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Could You Repeat That?: An Innovative Way of Getting Students to Speak Up

Keith S. Folse, Language Academy, Japan

From 1985 to 1989, the Texas International Educational Consortium operated a special program in which government-sponsored Malaysian students did their freshman and sophomore years in Malaysia before transferring to complete their degrees at various Texas universities. Before entering the academic track, students were required to take EAP classes until they had achieved certain TOEFL and writing exam scores.

Teaching these students was extremely rewarding but also challenging in many ways. One general language problem was simply getting the students to speak loudly enough. Perhaps as a unique aspect of their culture, Malay students tend to be *extremely* reticent in class. Even when they do speak, they do not speak up. Female students, most of them wearing partial veils, had to be prompted quite often to raise their voice to a level which the whole class could hear.

A more specific language problem was the students' pronunciation, particularly their non-English stress patterns. These include stressing the incorrect syllable in words, a common error being stressing the last syllable in a word (quick-ly, bu-tter, bicy-cle), and inappropriate sentence level stress. While Malay students have very few problems with any of the English phonemes (vowel plus /r/ combinations are exceptions to this statement), these stress mistakes often make the students' statements totally incomprehensible to a native speaker even though all the individual sounds are correct.

To practice speaking loudly and to practice emphasizing certain words within a phrase (i.e., stressing certain words), I developed the game "Could You Repeat That Please." It requires little preparation on the teacher's part, is easy to use in class, and generates LOUD English from normally quiet mouths.

General Plan

In this game, the class is divided into two teams. From each team, one student will write at the board, one will dictate a sentence, and the others will be the support team in the audience and will eventually have a chance to participate. The board should be divided into two equal areas, one for each team. The area must be big enough to write a sentence of about ten words. First, send a writer from each team to the board. The people writing at the board must face the board and cannot turn to the audience. Second, the dictating students (again, one from each team) will each be given a small slip of paper with a sentence on it that he must dictate to the person at the board. The dictating person should not be able to see the blackboard. In Malaysia, our boards were on stands and were not fixed on the wall. In my class, I always had the dictating student actually sit in a desk which had been set up behind the board. If your board is on the wall, you could have the dictating students sit in

the back of the room, facing the back wall. In this way, they would not see the board and their voices would have to be very loud for the writing student to hear.

When the teacher says, "Go," both of the dictating students will attempt to say their sentence to the person who is writing at the board. For the first minute, I do not let the audience help. They are well aware of what the dictated sentence is as well as what is being written on the board and are all too eager to help their team.

The sentences that are distributed to the dictating students contain numerous minimal pairs or similar sounding words or phrases which have been placed in the same general positions within a sentence. This causes confusion and requires the students to speak loudly, speak clearly, and, above all, stress the words that the student at the board is having problems with.

After one minute, I allow the two students at the board to ask the dictating students questions. The students often repeat what they have written already and then stress the missing parts: "He went to the market and bought some WHAT?"

If the sentence hasn't been solved within a minute, the dictating person rejoins his team in the audience and another team member takes over that position. If the sentence has not been solved within another minute, then anyone from the team is free to make comments to the person at the board.

Since this game practices pronunciation and listening skills, the game must be done completely in English. If any team member uses a non-English language hint, the other team is automatically awarded the point for that sentence.

The Sentences

For one game, the teacher should prepare seven to ten pairs of sentences. In the following sample sentences, note the similarity in individual word pronunciation and stress patterns:

1A: After she drank the tea, one of the other passengers spoke to her.
1B: When the ship sank at sea, none of the passengers was saved.

2A: First, he studied math. Then, he watched a movie on T.V.
2B: First, she studied math. Then, she saw a show on T.V.

3A: He deposited the coins in the machine and then chose a drink.
3B: She dropped the coins on the ground, so she couldn't buy a drink.

4A: The wind was blowing wildly. You could hardly walk.
4B: The men were talking loudly. I could hardly hear.

5A: If the test is not too hard, I think I might pass.
5B: If this is not a heart, I think it might be a circle.

6A: Her tomato salad looks very good. Perhaps she ought to add some lettuce.
6B: Her lettuce salad looks very good. Perhaps she ought to add some tomatoes.

7A: Of all the questions, the most difficult to get right is number six.
7B: Of all the answers, the most difficult to write is number sixteen.

In choosing minimal pairs for these sentences, the teacher should use those

phonemes which are problematic for the students to hear. This will cause the student who is trying to write down the sentence to have to ask for clarification. In addition, it is a good idea to choose two words that are similar linguistically, i.e., two nouns or two adjectives. In this way, the words will probably have occur in similar positions within the stress pattern of the sentence. An excellent source for such words is *Pronunciation Contrasts in English*. In addition, for the teacher in a multi-lingual class, this text also tells which minimal pairs are problematic for which L1 backgrounds.

Teachers can make the game more relevant by including contexts with which the students are familiar (living in the dormitory, having to open a bank account, etc.) or by including grammatical patterns and vocabulary and idioms recently studied. Also, it is important that the teacher make use of the particular minimal pair phonemes which are troublesome for that language group. Because the sentences are similar in stress patterns and may contain minimal pairs, this exercise is very challenging for the students.

