

TEACHING TECHNIQUES IN ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE
Series Editors: Russell N. Campbell and William E. Rutherford

**TECHNIQUES AND
RESOURCES IN
TEACHING
GRAMMAR**

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· CONTENTS ·

· CHAPTER ONE ·

Basic Issues

BACKGROUND

Acknowledgments · I

Basic Issues

Chapter One · **Background** · 1

Chapter Two · **Getting Ready to Teach Grammar** · 16

Techniques

Chapter Three · **Listening and Responding** · 39

Chapter Four · **Telling Stories** · 51

Chapter Five · **Dramatic Activities and Roleplay** · 61

Resources

Chapter Six · **Pictures** · 73

Chapter Seven · **Realia and the Classroom** · 87

Chapter Eight · **Graphics** · 99

Techniques and Resources Integrated

Chapter Nine · **Songs and Verse** · 116

Chapter Ten · **Games and Problem-solving Activities** · 132

Chapter Eleven · **Text-based Exercises and Activities** · 149

Conclusion · 170

Bibliography · 176

Structure and Word Index · 186

Of the many issues surrounding the teaching of grammar, perhaps the most controversial is whether to teach it at all. From an historical perspective, this controversy should come as somewhat of a surprise: teaching grammar has been central to and often synonymous with teaching foreign language for the past 2,500 years (Rutherford 1987). This tradition notwithstanding, in the past several years many ESL professionals have come to assume that second-language (L-2) learning is very much like first-language (L-1) acquisition. Their argument is that providing “comprehensible input” (language addressed to the learner that he or she can understand) is really all that a foreign- or second-language teacher can or should do to facilitate acquisition. According to Richards (1985:43), the basic assumption of such an approach is that “‘communicative’ classrooms provide a better environment for second-language acquisition than classrooms dominated by formal instruction.” It is not at all surprising that approaches like these have met with such enthusiasm; they are intuitively very appealing. Yet Richards warns that all too often techniques and approaches aren’t based on actual evidence but rather

... are promoted and justified through reference to intuitively appealing assertions and theories, which when repeated by those in positions of authority assume the status of dogma. (p. 43)

Richards goes on to point out that no actual empirical studies have been conducted that prove that “communicative” classrooms produce better language learners than the more traditional teacher-dominated classrooms. In fact, in spite of its intuitive appeal and the anecdotal

evidence which supports it, there is equally appealing and convincing evidence that a communicative approach can lead to the development of a broken, ungrammatical, pidginized form of the language beyond which students can never really progress. Such students are said to have “fossilized” in their acquisition of the language.

Part of the anecdotal evidence Richards refers to is a paper by Higgs and Clifford (1982). Before discussing their work, perhaps we should first review the Foreign Service Institute Oral Interview, a proficiency exam developed by the Foreign Service Institute Language Testing Unit. This examination, referred to by many as the FSI, is used by numerous foreign affairs agencies of the U.S. government. Although the FSI can measure both oral and reading skills, we are primarily concerned with the oral exam. The procedures for rating an individual on the FSI are exceedingly sophisticated and complex, and require a great deal of training. Thus, its administration is problematical. In spite of this, the FSI still yields the best assessment of oral proficiency that we know of. Its rating scale encompasses a wide range of proficiency levels from 0 to 5. Level 1 indicates minimal communicative competence; Level 5 designates the speech of an educated native speaker. In order “. . . to demonstrate to Americans having limited experience with foreign language what they themselves might sound like to a foreigner when attempting to communicate in the foreign language,” Higgs and Clifford contrived the following examples of speech at each level.

Level Visa Officer's Reply to Applicant

- 5 Under U.S. statutes, your affiliation with the Communist Party renders you ineligible for a regular tourist visa. There exist, however, waiver procedures which may be invoked. These are the steps that you should initiate . . .
- 4 According to U.S. lawss your affiliation wiz ze Communist Party makes you uneligibile for a regular tourist visa. You may, however, request a waiver. Zis iss what you must do . . .
- 3 Zee laaw zayz zat mambears of zee Communist Partee caanoht bee geeven a regoolair toorest veesaa. Owehvair, egzeptions are zohmtaymes dunn. You must do zees . . .

- 2 You cannot legully get toolist visa. It is not light, because berong to Communistic Palty. But you can ask for a special permission. You to do this . . .
- 1 You commyunist. No gyet vyisa. Got tryy agyain. Take thysis. Fyill in, plyeez. (p. 64)

As a result of their experience at the Defense Language Institute and informal contacts at other governmental agencies such as the CIA and the FSI, Higgs and Clifford identify a student type which they call the “terminal 2/2+.” This is a learner who cannot progress beyond the rating of 2 or 2+ on the FSI exam. At this level, an individual communicates fluently but ungrammatically, though he often has a large vocabulary. Apparently, the “terminal 2/2+,” (i.e., the student who gets stuck at that level) is a prevalent phenomenon. Even highly motivated and educated individuals aspiring to international careers in government or management that require proficiency in a foreign language sometimes fall into this category. Higgs and Clifford provide a profile of the “terminal 2/2+”:

This pattern of high vocabulary and low grammar is a classic profile of a terminal 2/2+ . . . It is important to note that the grammar weaknesses that are typically found in this profile are not *missing* grammatical patterns, which the student could learn or acquire later on, but are *fossilized* incorrect patterns. Experience has shown again and again that such *fossilized* patterns are not remediable, even in intensive language training programs or additional in-country living experience. Hence the designation *terminal 2/2+* . . . The data suggest that members of the group that have arrived at the 2/2+ level through street learning or through “communication first” programs are either unsuccessful at increasing their linguistic ability or tend to show improvement only in areas in which they had already shown high profiles . . . Members of the group that have arrived at the 2/2+ level through “accuracy first” programs, however, typically show the opposite prognosis. (pp. 67, 74)

In addition to the work by Higgs and Clifford, there have been numerous studies which suggest that comprehensible input is not enough to achieve high proficiency. Michael Long has pointed out that the data from these studies suggest that the prognosis in the long run is much better for those with overt formal instruction than for those with none.¹ Although these studies are highly suggestive and even persuasive, they are certainly far from conclusive. Indeed, as far as we know, there is insufficient direct evidence on either side to state categorically the effects of formal instruction on second-language learning. The jury is still out, but the question is being vigorously pursued by Long and his colleagues at the University of Hawaii, as well as others.

It is important to note that, to our knowledge, there are no studies that provide evidence that overt grammar instruction is essential. The burden of proof rests on those who maintain that grammar instruction is irrelevant to language acquisition, and so far no empirical support has been provided to support that claim. Although comprehensible input may be necessary, it is by no means clear that it is sufficient for mastery of a second language.

Let us now turn to a very practical argument in favor of teaching grammar, namely that many ESL/EFL students are required to pass a standardized national or international exam in order to proceed with their plans. These exams can determine their acceptance to a university or affect their professional or vocational advancement. These exams may even decide which professions are open to them. In other words, to one degree or another, their futures can be determined by their performance on an exam. Typically, a major component of such exams is grammar. Therefore, to give these students an incomplete grounding in grammar, regardless of one's conviction about teaching it, is to do them a great disservice. Students have to know and apply the rules of English grammar in order to do well on such tests.²

LEARNER VARIABLES

Although we are reluctant to abandon grammar teaching without

¹ Lecture given at UCLA on February 14, 1986.

² For an introduction to language testing as well as an idea of how language tests seek to measure grammatical competence, see Madsen (1983).

further evidence, we hesitate to recommend a single approach or method, as students have different learning strategies or styles. Studies in educational psychology suggest that people learning anything—including second or foreign languages—use at least two distinct strategies: analytical and holistic.³ Analytical learners form and test hypotheses: consciously or unconsciously, they extract paradigms and rules from examples. Holistic learners, on the other hand, learn best by doing little or no analysis. Instead, they learn by exposure to large chunks of language in meaningful contexts. In second-language acquisition, these two types of learners might be designated as “rule learners” and “data gatherers” (Hatch, *et al.* 1985: 44). To complicate matters further, learning strategies are affected by age and task type. Children seem to prefer a holistic approach over an analytical one, and even those adults who are generally more comfortable with an analytical style often approach a completely new learning situation holistically and later switch to an analytical style. Additional information regarding learner differences has been reported by Hartnett (1985), and her findings suggest that deductive learning is more effective for students with left-hemispheric dominance (perhaps what we call analytical learners) and that inductive learning is as effective or more effective for those with right-hemispheric dominance (possibly what we call holistic learners). It seems, then, that if ESL teachers adopt a methodology which favors either a holistic or an analytical approach, or favors inductive reasoning over deductive reasoning, the odds are that they will not be equally effective with all of their students. In other words, it is probably the case that students do best in classes in which the teacher varies the approach in order to accommodate all learning styles.

We also know that some learners prefer visually-oriented grammar instruction (e.g., contextualized examples, sentences on the board or in a textbook) while others respond better to auditory input (e.g., listening to the same sentences being spoken, perhaps several times). Any approach that is either primarily visual, such as grammar translation, or primarily auditory, such as the audio-lingual method, works against the natural learning preferences of some students. To prevent this lack of differentiation, we favor an approach to teaching grammar

³ See Cronbach and Snow (1977), Witkin, *et al.* (1977) among others.

which encourages learners to use their eyes, their ears, and as many of the other senses as possible.

Another consideration is age. Lenneberg (1967) and others after him have found evidence pointing to a “critical period” for language acquisition. Although the critical period hypothesis has undergone various modifications and revisions, it essentially posits a period during which a child is biologically predisposed to language acquisition. During this period, the child learns whatever language(s) he is exposed to “automatically,” without instruction or correction, provided the environment is linguistically rich enough.⁴ Such a hypothesis could certainly account for the differences ESL teachers routinely observe between their adult learners and the learners’ children. Regardless of the age limits set to define the critical period—and there is controversy over the precise limits—most researchers seem to agree that overt instruction in the L-1 during this period is of no value to the child and may even tend to slow the process of acquisition (Aitchison 1985). This might also apply to children learning an L-2 during the critical period. Thus, attempting to teach language—including grammar—may be not only futile but even detrimental in the long run.

The issue of children aside, not everyone can learn grammar; nor for that matter does everyone need to. For many of our learners, a pidginized communicative interlanguage is completely sufficient for their social and vocational needs. In such cases, a lexical approach as suggested by Schumann (1987) or a grammarless communicative syllabus may be the most efficient. It is a good idea, however, to inform students of the suspected effects of such a curriculum or approach. As Higgs and Clifford point out:

While the most efficient way to achieve survival level proficiency would be a course that stressed vocabulary, our experience indicates that such a course would work to the disadvantage of students who wished to develop higher levels of proficiency. Students entering such a program would have to be warned of its potentially negative effect on their long-range aspirations. (p. 73)

⁴ Aitchison (1985), Gleitman (1986), Hyams (1986), Landau and Gleitman (1985), Lightfoot (1983), among others.

