Lingual House Publishing Company. According to the authors, it is designed to help beginning students develop listening skills such as "following instructions, taking messages, understanding descriptions, solving arithmetic and spatial problems, making inferences and noting main ideas and themes." It is successful in all of these areas, though it would be better described as a course for false beginners, i.e., students who have some experience in reading, writing, and translation but little experience in conversation. I had an opportunity to use the course with adult Japanese students who scored between 50 and 150 for the listening segment of the TOEIC exam. The class met twice per week for two hours each session. In general the course was quite successful and easy to use.¹

Basics in Listening includes a workbook divided into twenty-five units of three sections each, an instruction manual with tape-scripts, exercise answers and suggestions for additional exercises, and three sixty-minute tapes with a variety of native speaker dialects. The course is obviously made for Japanese EFL students. Though the workbook and tapes use only English, the instruction manual is bilingual and some of the units use phonemic contrasts especially targeted at Japanese students of English. Nevertheless, the course is suitable to most adult English language learners.

Each unit is designed to be completed in one class hour, that is, each section of a unit takes 10-15 minutes. These are preceded by a five minute preview of selected vocabulary items which are to be introduced by the teacher. Along with suggestions for introducing this vocabulary, the instruction manual also provides follow up activities to reinforce the material in each unit. My class had no difficulty completing the initial units in 40-50 minutes, but the later units often required a full hour due to the necessity of repeated playing of the more difficult segments of the tape.

Basics in Listening avoids faults which can be found in many other listening courses for beginning EFL/ESL students. All such

¹ I was also able to test final units of the course with students who scored between 200 and 235 for the listening segment of the TOEIC. For these students, the course seemed quite easy.

courses are obliged to make some concessions for speed and vocabulary selection. However, there is a point at which such concessions become patronizing. More important than this insult to the maturity of adult students is the fact that language learned in this way is useless, since students are not likely to hear such utterances outside of their language laboratory headphones.

The concessions which are made in *Basics in Listening* are of the order which would normally be made by native speakers communicating with non-native speakers. Phonological concessions are minimized in favor of lexical, syntactic, and semantic concessions. In most listening segments, speed is only somewhat reduced and there are slight pauses between syntactic units. Vowel neutralization and reduced forms are limited in the initial units. Lexical range is controlled and carefully previewed prior to each exercise. Syntax is simplified by using shorter phrase structures. From unit to unit and, within each unit, from the first section to the third section, there is a progression from easier to more difficult language, from greater to lesser concessions. The final sections of later units approach normal enunciation.

There are usually contextual clues to assist students in coping with these minimal concessions and easing the transition from simpler to more difficult passages. For example, the elision of the subject and copula in (1) below is presented in a clear visual and lexical context.

- (1) The egg is in the cup.
The egg's in the cup.
[ðə egz in ðə kʌp]
- (2) The eggs are next to the cup.
[ðə egz ɑ:r nekst tu: ðə kʌp]

Students are presented with pictures of various arrangements of eggs and cups. They must select one of two pictures which corresponds to a description on the tape. Since students are already familiar with the prepositions 'in' and 'next to' from a previous exercise, it is easy for them to recognize that the same phone [z] can be used to mean either the copula 'is' or 'plurality'. In fact, my students spontaneously asked about this ambiguity, and the resulting discussion prepared them for dealing with other kinds of reductions which came up in subsequent exercises.

Although most of the exercises are well-organized, a few abandon the use of multiple contextual clues. Students may be asked to identify a specific lexical item or syntactic structure in a series of semantically unrelated sentences. One section of a unit concentrating on question formation illustrates this lapse. The first series below is a transcript of part of a series of ten brief dialogues which students hear on the tape. In their workbooks, students must identify the interrogative pronoun used by choosing one of two written options. Because this series is a well-connected progression which develops a kind of story, it is relatively easy for them to select the correct choice despite the minimal phonological concessions made by the speakers on the tape.

1. A: She gave me something.
B: What?
A: This envelope.
2. A: I have to give it to someone.
B: Who?
A: You.
3. A: There's something inside it.
B: What?
A: A letter.

However, this series of ten dialogues is followed by a second series of near random dialogues. As in the previous exercise, students are presented with multiple choice options of possible referents for the statement and question that they hear on the tape.