One final piece of advice: With this game, even those students who haven't murmured a word all term might suddenly come alive, so you should consider the size of your class and what noise problems could be generated. In Malaysia, teachers in nearby classrooms asked me after class what all the commotion had been. They could hardly believe that our quiet, shy Malay students had actually generated that much noise.

Reference

Nilsen, D. L.F., and Nilsen, A. P. (1973). *Pronunciation contrasts in English*. New York: Regents Publishing Company.

About the Author

Keith S. Folse is the author of Intermediate Reading Practices *(University of Michigan Press). He has taught and coordinated in programs in the U.S., Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, and Japan. Currently, he is the Educational Director at Language Academy, Gumma, Japan.*

Conference Announcements

The 26th Annual Convention of TESOL (Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages) will be held March 3-7, 1992 in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. Contact: TESOL, Inc., 1600 Cameron Street, Suite 300, Alexandria, Virginia 22314-2751. Tel.: 703-836-0774. Fax: 703-836-7864.

The Japan Association of Language Teachers (JALT) will sponsor its Seventeenth Annual International Conference on Language Teaching/Learning at the Portopia Convention Center, Kobe, Japan, November 2-4, 1991. Contact: JALT Central Office, Lions Mansion Kawaramachi #111, Kawaramachi Matsubara agaru, Shimogyo-ku, Kyoto 600 Japan. Tel.: 81-75-361-5428. Fax: 81-75-361-5429.

An A.B.C. of Course Design: A Questioning Approach

Ruth Wajnryb

This article presents a schema for course design to help teachers prepare courses to meet the needs of their students. It is a step-by-step approach to course design based on asking (and answering) the right questions in the right order. The schema can be applied to any language teaching or E.S.P. course, such as for English for Communication, English for Business, English for Hotel Receptionists, English for Nurses, English for Computer Programmers, English for Pre-tertiary Students, English for Students on a Working Holiday, to mention just a few.

The sequence of course planning elements may be represented diagrammatically (see figure one, below).

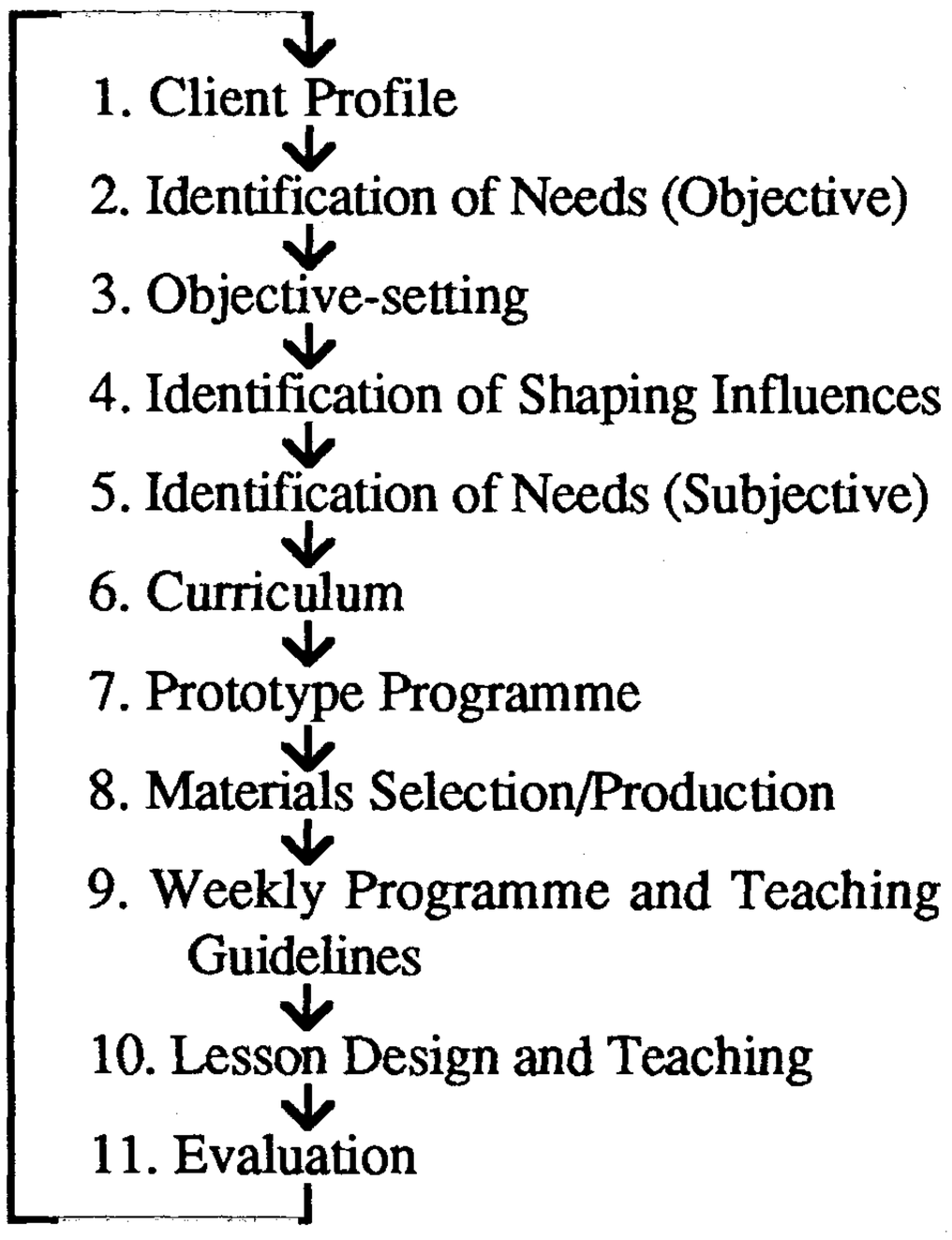

Fig. 1. Sequence of Course Planning Elements

A Step-by-Step Approach to Course Design

The first eight steps in the course planning sequence are outlined below:

Step 1. The Client Profile

The aim here is to build up a profile of the average or typical client student. It helps to "personalize" the profile by providing a name.

Sample Questions

- Who is the learner?
- How old is he (or she)?
- How long has s/he been in (Australia?)
- What previous courses have been studied?
- What level(s) of proficiency does the learner have, according to the 4 skills?
- What is the learner's L1? Are any other languages known?
- Has English been studied before? In what way? For how long?
- Is the learner living with or separated from family?
- Will the learner be working while a student?
- What are the learner's expectations—about processes and outcomes?

Step 2: Identification of Needs (Part I)

The aim here is to identify the learners' objective language needs. This phase is product-oriented: we are trying to ascertain what terminal target-language behavior the clients need/want to acquire.

Sample Questions
- What do they need English for?
- What purpose(s) do they have for studying English?
- What do they want to do with their English?
- Where/when/in what context does their English let them down?
- Is there agreement or discrepancy among learners and between learners and teacher about what is needed and how it should be acquired?

Step 3: Objective-Setting

Here the aim is to think in terms of aimed-for performance and hoped-for target language goals. In language-learning terms, we are thinking of skills: what does the learner hope/need/strive to be able to do in/through/with English by the end of the course?

Sample Questions
- What macro-skills (speaking, listening, reading, writing) are being aimed at?
- How are these to be prioritized?
- What proportion of course time will be devoted to each skill?
- Is this likely to change during the course?
- For each macro-skill, what micro-skills can be identified as being component parts? What cumulative process can be mapped out in advance?
- Can these micro-skills be ordered in the sequence in which they may be presented/practised?

Step 4: Identification of Shaping Influences

The aim here is to identify the various shaping influences that will impact upon the successful progress and outcome of the course. These may be positive or negative influences; where negative, they may be seen as "constraints". The aim is to create a programme of study that will be real rather than ideal; it should capitalize on facilitating factors while also taking into account the constraints or less-than-perfect conditions that may affect the learning context, at worst impeding success.

Sample Questions
- What shaping influences may be identified?
- Are these facilitative or constraining?
- Are they external or internal?
- Where constraints are identified, how might these by overcome/restrained/neutralized/harnessed/avoided/reduced etc.)

Step 5. Identification of Needs (Part II)

This is a second phase of the needs identification, begun in step two, above. It comes at a later stage in the course design process because information gleaned from the objective setting and the identification of shaping influences (sections three and four) may help to inform it. Here we are dealing with subjective rather than objective needs and are concerned more with "process" than with "product". We are also looking at the learner's transitional (rather than terminal) behavior.

Sample Questions
- What does the learner need to know in order to learn?
- What does the learner need to do in order to learn?
- How will these content/skills areas to approached?
- Is there anything that the learner needs to un-learn in order to learn?

- Does the learner need to learn how to learn? How might this be approached?
- Where a metalanguage is needed, how might this be provided?

Step 6. Curriculum

Here we are concerned with both the content (what?) and the methodology (how?) of the course.

Sample Questions

- Given the information we have collected above, what implications can be drawn for the content of the course?
- How will this content be organized? What will be the point of departure?
- How will the content be contextualized?
- How will the content be sequenced?
- How (using what methodology) will it be taught? What assumptions underpin the choice of methodology?
- Is the methodology consistent with learner expectations? If not, what provisions have been made?

Step 7: Programming: The Prototype Programme

Here we are concerned with designing a prototype programme that will serve as a model or blueprint for the weekly programmes. As the prototype programme begins to take shape, there are some check questions (see below) that may be applied to it.

Sample Questions

- Does the prototype programme reflect the course objectives?
- Does it reflect agreed-upon processes?
- Does it reflect agreed-upon priorities?
- What percentage of the lesson content is focused? What percentage unfocused?
- Is it realistic? Does it address/cope with identified constraints?
- Does it take advantage of facilitating factors in the learning environment?
- Is it well-sequenced?
- Will it allow for re-cycling?
- Is it well-integrated?
- Is it well-balanced

Step 8. Materials

This sections deals with the actual lesson level or chalkface of the course design.

Sample Questions

- Are there commercial materials available or will the materials need to be produced?
- If both, what proportions will operate?
- What need is there for authentic materials? How might these be obtained?
- Is there a possibility of using text that is learner-generated?
- What guide-lines for lesson planning will be used?