Unfortunately, many learners arrive in classrooms having already achieved a fossilized pidgin, and frankly, the prognosis for their attaining native-like proficiency is not good, regardless of the amount of grammar instruction received. Still others, because of prior education, cognitive development, or age, are simply not able to master a foreign-language grammar. For these students, grammar instruction may not be as important as it is for others. It is interesting to note, however, that many of these students *demand* grammar instruction because it fulfills a cultural expectation of what constitutes a language class. Furthermore, it may be necessary for people who require native-like or near native-like proficiency (those learning English for professional or academic purposes, especially in the humanities, or those seeking assimilation into the target society). As Higgs and Clifford point out, “Survival and social integration bear little resemblance to each other” (p. 61). If a student’s goal is the latter, grammar is important, if not absolutely essential.

Finally, it should be noted that learners will never truly attend to form unless they want to and are able to. They will learn best once they have achieved basic comprehension and can accept feedback on the form of their production in meaningful discourse, either spoken or written. In other words, feedback on form becomes more important after the student has acquired minimal competence and can absorb this feedback.

TEACHER PREPARATION

As we have noted, the questions of when and how to teach grammar depend on many variables. Students’ needs change over the course of several weeks, and a teacher should be sensitive to these changes.

Regardless of a teacher’s methodological preferences, a knowledge of grammar is essential to the ESL/EFL teaching professional. Such knowledge helps in carrying out several important and fundamental responsibilities:

- integrating form, meaning, and content in syllabus design
- selecting and preparing materials and classroom activities
- identifying and analyzing which student errors to concentrate on at any given time

- selecting and sequencing the grammatical forms to emphasize at any given time
- preparing appropriate exercises and activities for rule presentation or error correction
- answering students' questions about grammar

GRAMMAR AND OTHER LANGUAGE FACTORS

If grammar instruction is deemed appropriate for a class, the teacher's next step is to integrate grammar principles into a communicative framework, since the fundamental purpose of language is communication.⁵ Unfortunately, grammar is often taught in isolated, unconnected sentences that give a fragmented, unrealistic picture of English and make it difficult for students to apply what they have learned in actual situations. Realistic and effective contextualization of an isolated grammar point is not always easy, but on the next few pages we would like to offer some suggestions we have found helpful.

First of all, there is a strong tendency for grammar or structural points to occur with one of three other aspects of language:⁶

- social factors
- semantic factors
- discourse factors

To help illustrate this tendency, let's consider each of these factors in detail.

Social Factors

"Social factors" refer to the social roles of interlocutors, their relationship to each other, and the purpose of the communication. Communicative functions such as requesting, inviting, refusing, agreeing, or disagreeing are all very sensitive to social factors such as politeness, directness, etc. For example, in refusing a request, the words and grammatical structures used depend on two basic variables: how well the individuals know each other and their social roles *vis-à-vis* one another.

⁵ See Newmeyer (1983) for other uses.

⁶ The basis for this framework was first suggested to us by Diane Larsen-Freeman.

The following are different ways of refusing a dinner invitation, but not all are equally appropriate for all situations:

- a. Aww, I can't. I've gotta work.
- b. Oh, I'm sorry; I'd love to, but I won't be able to. I have to work.
- c. How nice of you to ask! I'd really be delighted, but I'm afraid I have to work that night.

The complexity of modals (e.g., *can*) and periphrastic modals (e.g., *have to*, *be able to*) lies in part in their social-interactive character: their use is socially constrained. Many ESL/EFL students find them difficult because they are frequently taught from a somewhat artificial semantic perspective rather than a social-interactive one. For example, teachers sometimes provide isolated semantic equivalents such as, "*Should* means an obligation or suggestion." The students are then perplexed at the reactions they provoke in their teacher when they *suggest* that he should go on a diet or modify his behavior in some way. If the use of a structure is constrained socially, situational factors, matters of personal choice, social functions, register differences, and other sociolinguistic variables come into play. As students become aware of these constraints, they learn that many suggestions are often inappropriate and even offensive in English.

Semantic Factors

These involve meaning. Grammatical structures that are most naturally taught from a semantic perspective include expressions of time, space, degree, quantity, and probability. For example, the difference between the quantifiers *few* and *a few* in the following two sentences is primarily semantic:

- a. John has a few good ideas.
- b. John has few good ideas.

In (a), the emphasis is positive, while in (b) it is negative. The choice of a form is not governed by whom one is addressing, but rather by what one wants to say. Thus, the difference between *few* and *a few* is not illuminated by social-interactive factors because the difference between (a) and (b) does not rest on social factors but depends crucially on meaning. Therefore, expressions of location, time, space, degree, quantity, probability, etc. can be taught most effectively with a focus

on morphological, lexical, and syntactic contrasts that signal a difference in meaning.

Discourse Factors

Our third category includes notions such as topic continuity, word order, and the sequencing of new and old information. These factors affect the forms that propositions take in the context of a discourse. For example, indirect object movement in the following two sentences is discourse governed (i.e., the decision to use one sentence or the other depends on discourse factors). In English, we tend to put the most important element or the one on which we are focusing at the end of the sentence. Hence the difference between (a) and (b) is one of focus.

- a. He gave the flowers to Mary.
(Not to Janet, not to Carol. This might be in response to the question, “Who did he give the flowers to?”)
- b. He gave Mary the flowers.
(Not the candy, not the book. This might be in response to the question, “What did he give Mary?”)

Another example is the use of logical connectors such as *even though*, *although*, or *unless*. Our experience and that of many of our colleagues suggests that defining these words semantically is less than satisfying and often leads to a great deal of frustration and confusion for both students and teacher. On the other hand, giving students a portion of discourse which illustrates how these logical connectors function in context or what they signal in discourse seems to work remarkably well. In other words, a definition of *although* may not be as helpful as several sentences in which *although* is used, such as:

- a. Although John didn't study, he passed the test.
- b. Although Maria doesn't have much money, she is rich in spirit.

Our final category, then, consists of words and elements of language which are more effectively defined or explained with reference to their function in discourse than to their socio-linguistic function or semantic content.

All of these factors (i.e., social, semantic, discourse) interact with each other, as well as with the structure of the language. Clearly there are instances in which they overlap. They are not so much discrete

categories as continuous tendencies along multidimensional continua. But grammar instruction should always involve the matching of a structure or grammatical point with one of these three aspects of language; if that match can be made in preparing the grammar lesson and it captures a natural tendency in the language, the lesson will be easier for the teacher to prepare and easier for students to understand.

TECHNIQUES

Just as grammar points seem to pair naturally with other aspects of language, teaching techniques should vary according to the match being emphasized. For example, in structural-social matches such as modals and requests, the degree of politeness depends on the social relationship between the speaker and his or her interlocutor. In such cases, dramatization and other dynamic, interactional techniques allow learners to make the connection between structure and social function. Such techniques facilitate a proper match between the grammar point being presented and the language factor with which its use is most often associated.

On the other hand, if one is teaching quantifiers, locative prepositions, or modals of logical probability—structure-meaning matches—the most useful techniques are demonstration, illustration, and TPR activities.⁷ These techniques allow the teacher to focus on meaning distinctions by manipulating the environment, thereby helping students to focus on contrasts, semantic systems such as sets or scales, or certain operations such as negation or inversion. These activities are more static than roleplay or dramatization, but they help students match linguistic form with semantic variables.

Finally, with structure-discourse matches, the major techniques include text generation, manipulation, and explanation. A combination of the teaching activities mentioned above can be used for this match. That is, one can use a dynamic piece of discourse such as a natural dialog for the text. Then the more static techniques of illustration, explanation, and demonstration can be used to focus students'

⁷ James Asher's Total Physical Response method.

attention on the text itself and its cohesion, rather than on pragmatic or semantic factors. Obviously, a great deal of text-based experience and work are necessary to develop a student's skill in this type of match, but the skill is vital for effective writing and, in certain respects, effective reading.

RESOURCES

Each structure-factor match mentioned above suggests resources which can be exploited in making the match clear to students. The structure-social match and the dynamic techniques it suggests in turn suggest teacher activities and student activities, such as roleplaying, storytelling, and student-generated skits; indeed, any resource which allows students to understand and focus on social factors that affect language use would be appropriate. Thus, resources take us one step further toward a concrete lesson plan. Having determined the larger factors that need emphasis and then suitable techniques, the next step is to select material or choose resources.

In addition to the activities mentioned above, there are also resources that consist of objects, such as pictures, realia, and graphics. These can be used for matching structural and semantic factors, since semantic distinctions often need visual reinforcement. For example, the difference between *in the box* and *on the box* can be illustrated by putting something into, then onto a box.

Finally, there are integrated techniques and resources that consist of both a linguistic "object" and a related activity. For example, a song, a verse, or a problem is a text (i.e., a linguistic object), but singing the song, reciting the verse, or solving the problem is a linguistic activity. These resources appear best suited to a structure-discourse match.

Thus, some resources are better than others in helping students make a particular type of match. A roleplay is dynamic and can illustrate socio-linguistic variables. It's a marvelous resource, but probably wasted on teaching locative prepositions. On the other hand, a graphic aid showing three cats in graduated sizes or three stuffed animals would probably illustrate comparatives and superlatives quite well, whereas a roleplay would not be as appropriate in this situation. However,

neither graphics nor roleplay would be an efficient or insightful way to approach logical connectors such as *even though* or *unless*.

As a review of these points, consider the following grid.

Three Elements to Match with Structure			
	Factors	Technique	Resources
structure +	social	dynamic interactional techniques (e.g., dramatization)	socially oriented activities (e.g., skits, roleplay)
structure +	semantic	listening and responding; demonstration; illustration; static techniques	objects such as pictures, realia, graphs
structure +	discourse	text generation and manipulation; explanation	linguistic objects and activities such as songs, problems, stories

For each structure, one of the three language-factor matches can be made. Once that match is made, there are certain techniques which would be most appropriate to realize the match and certain resources which would be most helpful in employing that technique. This matching of structure with language factor, technique, and resource takes advantage of natural tendencies in language and pedagogy. In this book, we have tried to indicate these various matches. While the book is organized around techniques and resources, these should be construed as tendencies which facilitate explanation and generalization, not as hard and fast categories or rules.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter we have presented our case for teaching grammar. While it is not yet conclusive, the evidence available suggests that we proceed with caution in forming judgments about the necessity of grammar instruction. In any case, it is clear that no one should dismiss grammar instruction altogether, because there is no empirical evidence that to do so is ultimately more beneficial to second-language learn-

ing. Indeed, some of the alternatives might be harmful in the long run. By forcing learners into communication tasks beyond their grammatical competence, such alternatives may encourage pidginization and premature fossilization.

In this chapter we have also defended an eclectic approach to grammar teaching because of the number and complexity of learner variables. In an effort to improve on traditional methods of teaching grammar, we have proposed a natural matching of structure, language factor, technique, and resources, a procedure which exploits natural divisions in language and pedagogy and thus helps teachers prepare suitable and effective lessons. This matching process will be used throughout the book as a frame of reference for each technique and resource presented and underlies the choice of structures. Because it is the consensus of our colleagues that the communicative phase of a grammar lesson is the most difficult, we have tried to give extra emphasis to this aspect of teaching grammar.

Our techniques are rooted in our experiences in the classroom and those of our colleagues. We present only techniques we feel are workable; however, as we all know, what works for one teacher may not work for another, at least not without considerable modification.

