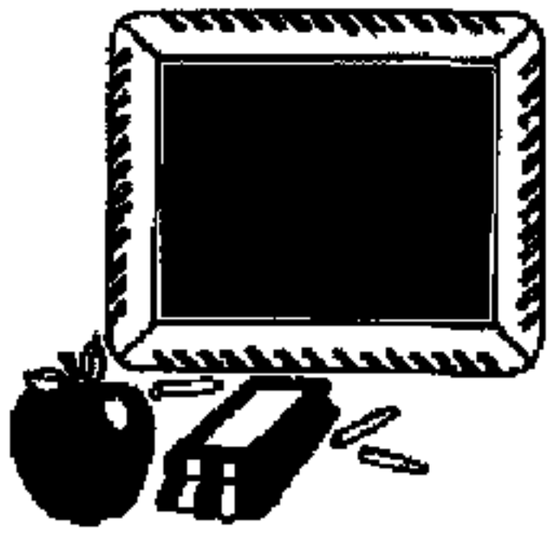

Tips for Teachers

Teaching Pseudo Synonyms to ESL Students: The Case of "Do" and "Make"

Alexander Astor, Hostos Community College, City University of New York

Vocabulary teaching in TESOL curricula has been historically relegated to secondary status in favor of an emphasis on grammar. Most programs assign vocabulary instruction to reading or listening comprehension courses where it is often seen as a means to an end but not as a goal in itself. The result of this kind of instruction is hardly a surprise: college-level students, who have completed ESL courses, find themselves at a literal "loss for words" in the uncontrolled English-speaking environment of the American university. They feel frustrated and sometimes claim that their ESL years were wasted since they experience enormous difficulty understanding and using English in their daily academic and nonacademic endeavors.

In order to remedy this situation, college level ESL curricula should be redesigned to include direct vocabulary instruction. Our students will be evaluated as much on their lexical proficiency as they are on their command of syntactic structures. Thus, it is incumbent on us to provide them with sufficient vocabulary instruction to function normally in an uncontrolled English-speaking environment. We have made strides in the *t*eaching of grammar, and there is no doubt that we can be as successful in teaching vocabulary. At present, however, since few college-level ESL programs provide for direct vocabulary teaching, ESL instructors must often create their own materials.

One area of vocabulary instruction that has intrigued me for a number of years is student confusion with what I call pseudo synonyms. Unlike typical synonyms, pseudo synonyms classify disparate groups of concepts, phenomena, and objects. There are two main categories of pseudo synonyms in English-those that can be used interchangeably in certain linguistic contexts, like vehicle and car, and those that cannot, like famous and notorious. Use of pseudo synonyms that are not

interchangeable can result in generating statements that are absurd, that do not convey the speaker's intended meaning, or that disrupt the flow of discourse.

My students have produced these sentences, which illustrate confusion with pseudo synonyms.

The wages were aroused.	instead of	The wages were raised.
He gave up the job.	instead of	He refused the job.
I did not listen to the news.	instead of	I did not hear the news.
He suggested repeating the experiment.	instead of	He offered to repeat the experiment.
He did not see me.	instead of	He did not look at me.

There are several reasons for these errors in adult ESL student speech. At the beginning level, ESL students often confuse pseudo synonyms due to the influence of their first language. One term in a student's first language may correspond to two or more in English, for example come and go; say, speak, and tell; teach and learn; suggest, offer, and propose; and make and do. In other cases, lexical difficulties are compounded by specific grammatical co-occurrence restrictions or the semantic intentions of the speaker. Without direct instruction, however, our students are frequently unaware of the differences in usage between pairs of ostensibly synonymous words in English. They are unable to correct errors because they unaware of them. They do not fully understand the complexities involved in mastering the usage of a word. Even students who are aware of the complexities of vocabulary use are frequently frustrated in their attempts to seek help. Most dictionaries and thesauri are written for native speakers who have the background knowledge to select an appropriate word or phrase for a given context from a long list of synonyms.

Below are examples of activities that I have used to draw student attention to the meaning and use of pseudo synonyms. While these exercises are specific to the pseudo pair "do and make," similar exercises can be used for other sets of pseudo synonyms.