Notes

i) Provision should be allowed for curriculum changes to be made during the course. Sometimes learners' needs that were not visible or realized earlier emerge later in a course. Sometimes learning pace is slower/faster than expected.

ii) There should be provision for on-going student feedback and course-final evaluation.

About the Author

Ruth Wajnryb is a freelance trainer, language consultant, and writer residing in New South Wales, Australia.

Hey Baby! Teaching Long Songs in the ESL Classroom

Dale T. Griffee, Joshi Seigakuin Junior College

This is the fourth in a series of four articles on using popular songs in the second language classroom. The first article, "Hey Baby! Teaching Songs That Tell Stories in the ESL Classroom," appeared in the *TESL Reporter*, vol. 23, no. 3 (July 1990) and featured four techniques: (1) *Tell Them A Story*, a way of introducing a story song; (2) *Strip Songs*, a listening technique that provides students with the lyrics; (3) *Paraphrasing*, a writing and discussion technique that uses paraphrasing as a way of working with vocabulary and meaning; and finally, (4) *Point of View*, a discussion technique for students at the intermediate level and above.

The second article, "Hey Baby! Teaching Short and Slow Songs," appeared in vol. 23, no. 4 (October 1990) and featured five techniques: (1) *Drawing the Song*, a drawing technique which gave several ways of using drawing to work with vocabulary; (2) *Pictures*, a way to work with pictures to introduce vocabulary; (3) *The Cloze Passage*, an overused but effective listening and/or prediction technique that provides students with lyrics; (4) *Song Cards*, a listening and physical manipulation technique that gives a way to reinforce vocabulary; and (5) *Song Word Puzzles*, another vocabulary enrichment technique.

The third article, "Hey Baby! Teaching Short and Fast Songs," appeared in vol. 24, no. 1 (January 1991) and featured five techniques: (1) *Did You Hear It?*, which can be used to introduce a song by preteaching vocabulary; (2) *Vocabulary Song*, which can be used to give students the lyrics by means of listening; (3) *Definitions*, which makes the matching of words and definitions into a game; (4) *Song Lists*, an easy discussion technique; and (5) *Theme Words*, a higher level discussion technique.

This fourth and final article deals with long songs. It begins with a short discussion on the distinctive features of song, gives a definition of long songs, and concludes with four techniques that are compatible with long songs.

What Makes A Song A Song?

Although songs have elements in common with speech and poetry, they are a unique form. Both songs and speech are vocally produced, are linguistically meaningful and have melody. Both songs and poetry use words to convey meaning, both are usually written down before publication, both can be put to music and both can be listened to (e.g. a poetry reading for poems and a concert for songs).

Nevertheless, songs have their own identity and they function differently than speech or poetry. It is possible to note at least three features of songs. (1) Songs convey a lower amount of information than poetry. Even though poetry can be heard, we usually read it which permits

longer and more dense information. (2) Songs have more redundancy than poetry. Songs achieve redundancy by devices such as borrowing of lines from other songs, proverbs, catch phrases and cliche as well as alliteration. It is this high degree of redundancy that makes songs sound so simple, especially as compared to the complexity and subtlety of poetry. The simplicity of songs is not, however, a weak point. Because a song is heard for a short time, simplicity, redundancy and a certain "expectedness" contribute to our understanding. (3) Songs have a personal quality that makes the listener react as if the song were being sung for the listener personally. We are joined through the direct quality of the song words (unlike a movie actor in a film talking to another actor) to the singer and through the singer to others in the audience even if we are at home rather than at a concert. Thus songs have a socially unifying feature for the selected audience. Songs create their own world of feeling and emotion and as we participate in the song, we participate in the world it creates. As Mark Booth states, "the song embodies myth and we step into it." (Booth 1976).

What are Long Songs?

Long songs represent the majority on Top 40 charts. They are usually four minutes or longer in duration. Most long songs are fast. As an example, think of almost any Madonna song. About twenty or twenty five per cent of long songs are slow, however. For example, Billy Joel's "I'm in a New York State of Mind." Long songs are not divided into long, fast songs or long, slow songs because the tempo does not seem to have any effect on the techniques. Techniques that work with long, fast songs are equally effective with long, slow songs. Frequently long songs are not very easy to sing and present a series of images rather than tell a story. For many of our students, these songs are the same as rock songs.

A Possible Lesson Plan

Long songs are so numerous and they have so many possible thematic variations that it is difficult to recommend techniques that will be compatible with all long songs. What follows is a general technique for getting lyrics to songs when the lyrics are not easy to understand titled *Pop Songs: When Words are Impossible to Catch*. Following that is a possible lesson plan for lower level classes and consists of *All Purpose Questions* (before listening questions) to introduce the song. *Vocabulary Song*, described elsewhere (Griffee 1991) to give students the lyrics. *Mistakes Change Everything* gives students additional practice with vocabulary and structures and *Vocabulary Association* outlines an easy discussion technique.