We leave it up to you, the teacher, to amend and adapt these lessons as your creativity, inspiration, and classes dictate. We hope you will enjoy reading this book and be able to use many of our teaching suggestions in your English classes. Even more, we hope our suggestions will encourage you to create your own activities for teaching grammar. After all, you know your students' needs and understand what works best for them.

·ACTIVITIES·

Discussion Questions

1. What approach(es) to second- or foreign-language teaching have you experienced as a learner? Were they rule-based or meaning-and-use-based? How was grammar treated?
2. Based on your experience as a language learner and/or teacher, do you think Higgs and Clifford's characterization of a "terminal 2/2+" has any merit? Why or why not?
3. Do you think the proposed association of grammar structures with social, semantic, and discourse factors describes natural divisions in language and pedagogy? Why or why not? Would you draw the lines differently? If so, how?
4. Given a particular match between a structure and language factor, do you agree with the authors that certain techniques and resources are natural pedagogical tools? Why or why not?
5. What kind of match applies for teaching the following and why?
 - tag questions (Jack's a teacher, *isn't he?*)
 - correlatives (*Either* John or Jane will win the contest.)
 - indirect speech (Mary said that *Carol was her cousin.*)
 - attributive adjectives (*A trusted* friend will take care of all the details.)
6. Recall an ESL class you have observed. Was grammar overtly taught? If so, how? Was the lesson effective? How do you know? What elements in the lesson made you consider it effective or ineffective? Would you use the same approach in your classroom? Why or why not?

GETTING READY TO TEACH GRAMMAR

WHAT IS GRAMMAR?

We can think of language as a type of rule-governed behavior. Grammar, then, is a subset of those rules which govern the configurations that the morphology and syntax of a language assume. These rules are a part of what is “known” automatically by all native speakers of a language; in fact, they do not exist outside of native speakers. That is, there is no English, French, or German which exists independently of its speakers. A language (and by definition, its rules) exists in the individual brains of native speakers. These rules in our brains are usually so automatic and familiar to us as native speakers that we are probably not able to articulate them, but we all certainly know when they are being violated. For example, the rules of English allow us to accept the following sentences as grammatical:

1. a. He goes to school every day.
- b. Where are you going?
- c. I can't hear you.

However, those same rules force us to reject the following sentences, which contain typical ESL learner errors:

2. a. *He go to school every day.
- b. *Where you are going?
- c. *I no can hear you.

Of course, it is likely that the sentences in (2) would be understood even though they are ungrammatical; and in some situations, it is undoubtedly better to be able to communicate with sentences like those in (2) than not to be able to communicate at all. However, as we have

discussed, in many situations such sentences are simply not sufficient. The communication needs of our students may require that their language conform more closely to the rules of English grammar used by native speakers.

WHAT IS THE RIGHT WAY TO SAY IT?

Usually we have no trouble identifying an ungrammatical sentence. A problem arises, however, when our students want to know “the right way to say it.” Much to our mutual dismay, we don't always have a ready answer. For example, consider the following:

3. a. There's two books on the table.
- b. There are two books on the table.
4. a. Going to class now?
- b. Are you going to class now?
5. a. We will talk to you later.
- b. We shall talk to you later.
6. a. Do you have a pencil?
- b. Have you a pencil?

Traditional English grammarians would tell us that (3a) is ungrammatical while (3b) is correct: in sentences with existential *there* the verb agrees with the logical subject of the sentence (*books*), which follows the verb. Because *books* is plural, the verb must be plural. This rather elementary “rule” notwithstanding, sentences such as (3a) routinely occur in the informal conversation of educated speakers of both North American and British English. How do we account for this discrepancy between a prescribed rule in a grammar book and the actual speech of native speakers? Perhaps the following more accurately captures the actual rule followed by native speakers: in informal conversation, *there's* is used with both singular and plural logical subjects, but only in the contracted form. In formal speech or writing, however, (3b) is required. Thus, in this and many other cases, there are different rules for informal speech and formal or written English.

The sentences in (4) illustrate another difference between spoken and written English. In speech we often omit the subject and auxiliary verb in a *yes/no* question, particularly when the subject of the question is the second person (i.e., the person being addressed). In most

written English, however, the same omission would be unacceptable, illustrating once again that there are some differences between the rules of written and spoken English.

Of the two sentences in (5), only (5b) is correct according to the old prescriptive rule that states one should use *shall* with the first person subject pronouns *I* and *we*, but *will* with other pronoun subjects, yet (5a) is what most educated native speakers of North American English say. This rule is a prescriptive one that does not accurately describe what most English speakers say or write. Clearly, in some situations, a prescriptive rule that has no basis in usage is not very useful and may even be counter-productive for ESL learners who want to use English the way that native speakers do.

The sentences in example (6) represent the North American and British dialects respectively, but which one is correct? In the United States, (6a) is unquestionably more appropriate, but is (6b) wrong? It is not ungrammatical, and in England (and in the United States many years ago) it is the preferred form for questions in which *have* is the main verb; however, in North America, questions with *have* as the main verb are formed with *do* support, as in (6a).

Even when we are using an approach which does not explicitly teach grammar, it is impossible to avoid such questions from alert and observant ESL students. Often, neither choice is wrong, but one is more or less appropriate, depending on register, communicative purpose, and other pragmatic factors.

LANGUAGE ACADEMIES

For most major languages of the world, it is easy to decide whether a given word, phrase, or sentence is correct or incorrect. The rules governing these languages are promulgated by academies or equivalent national institutions that decide such issues, taking questions of grammar, spelling, writing systems, and coinage of new words, as well as matters of general language policy, out of the hands of the general populace.¹ English-speaking countries, however, have never established language academies. As a result, the rule variations illustrated

¹ For a discussion of language academies, see Cooper (in preparation).

above complicate the teaching and learning of English. It is interesting to note that in addition to making English difficult to teach and to learn, the lack of an official academy stimulates as an epiphenomenon the appearance of “pop” grammarians, like John Simon and Edwin Newman. The popularity of these “language guardians” relies crucially on our acceptance of the notion of “absolute correctness.” Such a notion is surprisingly popular, even among many of us who should be highly suspicious.

Students who come from countries where language academies prescribe usage often feel there can be only one set of correct rules for English. Since English has no language-academy-set rules, the most realistic approach to determining good usage may be to observe the standard set by educated native speakers in a variety of settings. Linguists have long taken this approach and have provided us with numerous descriptions of what people actually say or write rather than with prescriptions that reflect unrealistic abstractions. If the common goal of ESL teachers and students is communicative competence, the appropriateness of what is said becomes as important as correctness, and appropriateness can only be ascertained by means of a descriptive approach.

Although, as we have noted, language variation in English occurs between speech and writing, between formal and informal usage, between North American and British dialects, and along other dimensions as well, all of these varieties still share enough rules to be considered English. However, we must keep in mind that whenever we are teaching grammar or answering questions about grammar, we are dealing with variable rules. ESL teachers will always have to exercise judgment and common sense in determining what to teach and what to accept.

CORRECTION AND FEEDBACK

Whether an utterance is ungrammatical or not is usually an unambiguous issue. On the other hand, the question of what, when, and how to correct is often problematic. Experience will quickly reveal that it is impossible to correct every error a student makes. Clearly, the ESL/EFL teacher needs to set priorities. One priority is errors in

the grammatical structures that are being taught at the moment. These errors should be corrected immediately, as they occur.

For the next priority, we turn to Burt and Kiparsky (1974), who maintain that comprehensibility is the criterion for identifying what needs to be corrected. They suggest that ESL learner errors are hierarchical; that is, some errors make a sentence more difficult to understand than others. They further divide errors into two broad categories, global and local:

Global mistakes are those that violate rules involving the overall structure of a sentence, the relations among constituent clauses or, in a simple sentence, the relations among major constituents. Local mistakes cause trouble in a particular constituent or in a clause of a complex sentence. (p. 73)

For Burt and Kiparsky, global errors are higher in the hierarchy than local ones. This suggests that errors involving word order, missing obligatory constituents such as subjects, and misuse of semantically full connectors or those that confuse the relationship of clauses or sentential constituents are more important than an omitted article or inflectional morpheme in the third person singular. For example, let us consider the student-generated sentence (7a) below. Burt and Kiparsky point out that correcting the global error of word order (7b) facilitates understanding to a greater degree than correcting two local errors of subject-verb agreement and an omitted article in (7c).

7. a. English language use much people.
- b. Much people use English language.
- c. The English language uses many people.

Burt and Kiparsky also claim that it is easier for a student to recognize and correct a global error than a local one. This is certainly true for native speakers of English, as Tomiyama (1980) has demonstrated. On the other hand, research by Master (1986) suggests that with proper systematic instruction and focus on form, the frequency of even the most recalcitrant of local errors can be reduced significantly.

Although our experience, for the most part, is consistent with Burt and Kiparsky's observations and conclusions, there are certain situations in which local errors affect the comprehensibility of a sentence as much as global errors. We are thinking of local cases such as quan-

tifiers and the distinction between gerunds and infinitives. For example, in (8a) below, John does have some good ideas, whereas (8b) is an insult.

8. a. John has a few good ideas.
- b. John has few good ideas.

In (9a), John didn't pay the rent. In (9b), he paid the rent, but forgot he had done so.

9. a. John forgot to pay the rent.
- b. John forgot paying the rent.

ESL students often substitute (8b) for (8a) or (9a) for (9b), and such local errors can and do affect comprehensibility.

Last, but certainly not least, is any error that stigmatizes the user or identifies him as a member of a group to which he might not want to belong. For example, the use of *he don't* or *ain't* might be a stigmatizing error in American English. We suggest that errors that stigmatize the learner should be pointed out immediately, regardless of whether they are the object of pedagogical attention, are global or local, or affect the comprehensibility of the sentence.

We suggest, then, the following priorities for correcting errors:

1. errors which stigmatize the learner
2. errors which are the object of pedagogical attention
3. global errors which affect comprehensibility
4. local errors which affect comprehensibility
5. global and local errors which do not affect comprehensibility

We will have a bit more to say about correction later in this chapter when we discuss those activities in which correction is counter-productive.

SEQUENCING

In addition to deciding which structures to teach and which errors to correct, there is the question of what to teach first. General educational principles suggest we start with the simple and move toward the difficult, but structures that seem, *prima facie*, uncomplicated may in fact be quite difficult for some students to internalize. For example, there is evidence that inflection for the third person singular in the present tense is "late acquired." In other words, most adult learners still omit the obligatory *-s* from third person singular verbs in the pre-

sent tense long after they have mastered “more complicated” verb forms. Obviously, “simple” and “complex” are meaningless terms if they are not defined from the learner’s point of view. Although there have been some attempts to identify a “difficulty” or “acquisition” order in English,² the resulting sequences usually deal only with elementary structures and cannot possibly account for every structure in the language. Also, these lists have been created from a structuralist perspective, which may be inadequate and inappropriate if acquisition does not proceed in terms of grammatical structure but according to some other schema.

