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REPORTER

Grammatical Explanations in the EFL Class
by Mauricio Pilleuxpage 47

Specific Skills Series: A Brief Evaluation
by Lorinda Cluffpage 50

Assisted Reading for
Second Language Learners
by Emilio Cortezpage 53

A Controlling Frame
for Paragraph Development
by Walter P. Allenpage 55

The Effect of Rate Alteration vs. Repetition
on ESL Listening Comprehension:
A Pilot Study
by T. Edward Harveypage 57

Overseas Opportunitiespage 62

Announcementspage 64

The following issues of the *TESL Reporter* have been entered into the ERIC data base:

Vol. 1, Nos. 1-4--ED	184	351	Vol. 6, No. 1--ED	077	287
Vol. 2, Nos. 1-4--ED	184	349	Vol. 6, No. 2--ED	077	288
Vol. 3, Nos. 1-4--ED	184	350	Vol. 6, No. 4--ED	083	877
Vol. 4, No. 1--ED	184	346	Vol. 10, No. 1--ED	135	217
Vol. 4, No. 2--ED	184	347	Vol. 10, No. 2--ED	148	177
Vol. 4, No. 3--ED	082	571	Vol. 10, No. 4--ED	144	363
Vol. 4, No. 4--ED	082	572	Vol. 11, No. 2--ED	150	856
Vol. 5, No. 1--ED	184	348	Vol. 11, No. 3--ED	159	894
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Grammatical Explanations in the EFL Class

by Mauricio Pilleux

This paper is addressed to those teachers who are searching for a way to help their students not just "parrot" the foreign language they are learning, but speak sensibly and know what they are saying. The stretch of the road between mechanical drills and communicating new ideas in the foreign language is hard going for the students and many times puzzling and discouraging for the teacher. Because of the influence of the audio-visual approach we have been warned to teach the language, not to teach about the language. A clear example of this view is furnished by Palmer, who back in 1921, in his book *Principles of Language Study*, defined language learning as a "habit forming process," urging teachers to use repetitive drills as a means of teaching the foreign language. His expression of dislike for grammatical explanations (GEs) is worth quoting (1921:57):

Nearly all the time spent by the teacher explaining why such and such a form is used and why a certain sentence is constructed in a certain way is time lost, for such explanations merely appease curiosity; they do not help us to form new habits, they do not develop automatism. Those who have learnt to use the foreign language and who do use it successfully have long since forgotten the why and the wherefore; they can no longer quote to you the theory that was supposed to have procured them command of the language.

Bolinger (1968:34) says that being given a grammatical rule is "like being introduced to a stranger; we may be able to recognize him on later encounters, but cannot be said to know him. . . . To imagine that drills are to be displaced by rule-giving is to imagine that digestion can be displaced by swallowing." One cannot agree more with Bolinger in his justification of retaining drills in the classroom. However, in his statement he implicitly recognizes the value of the grammatical explanation (GE). By

examination of his simile we can conclude that pattern drill exercises ("digestion") can be improved when the students know the reasons why ("swallowing") they are drilling a certain pattern. Besides, Bolinger speaks of rule-giving and not of grammatical explanation. For the purpose of clarification we will understand a GE as a statement—which in no way replaces the exercises or activities requiring the students to manipulate the structure under consideration in a grammar class—that explains or clarifies the principle being taught. It should not be considered as an end in itself, but as a means of helping the students to generate new utterances in the foreign language freely.

Due to the strong influence of the audio-lingual approach, GEs have been largely neglected in the EFL class. It has been our experience, however, that adolescent and adult learners at the college level find GEs particularly useful. It would seem indeed that "the grammar explanation should play a more crucial role than that attributed to it by audio-lingual approaches, and while we don't want to turn our language lessons into lengthy analyses, there are several arguments that support the position that more careful attention and increased emphasis be given to the presentation of grammar rules" (Furey 1977:1).

If we accept the view that the role of grammar in the EFL class is to facilitate the understanding of the foreign language, both in its spoken and written forms, and that this role is best attained by intensive guided practice with the help of materials which provide the necessary information and good models of usage, then the GE serves as a medium for making that practice meaningful.

Justification of GEs in the EFL class

1. "Implicit" versus "explicit" explanations

The fact that in the last few years foreign-language learning has been found

to have some resemblance to first language acquisition cannot erase the fact that foreign language learning for most adolescent and adult students is an artificial process—in the sense that it is not learned *in situ* with native speakers of that language. This implies that all the elements a child has at his disposal in learning his native language are not present in the classroom. Moreover, the need expressed by our students to have more grammatical explanations is not something felt by the child, who has not reached a stage in his neurophysiological development when a GE could be of any service. Even though one cannot deny that studies on first language acquisition have shed new light on the processes involved, there is no evidence saying that implicit rules the child assimilates from the linguistic environment cannot be taught explicitly to adolescent and adult learners. This does not mean that we assume that such abilities as understanding, speaking, reading, and writing can be mastered just because a grammatical explanation is given—only that the GE can be a very useful device on the way to mastery. The student will understand the *why* and *how* he has to drill a certain pattern, and situations where students are very “active” in choral or individual repetition but do not know what they are doing will be avoided.