Pop Songs: When Words are Impossible to Catch

Many popular songs are sung in such a way that the words difficult to catch but it is often just this kind of music that students most want to listen to. Rather than using only slow and easy to understand music in your classroom, this technique makes it possible to play music with difficult to catch lyrics. Before you begin obtain the full lyrics of the song and prepare them to be handed out. Students will have the full lyrics in three steps. Step one is to listen to the song with no text or preparation. The student's level of understanding will be close to zero. Ask

what words they could catch. Step three is to play the song again but this time read a line before playing the song. In other words, read a line and play a line. Students will not understand all the vocabulary nor will they retain much in long term memory, but they will understand and recognize that what you are saying is indeed what is being sung. Step three is to pass out the full text and have the students listen again while they are looking at the lyrics. In three short, simple steps you have taken the students from almost zero to full understanding. Finally, discuss vocabulary, idioms, grammar and any other questions.

Extensions

1. In step three, instead of passing out the full lyrics, pass out a clozed form of the lyrics. You have many options as how much to cloze. For a low class, cloze easy to catch words; for a slightly higher class, cloze full phrases or every 5th word. For a high class give only the first two or three words in each sentence.
2. After completing step three, have the students turn the complete lyrics over, listen and fill in a clozed passage. You will have to decide how many times to listen. Then compare their cloze lyrics and the full lyrics that you previously gave them. Students will be able to see for themselves what words and phrases they cannot hear.

All Purpose Questions

This technique works with all song types and is a collection of questions divided into pre-listening questions, while you listen questions, and follow up questions. These questions can be used to (l) introduce a song, (2) quiz students on their reaction to a song, (3) gage their grasp of content, or (4) work on grammar points such as future and past tenses. Before you begin look at the questions below and decide which ones to use. Be selective, don't try to use them all. Tell the students the name of the song and any additional information you know that you feel might be helpful. Then ask the questions, write them on the board, or pass them out. Play the song and discuss the answers.

Before Listening Questions

1. What type of music do you think this will song will be? rock, country, folk, etc.
2. Do you expect the singer will be man/woman; over 30/under 30; U.S., British, etc.
3. Is this song going to be happy or sad?
4. Will the song be fast, moderate or slow?
5. What are some of the words you expect to hear?
6. In one word or phrase, what is this song going to be about?
7. Do you think you are going to like this song?

While Listening Questions

(These questions must be based on the actual lyrics of the song.)

1. Check or tick (√) all the . . .
2. Write down all the . . .
3. Answer these true-false questions.
4. Count the times you hear . . .
5. Did you hear _____ or _____?
6. Listen and tell me who, what, when, where, why, did, is, are

After Listening Questions

1. What kind of music was this?
2. How did you feel while you listened?

3. What did you think about while you listened?
4. What words do you remember now?
5. Would you like to listen again? Why or why not?
6. Would you like to listen to another song by the same singer or group?
7. Did you notice how you moved your body when you listened?
8. How would you describe this music?
9. Have you ever heard this song before? This type of song? Where?
10. What do you think the singer/group looks like?
11. If you had to give this song a new title, what would it be?
12. What happened in the composer's life to make him/her write this?
13. What is one word (in this song) that best describes it?
14. What is the one word or what are some words (not in the song) that best describes it?

Mistakes

This is a technique which raises the consciousness of students about their mistakes and was inspired by the mistakes I found on record album lyric sheets. It works with all songs and with all class levels. Before you begin, think about common mistakes your students make such as spelling, singular and plural agreement, verb tenses, omitted and incorrect prepositions. Insert the mistakes in the lyric sheets you prepare for handouts. In class hand out the lyric sheets containing the mistakes. Listen to the song and ask students to underline unusual, ungrammatical items or things that just don't make sense. Include some lines with no mistakes.

Extensions

1. Hand out the lyrics before you listen and ask the students to underline the mistakes. Discuss any mistakes the students find. Then play to verify or find additional mistakes.
2. Use this technique as a initial diagnostic test early in the semester. Include as many common mistakes as you can. Hand out the lyrics, but don't discuss them. Listen and ask students to underline. Count and tabulate the mistakes. This will give you an idea of what students can and can't hear and where you might want to work. Do the same song with the same lyric mistakes at the end of the semester to measure improvement.

Vocabulary Association

This technique works with vocabulary through word association. Individual words from a song are selected. Students are asked to list additional words that they associate to form word families. This helps students remember vocabulary in groups rather than as isolated units. Select a song and make a list of the vocabulary you want to work with. Sometimes it's helpful to select words that focus on a content theme or structures e.g. nouns, adjectives, adverbs, prepositions or negatives.

Before you begin make your vocabulary list available to students for example, dictate the words for spelling practice. Then hand out the song lyrics. Listen to the song and ask students to circle the words in the lyrics from the list as they hear them sung. Then ask students to write two or three words they associate with each word on the original list.

Word from Song	Example Associated Words
black	night, big, lost
give	present, like, action, ribbon

Finally, have students compare their lists and discuss them.

In Conclusion

Our young students are the new generation. They were born at a time in which most of them, no matter where they were born, know each other's songs, and English language songs lead this movement. Songs are part of what makes a generation a generation and the current generation is a global generation rather than a parochial one. The world is evolving a common culture and pop songs are its backbone. By using pop songs in your classroom, you and your students are participating in the emerging world culture.

Acknowledgements

I learned *Vocabulary Association* from Kaye Wilson.