In describing a natural acquisition order determined by observing children learning German as their L-1, Pienemann (1984) presents convincing evidence that children learning German as a second language do not learn structures for which they are not “ready” (e.g., a structure which is not “next” in the natural acquisition order), even when these structures are overtly taught. One could thus argue that the children who learned the structure were “taught” nothing, were simply ready to take the next step in acquisition, and would have done so regardless of the lessons. Similarly, those who were not ready did not learn. As interesting as these conclusions are, however, we must remember that they apply to children, and, as mentioned earlier, there is a great deal of evidence that child language learning is quite different from adult language learning. Adults learning English do not necessarily go through the same stages of acquisition as children learning English as an L-1, and there is no reason we should expect them to. Thus, sequencing ESL lessons to match the child acquisition order may be needless for children and irrelevant for adults.

An argument could be made for teaching the language of basic social skills early on, such as greetings, holding one’s place in a conversation, leave taking, and asking a native speaker for assistance (“How do you say this in English?”). Such an approach would certainly give adult learners a grasp of conversational English very quickly, but might encourage conversation “prematurely” if the hypotheses regarding pidginization and fossilization turn out to be true. (See Chapter 1).

² See Dulay and Burt (1974); Bailey, Madden, and Krashen (1974); Larsen-Freeman (1975, 1976); Anderson (1978); among others.

Again, in the absence of evidence to the contrary, we are inclined to be conservative and follow the traditional structuralist syllabus, which sequences structures so they “build” on each other. For example, the simple present of the verb *to be* is taught before the present continuous, which requires the conjugated form of *be*, namely *is*, *am*, and *are* and a present participle (verb + *ing*). Despite this inclination, the bottom line regarding sequencing is simply that the issues are exceedingly complex and far from resolved in the current literature.

Few of us have the luxury (or perhaps we should say the burden) of sequencing an ESL program from beginning to end. We are more often obliged to teach district- or school-prescribed syllabuses, which usually are structurally based, so let us imagine for the sake of illustration that we are beginning teachers, required to teach the passive voice, in addition to other structures, to our intermediate adult-school class as part of a ten-week semester. Let’s follow the lesson from beginning to end.

PREPARATION FOR THE GRAMMAR LESSON

The first step in preparing a grammar lesson is to consult a variety of grammar reference books and ESL texts in order to establish how a structure is formed, when it is used, and whether there are any particular rules or exceptions governing its use. For example, in her English grammar reference, Frank (1972) says of the passive:

The active voice is used in making a straightforward statement about an action . . . In the passive voice, the same action is referred to indirectly; that is, the original “receiver” of the action is the grammatical subject and the original “doer” of the action is the grammatical object of the preposition *by*. Because the grammatical subject of a passive verb is the original object of an active verb, *only a transitive verb may be used in the passive voice.* (p. 56)

Frank lists the situations in which the passive voice would be chosen over the active voice, including:

1. when attention is being drawn to the “receiver” rather than the “doer” of the action (e.g., *My dog was hit by a car*), and

2. when the “doer” of the action is unimportant or not known. Another point Frank makes is that *get* or *become* can be used instead of *be* as a passive of transition (e.g., *They're getting married tomorrow*).

In another source, Leech and Svartvik (1975) describe the passive as “the type of verb phrase which contains the construction *be* + past participle: *was killed, was seen, etc.*” (p. 257). The authors go beyond Frank in saying that not all verbs taking objects have a passive, such as *have* in *I have a Fiat* (but not *A Fiat is had by me*) and *hold* in *This jug holds two pints* (but not *Two pints is held by this jug*). Leech and Svartvik say the agent in the *by*-phrase is retained only in specific cases; in fact, about four out of five English passive clauses do not have an agent. Despite this information, the authors do not enumerate the cases in which the agent is required. They do deal with the *get* passive, but characterize it as belonging to “informal style and in constructions without an agent” (p. 259). However, the following examples come to mind in response to their claim that the *get* passive doesn't normally take an agent: *Tom got hit by a truck*, and *Maurice gets stung by a bee every single summer*. In American English, it seems, *get* passives can retain the agent.

Azar, in her grammar book (1981), mentions that only transitive verbs are used in the passive and that usually the *by*-phrase is omitted, since the agent is generally understood. She also says that the passive ranges over all tenses and she gives the form for the present, past, future, progressive perfect, and simple tenses.

Additional aspects of the passive are given by Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman (1983); they disagree with Frank's claim that the passive is the same action as the active referred to indirectly. As proof, they cite the famous example from Chomsky (1965) which shows that active and passive pairs are not necessarily synonymous: *Everyone in the room speaks two languages* (i.e., any two languages per person) and *Two languages are spoken by everyone in the room* (i.e., two specific languages that everybody speaks). To this we would add an example given to us by Ed Keenan: *Every politician kissed a baby* (i.e., different politicians kissed different babies) and *A baby was kissed by every politician* (i.e., every politician kissed one, specific baby).

Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman also counter Azar's claim

that only transitive verbs take a passive with examples that show there are some passives which do not have active transitive counterparts: *Mehdi was born in Teheran* (but not *Someone bore Mehdi in Teheran*) and *It is rumored that he will get the job* (but not *Someone rumored that he will get the job*). Thus, they conclude that whether a verb is compatible with the active voice, the passive voice, or both is a property of the verb.

Another aspect noted by Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman is that most passives do not have an agent. They cite a usage study conducted by Shintani which suggests that since 85 percent of all passives will not retain an agent, we should teach our students when and why to retain an agent in a passive, rather than teach when to omit an agent.³ Shintani's study (1979) includes a list of those situations in which a *by*-phrase is retained:

1. when the agent is a proper name designating an artist, inventor, discoverer, innovator, etc., who is too important to omit in the context (e.g., *The Mona Lisa was painted by da Vinci*.)
2. when the agent is an indefinite noun phrase (i.e., new information) and is retained to provide the listener or reader with the new information (i.e., *While Jill was walking down the street, her purse was snatched by a young man*.)
3. when the agent is an inanimate noun phrase which is retained because it is unexpected . . . (we usually expect an agent to be animate, e.g., *All the lights and appliances in the Albertson household are switched on and off daily by an electrical device*.)

Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman also mention different kinds of passives. In addition to the *get* passives already mentioned, they introduce a complex passive with *have*: *Alice had her purse snatched while shopping downtown*. They explain the differences in meaning among a simple passive, the *get* passive, and the complex passive with *have*, as well as stative passives in which the participles function more like predicate adjectives than passive verbs.

Finally, Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman talk about the circumstances under which the passive is used. Besides the two situa-

³ Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman (1983: 225).

tions provided by Frank, these include:

1. when the agent is obvious and, therefore, not expressed (e.g., *Grapes are grown in the Napa Valley.*)
2. when the writer wants to sound objective (e.g., *It is assumed/believed that this was among the most significant policy decisions of the decade.*)
3. when the writer wishes to retain the same grammatical subject in successive clauses (e.g., *Rene Arredondo beat Lonnie Smith, but he was beaten by Gato Garcia.*)
4. when the theme is shared information, but the agent is new (e.g., *What a beautiful picture! Isn't it? It was painted by one of my students.*)

Having looked at just two grammar references, one ESL text, and one TESL training text, we already see problems. All of the texts provide interesting and helpful information. However, none is 100 percent complete. Therefore, it is necessary to consult more than one text when preparing to teach a grammar point for the first time. Since not all of the sources will agree, and not all will agree with what we have learned through our own experiences, questions which arise during preparation need to be resolved to some degree before the lesson is presented, since some bright and articulate student will probably notice a discrepancy and ask about it. With this information in mind, let us now plan our strategy for teaching the passive.

The first step is to decide which language factor occurs most naturally with the passive. This structure does not seem particularly sensitive to socio-linguistic factors; whether one uses passive or active does not vary according to whom one is talking to (*Harold was struck by lightning* would not necessarily change to *Lightning struck Harold* as a result of whom one was addressing). Likewise, the semantic content of many (but certainly not all) active/passive pairs is similar, so approaching the passive voice from a semantic perspective would not be very helpful. By the process of elimination, then, we conclude that the most natural match seems to be structure with discourse. With some experience in matching, the process becomes much less arbitrary, and it will be easier to see which language factor most naturally complements a particular structure. Now that we have decided that the passive voice is discourse-sensitive, we will have to provide sufficient

discourse context to give a realistic picture of the structure. The techniques which this combination suggests include storytelling, singing, and problem solving. Our resources will be linguistic objects or texts such as stories, songs, dialogs, and verse, combined with appropriate activities.

The second step is to delimit the information so that what we teach matches the ability of our students. In our hypothetical program, this is the first time the class will be learning the passive voice, so we will not include all of the variations, such as *get* passives, complex passives with *have*, and stative passives at this time. Instead we will confine our instruction to the simple *be* passive. Depending on the students' level, we may also limit our focus to one or two tenses.

THE GRAMMAR LESSON

The second step or stage is the grammar lesson, which consists of four parts:

1. **Presentation**, in which we introduce the grammar structure, either inductively or deductively. There are a variety of techniques and resources that can be used during this step. Selection should be made according to teacher strengths, student preferences, and the nature of the structure (e.g., What is the structure-language-factor match?)
2. **Focused practice**, in which the learner manipulates the structure in question while all other variables are held constant. The purpose of this step is to allow the learner to gain control of the form without the added pressure and distraction of trying to use the form for communication. The teacher should not proceed to the next phase until most students have mastered at least the form of the structure.
3. **Communicative practice**, in which the learner engages in communicative activities to practice the structure being learned. According to Morrow and Johnson (1981), a communicative task incorporates the actual processes of communication; the more of these features an exercise incorporates, the more communicative it is.
 - *Information gap*. In the course of doing the activity, one participant should be in a position to tell one or more other people

something that the others do not yet know.

- *Choice*. The speaker must have some role in deciding exactly what he will say and how he will say it. (Options can be presented in advance by the teacher.) This also means that there should be some uncertainty in the mind of the listener(s) about what the speaker will say next.
- *Feedback*. What the speaker says to the person(s) he is communicating with depends not only on what the other person(s) says, but also on what the speaker wants to accomplish via the conversation (pp. 62-63).

4. **Teacher feedback and correction.** Although this is usually considered a final step, it must take place throughout the lesson. We also feel that a teacher's correction strategy should probably change according to the phase of the lesson. For example, during the second part of the lesson, correction should be predominantly straightforward and immediate. During the third part, however, communication should not be interrupted. Instead, the teacher should take note of errors and deal with them after the communicative exercises. There is one element of correction, however, that we feel should remain constant; regardless of when correction is made, teacher feedback should always attempt to engage the student cognitively rather than to simply point out the error and provide the appropriate target form. In any case, the match in language factors, technique, and resources will be used in each part of the lesson.

For additional discussion of each phase, see Chapter Ten, which includes a remedial minigrammar lesson. The differences between the abbreviated version of a grammar lesson described there and a regular lesson are the length of each phase, the variety in the presentation, and the remedial nature of the minigrammar lesson. The minilesson assumes that the structure has been taught, but for some reason has ceased to be an active part of the repertoire of at least some of the students. A regular grammar lesson is much more substantial and generally presents a grammar concept for the first time.