2. Seeing versus hearing

Because of the different constitutions of our students, different learning strategies are used in class. Some students learn more effectively just by listening to what their teachers and classmates say. They have a “hearing” memory. Other students can benefit appreciably from seeing the structure under consideration written on the blackboard; they have a “visual” memory. By using both approaches, all the students can benefit from the class.

3. Inductive versus deductive learning

Since our adolescent and adult learners have expressed the need for more GEs and have asked for more discussion of the rules underlying the structures they are learning, one has to conclude that different learning strategies are at work here than

those in small children. Some of them learn better through inductive strategies, in which they learn the grammatical constructions “correctly” during the presentation of the lesson. Later, with the aid of the teacher, they are led to form their own rules for the pattern they have been practicing. There is no doubt that when students are allowed to derive their own rules by themselves, they will find them meaningful. Nevertheless, other students learn more effectively through deductive strategies, requiring understanding of general principles prior to their application in language exercises and activities. The latter approach has the advantage of saving precious time in class. There is nothing wrong—at least our experience does not so indicate—in catering to the learning needs of this type of student. It needs to be repeated again that the GE cannot be considered as language, and consequently there will be plenty of illustrative examples to be done orally

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and/or in writing, together with intensive pattern practice exercises later on. The use of either of these approaches is recognized by Rivers (1976:106) when she states that “at some stage students must learn the grammar of the language. This learning may be approached deductively. . . or inductively. . . . In either of these approaches there is a phase wherein the student practices the use of grammatical rules in possible sentences.” Paulston and Bruder (1975:23) assert that it also “helps the student to know what he is supposed to be learning and to concentrate his attention and efforts on discrete items of language, although undeniably global aspects of language are being learned and reinforced.”

4. Speaking versus writing

Students have a chance to confirm GEs in oral as well as in written exercises. The oral exercises are useful because the student can practice, be corrected, and receive feedback on the spot as to how he is applying a certain rule. The teacher, on the other hand, will know exactly when a rule has been understood, and be able to add or skip some exercises according to the performance of his (her) students. Written exercises allow the students to test their rules by focusing their attention on specific problems, and also give them a chance to check—by means of dictionaries, texts, grammar books, etc.—whether or not the sentences they want to produce follow the principles stated by the rule.

5. Meaningful learning

Educational psychologists (Cronbach 1963; Glaser 1966; Ausubel and Robinson 1969) advise language teachers that understanding of underlying principles aids learning. Meaningful learning results when the student relates in a sensible way the pattern being learned to what he already knows (Ausubel and Robinson 1969). It is precisely this GE approach that can help our adolescent and adult students in assimilating and integrating into their cognitive structure the newly learned material. Meaningful learning can be facilitated by demonstrating the logical, systematic organization of language, and by introducing and reinforcing the appropriate ideas to which new material can be related. Meaningful learning means, in other words, going from the known to the unknown in graded stages.

Summing Up

GEs are useful in the grammar class in order to help make practice more meaningful, against the claims of the audio-lingual

approach that rule explanation should be discarded from the foreign-language class. Experience has shown that the use of GEs with adult and adolescent students is very fruitful.

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Specific Skills Series: A Brief Evaluation

Book Review by Lorinda Cluff

SPECIFIC SKILLS SERIES. Richard A. Boning. Baldwin, N.Y.: Barnell Lofts, Ltd., 1977.

When teaching English to speakers of other languages, emphasis is usually placed in four different areas—listening, speaking, reading and writing. The purpose of this review is to take a brief look at one series of books designed to help the learner improve his reading skills—the *Specific Skills Series* by Richard A. Boning.

In working with students in the English Skills Laboratory at BYU—HC, I have been very impressed with the effectiveness of this series. Boning has done an excellent job of covering some of the most basic skills necessary for meaningful reading. And he has been able to make the learning of these skills an interesting experience. Perhaps a quick overview of the series as a whole would be appropriate.

The *Specific Skills Series* gives students help in developing their reading skills in eight different areas (which will be discussed later in greater detail). These eight areas are each divided into twelve levels of difficulty—level A for those who are on a basic, primary level, and level L for those who are on a native twelfth grade level, with the other levels at varying degrees between A and L. The material used for reading in all the booklets at all levels (with a few exceptions at the lowest levels) is all factual. Many of the readings give pertinent background material; many of them are culturally oriented; many of them are, simply, fascinating trivia. But the important thing is that they are all factual; the students are continually gaining factual knowledge while acquiring the basic reading skills. Another important aspect of the series is its interest level. I have seen students spend, literally, hours in the lab working on the series. And I have often found that I became very involved in reading the passages and answering the questions myself.