1. A: I saw a very famous person yesterday.
B: Who?
2. A: Let's go out tonight.
B: Where to?
3. A: I'd like some coffee please.
B: When?

Although this latter series lacks the multiple contextual clues of the first series, it has the merit of requiring students to think in terms of possible responses to segments of language rather than merely identify lexical items or strings which have been heard. This constitutes a first step toward developing active strategies demanded by genuine communication. Further, although the first series constitutes a connected series by which students can

delimit and anticipate a subsequent iteration of the series, it is scarcely an example of authentic speech. Though the importance of context for language acquisition is evident, it is not clear that contrived clues are more beneficial in the long run than the less coherent signals of authentic communication. Indeed, considering the beginning student's limited comprehension, authentic speech, with its many false starts, ellipses and colloquialisms, may be better approximated by the latter series above. To construct a context for this series, while maintaining the focus on question formation, would probably entail so many contrivances as to undercut the overall goal of *Basics in Listening*—to expose beginning students to authentic listening tasks to the greatest extent possible.

The important point here is not the precise combination of phonological, syntactic, and semantic concessions which best determines this extent. This certainly varies from one group of students to another. Rather, in the absence of abundant contextual clues, the minimal phonological concessions made some of the exercises too difficult for my students, especially beyond the first six units. The increase in difficulty from the first section to the third section of a unit sometimes outpaced the progress of the students. As mentioned above, I found that more class time was required to complete a unit as the course progressed. Indeed, it was necessary to abandon the third section of some units and reserve it for a review lesson at a later stage in the course. The authors anticipate this possibility and suggest that lessons may be taught in a variety of sequences, e.g., 1:1, 1:2, 1:3, 2:1, 2:2, etc., or 1:1, 2:1, 3:1, 1:2, 2:2, etc. This certainly adds a degree of flexibility for adjusting to different rates of student progress which many listening courses fail to provide.

These problems of difficulty and pacing were in part due to the limitations of adult education. My students had only moderate motivation to progress and little contact with English outside of the classroom. I think that students enrolled in a full-time curriculum with more frequent exposure to English would not experience these difficulties. In such a curriculum, students could complete two or three units per week. Finally, I would like to emphasize that this problem was a minor one which was easy to work around. I was soon able to anticipate sections which would be too difficult for the students and use this time to review earlier

exercises. This modular structure results from the overall curriculum design of the course.

Basics in Listening is based on a notional/functional approach. Each unit has a semantic focus, covering general themes such as spatial relations, comparison, or processes, rather than a syntactic, lexical, or phonological focus.² In terms of functional language, each unit exposes students to a range of phrases which may be used to communicate information, opinions, or attitudes about each notion. For example, in the unit on social talk, students listen to phrases which cover a range from strong agreement to ambivalence to strong disagreement.

There are several advantages to this approach. First, it is easy to integrate units with other lessons in a comprehensive curriculum. Though there is a progression from easier to more difficult listening segments from unit to unit, the initial sections of advanced units, e.g., 17:1 or 18:1, are comparable to the advanced sections of initial units, e.g., 7:3 or 8:3. This allows a good deal of flexibility in selecting exercises to compliment conversation, reading, writing, or translation lessons. In the same way, it is easy to use lessons from a general curriculum to compliment and expand units from *Basics in Listening*. In other words, the course can be used to supplement other already established texts in a program or as a central text around which a program may be constructed.

A second advantage of the notional/functional approach is that it teaches students to have a flexible response to listening tasks. All too often, students become quite adept at recognizing a few set phrases, but are unable to comprehend variations of these phrases. Students might do well in a classroom situation exchanging bookish phrases, but be unable to comprehend simple requests by foreign tourists. English is a language of great variety, even for rather set exchanges such as greetings. By introducing students to the concept of functional differences and encouraging active listening skills, *Basics in Listening* helps students predict on the basis of semantic context the probable meaning of even previously unheard phrases.

These kinds of skills are especially useful for preparing students to comprehend extended passages of language. Beginning students must use a variety of strategies to overcome listening comprehen-

² However, there are two units devoted specifically to verb tenses and phonological contrasts.

sion limitations in such situations. *Basics in Listening* culminates in three brief lectures on New Zealand, Canada, and Ireland. Although exercises for these lectures merely require students to complete a table of information, they represent an initial and important step towards comprehending general discussions of any kind.