References

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About the Author

Dale T. Griffee teaches at Joshi Seigakuin Junior College, Tokyo, Japan. He has been working with song techniques since 1983. All the techniques in this series of articles will appear in a teacher reference book entitled Songs In Action, *Prentice Hall (in press).*

East-West Center Offers Intercultural Workshop

From July 15 to 24, 1992, the Institute of Culture and Communication at the East-West Center will offer a workshop for college and university faculty who wish to develop courses in intercultural and international topics. Participants will examine possible texts, interact with East-West Center staff familiar with a variety of courses, discuss issues with the authors of texts currently used in intercultural courses, share ideas with each other, and become familiar with concepts that can be integrated into various courses. The general areas within which courses can be developed are the behavioral sciences, social sciences, language and culture, and international management, and they include the following more specific areas: cross-cultural psychology, English as an international language, cross-cultural research methods, language and culture, intercultural communication, human resources management, etc. Contact: Dr. Richard Brislin, East-West Center, Institute of Culture and Communication, Honolulu, Hawaii 96848.

The "Plastic Wrap Board" a Space Age Flannel Board

Mark W. Seng, University of Texas at Austin

Your students will love the colorful combinations of pictures and text they (and you) create with "space age" materials which update the traditional flannel board. Rather than using cloth to stick pictures or word strips to a flannel covered board, you can "magically" attach beautifully laminated, full color pictures to cardboard covered with clear plastic wrap.

A Variety of Uses

Different combinations of materials and methods add versatility to this ingenious device. For example, words can be written on inch-wide strips of colored paper or cardboard. (For erasable signs, laminate the strips *before* lettering; for permanent use, laminate them afterwards.) To use these words for practicing sentence construction, place them randomly on the board and then have students arrange them to form declarative sentences. Then, challenge students to come forward to rearrange the sentences into questions, to add past or future tense markers, or even to combine sentences.

Students can also rearrange pictures on the vinyl board according to the teacher's instructions. Reminiscent of TPR, this technique helps students remember concepts. It is also very good for visually demonstrating prepositional relationships like *over*, *under*, *in*, and *around*.

Appealing pictures can be used for many purposes, such as to illustrate lexical items. Both sides of plastic coated picture cards can be used for practicing singular/plural or past/future. Color coded verbs, nouns, or prepositions help students learn their functions. In a "table-setting" activity, students can even practice lexical items, prepositional relationships, and etiquette by arranging pictures of silverware and dishes in their required places.

Materials and Construction

Ordinary corrugated cardboard can provide a light, inexpensive board surface. Even better is "foamboard," available in bright colors. Artists and draftsmen use this material with its smooth paper surface and styrofoam core.

This board is then covered with clear plastic wrap. Among those varieties which have proven successful are household plastic wraps or wraps used by restaurants (which sometimes offer better adhesion and strength). Inexpensive "stretch" or "shrink" wrap materials prove especially "tacky" and provide stronger adhesion.

Variety stores sell seasonal window decorations of "static cling" vinyl, which is designed for excellent adhesion. Inexpensive yet heavy clear vinyl plastic also works well. It is important to get the type which feels sticky to the touch. Many vinyls, apparently treated to overcome this "problem," do not offer the tack needed. A yard of this material can be thumbtacked or taped to a wall or chalkboard. This vinyl anchors pictures or letters even better than the clear plastic wrap.

Laminating pictures and cards makes them stick to the board. Observe your laminator to see if it always produces a curl in the same orientation each time. If so, laminate materials so that the concave side faces the board.

If a laminator is not available, clear, pressure-sensitive plastic, which is separated from its backing and placed on the picture or card, can accomplish the same purpose. In fact, this material seems to provide the best results. This film can even be stuck on the back of laminated materials to increase their adhesion.

Other techniques for fastening items to the board can be used. For example, rather than sticking items directly to the display board, use an intermediate material. A square foot of cardboard covered with clear plastic will adhere nicely to the board and provide a base for mounting other materials. (The square foot sticks to the plastic-wrap board securely because of its large surface area.) Several small pieces of sticky-back velcro can be attached to this intermediate board. The mating pieces of velcro can be stuck to small objects, which can then be mounted on the board. Velcro also adheres well to some carpeting and various types of cloth.

Still other materials will readily stick to a plastic-covered display board. For example, tacky-back notes (new or re-cycled) can be taped to the back of the items to be displayed so that the tacky surface is exposed for adhesion to the board. Double coated tape will also work, as will the convenient sticky "dots" used these days to fasten down drafting paper. (These dots will remain sticky if after removal they are immediately parked on a clean surface like a page protector.) 3M Scotch #811 removable (blue label) tape also provides the right adhesion for holding laminated cards.

A postage-stamp size piece of clear, old fashioned vinyl can be taped to small objects. The vinyl "stamp" will then stick to the display board. This technique has been used successfully to attach miniature "cans" of food, made of paper and sold as toys for children "playing house." Other toy sets, such as a "doctor's kit" or miniature toy kitchen, are sold in variety stores and lend themselves to many classroom activities.

A Free-Standing Display Board

Many teachers will find it convenient to make a board which is hinged for convenient storage or ease in carrying it. To make one, start with a rectangular piece of foamboard, one foot wide by three feet long. Draw two lines which divide this board into three equal sections. Draw one line on one side of the board and the other on the other side. Cut only halfway through each of these lines. (The remaining, uncut paper makes a fine hinge.) This rectangular board can now be folded into a "Z", one third of its original size. Not opened completely, this board will stand nicely on a table or desk.