The series has several other important advantages. It is ideal for individualized language lab use. The student can work at his own pace, spending as much time as necessary on each level until he has mastered that level. But perhaps the greatest advantage of the series is the immediate feedback it gives the student. When a student has completed from one to three units, his answers are checked. The "average" student will spend ten to twenty minutes doing a five paragraph unit in *Getting the Main Idea*, level G. After having his work checked (which takes only a few seconds), he can then go back and review any answers he missed. This quick feedback proves very helpful to most students, and it is easy to see if the student has mastered each level. Once this mastery is attained, the student can quickly proceed to the next level of difficulty. This helps to eliminate the frustrations many students acquire when they feel the work they are asked to do is too easy for them.

THREE BASIC SKILLS

John Haskell (1978) mentions three skills as being "basic" to gaining reading skills: "The acquisition of reading skills . . . requires the ability to deal with certain linguistic elements or processes which a writer uses. Basic to these is vocabulary acquisition and includes helping the student to recognize such things as morphological signals (prefixes and suffixes), [and] sequence signals." In the *Specific Skills Series*, Boning provides booklets to help the learner improve his skills in all three of these areas.

Using the Context

These booklets are the vocabulary builders of the series. There are twenty-five units at each level, each unit consisting of ten short paragraphs. In each paragraph, one or two words have been omitted. Using contextual clues (such as word form, language patterns, and grammatical correct-

ness), the students are to choose, from three or four given words, the word which correctly fills the blank.

Working with Sounds

This set has two major purposes: 1) to acquaint the student with the phonemes of English (this is accomplished in the lower levels), and 2) to aid the student in recognition of word meanings through the medium of prefixes, suffixes, and roots. Generally, on the upper levels, the concept of the unit is identified or defined in the first exercises, and is then followed by nine exercises in which the student is able to apply the concept in related words.

Detecting the Sequence

Each booklet in this set contains twenty-five true stories. The student's understanding of the correct time sequence is revealed by his answers to the true/false questions accompanying each story.

COMPREHENSION SKILLS

Of course, basic to reading is comprehension. As a student reads, he should be able to understand the main ideas or concepts given in the reading material. He should be able to go beyond the facts the writer sets forth; and draw conclusions from those facts. But, just as importantly, the student must be able to distinguish the facts the writer has given from any inferences he, the reader, may have drawn. Practice in these three skill areas is also provided by the *Specific Skills Series*.

Getting the Main Idea

This set of booklets is designed to help the student do just that—get the main idea of a short paragraph. Each of the twenty-five units in each book consists of four or five short passages for which three or four possible main ideas are given. The student should be able to choose the correct main idea.

Drawing Conclusions

The idea of this set of booklets is to help the student infer ideas from written passages. These booklets are based on the same format as that used in *Getting the Main Idea*, but the emphasis is on drawing con-

clusions that can be supported by facts found within the written passages.

Getting the Facts

The goal of helping the students develop the skill of recalling specific facts in an article from one reading is accomplished in this set by having the article written on one side of the page and the questions written on the reverse side of the same page.

ADDITIONAL SKILLS

The *Specific Skills Series* affords students practice in two additional skills: locating the answer and following directions. These two skills are especially valuable to people who attend school and have a need to improve their study (as well as their reading) skills.

Locating the Answer

The fundamental purpose of these booklets is to aid the students in, first, clearly understanding the questions that are asked, and, second, developing their skill in locating the answers in a written passage. The student is encouraged to read the questions prior to looking for the answer, and reading the entire written passage first is discouraged.

Following Directions

These booklets help the student to understand that the skill of following directions and instructions requires, first, a careful reading and understanding of the directions. The focus in the set is on four basic types of directions: testing and drilling, experimenting, assembling, and performing.

SUPPORTIVE SKILLS

Boning has also written another series of books which he calls his *Supportive Reading Skills Series*. This series is based on the same general format as his *Specific Skills Series*, but covers such related skills as understanding questions, idioms, and word relationships. The English Skills Laboratory at BYU—HC has two of the *Supportive Skills* sets. *Reading Schedules* gives the student practice in reading sched-

ules and tables, a common necessity in our society and something which is seldom taught or ever explained. The set includes a wide variety of tables and schedules which most students are likely to encounter frequently. *Understanding Word Relationships* uses an analogy format (blue:blew::bury:) to aid the student in recognizing different kinds of relationships between words. Many different types of relationships are covered, such as sound spelling, time, abstract meaning, synonymy, antonymy, etc.

While the *Supportive Reading Skills Series* covers important skills, the content matter tends to be much less interesting than the content matter in the *Specific Skills Series*. For example, page after page of word analogies tends to get a bit tedious after a while. But the quick feedback and

reinforcement aspect of the *Specific Skills Series* is also present in this series.