Finally, the exercises in *Basics in Listening* are interesting. This point should not be underestimated. Learning a language involves a lot of drudgery. Although *Basics in Listening* uses many typical exercise patterns such as multiple choice questions and cloze exercises, there are also exercises which entail drawing pictures, circling dates on a calendar, or labeling diagrams. There is enough visual variety to prevent the listening component of this course from becoming a mere adjunct to reading comprehension of the workbook. The subject matter is topical without being so culture specific that the bulk of the class becomes a teacher-centered explanation of obscure bits of trivia. In short, my students, who ranged in age from twenty-two to sixty-four, enjoyed working with this text.

In conclusion, *Basics in Listening* is strongly recommended for anyone seeking a listening course for false beginners. It is commendable because it makes minimal language concessions and employs a semantic rather than lexical or syntactic focus for the lessons. Both of these features prepare students for dealing with authentic language and real communication.

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Announcements

Call for Papers: MITESOL NEWSLETTER. The *MITESOL Newsletter* is now accepting contributions of articles which contribute to the field of foreign and second language teaching and learning in both the theoretical and practical domains, especially in the following areas: 1) curriculum, methods, and techniques; 2) classroom observation; 3) teacher education and teacher training; 4) cross-cultural studies; 5) language learning and acquisition; 6) overviews of, or research in related fields; 7) book reviews. Articles should be no longer than 1,200 words. All copy must be typed and double-spaced. Please note that articles will not be returned. All articles and inquiries should be directed to: Donna Brigman, Editor, *MITESOL Newsletter*, 211 Oakwood, Ypsilanti, MI 48197, U.S.A.

TESOL SUMMER INSTITUTE. July 7-August 15, 1986; Honolulu, Hawaii. The 1986 TESOL Summer Institute will be held at the University of Hawaii, Hawaii. At least half of the courses will run the full six weeks. Intensive three-week courses will run from July 7-25 and July 28-August 15. For additional information, please write: Pamela Pine, Assistant Director, TESOL Summer Institute, Department of English as a Second Language, University of Hawaii, 1890 East-West Road, Honolulu, Hawaii 96822, U.S.A.

JALT '86. November 22-24, 1986; Hamamatsu, Japan. The Japan Association of Language Teachers (JALT) will hold its Twelfth Annual Conference on Language Teaching and Learning in Hamamatsu, Japan. The Conference will feature over two hundred workshops, demonstrations, and papers dealing with a wide range of topics relevant to language teaching, learning, and acquisition. For further information, please contact: JALT, c/o Kyoto English Center, Sumitomo Seimei Bldg. 8F, Shijo-Karasuma Nishi-iru, Shimogyo-ku, Kyoto 600, Japan.

Call for Paper: The Japan Association of Language Teachers (JALT) is accepting proposals for papers, demonstrations, and workshops relevant to language teaching, learning, and acquisition for its Twelfth Annual Conference. For further information, please write to: JALT, c/o Kyoto English Center, Sumitomo Seimei Bldg. 8F, Shijo-Karasuma Nishi-iru, Shimogyo-ku, Kyoto 600, Japan.

TEACHER-TRAINING SEMINARS. August 20-24, 26-30; Odawara, Japan. The M.A.T. Program of the School for International Training (SIT) will offer seminars concerning the implementation of innovative approaches in the

classroom (focusing on CLL and the Silent Way), and teacher training and supervision, giving participants a chance to design and conduct training sessions. The four- or five-day residential programs will be limited in size and to experienced teachers. Graduate credit is available. For further information and alumni, please phone The Center: (06) 315-0848 or Japan Language Forum: (03) 719-4991.

RSA TUTOR'S CONFERENCE. September 18-21, 1986; Dartington, South Devon, England. The RSA Diploma TEFL Tutor's Conference will be held in Dartington, South Devon, England. For more details, please contact: Rod Bolitho, South Devon College of Arts and Technology, Newton Road, Torquay, Devon, England.

SCOLT/FFLA CONFERENCE. October 16-18, 1986; Sheraton World Hotel, Orlando, Florida. The Southern Conference on Language Teaching and Florida Foreign Language Association will hold a conference on the theme of planning for proficiency in Orlando, Florida. For more information, please contact: Christa Kirby, Pinellas County Schools, Largo C & I Center, Largo, Florida 33540.