One reason students confuse "do" and "make" is illustrated in these questions and responses:

1.	What does a baker do?	He makes bread.
2.	What does a tailor do?	She makes suits.
3.	What do shoemakers do?	They make shoes.
4.	What does a contractor do?	He makes houses.
5.	What does the desk clerk do?	She makes reservations.

Exercise 1

The following questions, set in the context of getting to know a classmate, can be used to draw student attention to common expressions that use forms of "make" and "do." Students can work in pairs and take turns asking and answering the questions. Since these sentences are short and simple, students are able to attain a degree of automaticity with these expressions.

1. Do you always do your assignments?
2. When do you do your homework?
3. Did you make many mistakes in your last test?
4. Did you make grammar or spelling mistakes?
5. Do you help your mother do the housework?
6. Do you make friends easily?
7. Do you make up with your friends after a fight?
8. What do your parents do?
9. Have you done your project yet?
10. Did you make a donation to the food bank?

Exercise 2

These proverbs and common sayings contain "do" or "make." Can you understand them? If not, you may need to consult a dictionary or ask your teacher to explain them to you.

Sayings and proverbs with "do:

1. When in Rome, do as the Romans do.
2. What we do willingly is easy.
3. What has been done cannot be undone.
4. Well begun is half done.
5. If you want something done well, do it yourself.
6. Promise little, but do much.
7. Anything that is worth doing is worth doing well.
8. Never put off till tomorrow what you can do today.
9. If we can't do as we would, we must do as we can.
10. Do unto others as you would have others do unto you.

Sayings and proverbs with "make"

1. Make hay while the sun shines.
2. Don't make mountains out of molehills.
3. Two wrongs don't make a right.
4. Haste makes waste.
5. As you make your bed, so you must lie on it.
6. You cannot make an omelet without breaking eggs.

Exercise 3

Change the following imperative sentences into polite requests using , "Would you mind . . .", "Please . . .", or other appropriate phrases.

	Imperative form	*Polite form*
1.	Do me a favor.	Would you mind doing me a favor?
2.	Make the bed.	Please make the bed
3.	Don't make so much noise.	
4.	Do the translation first.	
5.	Make a list of everything you need.	
6.	Make room for another person in your group.	
7.	Do your homework in the library.	

Exercise 4

Here are some rules of advice that people commonly give each other. We call rules written in this way "dos" and "don'ts." Can you understand them? Do you agree with them? Can you add to the list? Write your own dos or don'ts.

1. Don't make this mistake again.
2. Don't go to bed until you have done your homework.
3. Don't make mountains out of molehills.
4. Don't do anything till I come back.
5. Always do your best.
6. Do as you like.
7. Do your work first and then play.
8. Be the labor great or small, do it well, or not at all.

Exercise 5

The following statements are false. Work with a partner to correct them.

1. Violins are made of glass.
2. It is easy to make a house.
3. Cows make nests.
4. Beer makes flowers grow.
5. The story was so funny that it made me cry.
6. If you want something done well, ask someone to do it for you.
7. Smoking will do you no harm.
8. It will do you good to go to bed late every night.

Exercise 6

Use the appropriate form of "do" or "make" to complete theses sentences. The sentences tell about a plastics factory.

1. This factory ___ plastics.
2. The founder of this company had ___ everything himself.
3. The first thing he ___ was to borrow money from the bank.
4. Don't ___ anything ___ the foreman angry.
5. Try to work like he ___.
6. If you ___ the work by 4:00, you will ___ progress.
7. Please ___ everything possible ___ the new worker feel at home.
8. What are plastics ___ of?
9. Work the morning shift or the evening shift. It ___ no difference to me.
10. You must ___ your best ___ as few mistakes as possible.
11. It will ___ you good to give up smoking.
12. Don't rush, because haste ___ waste.

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Building and Using a Picture File

Jean Coffman, Hawai'i Pacific University

The cliché that a picture is worth a thousand words expresses advice that language teachers can put to good use. While I do not often draw a thousand words out of my ESL students, I have found pictures to be a very simple means of sparking ideas and eliciting language, even from reluctant, beginning level students. About ten years ago, I began to organize a picture file that has now grown to several hundred pictures, organized and stored in a way that makes them available to over 50 ESL teachers at my university. The process by which this file was created could be adapted for use by other programs or institutions.