Because review is essential in our program (like many adult schools, our imaginary school has a policy of open enrollment, so that students may enter our class at any time during the semester), we will teach the passive voice after reviewing the major tenses and aspects.

As we cycle through each tense to review over the next few weeks, we will include the passive voice for that particular tense and aspect. In other words, we will introduce the passive in present and past tense now, but when we review the present perfect some weeks hence, we will introduce the passive voice of the present perfect. In this way, we will be able to cover the passive voice with various verb tenses and aspects once the basic concept has been understood and mastered, and we will not have to give students so much initial data that they lose sight of the general picture.

Since we have established that the active and passive versions of a sentence are not always as closely tied as we had first imagined, we will not teach passive sentences by simply transforming active ones. We will teach the passive in its own right, not as a structure derived from an active sentence. We will start out by teaching the passive *without* the agent *by*-phrase because naming the agent through a *by*-phrase is unusual—not commonplace—in the passive voice. Only later will we teach the exceptions that allow students to retain the agent.

Finally, for this lesson we should keep in mind that not all passives have an active, transitive counterpart, and we will therefore teach “passivization” as a property of the verb (i.e., some verbs can be used in passive sentences and some cannot; whether a given verb can or not is not a function of transitivity, but rather a property of the verb, although, of course, there is a strong correlation between verbs that are transitive and verbs that passivize).

Now that we have made the basic preliminary decisions, we will describe an actual lesson we observed in an adult school in terms of the steps outlined above. We visited the class of an experienced teacher who had excellent rapport with her class, which consisted of fifty-one students, predominantly from Latin America, about evenly divided between male and female. The teacher was comfortable with the number of students, as well as with the subject matter and the techniques used. The techniques were appropriate for the structure she was teaching and worked well for her, but they are not necessarily appropriate for everyone. It is important for each of us to explore and develop techniques which are compatible with our personalities and philosophies. Recall that we have suggested that any grammar lesson has four parts: (1) presentation, (2) structured, focused practice, (3) communicative

practice, and (4) feedback and correction. We will begin by describing the observed teacher's presentation.

Presentation

The teacher's first objective was to focus students' attention on the structure in a natural context for the passive. Her second aim in the presentation phase was to elicit the rule for forming the passive from the students rather than simply telling them the rule. Her technique was a roleplay/storytelling combination. She began by selecting a student from the class and having her come to the front of the room with her purse. She whispered to the student briefly, explaining what was going to happen so that the student would not be startled or upset. She then selected another student to play the role of a thief. She directed the second student to run by the first student, grab her purse, and run to the back of the room. The teacher assured us that most students love a roleplay, and that she had never seen students take this one seriously or become upset or agitated by it. We would caution, however, that if you think the students you are working with would not respond well to this situation, you might want to select another context in which the focus will naturally be on the one who receives rather than the one who performs the action, such as being invited to the movies by a famous person.

The teacher felt that by the time students reach an intermediate level, they should be proficient at both hamming it up and participating as an audience. Her narration of the scene for the class follows:

"You know, last night Luisa was walking home from her friend's house when suddenly something terrible happened."

At this point, the second student was cued to run by and steal the purse.

"Her purse was stolen! Oh my goodness! That was terrible! Luisa, what happened?"

The teacher then allowed Luisa to enjoy her role by giving the class as much detail about the incident as she wanted, and involved the other students as much as they wanted. As soon as everything settled down, the teacher helped Luisa to her seat and said:

"You poor thing! That's too bad! Here, let me help you to your seat."

Then the teacher said to the class:

"Wasn't that awful? Luisa is going to call the police right away, and what is she going to tell them?"

Then the teacher elicited answers from the class and wrote on the board,
My purse was stolen.

She then shifted the class's attention to the student at the back of the room with the purse, who had been forgotten in all the excitement. Her narration continued:

"Well, here's the thief. Carmen. Let's see what happened to her. She was chased all over the city by the police."

The teacher acted as both narrator and police officer, chasing Carmen around the room and giving commentary on the action in the passive voice. After everyone had enjoyed the action, the teacher shouted, "Halt!" and then continued:

"Finally Carmen was caught. She was frisked and then she was handcuffed, and finally she was taken to jail. And what happened to Luisa's purse? It was given back to her."

The teacher returned Luisa's purse, thanked the students for participating, and asked everyone to be seated. Returning to the chalkboard, she said:

"Now, what happened to Carmen?"

She wrote each statement on the board after eliciting it from a student. Not all of the suggestions were grammatically correct, but when students couldn't provide the form exactly, the teacher accepted appropriate content and put the grammatically correct form on the board in order to give feedback:

She was chased, she was caught . . .

After all the forms were written on the board, the teacher proceeded as follows:

"Now this is sort of interesting. We have a new grammatical form here. Does anyone know what this is called?"

No student could provide the name of the form, so she said:

"This is called the passive voice."

Then she explained why the context demanded use of the passive voice. Her explanation was more like a dialog with the students than a lecture. It went something like this:

"What is important to Luisa?"

The students responded, "Her purse."

“That’s right. Luisa is interested in her purse. She doesn’t even know the person who took it. The thief isn’t interesting. If Luisa calls you on the phone to tell you about her experience, what are you interested in?”

Again, the students responded, “Her purse.”

“That’s right. And that’s why Luisa is talking about her purse, not the person who took it. Sometimes we’re more interested in what receives the action than what does the action. In this case, the person who did the action is a stranger. We’re not interested in her. We want to talk about what’s important to us.

So this is one time we would use the passive voice in English.”

She then wrote the rule on the board, under the heading *Passive Voice*.

The next focus of attention was form. Referring to the sentences she had written on the board, the teacher asked:

“Can you see what the pattern is? How do we make the passive voice?”

She worked with the students until the correct rule of *be* + past participle was arrived at. Technically, the passive is formed with a passive participle, but for all intents and purposes, it is identical to the past participle, so the teacher used the term “past participle” to draw on what her students already knew. At this point, she then reviewed exactly what the forms of the verb *be* are, writing each on the board:

“Now what is the verb *be* again? *Am, are, is, was, and were*, and when do I use *am? Are?*” (etc.)

She put the pronouns by the verb so that she finally had the paradigm, *I am, you are, he/she/it is*, etc. on the board, and then reviewed past participles as the “third part of the verb” and went through several verbs, writing the base form, simple past, and past participle on the board. After this minireview, she turned to the passive sentences her students had formed about the scene their classmates had performed and pointed out and underlined the verb *be* and the past participle in each example, as well as the rule for its production that had been elicited from the class. She then erased the sentences about Luisa and the fate of the thief and called a young man to the front of the class.

“Everyone knows Ali. Ali, say hello to everyone.”

Ali hammed it up.

“You know, a few months ago, Ali did something very wonderful. He helped a lot of poor people in this city, which was a very fine and important thing to do. In fact, it was so wonderful that the mayor held a special ceremony for Ali last week. Did you know that? Ali, is it true?”

Once again, Ali did his part.

“Let me tell you what happened at that ceremony. Ali was given . . . what’s this called?”

Someone supplied the term *a medal*. The teacher pinned a paper medal she had made on Ali’s chest and asked:

“What happened to Ali? Everyone write it down on your paper, but don’t say it. Give everyone a chance to get it.”

She waited a few minutes and then asked the class:

“What happened to Ali?”

A student volunteered the answer, “Ali was given a medal,” and the teacher wrote it on the board, repeating it as she wrote. She then went over each element of the sentence and asked:

“How many people got this right?”

Several students raised their hands. She acknowledged them and then continued with Ali’s story, using the same procedure for each main point:

“And he was congratulated by a lot of important people. His picture was taken,”

Here the teacher again simulated the action and had the students try to write on their papers before she provided the narration for the event:

“and he was given the key to the city.”

The teacher presented a “key,” with a brief side discussion about what it meant to receive the key to the city. At each step the teacher asked for a show of hands of how many students had gotten the sentence correct. She told us she was using this as an informal evaluation process, and she would continue the story of Ali or begin a new story until about 80 percent of the class was correctly producing the passive on their papers. As an additional verification, she walked around the room as she told the story, informally checking papers during the pauses when students were writing. When she was satisfied, she addressed the class, standing by a very proud Ali,

“Don’t you feel proud just to know him? Let’s give him a hand.”

All the students applauded. The teacher then returned to the line of reasoning begun before.

“Now, what are we interested in, the person who gave Ali the medal or our friend, Ali? What’s more interesting to us, the person who took his picture or Ali?”

At each point the students responded properly and the teacher said:

“That’s right, and that’s why we say . . .”

She again reviewed the context for the passive and the rule for constructing it, and then she moved into the second phase of the lesson.

Focused Practice

Recall that in this part of a grammar lesson students are asked simply to manipulate the structure under consideration. To accomplish this task, the teacher asked the students to imagine they were writing home about their classmate, Ali, and his award ceremony. She put these sentences on the board and asked students to fill in the appropriate form of the verb.

Dear _____ ,

Last night an award ceremony (1) for my friend, Ali. He
(hold)

is a real hero in this city, and last night he (2) a medal
(give)

for his bravery. Everyone (3) . After the ceremony, his
(impress)

picture (4) with the mayor and everyone wanted his auto-
(take)

graph. Later there was a party at a fancy restaurant to celebrate. We

all (5) . It was fantastic! We danced and drank champagne
(invite)

until two in the morning. Truly, a good time (6) by all. I’ll
(have)

write more later. Bye for now.

Love,

Students copied the letter from the board and filled in the blanks with the passive form (*was* or *were* and the past participle of the verb in parentheses). As students were working, the teacher walked around the room, answered questions, and worked individually with students who were having trouble or who asked for help.

When everyone had finished, the teacher selected a volunteer to fill in the blanks on the board. Members of the class then took turns reading aloud from the board. The teacher corrected any errors immediately with the help of students. Finally, she asked students to check their work against the examples on the board. During this phase of the lesson, the teacher gave careful attention to correction. She was circulating in the room, correcting errors as she found them. Her last step was to ask how many students had gotten all the answers correct, only one wrong, only two wrong, etc. As students raised their hands, she looked around and acknowledged each.

This concluded her presentation and focused practice of the passive. Her lesson lasted about thirty-five minutes. Each day for about one and a half weeks she planned to review the previous day’s work and introduce a new context and some structured practice for the passive voice.

Communicative Practice

The teacher didn’t really give the class any communicative exercises (the third phase of a grammar lesson) until about a week after introducing the passive, when she was confident that most students could at least manipulate the form and use it in a controlled context. For her first communicative activity, the class was divided into pairs. One member of each pair was sent to an adjoining room, and the door was closed so they could not see what was going to happen. Then an aide, Alan, whose help had been solicited before class, came to the front of the room. The students laughed while a silly hat was put on Alan, a mustache was drawn, a fingernail was painted green, etc. While the victim retreated to clean himself up, the second members of the pairs were called back to the room. The teacher explained that students who had stayed in the room had to tell their partners what had happened to Alan, using the passive voice. During the communicative exercises, no corrections were made, but the teacher circulated around the room, noting errors in her notebook.