As I have, in the past year, looked at many different materials available in the TESOL field, I have been amazed at the amount of material that is now being published, some of it good, some of it poor. In my work with students in the English Skills Lab, I have been impressed with the materials Richard Boning has produced. They are usually very interesting to the students, but, more importantly, they are very effective in helping the students improve their basic reading skills.

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Book Review

HOW TO LEARN A FOREIGN LANGUAGE. Paul Pimsleur. Boston: Heinle & Heinle Publishers, 1980. Pp. 113. \$7.50

This delightful little volume will be a valuable asset to language students everywhere. It embodies the dream of the late Dr. Paul Pimsleur to make language learning easy and enjoyable for all students in secondary schools, junior and four-year colleges, adult evening classes, and for the self-learner. Teachers will appreciate the effectiveness of this book in helping their students. Used as a primer, it will provide assistance and encouragement to anyone who might feel overwhelmed by the complexities of language learning. Used as an adjunct to any foreign language course, it brings simplicity and fun to the learning process.

How to Learn a Foreign Language is divided into two sections covering the "whys" and "hows" of language learning. Each section is filled with short, concise, and often witty chapters relating anecdotes on everyday confrontations with language and advice on how to overcome the various stumbling blocks encountered in learning. The author drew on his own experiences and those of others to illustrate his points, and the situations described are sure to hit home with anyone who has been trapped in an embarrassing or amusing situation involving language. In this book, his primary purpose is not just to emphasize the importance of learning a foreign language, but to make the process of language learning one that can be enjoyed by both student and teacher.

Assisted Reading for Second Language Learners

by Emilio Cortez

This article features teaching strategies that have been culled from several sources. The techniques described are associated with the assisted reading approach and are particularly appropriate for second-language learners during the initial phases of reading instruction.

The assisted reading technique has yielded favorable results in the classroom setting. Kenneth Hoskisson describes the assisted reading approach as follows:

Assisted reading consists of reading a word, a phrase, or a sentence and having the child repeat it....To begin to get the child to focus on the print the [teacher, parent, aide or peer tutor] puts a finger on the page and moves it slowly under the line while reading. The child is asked to follow the words and repeat them as they are read. Eventually the child is asked to put a finger under the line of print and move it along while reading the words aloud. (Hoskisson 1974:298)

Yetta Goodman and Dorothy J. Watson propose a variation of the assisted reading approach.

An alternative... is to have the adult [teacher or aide] read, stopping where a highly predictable word or phrase follows so that the reader can supply the appropriate language. (Goodman and Watson 1977: 868-869)

In keeping with the assisted reading procedure as proposed by Goodman and Watson, the snap reading technique (Cortez 1975) can be used effectively to aid in the improvement of students' reading and listening skills.

Snap reading requires that the teacher read orally at normal speed, stop, and snap his/her fingers. This alerts a student to read the next word. The teacher immediately resumes reading, stops, and snaps his/her fingers again. A different student within

the group reads the next word, and so on. Since some pupils inappropriately read function words with a heavy stress, it is suggested that such words be read by the teacher. In other words, nouns and main verbs should comprise the majority of words to be read by the students. (Snap reading can also be used with the entire class; when the teacher snaps his/her fingers, the class responds chorally.)

Carol Chomsky successfully used tape recorded storybooks with pupils who were described as chronic reading failures. Chomsky elaborates further:

The children listened individually to tape-recorded stories following along in the written text. They listened repeatedly to the same story until fluency was achieved. The text was then to be analyzed extensively through a variety of games... designed to lead the children from rote recognition of the written material toward an active interpretation of alphabetic and phonological features of the writing system. (Chomsky 1976:289)

It is important to note that although a child has memorized a particular reading passage and can read it flawlessly, it does not follow necessarily that the child will recognize the same words in different phrases, sentences, or contexts. Thus, as one might infer from the latter part of the quotation just cited, additional exposure to the same words in varied contexts is essential to ensure mastery.

Marie Carbo also used tape recorded stories with pupils who required remedial reading instruction. Carbo found that her students had problems following along in the text as they listened to the tape recorded reading. Nevertheless, this situation was rectified by utilizing three strategies which helped to synchronize for the students the printed words with the tape recorded words.

More specifically, Carbo implemented strategies such as:

1. *Cueing the listener.* I numbered the book pages consecutively... and cued the youngsters for whom I was reading by stating the page number before reading the page. Next, I paused long enough to allow the listener to turn to the correct page, look at the pictures, and find the first line of print.
2. *Phrase reading.* I recorded the material with particular emphasis on clarity, expression, and logical phrasing. The latter seemed to help the students to assimilate natural word groupings and lessen their tendency to read word-by-word.
3. *Tactual reinforcement.* I had each child move a finger under the words as they were spoken. (Carbo 1978: 269)

Short tape recorded reading passages can also make it easier for students to synchronize the language they hear with its graphic representation. For example, a number of brief pedagogic dialogues can be tape recorded, transcribed, and used as supplementary reading material. A straightforward dialogue such as the one that follows could be used for such purposes.