Building the File

Step 1: Creating Storage Space

Deciding where and how the completed picture file will be stored is a good place to begin. This will determine the size and source of the pictures to be collected. Our file is stored in a file cabinet. Depending upon their situation, teachers may wish to use smaller pictures that could be stored in index card files, photo storage boxes, or other smaller files.

Step 2: Collecting the Pictures

Perhaps the easiest part of the process is gathering pictures. My primary sources of pictures were discarded magazines and calendars. I looked for pictures that were visually attractive, clear, colorful (for the most part), and free of distracting text. I also included pictures of unusual, humorous, or exotic people and places. Once colleagues knew about the project, they donated pictures for our file as well.

Step 3: Preparing the Pictures

Creating a file that can be used and cared for by many people requires some extra care in preparation. It is important that all the pictures be carefully trimmed and easy to handle. All of our pictures are mounted on colored sheets of 8fi by 11 inch paper. This size works well for us because the pictures are large enough to be shared by several students and can sometimes be shown to an entire class. As noted above, it is also cheap and easy to find pictures that will fit on paper of this size. Smaller pictures can be mounted on index cards of various sizes. If it is possible, the cards should be

laminated. This makes them durable and keeps them clean. We are fortunate to have the help of student workers to prepare and maintain our pictures.

Step 4: Organizing the Pictures

Some system for classification is necessary so that teachers with a particular activity in mind can quickly find what they are looking for. Our file is organized into about a dozen categories including individuals, groups of people, people at work, man-made things, animals, nature, and recreation and sports. These categories are labeled in the file cabinet so that teachers can quickly go to the section where they are likely to find what they are looking for. To help us return pictures to the right place, each card also has a sticky label on the back, coded to fit the category where the card belongs.

Step 5: Maintaining the File

Anything used by a large number of people requires upkeep. Busy teachers don't always check where they are putting pictures when they return them to the file. Occasionally pictures go missing. The sticky labels eventually fall off. Just as library shelves need to be checked and organized periodically, so does our picture file. We continue to look for pictures to add to the file, and once in awhile we add a new category of pictures.

Sample Picture Activity—My Daily Routine

The steps below describe a picture-based activity that works well with intermediate level students who have recently begun to work on subordination. The activity promotes oral fluency, provides guided practice in sentence construction, encourages students to ask for help, and gives them a chance to use their imagination or sense of humor.

1. From the picture file, select enough pictures for each student to have one of each in the categories of places where people might live (houses, apartments, igloos, tents, etc.), ways people might travel (cars, trains, boats, buses, horseback, etc.), types of jobs people might have (cutting down trees, surfing, doing office work, teaching, driving bus, etc.), and kinds of leisure activities people might enjoy (swimming, eating at a restaurant, catching butterflies, hiking, boating, etc.)

2. Layout the four sets of pictures. Ask students to choose one picture from each group. Try not to get the piles of pictures mixed up. Do not tell them anything more at this time.

3. As students are choosing their pictures, write on the board or overhead projector the adverbial conjunctions and relative clauses that the class has been using

to introduce subordinate clauses. These probably include when, while, because, although, after, where, and that.

4. After the students have chosen their pictures, write the following on the board or overhead projector. You can add or delete information depending on your students' level.

Where I live

How I get to work

What I see

What I do on the job

What I do later (my hobby)

5. Tell students that they need to use their pictures and the cues on the board to create an imaginary short story about themselves. Then, demonstrate, making the story as humorous as possible. For example: I live on a tropical island where the temperature is always mild. As I travel to work on my dogsled, I usually see chimpanzees along side the road. I have good job catching butterflies for the Ministry of Science and Technology although it doesn't pay very well. After we get off work, my colleagues and I often go disco dancing. Remind students to try to use some subordination although they may use other sentence structures as well.

