

Using the Overhead Projector to Bridge the Communication Gap

by John Pentick

As a teacher of adult immigrants in a community college setting I was often disappointed with the way my students communicated, or more accurately, failed to communicate once they left the classroom. There seemed to be a large gap between the competence they displayed in class and the garbled English they showed in the 'real world' outside. I resolved to try to develop an approach which would allow me to bring that 'real world' into the classroom where we could work with it. The result was a series of overhead projector transparency lessons depicting scenes from real life.

The Rationale

I chose the overhead projector for a number of reasons. It is a simple, easy-to-use machine that is readily available

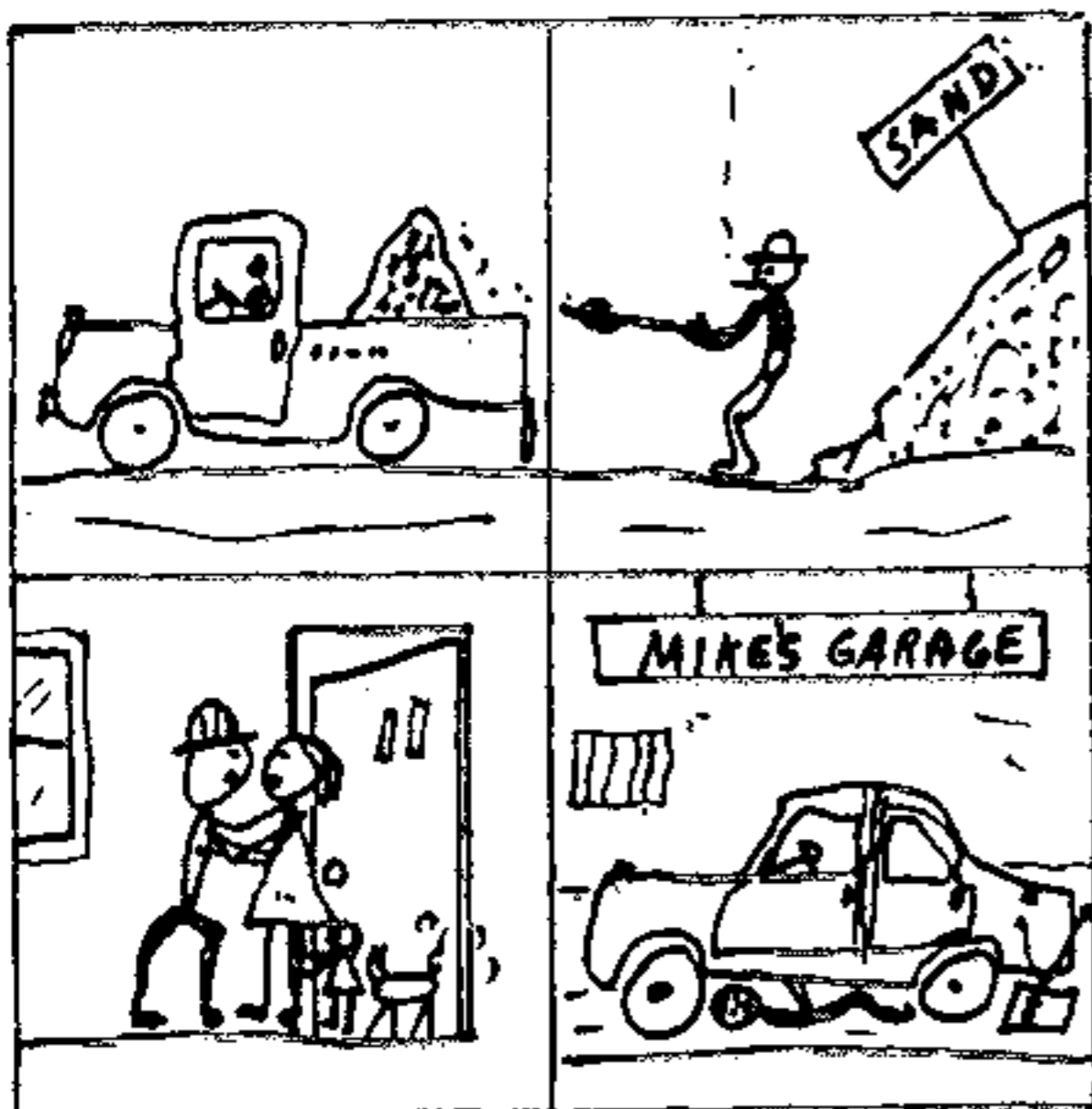
in nearly every school. And although the transparencies can be used in a lighted classroom I often found that a partially darkened room encouraged shy students to speak out with a confidence that might otherwise disappear. Furthermore, the transparency is a permanent addition to one's teaching materials and, as such, can be recalled for review or testing. Finally, this type of lesson is an excellent way to handle those Friday afternoon doldrums.