Feedback and Correction

The next day's grammar lesson began with the teacher writing several errors she had overheard the day before on the board. She said to the class, "Yesterday during our lesson I heard someone say this. What do you think about this sentence?" She then elicited the correct form from the class and did a very quick focused review, much like the structured, focused exercises mentioned in our description of the presentation phase of the lesson. Next she moved into another communicative exercise and alternated between phases two and three until she was satisfied with her students' mastery of the structure.

Lesson Summary

Because we have decided the most frequent and natural context for the passive voice is written discourse (Shintani, Quirk, *et al.* 1985), more advanced or sophisticated students might respond better or more comfortably to some of the exercises for the passive that appear in Chapter Eleven. We have explained what we observed one adult-school teacher do successfully, but of course presentation, focused practice, communicative practice, and correction and feedback procedures will vary according to the natural inclinations and preferences of the teacher and students.

In addition to the lesson we saw and the teacher's projected lessons, we would suggest a lesson toward the end of the unit illustrating when the agent *by*-phrase is retained in a passive sentence and another one on verbs that occur only in the passive (e.g., *to be born*).

CONCLUSION

In this chapter we began by considering what language really is and the difference between prescriptive and descriptive grammar, so we could more rationally evaluate material in preparation for a grammar lesson. We parenthetically considered the issue of sequencing and then began to prepare for the lesson much in the same way any ESL teacher would prepare to teach a grammar point for the first time.

We looked up the passive in two reference texts, an ESL text, and a TESL text. We noticed similarities and differences among the texts and compared them to our own experience and common sense.

Then we summarized our findings. Our next step was to determine the match between structure, language factors, techniques, and resources so that we could select appropriate techniques and resources for the lesson.

Finally, we described in detail an actual thirty-five minute grammar lesson for teaching the passive voice and the sequencing the teacher planned to follow over a period of time as she moved through the four phases of teaching grammar:

- presentation
- focused practice
- communicative practice
- feedback and correction

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- communicative practice
- feedback and correction

·ACTIVITIES·

Discussion Questions

1. Why is it so difficult to give hard and fast rules for English grammar?
2. This chapter suggests that a grammar lesson might optimally consist of four phases. What reasoning do you think motivated these divisions? Do you agree or disagree? Justify your position.
3. Based on your experience as a language learner and/or teacher, do you agree with the suggestions in the grammar lesson regarding correction and feedback? Why or why not?
4. What did you think of the grammar lesson presented in this chapter? How would you change the lesson to make it work for you and your students?

Suggested Activities

1. Select a grammar point. Look it up in a grammar reference book, a text for ESL students, and a reference text for ESL teachers. Do the three agree with each other? On what points do they disagree?
2. Plan a grammar lesson on the point you researched in the previous question. List in detail the steps you decide to incorporate into your grammar lesson.

·CHAPTER THREE·

Techniques

LISTENING AND RESPONDING

Let us begin our discussion of techniques by considering one which is particularly well suited to both presentation and focused practice of grammar structures with a semantic challenge: the technique of listening and responding.

Most of us, at one time or another, have seen young children learning a second language. In contrast to adults, most children seem to learn second and third languages almost effortlessly. For example, the children of adult immigrants are almost always considerably more proficient in their second language than their elders and, unlike their parents, they often achieve native-like fluency and pronunciation. No one is absolutely certain why this occurs, but one of the *prima facie* differences in language acquisition between adults and children is that the children observe a "silent period." According to researchers, children often don't say anything or say very little when first learning a second language. They appear simply to listen; then, after a while, the new language begins to emerge naturally.

Many methodologists feel that adult second-language learners, like children learning their first language, should be allowed to enjoy a silent period and that if we didn't force our adult learners to speak and repeat phrases in the new language immediately, adults would be much better language learners. Moreover, from our reading of Blair (1983), we know that not all adults are poor second-language learners. Blair cites work done by Hill (1970), who reports on Indians living in the Amazon basin, among whom "the learning of new languages in both childhood and adulthood is widespread and thought to be perfectly ordinary" (p. 240). Approximately twenty-four distinct

languages are spoken in this area, and the culture of these peoples demands that they marry someone from another language group. To do otherwise is considered incestuous. Thus, children are minimally bilingual before they reach adolescence, speaking the native languages of both parents, and often learn several more languages in adulthood. Of particular relevance to our discussion on listening is how the Indians learn these different languages:

The Indians do not practice speaking a language that they do not know well yet. Instead, they passively learn lists of words, forms, and phrases in it and familiarize themselves with the sound of its pronunciation. . . . They may make an occasional attempt to speak . . . in an appropriate situation, but if it does not come easily, they will not force it.¹

Blair also cites Nida (1971), who reports that many African polyglots have told him that after listening to a language long enough, they can “hear” it. One African said, “We just live there and listen, and before we know it, we can hear what they say. Then we can talk” (p. 42).

While conducting research at the Defense Language Institute in Monterey, California, Postovsky (1970, 1975, 1976) found that, among students of Russian, the development of comprehension skills significantly facilitated the acquisition of speaking skills. Postovsky speculated that comprehension constituted a latency from which speech production would emerge naturally. Likewise, TPR—in which the first weeks or months of a student’s second language learning consist of physically responding to a series of oral commands in the target language—has been an effective approach for both younger and older second-language learners, particularly at the beginning levels (Asher, 1965 and Asher *et al.*, 1974).²

Not all students are willing or able to observe a silent period. Cultural expectations or practical obligations may force them to interact verbally; they need to ride the bus, hold down a job or go to school, pay the rent, enroll children in school, etc. It may thus be unrealistic to enforce a strict silent period with adolescent or adult ESL learners;

¹ Sorenson (1967: 680), cited in Hill.

² For a discussion of this method and an example lesson using TPR, see Larsen-Freeman (1986).

however, it appears that some kind of compromise that includes work on listening comprehension for part of the time is more beneficial than the standard “listen and repeat” classes we see in many schools.

Banjar (1981) conducted an experiment involving just this kind of compromise in Saudi Arabian secondary schools. Four classes, each with four hours of English per week, participated in the experiment. Two experimental classes devoted the first fifteen minutes of each lesson to listening comprehension using *The Learnables*, materials developed by Harris Winitz. The materials consist of picture books (no written text) accompanied by tapes recorded by native speakers. The tapes describe the pictures in sequence, and students simply listen and turn the pages. The two control classes in Banjar’s experiment did other activities irrelevant to the experimental treatment during the first fifteen minutes of each lesson. Both groups were tested at the beginning and the end of the experiment. After three months, “Students in the experimental group who received the listening component performed significantly better . . . not only on listening comprehension but also on other language skills such as grammar and dictation” (Banjar 1981: 32).

A very good way of achieving the kind of compromise Banjar’s research supports is for the language teacher to speak only the target language, in class and out. It is natural for teachers to want to demonstrate their mastery of the students’ native language, or to want native speakers with whom they can practice a language they are learning. However, when language teachers use their students for either of these purposes, they do so at the expense of the students. Conversation with students outside of class on routine matters may be the only opportunity to converse about personal or real-life situations in the target language. We know some teachers who will allow students to address them in either their native or the target language, but these teachers will respond only in the target language. In this way, if students have personal messages or problems that they cannot express in the target language, they can still communicate with the teacher yet they also receive target language input. Moreover, students who may constitute a language minority in a class will very likely feel left out and rejected if the teacher addresses everyone in the class (except them) in a language to which they are not privy. Besides being extraordinarily

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rude, such behavior suggests an intimacy and understanding with some of the students from which the others are excluded. Affective factors are exceedingly important in second-language acquisition, and to be excluded by one's language teacher, whether the rejection is real or imagined, intentional or unintentional, can be devastating.

We have had colleagues who argue energetically and even persuasively for the expediency of offering a word now and then in the native language of the students if the class has one common language; however, we must admit that we remain unconvinced. Our experience as second- and third-language learners and as second-language teachers suggests to us that the safest and most satisfying policy in the long run is for us to speak the target language at all times with our students, and this is our advice to you. It may take more time to explain a vocabulary item in the target language, and you may need to make several attempts, but each attempt constitutes listening comprehension practice of authentic language used for communicative purposes and should thus ultimately be beneficial to the students, even if it does not instantly achieve the immediate goal.

The exercises in this chapter are based on the assumption that listening comprehension is necessary for second-language acquisition. They encourage learners to make a match between structure and meaning while observing a silent period and are thus ideally suited to beginning students. More experienced students can also benefit from this approach because it will help them to comprehend a structure before they are asked to produce it. For structures that have a semantic association, the listening exercises in this chapter can be used as the basis for activities in which students are asked to listen and respond, physically or verbally. The resources needed for this technique are objects and people, mainly the students themselves.

LISTEN AND PHYSICALLY RESPOND

Our first exercise, which draws on Asher's Total Physical Response method (1977), is a very effective way to present imperatives, prepositions, and phrasal verbs. Although it is a presentation technique for students at all levels, it can also provide structured and communicative practice for beginning students who don't have enough language to

handle a communicative task. Asher's research suggests that students benefit from watching as well as from doing, so you can begin by bringing several students and their chairs to the front of the room. The rest of the class will watch and learn. Have students sit down and face the class. Be careful not to use any language except English. Say "Stand up," and do it yourself to show your students what you mean. Do it several times until the students in the front of the room get the idea. Then ask individual students to do it. Use their names: "John, stand up." When John does it correctly, acknowledge this by saying, "good" or "OK." After all the students in the front of the room can do it, try a new command: "Mary, sit down." Go slowly. Repeat and act out each command as many times as necessary. When students can stand up or sit down on command, ask one to walk to the window. Remember, you can demonstrate yourself or use gestures, but don't answer any questions in the student's native language. Everything must be in English. Continue with other directions, such as, "Stand up," "Sit down," "Jump," "Walk to the window," and "Walk to the chair." When they have mastered these commands, you can give them a novel command they haven't heard before, such as, "Jump to the window." Students will be delighted when they realize they can understand and respond to something new in English in so short a time. In this way, students learn to comprehend the imperative form without even realizing it.

LISTEN AND DRAW

For working with students beyond the very beginning level, the following activity might be used for communicative practice of prepositions and locations of objects with various shapes.

Ask students to take out a piece of paper and a pencil. Tell them to listen and to draw what you ask. You can make the directions as simple or complex as you want. The following example starts out very simply, but becomes quite complex:

"Draw a heart in the upper right-hand corner of your paper. Now draw a diamond to the left of the heart. Draw a house in the middle of your paper. Now draw a tree three inches below the heart. Put two horizontal, parallel lines three centimeters below the diamond."

This exercise can continue as long as your students are challenged and can be varied to practice vocabulary and prepositions receptively.

LISTEN AND COLOR

For receptive practice of possessive adjectives, the following activity can be used. Give students some crayons and a mimeographed sheet with line drawings of a boy and a girl, and their dogs. The pictures can be simple, but students must be able to tell the boy from the girl. Then give the class the following instructions:

“On your paper there are two people, a boy and a girl. Color his hair red.”

Wait for students to do this, and then say:

“Color her hair orange. Color her skirt brown. Color his pants black. Color her T-shirt green. Color his T-shirt purple. Color his dog brown and white. Color her dog yellow.”