- A. I bought seven cookies for lunch,
and I ate three.
- B. How many do you have left?
- A. Just four.
- B. May I have one?
- A. Sure. (Cortez 1976:12)

Because of their brevity, inherent humor, and recurrent rhyme scheme, limericks can be used effectively in conjunction with

the assisted reading approach. Consider the following limerick that would be appropriate for young second-language learners.

There once was a man with a cold
whose story has never been told.
With one mighty sneeze,
he blew down some trees.
And they rolled, and rolled, and rolled.
(Cortez 1980:10)

In closing, when properly utilized and judiciously incorporated into the ESL classroom, assisted reading constitutes an effective approach for teaching reading and listening skills during the initial phases of reading instruction.

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The Institute of International Education has published a new series entitled *The Learning Traveler*. Volume I: *U.S. College-Sponsored Programs Abroad: Academic Year* lists about 900 semester and academic-year programs sponsored by accredited U.S. colleges and universities. The companion volume *Vacation Study Abroad* is a comprehensive directory describing almost 950 spring, summer, and fall study abroad programs sponsored by U.S. and foreign educational institutions and private organizations. Contact: Barbara Cahn Connotillo, Sr. Editor/Information Administrator, Communications Division, Institute of International Education, 809 United Nations Plaza, New York, N.Y. 10017

A Controlling Frame for Paragraph Development

by Walter P. Allen

Different cultures foster varying modes of thought, logic, and exposition. In a widely quoted and frequently reprinted article (see Croft, 1980, p. 410), Robert Kaplan points out that paragraph development in American English is likely to be more direct than that in some other languages. For this reason, our ESL composition students, who have all been trained in different cultures, need not only training in appropriate grammatical forms and units, but also familiarity with common forms of organization expected of students in an American university. (See also Buckingham, 1979.) Since test answers, lab reports, and business memos (among other things) are all expected to follow this direct development pattern, it is vital that the foreign students learn to use this organization in their writing.

For several years I have been developing exercises which provide models for guiding students to organize their paragraphs in a common English expository style: starting with a topic sentence and leading through supporting statements and details to a summary conclusion. My experiments have resulted in a model and a frame which lies pretty close to the end of the continuum from controlled writing to free composition. An example, developed to follow discussion of Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men*, is reproduced in Figure 1 (see page 56).

The exercise sheet is given out to the students following class discussion of the two subjects which are given as topic sentences in the sample and in the following quiz. The handout begins with a simple statement of the organization pattern which will be used. The sample follows with each sentence labeled as one of the parts identified in the organizational pattern: topic sentence, supporting statement 1 with details a and b, supporting statement 2 with details a and b, and the conclusion. Each item in the pattern is discussed and its relationship to the whole is stressed. It is also explained

that this simple pattern is a bit raw, as some connecting expressions are needed to mold the bare sentences into a unified paragraph.

In the last ten or fifteen minutes of the period, the students write the quiz, making up their supporting statements, details, and conclusion to go with the topic sentence provided. With the model of the sample before them, the students can advance sentence by sentence to fill out the pattern for this paragraph form. The frame gives direction, but allows for free writing of the sentences. On a 100 point grading scale,

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a student can earn up to 20 points for each supporting statement and the conclusion and ten points for each detail.

Controlling frames can easily be made for any story or topic the class is studying, and different frames can be constructed for other types of paragraphs. The use of several of these exercises will help the students write in the more direct patterns expected in our American culture.

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- Steinbeck, John. 1937. *Of mice and men*. New York: Viking Compass (C-125).

Name _____

Steinbeck, Of Mice and Men

A paragraph may be organized with a topic sentence, supporting statements illustrated by details, and a conclusion.

Sample

Topic Sentence	Lennie is just as important for George as George is for Lennie.
Supporting Statement	1. Lennie could not exist without George to help him.
Details	1a. George saved Lennie from the lynch mob in Weed. 1b. George gets jobs for Lennie.
Supporting Statement	2. The only thing that raises George above the other men is his concern for Lennie.
Details	2a. George's care for Lennie is praised by the God-like Slim. 2b. After Lennie's death George gets drunk, just like the other men.
Conclusion	"I got you and you got me" is as necessary for George as it is for Lennie.

Quiz

Write a similarly structured paragraph to develop this topic sentence.

Topic Sentence	Curley is more responsible for Lennie's death than George is.
Supporting Statement	1. _____
Details	1a. _____ 1b. _____
Supporting Statement	2. _____
Details	2a. _____ 2b. _____
Conclusion	_____

Figure 1

The Effect of Rate Alteration vs. Repetition on ESL Listening Comprehension: A Pilot Study

by T. Edward Harvey

Psychologists define listening as the apprehending of meaning from a continuous stream of verbal symbols. The more general theory of communication holds that listening is the receiving, decoding, and interpreting of a verbal message. In the practitioner's world of second-language teaching it is one of the "four skills" which previously was thought to develop by osmosis, i.e., "would develop of itself if we taught our students to speak" (Pimsleur, Hancock, and Furey, 1977). More recently the second-language teaching profession has begun to place greater emphasis on the teaching and testing of listening as an integral part of the language-learning process.