MIDWEST TESOL. November 6-8, 1986; Ann Arbor, Michigan. The sixth annual Midwest Regional TESOL Conference will be held in Ann Arbor, Michigan. For details, please contact: Leslie L. Prast, English Division, Delta College, University Center, Michigan 48710. Telephone: (517) 686-9102.

TRENDS IN LANGUAGE PROGRAMME EVALUATION. December 9-11, 1986; Bangkok, Thailand. Chulalongkorn University Language Institute is sponsoring a conference with the topic of Trends in Language Programme Evaluation in Bangkok, Thailand. Speakers include regional experts and experts from the United States and Great Britain. For more information, please contact: Chulalongkorn University, Language Institute, Prem Purachattra Building, Phyathai Road, Bangkok 10500, Thailand.

SUMMER WORKSHOP FOR JAPANESE TEACHERS OF ENGLISH. August 10-15, 1986; Odawara, Japan. The Language Institute of Japan (LIOJ) is holding its Eighteenth Annual Summer Workshop for Japanese Teachers of English in Odawara, Japan. This week-long residential workshop will include language study, special lectures and programs, and seminars on a variety of teaching methods and techniques. For more information, please contact: Language Institute of Japan, 4-14-1 Shiroyama, Odawara, Kanagawa 250, Japan. Telephone: (0465) 23-1677.

TESOL '87. April 22-25, 1987; Miami, Florida. The Twenty-First Annual TESOL Convention will be held at the Fontainebleau Hilton in Miami, Florida.

For more information, please contact: Lydia Stack, TESOL Central Office, 1118-22nd Street, NW Suite 205, Washington, D.C. 20037.

Call for Participation: The Twenty-First Annual TESOL Conference is accepting abstracts for possible presentations at the 1987 TESOL Conference. Deadline is July 15, 1987. For more information, please contact: Lydia Stack, TESOL Central Office, 1118-22nd Street, NW Suite 205, Washington, D.C. 20037.

Call for Papers: CROSS CURRENTS. *Cross Currents* welcomes manuscripts concerning all aspects of second language teaching and learning. We are now particularly interested in: 1) two to three page sketches concerning experiences teaching English in developing countries (deadline October 15th); 2) articles concerned with cross-cultural communication; 3) practical ideas for classroom use; and 4) book reviews. Please direct all manuscripts and inquiries to: General Editor, *Cross Currents*, 4-14-1 Shiroyama, Odawara, Kanagawa 250, Japan.

LIOJ *THE LANGUAGE INSTITUTE OF JAPAN*

The Language Institute of Japan (LIOJ) is a nonprofit language school located in Odawara, specializing in intensive, month-long residential English programs for Japanese businessmen and professionals. In addition, the school offers classes in English to the citizens of the Odawara area. Annually, the school offers a week-long summer workshop for Japanese teachers of English. All of the programs at LIOJ are designed to help promote better cross-cultural communication and to encourage international understanding. Inquiries concerning LIOJ should be directed to: The Language Institute of Japan, 4-14-1 Shiroyama, Odawara, Kanagawa 250, Japan.

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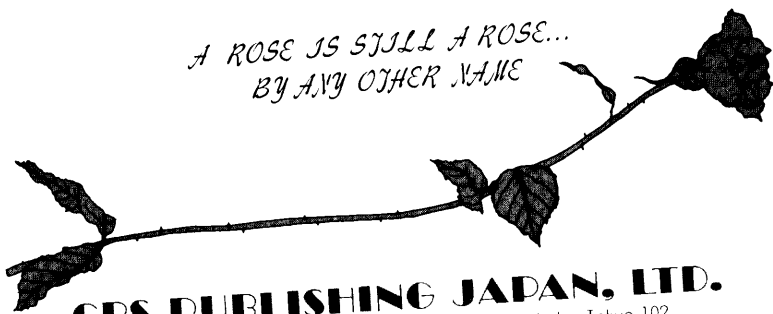


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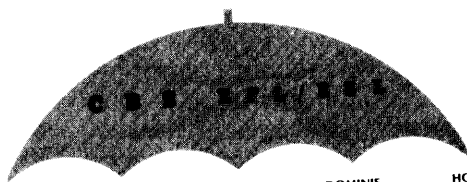
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