The transparencies I used were usually drawn in rough by myself—see drawing A. An artistic student (or friend) would transform the crude original into the quality of art you see in the finished product, drawing B.

Using example B, I set the lesson up, as follows:

VERB DRILL

1. WHAT DOES HE DO? (EVERY DAY)
2. WHAT'S HE GOING TO DO? (TOMORROW)
3. WHAT DID HE DO? (YESTERDAY)
4. WHAT'S HE DOING? (NOW)



My Drawing (A)

VERB DRILL

1. WHAT DOES HE DO? (EVERYDAY)
2. WHAT'S HE GOING TO DO? (TOMORROW)
3. WHAT DID HE DO? (YESTERDAY)
4. WHAT'S HE DOING? (NOW)



Finished Product (B)

VOCABULARY:

DRIVE a truck
 SHOVEL sand
 SMOKE a cigarette
 KISS her husband
 HOLD her mother's hand
 WATCH TV/ television
 FIX/REPAIR the car
 SUPPOSED TO BE fixing the car

STRUCTURES:

Habitual Tense:

What does he do?
 He drives a truck.

Continuous Tense:

What's he doing?
 He's driving a truck.

Simple Past:

What did he do?
 He drove a truck.

Activities

Introduction of New Vocabulary/Structures. Teacher models statement and/or question for the first picture. Students practice chorally and then individually. Class continues through all pictures.

Teacher-Controlled Practice. Teacher chooses one student to come to the projector to ask the questions. Teacher circulates amongst class correcting pronunciation and helping weaker students.

Student-Controlled Practice. Students come forward to 'Ask the Teacher' for answers to the ones they didn't get.

Writing Practice. Teacher puts the written sentence pattern on the blackboard but leaves blank the space for the verb. Students fill in the blanks. Advanced students can supply the answers in any number of different verb tenses.

Questions at Large: Teacher asks questions about the personal life of each figure

in the pictures: e.g., "How old is he? What's his phone number", etc. Students give the answers or make up new questions of their own.

For Advanced Students. Advanced students are directed to examine some detail of one of the pictures. The teacher might ask: "What do you think is wrong with the child in picture #3?" or "Why do you think he's watching T.V. in picture #4?"

Conclusion

It has been my experience that most students approach transparency lessons such as the one described above with enthusiasm. Because they are able to relate to these

John Pentick began teaching ESL in 1969. He has coordinated ESL and remote community programs and has pursued interests in teacher training and adult education. Currently he is a community college teaching master, specializing in ESL and communications, at Confederation College of Applied Arts and Technology, Thunder Bay, Ontario, Canada.

scenes from real life, they are anxious to acquire the skills needed to communicate what they see. The vocabulary and exercises involved in the lessons become meaningful and, thus, more effective learning takes place. With knowledge comes confidence, and the students are more willing and better able to transfer what they have learned in the classroom to the outside world. The use of the overhead projector in the teaching of a second language is, therefore, a worthwhile aid in helping to bridge the communication gap between the classroom and life in the community.

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