When tests of listening are mentioned, they usually have to do with comprehending messages or conversations in the second language, and one may assume a standard format: recorded spoken material played back through earphones to students either in class or in a language laboratory. Based on what is heard, s/he must answer a number of questions of the type used in objective tests, i.e., multiple choice, true-false, fill in, etc. Some tests try to isolate the listening skill and to present only hearing situations (i.e., where the student listens to a radio, to a record, to a conversation behind a door, or to what is said over a telephone). Others choose a hybrid situation with aural and visual stimuli. Plaister (1967, 1968) opted for a hybrid situation which featured a hearing/visual format and would avoid "culture static." In this format, an aural question which had reference to simple geometric line drawings was recorded and presented to the students. The avoidance of using questions which required elaborate artistry allowed them to have visual access to the culturally neutral stimuli in the test booklet. Results of research by Taggart (1974), Tardy (1975), and Omaggio (1979)

suggest the desirability of using visual referents in aural testing situations.

Since comprehension during listening is dependent upon more than just the introduction of visual referents presented in a culturally neutral hybrid format, other factors such as velocity, and "field" figure strongly in students' aural comprehension fluency. Friedman and Johnson (1971) along with Jarvis (1972) have hypothesized that students of a second language are in a position analogous to that of persons listening to compressed speech in their native tongue. In both cases, even though the transmission is clear, and lexical and syntactic features are known, the speech is too rapid to be processed efficiently. Research by Sticht (1970) has suggested that application of rate-alteration technology to native language—specifically expanded—speech tends to negate the cognitive overloading that results from the mere velocity of the message. The few studies dealing directly with foreign or second-language testing reinforce Sticht's findings: Littell (1976) reports unpublished research in which the reduction of "phonic rate of native speakers" resulted in improved student performance. Flaherty (1975) tested second-year, second-language learners' listening comprehension in a parochial school setting. She used a completion/rejoinder test in a multiple-choice format and expansion rates of 135% and 170% of normal. Her results indicate that at 135% expansion, significant improvement occurred on the completion portion of the test, but at 170%, improvement, while present, was not significant. She suggested that a rate between the two employed might serve to further improve comprehension, a suggestion that was supported by two studies using children acquiring their native language. McCrosky and Thompson

(1973) found that for their youngest group, 140% expansion produced a significant effect on comprehension, while McCrosky and Nelson (1975) reported that normal and language-disordered children experienced decrements in comprehension at 180% expansions but did not do so at 140%.

Besides the information-processing time factor, the perceptive acuity factor of "field" carries important weight in the totality of listening comprehension. Some second-language learners have difficulty separating the message from the speech medium or any accompanying noise even in their native tongue. Because of this phenomenon they are inefficient listeners in any and all languages. When they are confronted with a rapid string of speech sounds they panic. M.D. Steer (1945) found that inefficient listeners attended too much to the number of elements coming at them; they were overwhelmed by the number of words they heard and missed the message. They became so overly tense and preoccupied with the lost portion of the message that they became hopelessly lost and miscomprehended the entire message. Apparently those who can listen efficiently are also field independent.

Field independency is a theoretical construct based on the ability to keep things apart in a perceptual field, to see patterns, and to respond without stress in novel situations. Field dependent people are unable to disregard the more superficial aspects of a perceptual experience so as to detect order in the unfamiliar (H.A. Witkin, et. al., 1962). Applying this same construct to listening, Carver, Johnson and Friedman (1972) tested listeners who tended to concentrate more on the rate and less on the content. They used speeded speech in conjunction with measures of field dependency and found that the ability to comprehend highly speeded speech probably involves being field independent. In studying the effects of expanded speech, Flaherty (1975) and Littell (1976) have shown that for second language learners, slowing down the second language speech cues on listening tests significantly helps listening performance in aural testing situations.

The literature seems to suggest that slowing down the taped message will be a significant help to the learner. At the same time there exists the common classroom practice of repeating an aural cue during a listening test to make sure the students heard what they were supposed to. The basis for such a practice has been pragmatic and intuitive rather than theoretical. If the effects of merely repeating the aural cue were equal to or greater than the effects of an expansion condition, then curricula could be changed in favor of the preferable procedure and money could be saved by avoiding unnecessary hardware purchases. A study was thus conceived to test what effect the application of rate-alteration technology to recorded listening materials might have on the comprehension fluency of Asians and Polynesians learning an Indo-European language such as English (all previous studies listed above have dealt exclusively with Indo-European speakers either listening to their native language or learning to listen to a second Indo-European tongue). The effects of repetition of the aural cue were also considered and the resulting null hypotheses were formulated: H_{01} : there is no significant difference in listening test scores across four different listening abilities when rate-alteration technology is applied to recorded second-language testing materials; and H_{02} : there is no significant difference in listening test scores across listening ability levels when aural test cues are repeated twice.