6. Arrange students in small groups to practice. Encourage them to take turns telling their stories 2-3 times. One person at a time in each group can be designated to pay close attention to the use of subordination. Ask students to call you for help if they find something in their pictures that they do not know how to say in English. If time permits, groups can be rearranged so that students can tell their stories to a new audience as well. Pictures can also be shuffled and redistributed.

7. Once an activity like this has been taught, similar sessions with other targeted forms can become a routine yet fun form of periodic practice or review.

Many instructors in my program have their favorite picture-based activities. When one teacher finds another pulling pictures out of the file, there is often a brief exchange about how the pictures are going to be used. With just a minute or two of dialog, a teacher has a new idea for bringing life to his or her ESL lesson.

About the Author

Jean Coffman is Associate Professor of ESL at Hawai'i Pacific University. She also teaches TESL methods courses in which she encourages future teachers to begin developing their own picture files.

A Pinch of Salt: Using Etymology to Flavor EFL Classes

Ding Jiali, People's Republic of China

EFL classes can sometimes be dull especially when taught in settings where students have little contact with English outside of their foreign language classes. About 15 years ago, I began spicing up my EFL classes by introducing the etymology of interesting words and phrases. My students' interest level always rises when I tell a story of word origins. They learn the current usage of the word or phrase as well as some cultural or historical information. Most important, they enjoy using these words and phrases in their own speech. Gradually, they acquire a more and more complete picture of English and its complex history.

A good place to begin the study of word origins is with the origin of the word "etymology." I tell my students that this word is derived from the Greek root etumos, meaning "real" or "true", and the suffix -ology meaning "the study or science of". Thus, etymology is the study of word origins. I also point out that they have seen the suffix, "-ology" in other words that they know like biology or geology. Students begin to see how English is related to many different languages and how English words are built from meaningful pieces.

There are a number of different ways to introduce a story of etymology into an English lesson, but one of the best is when student curiosity leads to a question. For instance, my students were puzzled by reference to an experiment conducted on guinea pigs. Why would a small rat-like creature be called a pig? Does it have anything to do with the African country of Guinea? I compliment students who raise such questions, and I try to satisfy them with what I know about the etymology of the word. A Guinea pig is not a kind of pig as the word suggests. It is actually a kind of rat and originally came from South America. In the early days of trans-Atlantic trade between Africa, South America, and Europe, there was probably confusion about whether this cute creature came from Guinea or Guiana. Calling it a pig, which was a domesticated animal, had a better connotation than calling it a rat. Guinea pigs are often used for medical experiments because they have a rapid rate of reproduction, and since the early 20th century, the term has also referred to people who have been used as subjects in scientific experiments. My students are amused by this kind of story. More important, they remember the phrase and understand its usage.

Besides student questions, stories of etymology can grow out of the study of literature including the Bible, novels, plays; and folk tales. Literature is the source of common expressions used in a variety of contexts from newspapers to academic

publications. Studying the etymology of such phrases is both entertaining and useful for students who may encounter the expressions again in other readings. An example of such a word is "albatross." When my students first encountered this word, they had no difficulty understanding the primary dictionary definition of a white seabird, but they could not understand why the word also connotes "trouble" or "vexation." How could a bird signify "a burden that one cannot seem to get rid of"? It helps to know that in ancient times, a superstition said that anyone who killed an albatross would have misfortune. Then in his "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner," the English poet, S.T. Coleridge, described how an old sailor killed an albatross and caused his crew misfortune. The old sailor was forced to shoulder the dead bird as atonement for what he had done. This is how the word "albatross" came to be associated with the idea of a terrible burden.

Even relatively simple words have interesting stories. In one class, we were reading about an atlas. A student asked about the meaning of "atlas." This is another word with its origin in Greek mythology. Atlas was a mythical giant. When he got into trouble, he was forced to hold up the heavens as his punishment. In the 16th century, a geographer illustrated his book of maps with a drawing of Atlas holding up the world. Other publishers follow this example, and gradually, Atlas turned from a proper noun into a common noun. It is interesting that the mapmaker who first used the illustration of Atlas was Mercator, whose name has also come to mean something more than just a person's name.