Since plastic wrap boards are almost free of cost, you may want to make several of them. Small groups of students can each work with a different topic on their board and then rotate with other groups.

Students love variety and appreciate creative ways to practice their language skills. Students also love teachers who bring new ideas to the classroom.

Experiences Reading Literature and *Reading Literature*

Comparative Review by Bonnie Gairns

EXPERIENCES READING LITERATURE. John Dennis. Cambridge, Mass.: Newbury House, 1987. pp. xiv + 224. Paperback. $11.95.

READING LITERATURE. Roger Gower and Margaret Pearson. Harlow, England: Longman Group, 1986. pp. v + 278. Paperback. Cassette. $14.96.

Thinking of teaching literature in the ESL classroom? The following review presents two texts aimed at equipping upper intermediate to advanced ESL learners to read and enjoy English literature. The selections of both are authentic works by British and American authors. Glosses are provided, but no other concessions are made for ESL readers. In fact the authors suggest their texts may be used in "regular" (non ESL/EFL) literature classes.

Dennis' collection emphasizes American writers of the twentieth century, but makes an effort to include European authors and pieces of different times and places. Each chapter contains one complete short story or poem at a level of difficulty appropriate for Intermediate ESL students. The glosses average one for every fifteen words of text, but some of these are likely to be known to students at this level.

In contrast, there is much difficult vocabulary in the Gower & Pearson text. This may be due in part to the fact that their selections cover a much longer time span—the 14th century to the present. Some of the pieces could be used with intermediate students, but most would be appropriate only for advanced students. Moreover, glosses are kept to a minimum. Each unit/chapter groups several pieces of work. Frequently, these are excerpts from larger works or even abridged excerpts. Both British and American works are presented, but there is a definite British emphasis.

The twenty-two pieces in *Experiences Reading Literature* are grouped into five general theme groups, but there is no required reading order. Likewise, the ten organizational units of *Reading Literature* do not have to be covered in their given sequence. Each unit has a particular focus, which varies, from a literary form, to ways of building up interest before reading. Both texts provide brief answer keys for some exercises, and the Gower & Pearson book also contains a valuable, condensed history of British and American literature.

The layout of *Experiences* is simple and pleasing to the eye. Each chapter follows the same format: an illustration, biographical notes, cultural notes to establish the appropriate schema, and strategies to be applied in reading the specific piece. Following each selection is a retelling exercise, and questions focussing on the author's structure and style. Class discussion is encouraged, but the work could also be done individually (as homework?) or in pairs or small

groups. Unfortunately, the retelling exercise is a good idea in a poor format. The point is to have students describe the story or poem in their "own" words, but the exercise is essentially a cloze test, with far too many blanks.

The units in *Reading Literature* are highly organized, with a strict adherence to a numbered outline style, but the layout is sometimes cluttered with too many print types and sizes (and highlighting). Overall, the impression is one of high print density per page. Personally, I find it frustrating to look at several different short works or excerpts and would prefer to spend more time on longer, intact pieces. However, teaching and learning styles vary greatly and the strategy of *Reading Literature* is no doubt pleasing to many. There are certainly plenty of different exercise types designed to elicit schema, develop vocabulary and illustrate how language may be used to achieve particular effects.

Experiences is designed to provide one semester's worth of work (about 45 hours), while *Reading Literature* is much denser; working through the entire book would likely require two semesters. Both texts provide a great deal of guidance for the teacher and either one could be used as a main text for a literature class. Alternatively, Gower and Pearson suggest using their text as a supplemental text in conjunction with an anthology. I feel this latter approach would be more appropriate.

Both books reviewed above contain excellent literary selections and interesting exercises. Gower & Pearson's index of 63 authors reads like a "Who's Who" in English literature! Gower & Pearson obviously cover more literary ground than Dennis, but at a price—few works are presented in their entirety. I prefer Dennis' tactic of including only complete works.

On the other hand, *Reading Literature* provides a wealth of exercises, leaving the teacher free to pick and choose among them, while the exercises in *Experiences* may require alteration and expansion.

Overall, for the ESL teacher undertaking a literature course for the first time, *Experiences Reading Literature* is my personal choice. It's very user friendly—for teacher and student alike. The Gower & Pearson text may be intimidating for users without a background in English literature and is unlikely to succeed with ESL students below the advanced level. In addition, I prefer to focus on one, whole work at a time, rather than several samples—however "great" the samples. Nevertheless, literature buffs with an advanced class of enthusiastic students may well be drawn the other way with equally good reason.

Bonnie Gairns is a recent graduate of Ohio University's M.A. TEFL program.

Preparing & Encouraging Students to Speak

(Continued from page 40)

in an activity. Therefore, requirements of the national syllabus and features of each course need to be explained time and time again. What is the starting point? What level can they reach after finishing the course? What major problems are going to be solved at the present stage? How is the teacher going to teach? How should they learn and cooperate? Answering these questions clearly is an essential first step. Once the goal has been made clear, students will usually become active, and in the process they will gradually adjust their ways of learning English.