Procedure

Fifty-six Polynesian and Asian students in the BYU-HC English Language Institute took the 1971 version of the Plaister Aural Comprehension Test (P.A.C.T.). The test recording had previously been duplicated to produce the four treatment conditions: (1) Repetition I—where the students heard the master recording with each question pronounced only once; (2) Repetition II—where the students listened to each question spoken twice; (3) Expansion I—where students were exposed to an electromechanically altered, master recording with the question spoken a single time but presented at a rate of 135 w.p.m. (0.8 times normal—165 w.p.m.); and (4) Expansion II—the master tape

slowed to 115 w.p.m., or 0.7 times native speed. Students from four levels of listening proficiency (101-104) were randomly selected and randomly assigned to one of the four treatment groups in order to isolate main effects.

Results

Table 1 presents the results of the 4 (Listening Proficiency Level) x 4 (Treatment Condition) factorial design which was used to determine main effects and first-order interaction effects. The *F* ratios for

TABLE 1

**A 4x4 Factorial Analysis of Variance
(Nonparametric) for Aural Comprehension
Scores Between Levels as
Compared to Treatment**

Source	df	SS	F
Between Levels	3	526.94	4.64**
Between Treatments	3	430.27	3.79*
Interaction:			
Level X Treatment	9	860.21	2.52*

*p .05

**p .01

Listening Proficiency Level and Treatment Condition were found to be statistically significant at the .05 level or better. However, given the non-equal cell sizes and the extremely small *N* for some treatment groups, this significance must be discounted.

Examination of the mean performance scores presented in Table 2 yields a clearer picture of actual results. These means show no clear linear relationship by proficiency level and in some cases present inverse relationships from those formerly expected and therefore will be considered by treatment condition.

As expected, for the control condition (zero repetition), the highest mean was produced by the group most proficient in listening ability and the lowest scores were recorded by those least proficient in the listening skill. However, this trend was not apparent across treatment conditions.

TABLE 2

**Mean Performance Scores on the
Plaister Aural Comprehension Test
Under the Two Treatment Conditions**

Level	N	Repetition		Expansion	
		Zero	Once	0.8	0.7
101	16	(n=4) 31.5	(n=4) 29.5	(n=4) 27.8	(n=4) 28.3
102	10	(n=3) 38.7	(n=2) 39.0	(n=2) 14	(n=3) 35.7
103	15	(n=4) 34.5	(n=4) 36.3	(n=3) 32.3	(n=4) 38.7
104	15	(n=3) 40.3	(n=4) 38.3	(n=4) 33.3	(n=4) 35.3

The students at the 102-level responded more strongly to the experimental repetition condition than to any other treatments, but only three tenths of a point higher than the control condition.

An interesting inverse result occurred between levels for the 0.7 expansion condition. The 102-level groups recorded the highest mean score across levels, causing the null hypothesis of no significant difference across levels for the greatest expansion condition to be retained. The null hypothesis of no significant difference across levels for the repetition condition is also retained for levels 101 and 104. However, for levels 102 and 103, the inverse appears to be true. The mid-level proficiency groups benefited more from repetition than any other treatment.

While the attained means across treatments tended to support the control condition as being the better procedure, a close examination of means between specific expansion treatments reveals a slight increase across levels for the 0.7 condition. This would suggest the possibility of rejecting the null hypothesis for expansion.

Discussion

The decrement in performance for the 101, 102 and 104 proficiency levels is probably due to the novelty of expanded speech and the distortion of clear syllabication which results from the electronic alteration of the recorded message. (No provision was made for introducing the subjects to

expanded speech.) This may account for the fact that the majority of subjects responded more strongly to the faster but more familiar native-speed, control condition. Similar subject reactions occurred under similar expansion conditions during an experiment by Flowers (1974). He tested sighted and blind subjects at three expansion conditions—0, 30, and 50 percent. He found that blind subjects performed significantly better than sighted subjects under varying conditions of expansion. He suggested the possibility that the blind performed better than the sighted subjects due to the phenomenon of habituation. The results of the present study seem to suggest the same. That is, that the slow monotonous characteristics of the expanded-speech stimuli could cause sighted subjects to lose interest in the stimuli being presented through their headsets. The tendency to seek stimulation through another sensory modality (namely vision) is a possible cause for the higher means being achieved for the control condition. More definitive research seems to be called for where the effects of a greater variety of expansion conditions are tested with enough subjects to increase statistical power so significant differences will appear where they actually do exist. This writer believes that the findings of this pilot study imply the need for further research in the effects of rate-alteration technology on listening comprehension in second-language learning.