The particular setting in which one teaches is another source of stories about word etymologies. I live and teach in China. My students are often puzzled by the English use of "Mandarin" to refer to both Chinese civil servants during the Qing Dynasty and the national language of our country. Today, the official language of China is Putonghua. How did Putonghua come to be known to English speakers as Mandarin? This question leads to another story of etymology. The first Europeans to travel in the Far East were the Portuguese. They associated the Indonesian word menteri/mantri meaning "minister" with the Portuguese word mandar meaning "command" and coined the term mandarim referring to high-ranking Chinese officials and the official language as well. Other speakers of European languages, including English, borrowed this term. Times have changed, and we do not call government officials mandarins anymore, but outside China people still refer to Putonghua as Mandarin. When I was in Australia and South Africa, people asked me if I spoke Mandarin. At first, I was amused, but when I realized that they had no idea what Putonghua was, I learned to refer to my language as Mandarin. Understanding the story behind these words helps my students accept the use of a foreign word for the name of their language.

The relatively new world of high technology is another source of words with interesting etymologies. Recently, I recommended that my students do a Google search to look for listening and reading materials on the Internet. During the next

class, a student asked the meaning of Google because he could not find it in his dictionary. Another student had found information about its etymology on line. He explained that Google is a variation of the word googol, a term coined by the nephew of an American mathematician to refer to the number 1 followed by 100 zeros. In other words, it symbolizes a very large number or amount. The search engine Google uses a variation of the term to reflect the company's mission of organizing an immense, seemingly infinite amount of information on the Internet. The other students were fascinated by what he had learned.

My experience is that etymology can be used as a pinch of salt to add some flavor to my EFL classes. If we want to make language learning a more enjoyable and more beneficial experience for our students, it is always worth trying new ingredients in our teaching approaches. Of course, too much seasoning will spoil the food, so I am always careful to choose just a few word etymologies at a time. Students become more motivated, active, and curious about the target language. In short, they realize that language learning can be fun.

References

Of course, I don't always know the answer to questions about etymology. Fortunately, I have found several good reference works that I have listed here. As my students are finding out, the Internet is another good source of information on etymology as well.

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Can a Non-native English Speaker Be a Good English Teacher?

Wang Xin, Inner Mongolia Polytechnic University

I believe most ESL and EFL professionals would respond to the question posed in my title as I used to do. My answer to this question was always, "Yes, of course," until one day a student in my freshman reading class made me read aloud a sentence he had made using "however." The sentence read, "Mr. Wang is a good teacher; *however*, he has a strong Chinese accent." My student's attempt to show his dissatisfaction with my class led me to reflect seriously on this question: Can a non-native English speaker (NNS) be a good English teacher?

I taught non-English majors for five years before I started teaching English majors. Of course, during my first few years of teaching, I asked myself this question quite often. Whatever doubt I had helped motivate me to do my best, however. After five years, I was comfortable in my role, and I did not give the matter much thought anymore. It was a shock, then, when in some of my first encounters with English majors, I was asked such questions as: "Are you a new college graduate?" "What are your qualifications?" "How long have you been teaching English?" I realized that it would take much more effort to convince these students that NNS teachers can be equally good, if not better, English teachers than their native speaker (NS) counterparts can.

What I have learned since then is that arguing with my students about the relative merits of being a native or non-native speaker of English does not convince them. Rather, I have to show them that I am a good teacher. It sounds simple, but once they accept me as a good teacher, their concern about my English fades. What makes a good teacher? From my own experience and observation, and from student feedback, I conclude that students' understanding of a good teacher is often affected by four factors: (a) a teacher's skill and experience, (b) the quantity and quality of help a teacher gives (c) the personal relationship a teacher develops with his or her students, and (d) the degree to which a teacher can help students lower their affective filters. In view of these four factors, the issue of native language becomes irrelevant.

A mythical belief among some students is that NS teachers are by nature more fun, open-minded, friendly, and more patient than NNS teachers. They often believe that NNS teachers are also more capable of, or interested in establishing good relationships with their students. But, do NS teachers necessarily possess better skills and knowledge in English teaching than NNS teachers do? Do NS teachers really have more pleasant personalities or personalities that are more fit for teaching? When I can show my students that the answer to these questions is "no," I no longer have to worry

about being challenged as a NNS teacher. What follows are some of the ways in which I try to demonstrate that I am a good teacher. No doubt teachers in my situation will think of similar strategies.