Good teacher-student relationships also play a very important part in a successful lesson. It is advisable for teachers to visit their students often, make friends with them and understand their difficulties and needs, so that they can deal with course requirements flexibly according to their students' real level. A good relationship enables the teacher to prepare his lessons vividly and humorously. e.g., a proper quotation from students' slang or colloquialisms often greatly amuses the whole class and achieves unexpected good results. It also helps the teacher create a light and agreeable classroom atmosphere in which the students will feel comfortable speaking English.

Buzz Groups—A Good Way to Keep Everyone Talking

When students begin to be active, the next challenge is to maintain and develop the impetus to speak. Proper organization of students and activities is absolutely necessary in order to accomplish this goal. Usually, classroom activities are mainly carried out either with the whole class or in groups. Problems of the text are solved and models are demonstrated when the whole class is together; but numerous drills can be done only in groups because it is impossible for everyone in a class of thirty or more students to practice a lot within the 45 minutes of one class period.

In this situation, buzz groups (i.e., groups formed by two pairs of students sitting in front of and behind each other) have proven to be convenient and effective in ensuring that every individual has a chance to speak. All needed oral drilling can be done in these pairs or buzz groups. When group practice time arrives, students just turn around to face each other. There is no need to move a chair, and not a single minute is wasted. When students get used to the procedure, the whole room will immediately begin to buzz as soon as they are given a drill item.

When they enter into such a situation, class members very often forget their ages, and everyone tries to be the first to speak. They play their own part actively and argue on topics given by the teacher so heatedly that some forget that it is just a drill. They take it for real and argue in English (but sometimes in Chinese, unfortunately)!

The teacher's job is merely to walk quietly around and smile with satisfaction. When a problem arises, the teacher should explain it right on the spot, leaving only common difficulties to be explained after drills.

When buzz groups are used, student practice occupies most of the classroom

time. The course begins to be a student-centered one. Students start to learn actively.

Keeping Buzz Groups Working

Is everything OK after buzz groups are formed and functioning? The answer is negative. Unless they receive proper guidance, we cannot hope they will remain successful from beginning to end.

It is not unusual to come across the following situation: When meeting with some people, one has a lot to say, and the conversation goes on very harmoniously. With other people, however, one often fails to think of a sensible topic, so everybody simply sits awkwardly having nothing to say, not daring to look at each other's faces. Occasionally, one member of the group wishes to break the ice, so that person beats his brains and at last murmurs a sentence, but unfortunately, it has not been thought out. His partners either cannot carry on the conversation or the topic is immediately blocked by one of them. This is just like an old saying in China: When the conversation gets disagreeable, to say one word more is a waste of breath. Everyone in the group suffers. They learn no English, but instead, bring the situation to a deadlock.

Our buzz groups sometimes experience this situation owing to different family backgrounds, ages, English levels, etc. of the group members. To remedy this difficulty, we try our best to create an atmosphere of friendship and harmony in the class, and change students' seats regularly so that everyone has a chance to practice with different people over the two years of their college education.

The Best Guarantee of Good Results in Teaching.

Having cleared away most of the obstacles that prevent students from actively practicing English, we still cannot be sure that a lesson will succeed. In the long process of helping students learn to speak, we have realized how important the teacher's complete patience and permanent enthusiasm are in helping adult students learn English. Somebody has said, "A teacher who always puts on a long face can teach math well, but can never do a good job in language teaching." A language teacher's smiling face, humor, easy going attitude and versatility influence his students greatly. With the same lesson, even the same teaching method, the results can be radically different if the lesson is taught by different teachers. In some cases, the students may learn a bit of bookish knowledge. In others, they learn skills to use the language and proper, vivid words to communicate. Without a warm heart towards teaching and students, without a good relationship with the students, and without their respect and cooperation, it is never easy to have good results in teaching.

About the Author

Zhou Qingjin teaches in Huizhou Educational College, Guangdong, China. He has ten years experience teaching adult Chinese students and has been vice-chairman of the English Department. His works include the translation of L.G. Alexander's Longman English Grammar *and essays on translation and teaching methods.*

Preparing and Encouraging Adult Chinese EFL Students to Speak

Zhou Qingjin, Huizhou Educational College, China

Municipal colleges of education in China enroll adult students who are junior high school teachers. They will go back to teach in the same school after two years' study. Their English background is varied. Only a few had a chance to go to normal schools. Most of them are high school graduates with years of teaching experience but with poor knowledge of English. Despite all their differences, they all have one surprising thing in common—they are not prepared to speak English in college!

Their level of maturity places them in a difficult predicament. They are not willing to say easy things because they think it too naive for their age (the oldest is up to 40). Nevertheless, they are unable or hesitant to say difficult things for fear of losing face.

This reluctance to speak is a major challenge in improving their English skills. If a teacher can make his students speak, his work is already half done. Our goal as English teachers is not only to help students understand English—which can simply be done by explanation—but to help them learn to use it, which demands practice. The teacher can only guide, help, or (at most) force, but he can never take the place of student practice.

Preparing Students to Speak

Most adult students are married and have children. They are not like carefree children who are happy to follow the teacher anywhere. They want to know why, how, and where before they decide to participate

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