The actual colors used are not important. The main objective is to give students a chance to follow directions while listening to colors and possessive adjectives in imperative sentences. When the students are finished, let them compare papers. Finally, show them your paper as a final check for accuracy. This activity is intended for children, but adults enjoy it or adaptations of it as well. If you cannot prepare mimeographed sheets for your students, you can draw the pictures on the board and have students approximate them on paper; two students can also come up to the front of the room and carry out the commands with colored chalk. The rest of the students can watch and correct their classmates if a mistake is made.

LISTEN AND MANIPULATE

A particularly effective technique for presenting or practicing prepositions and phrasal verbs requires your students to listen and manipulate objects. If you are using the following exercise to present the lesson, follow the TPR format outlined on page 43, in which the teacher demonstrates the appropriate action first.

For example, call one student to the front of the room and say: “John, put the book on the table. Good. Put the book under the table. Good. Put the book beside the chair. Good. Put the book in the drawer.”

Introduce the phrasal verb *pick up* by continuing this way:

“Pick up the book and put it on the chair. Pick up the book and put it in the drawer.”

For more advanced students who have mastered prepositions of location, you can extend the activity to demonstrate other uses of prepositions, such as the proxy function of *for*. To do this, say:

“Mike, John wants to put the book on the table, but he can’t. His arm is broken. Put the book on the table for him.”

Another exercise for teaching phrasal verbs that requires listening and manipulating objects is similar to the first exercise mentioned in the Listen and Respond Physically section. However, instead of having students stand up and sit down, have them manipulate objects. For example, ask a student to come to the front of the room. Put a piece

of paper on the desk and say:

“José, pick up the paper. Throw it away. Oh, oh! We want to keep it. Pick it up again. Give it to Marcia. She’s had it long enough. Take it away from her.”

Whether the commands are simple or complex, the same principles apply. In most classes, the teacher can even invite one of the students to take over the role of giving commands. This is usually well received by the class.

LOOK, LISTEN, AND VERBALLY RESPOND

A very effective technique taken from the Natural Approach, developed by Krashen and Terrell (1983), which we have seen Terrell skillfully demonstrate several times, involves the teacher speaking to students who can only give one-word responses (as a class or individually). The word can be *yes* or *no*, or it can be someone’s name, a noun, an adjective, a number, etc. Terrell uses this technique to teach vocabulary, but it can also be used to present or practice certain structures, such as *or* questions, after students have mastered comprehension of *yes/no* and *wh*-questions.

If students already know each other’s names and some basic color vocabulary, the teacher can begin by standing next to a student and asking the class (or an individual student) who it is:

T: Is this Maria or is this Susana? (demonstrates response) Susana.

T: Is this Maria or Susana? (elicits response)

S(s): Susana.

T: Is Susana’s blouse pink or is it blue? (points to blouse and responds) Pink.

T: Is Susana’s blouse pink or blue? (elicits response)

S(s): Pink.

This should continue with examples involving other students until the teacher is confident the class understands how to comprehend and respond to alternative questions. At this point, the teacher can introduce some well-selected pictures of desserts or sweets (along with the vocabulary if it is unfamiliar) and say, “We’re going to a restaurant. We’re going out for dessert.” The conversation can continue as follows:

T: Jorgé, do you want ice cream, pie, or cake?

J: Pie.

T: Do you want apple pie or cherry pie?

J: Cherry.

T: Samira, do you want ice cream, pie, or cake?

S: Ice cream.

T: Do you want vanilla ice cream or chocolate?

S: Chocolate.

This should continue until everyone has a chance to respond. The most common error is for students to answer *yes* or *no* when they should make a specific choice. When this happens, the teacher should show pictures of all the options in the alternative question and say to the student(s), “You can’t have both/all of them. You have to make a choice. Which one do you want? Do you want this one or that one?” During the exercise, the teacher should also include a few recall items, such as these:

T: Li, I forgot. Does Jorgé want ice cream or pie?

L: Ice cream.

If there is a mistake, as above, or any confusion, *yes/no* and *wh*-questions can be used to straighten out the facts:

T: Is that right, Jorgé?

J: No.

T: What do you want?

J: Pie (or cherry pie).

In this way, comprehension of alternative questions is introduced, while comprehension of *yes/no* questions and *wh*-questions is reviewed. This would take place during the presentation phase of a lesson.

LISTEN AND SPEAK

One of the best communicative exercises for practicing prepositions and phrasal verbs requires some preparation but is well worth the time and effort. Before class, you will need to cut out different shapes (triangles, circles, squares, and rectangles) from different colored papers. Make the shapes different sizes and colors, but make two copies of each color/shape combination. Use enough different shapes so that each student can have about six or eight pieces of paper. Before you

start, be sure students know the names of all the shapes and colors you have used.

For this exercise, each student will need a partner. Each pair is given matching sets of colored shapes. They can arrange their chairs so they are sitting back to back. One student in each pair then arranges his set of shapes on his desk any way he chooses. The only requirements are that he must use all the shapes the teacher has given him, and his partner must not be able to see the arrangement. Then, when the teacher tells students to begin, the student with the arranged shapes must tell his partner where to put her pieces of paper so the arrangement on her desk exactly matches the arrangement on his. He might say things such as:

“Find the little yellow triangle. Put it three centimeters down from the left-hand side of your desk and two centimeters away from the top. Now find the big red circle and put it to the right of the triangle.”

Perhaps the other student will ask:

“Is the big circle about five centimeters in diameter?”

The first student will answer:

“No, that’s the small red circle. Find the big one.”

Walk through the class as students do this exercise and make sure they are using English. If they forget the word for a particular shape, let them describe it as best they can, and you can present the vocabulary they have forgotten after the exercise. Don’t let the students turn around or look at each other’s arrangement until the exercise is finished. Both students can speak and ask any questions of the other that they want. The point is to communicate. The exercise is difficult but offers a high return for the effort: it demands communication, encourages use of new vocabulary, practices structures already learned, and is exceedingly challenging.

LISTEN AND WRITE

For more advanced students, there are exercises that require them to listen and write. Several such activities are discussed in detail in Chapter Eleven, which deals with text-based exercises, such as dictation and dictocomp.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter we stated that listening-based exercises, such as those above, are excellent for several different reasons: First, they help the second-language learner—even the first-day beginner—match meaning and form in context; this match is achieved by techniques that get the learner to listen and respond physically or verbally, with the teacher using as resources the students, the classroom, and occasionally pictures or special objects. Second, such exercises are in tune with the principle of delayed oral production, and we think that learners who are allowed an initial silent period will be more fluent and have better pronunciation than learners required to speak immediately. Third, even if the needs of your students make a completely silent initial learning period impractical, a careful integration of listening-based exercises with the other activities in your curriculum can significantly improve the language proficiency (and this includes the grammar) of your beginning-level students (Banjar).

Since these listening exercises can be as simple or as complex as required, they can be used liberally with students at all levels of proficiency. For more advanced students, they can be part of the presentation phase, after which students can be asked to state the rule (i.e., to use inductive reasoning). For beginning students who do not have enough language to state a rule, these exercises may constitute both presentation and practice.

When doing these exercises in the classroom, don’t proceed too quickly. Remember that what sounds familiar to you might be strange and difficult for your students to comprehend and distinguish. Repeat as often as necessary, but try to speak at a relatively normal pace with normal intonation, and keep in mind that there is no need to resort to ungrammatical speech or baby talk.

Although we may very well learn to speak a second language by first learning to comprehend it, remember that much more than comprehension is required if students are to develop grammatical accuracy. The remainder of this book deals with a variety of strategies that will help you take your students beyond comprehension to meaningful production, which is another necessary step for learners if their goal is achieving a reasonable level of grammatical accuracy.

· ACTIVITIES ·

Discussion Questions

1. Do you think it is possible to develop listening-based exercises to present more complex structures, such as conditional sentences and relative clauses? If so, provide a brief illustration.
2. Do you feel that listening-based grammar exercises will be equally useful to second-language learners of all ages and at all levels of proficiency? Why or why not?
3. Have you ever experienced or observed a language class in which students were doing listening-based activities? If so, describe the activities.

Suggested Activities

1. Develop a listening-based grammar presentation activity for some point not covered in this chapter, such as demonstratives, the use of *not*, or the use of the present progressive tense. Share your activity with others and see what they think of it.
2. Try out the activity described in this chapter in the Listen and Speak section with a colleague, classmate, or family member. Use your native language or any language you like. Was it easy? How did it affect the quality of your communication? What did you learn from the experience?

· CHAPTER FOUR ·

Techniques

TELLING STORIES

TEACHER-GENERATED STORIES

Everyone loves a story, including ESL students. Stories are used in contemporary ESL materials to promote communication and expression in the classroom. A dialog reflecting some version of a “story” is central to audio-lingual lessons, and Rassias (1983) has demonstrated very graphically the value of the teacher as a good storyteller in foreign-language teaching. Serial-type stories containing the structures of the lesson can be found in texts such as Praninskas (1973), among numerous others.

Stories can be used for both eliciting and illustrating grammar points. The former employs inductive reasoning, while the latter requires deductive thought, and it is useful to include both approaches in lesson planning. In addition, a well-told story is the perfect context for a structure-discourse match, but the technique can also be used effectively for a structure-social factor match. As noted in Chapter One, many techniques can be used with more than one kind of match. Storytelling is one of these extremely versatile techniques, and once you get the hang of it, it can be a convenient and natural grammar teaching tool. You may even find that it is the technique that holds students’ attention best, as well as the one they enjoy most.

The ESL classroom has always attracted and provided a platform for great storytellers. However, you don’t have to be Mark Twain or Will Rogers to tell a story well. Grammar points can be contextualized in stories that are absorbing and just plain fun if they are selected with the interest of the class in mind, are told with a high degree of energy,

and involve the students. Students can help create stories and impersonate characters in them.

Students will certainly appreciate and respond to your efforts to include them in the storytelling process, but they will also, we have found, enjoy learning about you through your stories. Adult-school students are particularly interested in their teacher; anecdotes about you, your family, or your friends, as long as they are relevant and used in moderation, can be very effective.

Stories should last from one to five minutes, and the more exaggerated and bizarre they are, the more likely students will remember the teaching points they illustrate. Let us now consider some stories that have been used in adult ESL classes to teach various grammar points.

Past Perfect

Recall that the lesson presented in Chapter Two introduced the passive voice with a story that used students in the class as the characters. This same technique, originally suggested to us and demonstrated by Randall Burger of Cambria English Institute in Los Angeles, can be used to present the past perfect. Again, the story centers around students, and student participation and development of the story is encouraged.

In an intermediate class, the story could go as follows:

“Let’s say that Mrs. Gonzales gets tired of her job. What do you do, Mrs. Gonzales?”

Allow the student to respond. Then continue:

“OK. Let’s say that Mrs. Gonzales is tired of working in a hospital. She wants to find a new job where she can make more money. Is that right, Mrs. Gonzales?”