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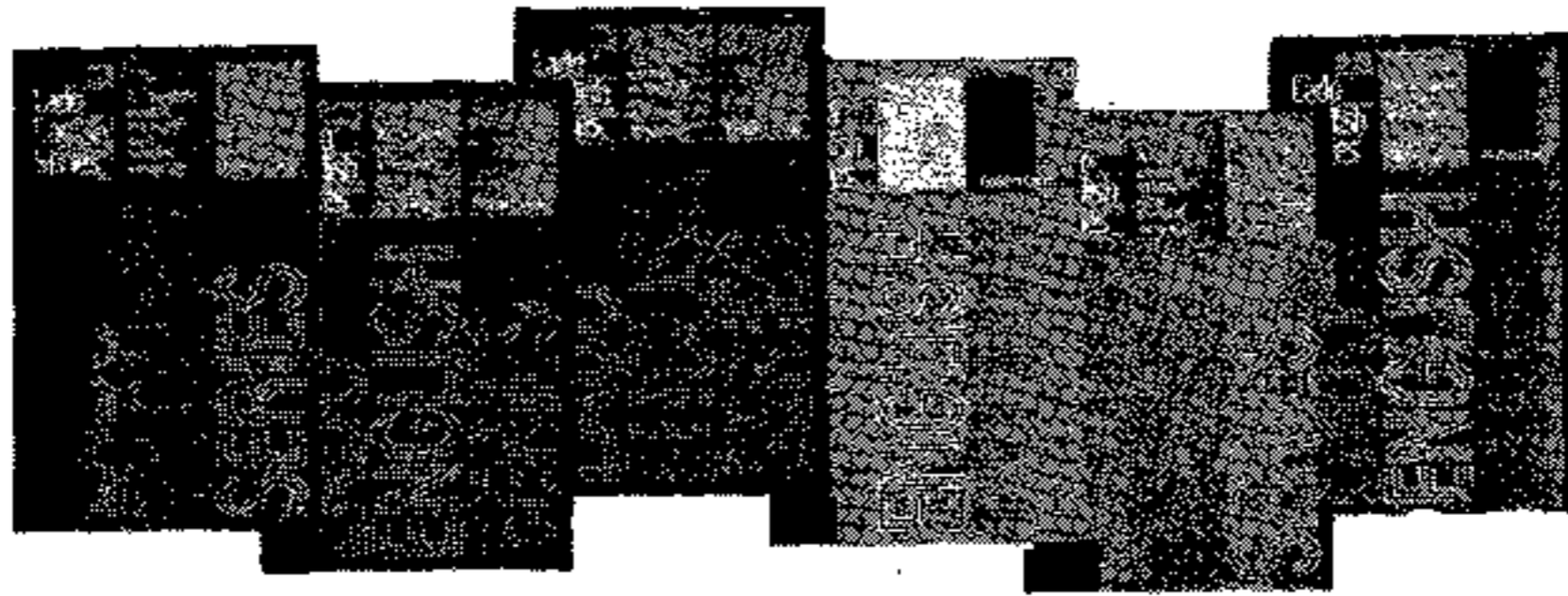
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Announcements

Honolulu, Hawaii will be the site of the sixteenth international conference of TESOL (Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages). Nearly 4,000 TESL/TEFL educators from throughout the world will be in attendance at this gathering May 2-7, 1982.

AILA 81, the sixth International Congress of Applied Linguistics, will be held at the University of Lund, Sweden from August 9 to 15, 1981. The theme chosen for the meeting is "Language and Society." The address for all correspondence with the Congress is: AILA 81, University of Lund, Box 1703, S-221 01, Lund, Sweden.

The Bell Educational Trust will offer several courses for overseas teachers of English during the summer of 1981. Areas studied will include EFL methodology, supplementary teaching materials, teaching English for specific purposes, and teaching skills. There will be two courses at the Bell School in Norwich, and four at the Bell College Saffron Walden. The courses are open to practicing teachers of English as a foreign language. Contact: Roger Gower, Principal, The Bell School, Willow House, Willow Lane, Norwich NR2 1EU, Great Britain, or Philip Prowse, Director of Studies, Bell College, South Road, Saffron Walden, Essex CB11 3DP, Great Britain.

The sixth annual Stanford Institute for Intercultural Communication will offer internships and three sessions on the Stanford campus during July and early August of 1981. The Institute offers an environment for acquiring knowledge, improving skills, and sharing experiences with professionals in the field of intercultural education, training, and research. For further information contact King Ming Young, Associate Director SIIC, P.O. Box A-D, Stanford, California 94305.

Colorado State University has developed a series of videotape programs and accompanying written materials on cultural misunderstandings. The purpose of these programs is to illustrate academic, social, and cultural situations in which international university students may encounter difficulties when their attitudes or reactions are inconsistent with their new environment in the United States. Videotapes may be ordered for preview for a one-week period. Written materials are not available for preview. Send orders to: Office of Instructional Services, Colorado State University, A71 Clark Building, Fort Collins, Colorado 80523.

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