Strategy 1: Demonstrating Skill and Experience

I may or may not be able to demonstrate superior teaching skills or experience compared to my native English-speaking colleagues, but I can demonstrate greater experience in learning English as a foreign language. I can capitalize on my experience as a successful English language learner. I understand the needs, frustrations, difficulties, and experience of my students. I have spent a large amount of time and effort trying to master English. I can share the strategies that have helped me learn grammar, expand my vocabulary, and improve my pronunciation and listening comprehension. My determination to succeed, and the fact that I have succeeded (at least to some degree), provide an excellent example for my students. Without the need to say or explain anything, I am a good role model for my students.

Strategy 2: Providing Help

Although my NS colleagues can use English more skillfully than I can, as a NNS, I often have an advantage when is comes to explaining difficult grammatical structures. Our students get different kinds of help from each of us, but both forms are valuable. Recognizing their enthusiasm for learning idiomatic English, I often use proverbs to teach language as well as to help my first year students form more realistic expectations regarding their teachers and themselves. For example, I begin with "Rome was not built in a day," a proverb which reminds them that the mastery of language is not easy and requires painstaking effort. My second piece of advice to them might be "Do in Rome as the Romans do," a saying which teaches them that in order to learn a foreign language well, one has to know something about the culture where the language is used. I use this opportunity to explain that language competence depends on accent, vocabulary, grammar, listening ability, writing, knowledge of the foreign culture, and more. In this way, I hope to change their distorted vision of the necessity for a "perfect" accent. Finally, I might help them understand, "There's more than one way to skin a cat," a reminder emphasizing the fact that one does not have to depend on a foreign teacher or to live in a foreign country in order to learn the language well.

Strategy 3: Establishing Personal Relationships

My students have limited opportunity to hear native English spoken outside of the classroom setting. I try to find ways to expose them to more English that also

demonstrate that I am interested in them as people, not just my students. For example, I spend at least one hour each week with my freshman students listening to Voice of America radio broadcasts in the early morning. We discuss the program, and I share with them the notes that I took while the program was on. In this way, I break down the cold wall between my students and me, and they see me in the same boat with them learning English as a foreign language.

Strategy 4: Lowering Affective Filters

Teachers can affect learning in a number of ways that go far beyond the transmission of knowledge. My students often begin their university studies assuming that they are second-rate learners because they failed to win admission to a top-ranked university. Some even believe that they have low intelligence. They frequently lack self-confidence and motivation. The degree to which I am able to lower their affective filters makes a big difference in how they view themselves and their foreign language studies. I try to help my students understand that I believe in them and they should believe in themselves as well. Past failures do not have to stand in the way of future successes. After all, many famous people faced setbacks in their careers. I remind them regularly that each of them has strengths or potential that others do not have. Instead of focusing on other people's strong points and their own weaknesses, I urge them to spend their time and energy discovering and developing their own special abilities. Thus, another feature of a good teacher is the ability to help students discover their own potential and to make full use of it.

In defending myself as a NNS teacher, I by no means intend to belittle my NS colleagues. Rather, I am appealing to more NNS teachers to make improvement in their teaching that will make us better all around teachers. It is my firm conviction that what makes us good English teachers has little or nothing to do with our nationality, native language, or accent. Rather, it is the drive, the motivation, and the passion within us to help our students. If there were more highly motivated NNS teachers, my students would no longer look at me with disapproval and ask skeptically, "Are you a new college graduate?" They would no longer take advantage of my accent and try to embarrass me by questioning my competence as an English teacher.

About the Author

Wang Xin graduated from the Department of Foreign Languages of Inner Mongolia Polytechnic University in 1993. Since then, he has taught English in that department.

Tips for Teachers

Have you been wondering how to get something published? Do you have an activity that works well every time? Does your colleague have a teaching technique that we should hear about?

TIPS FOR TEACHERS

would like to help you publish these ideas. All submissions are welcome. Editorial advice and assistance is available. See inside back cover for details.

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