Shake your head up and down to signal to Mrs. Gonzales what her response should be. The student will usually catch on immediately and respond in a way that will advance the story. If not, continue to shake your head to prompt the correct response. You might, perhaps, even give the correct response yourself, with good humor. After a few stories, you will probably find that students await your cues eagerly and respond promptly, or occasionally enjoy giving you the wrong response before agreeing to follow your cues. Both kinds of responses

can be effective and serve to make the experience more interesting and fun for everyone. Continue the narration:

“So, Mrs. Gonzales decides to get a new job. What kind of job do you think she gets?”

Let students volunteer possible jobs for Mrs. Gonzales, but reject them all. When you’ve exhausted all of their suggestions, continue:

“No, these are really good ideas, but Mrs. Gonzales doesn’t get any of those jobs. You’re a really good cook, aren’t you?”

Shake your head up and down to cue a positive response:

“What dish do you cook best? Enchiladas? Now, Nelson, you’re a rich man, aren’t you?”

Shake your head up and down to cue Nelson if necessary:

“Would you like to invest some money? Good. Why don’t you give Mrs. Gonzales fifty thousand dollars to open an enchilada stand?”

Explain that with Nelson’s help, Mrs. Gonzales opened an enchilada stand:

“I think Mrs. Gonzales will make a lot of money. What do you think, Mehdi?”

After Mehdi responds:

“Well, you know, she did just that. Mrs. Gonzales was so successful that in just six months, she had made enough money to pay Nelson back and had one hundred thousand dollars left over besides. Each year, she sold more and more enchiladas. She became a very rich woman and moved to Beverly Hills. She bought a big house with a swimming pool, and what else, Mrs. Gonzales?”

After she responds:

“Wow! Doesn’t that sound great? Well, you know, after two or three years, Mrs. Gonzales decided that she wanted to retire. She had made so much money, she didn’t need any more. Now, Mrs. Gonzales, let me ask you, how much money had you made before you retired?”

With cues, get Mrs. Gonzales up to a million:

“That’s right. Mrs. Gonzales retired after she had made a million dollars.”

The sentence can be written on the board and the form of the past

students complete the following with a story:

“Last night I got locked out of my house because . . .”

This exercise can be oral or written. Students love to use their imaginations and often can create very entertaining stories.

True stories can also be very exciting. An occasion for structured, communicative practice of the past perfect could be provided by asking students to tell their partners or the class about five things they had never done before they came to the United States. For example:

“Before I came to the United States, I had never eaten a hamburger.”

Telling each other how they spend national holidays provides an opportunity for students to use the simple present. Telling about next weekend’s plans will elicit the future. Conditional use of perfect modals can be practiced by discussing what students could have done if they had wanted to or whom they could have (or should have) married. Such past unreal conditionals are appropriate for discussing what would have happened if they had done so. One effective procedure is for the teacher to model a story first and then to direct students to tell their stories to their partners. Students usually find the teacher’s story almost as interesting as their own, and modeling the activity seems to break the ice. It also gives students an opportunity to hear the grammatical structure in context once more before they produce it.

Modified Cloze

A short anecdote or story from which the structure under consideration is omitted can be used for focused practice of a particular grammatical structure. For example, the following story about Nasrudin provides students with an opportunity to practice the correct use of definite and indefinite articles. Omit the underlined articles, and number each blank in the story for discussion and correction purposes.

Nasrudin

Once upon a time there was a carpenter who had so much work to do that he decided he needed an assistant. He put an advertisement in the paper, and soon someone came to apply for the job. The carpenter was surprised and disappointed when a strange, weak-looking man named Nasrudin appeared at the door.

At first, the carpenter didn’t want to hire Nasrudin because he didn’t look like he could even lift a toothpick; however, as no one else had answered the ad, the carpenter finally said:

“OK, I’ll give you a chance. Do you see the forest over there?”

Take my axe and chop as much lumber as you can.”

At dusk Nasrudin returned, and the carpenter asked:

“How many trees have you chopped down?”

“All the trees in the forest,” Nasrudin replied.

Shocked, the carpenter ran to the window and looked out. There were no trees left standing on the hillside. Nasrudin had chopped down the entire forest. The astonished carpenter asked Nasrudin:

“Where did you learn to chop lumber?”

“In the Sahara Desert,” Nasrudin answered.

“That’s ridiculous,” laughed the carpenter. “There aren’t any trees in the Sahara Desert.”

“There aren’t any now,” Nasrudin replied.

Any joke or anecdote can be put to the same use if it contains examples of the structure being taught. Simply write the story in language you think your students will understand. It has been our experience that teachers usually are better judges of complexity and what their students comprehend than any formula, whether syntactic or lexical, for assessing difficulty. Sometimes it is necessary to introduce key lexical items before the activity, but these should be kept to a minimum and introduced a day or two in advance and reviewed on the day of the exercise. This allows students sufficient time to internalize the vocabulary items and gives them the opportunity to focus on form rather than on lexicon when the lesson is finally presented.

For example, one might use the old story of “The Most Intelligent Man in the World.” Key lexical items in the story include *pilot*, *automatic pilot*, *stewardess*, *knapsack*, and *parachute*. These words should be introduced a day or two before the story is told. Then the teacher should write up the story, leaving numbered blanks for the structures students are to focus on and fill in. For example, if one is teaching the use of *too*, *very*, and *enough*, the structured practice story might look like this:

The Most Intelligent Man in the World

A private jet with president X, a priest, a hippie, and the most intelligent man in the world was traveling through the air when suddenly one of the engines began to cough and splutter. The pilot checked the gauge and realized that there wasn't *enough* fuel to make it to the airport. He set the plane on automatic pilot and went back to the passenger compartment. The passengers were *very* frightened when they saw the pilot. He had a parachute on, and he said:

"I'm very sorry, but we don't have *enough* fuel to make it to the airport. Unfortunately, we also don't have *enough* parachutes for everyone. I'm taking one, and the stewardess is taking another. That will leave three. The four of you will have to decide among yourselves who gets them. Don't take *too* long because you only have *enough* fuel for about three more minutes. Good-bye."

With that, the pilot and the stewardess jumped out of the plane together. President X was the first person to speak. He said to the others:

"I'm President X. I'm the president of country Y. I'm much *too* important to die. I have a lot of responsibilities, and a lot of people depend on me. I should have a parachute."

He put on one of the parachutes and jumped out of the plane. The next person to speak was the most intelligent man in the world:

"I'm the most intelligent man in the world. People come from all over the world to ask my advice. I've solved problems in every country of the world. I'm a *very* important person. I'm much *too* important to die. I'm also *very* intelligent. The world needs me more than it needs a priest or a hippie. I should have a parachute."

With that, he took a parachute and jumped out of the plane. Now there was only one parachute left. The hippie looked at the priest, but the priest didn't seem *very* upset. The priest spoke first:

"Look, I'm a man of God. I've made my peace with my maker. I'm not afraid to die. There aren't *enough* parachutes for both of us, so why don't you take this last one? Go in peace, my son."

The hippie just smiled. He was *very* relaxed and said:

"No sweat, man. There are *enough* parachutes for both of us. The most intelligent man in the world just jumped out of the plane with my knapsack."

This story has been well received by advanced students, but if it seems too dated or doesn't appeal to you, you might try another joke or even a simplified version of a classic short story by someone such as Somerset Maugham or Guy de Maupassant. Much as we might dislike comic book or simplified versions of great literature, the plots are classic and hold students' attention in a way that other stories do not. For more advanced students, a story from *Time* magazine or a local newspaper can be transformed into a valuable resource by making it a cloze exercise that focuses on the relevant grammatical structure.

A method developed by Trudy Aronson of the Cambria English Institute to teach summarizing skills is also very helpful in communicative practice of a grammar point. Short articles from sources such as *Weekly Reader*, the Laubach Literacy newspaper, or simplified news publications for ESL students are cut out and mounted on heavy paper. Students are divided into pairs, each member given a different story. Students are allowed only a few minutes to read their stories. Then they must summarize their stories for their partners. The stories can be chosen for the type(s) of structure or tense they will elicit and used accordingly. For example, non-referential *it* and the future tense can be used in summarizing a weather forecast. Feature stories often use the present tense, and some news stories are written in the simple past. Teachers should feel free to specify a particular structure or tense. Usually learners are cooperative and welcome the opportunity for communicative practice of a specific form.

CONCLUSION

Storytelling is traditional in almost all cultures. We can tap into that tradition for a very portable resource and a convenient and flexible technique for teaching any phase of a grammar lesson. A story provides a realistic context for presenting grammar points and holds and focuses students' attention in a way that no other technique can. Although some teachers are better at telling stories than others, almost any of us can tell stories with energy and interest. Students naturally like to listen to stories, and most are remembered long after the lesson is over.

·ACTIVITIES·

Discussion Questions

1. Have you ever been in a language class, as teacher or student, in which a story was used to present a grammar point? Did it work? Why or why not?
2. What are some good sources that ESL teachers can consult for stories that lend themselves to teaching a particular structure?
3. What grammar points other than those presented in this chapter could be effectively presented in stories? (Mention at least three.)

Suggested Activities

1. Develop a story completion or modified cloze exercise that should elicit a particular structure. Ask native speakers of English (if available) to do the exercise and see if they actually use the predicted structure. If you did not get the results you expected, can you explain why?
2. Find a story, joke, or anecdote that lends itself to practice of a particular structure. Share this teaching idea with your colleagues.
3. Make up a story that illustrates a particular structure using four of your students as characters (or four of your friends if you don't currently teach). Tell this story to a colleague and watch her face for reactions as you tell the story. Did the story seem to hold her interest? After you have made your own assessment, ask your colleague what she thinks of this lesson.
4. Think of a favorite short story and retell it to your colleagues in language you think your class would understand, or write the story down and try it out on an actual ESL class. How was the story received? Can you explain why it was or was not well received? If the story was not successful, what changes should be made?

·CHAPTER FIVE·

Techniques

DRAMATIC ACTIVITIES AND ROLEPLAY

In this chapter we will discuss a variety of dramatic techniques, including roleplay. These techniques facilitate a match between structure and social functions and can be used for both communicative and focused grammar practice. Methodologists most frequently propose arguments for using dramatic activities to teach second-language communication skills and phonology; however, we feel that these activities are an effective tool for teaching grammar as well.

Based on her experience with ESL students and her research into the use of drama in language education, psychotherapy, and speech therapy, Stern (1980) hypothesizes that dramatic activities in the classroom can be helpful in several ways. They appear to provide or increase motivation, heighten self-esteem, encourage empathy, and lower sensitivity to rejection. It is interesting to note that these same affective factors are also posited by Schumann (1975) as being critical in second-language acquisition. Therefore, it seems reasonable to assume that drama is an excellent tool for second-language teaching.

Stern maintains that dramatic activities "are a curative for the frustration and lagging interest which often occur during second-language learning," because they provide a compelling reason to learn.¹ In effect, drama gives a "strong instrumental motivation" for learning the second language. In addition, Stern reports that Heyde (1979) has correlated self-esteem or self-confidence with oral proficiency in a second language. Stern thus concludes that drama "raises self-esteem by demonstrating to second-language learners that they

¹ See also Hsu (1975); Via (1976); and Moulding (1978).