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The Role of Content Schemata in ESL Composition

by Cem Alptekin and Margaret Alptekin

In evaluating ESL compositions, teachers seem to pay a great deal of attention to the accuracy and appropriateness of linguistic and rhetorical properties, often at the expense of the discourse value of the students' writing that underlies the content of their texts. Possible reasons for this particular attention to form stem from the common practice of judging student compositions primarily in the light of textual criteria that can be easily reduced to linguistic rules and rhetorical models. Although linguistic and rhetorical properties are quite important in the evaluation of ESL compositions, they should not be considered so crucial that readers—in this instance the writing teachers— neglect the communicative essence of the text.

However, unlike the more or less clearly defined textual (linguistic and rhetorical) properties on which the teacher tends to base his opinion of the student's written product, there is no principled basis for assessing objectively the discourse value of a text written by an ESL student in the absence of commonly shared content schemata between a teacher and a student from different cultures. Content schemata, in the light of schema-theoretical conceptions of reading comprehension, are defined here as one's prior culture-based background knowledge of the content area of the text and his culturally determined prototypical structures of knowledge which, as Dechert indicates, are associated with his "experience of prior events and [which] organize the perception, memorization, and reconstruction of new events" (1983:176-177). It is assumed that the reader interacts with the text, and thus with the writer, by activating his own background knowledge and cognitive processes, thereby constructing meaning from it and eventually assimilating it as a whole.[1] In the case of a native English-speaking teacher of ESL, deciding how to interpret properly the propositional content and the illocutionary significance (Widdowson 1978) of compositions written by foreign students could become a serious problem and thus negatively affect his evaluation of the text, not necessarily because of linguistic and/or rhetorical difficulties impeding the message but also because of different background knowledge and cognitive processes operating between the parties.

Of course, the evaluation of the text may suffer not only in those instances where the mismatch between the content schemata of the writer and the reader causes the latter to misinterpret the former's ideas. As pointed out previously, it is quite possible for the teacher to shy away from evaluating the paper for its discoursal and textual properties by placing a myopic focus on its textual features alone. Aside from its drawbacks in evaluation, such a facile measurement of the student's writing may foster faulty learning habits. In fact, the student may become so preoccupied with the proper application of linguistic and rhetorical criteria to his composition that there will not be much spare capacity left in his mental resources for communication (Widdowson 1983: 47).

In order to prevent students from getting preoccupied with producing compositions merely for the sake of producing compositions in a given form, the teacher as the reader ought to make it clear to them that he is genuinely interested in what they have to say. Of course, interest alone is not enough to stimulate the students to write well. They also need to know that the teacher is an informed and critical reader not only in matters pertaining to language and rhetoric but also in terms of what constitutes their own consciousness embedded in their culturally determined world view. To be a cross-culturally informed and critical reader, the teacher needs to develop

an awareness of both his own content schemata and those of his students on a variety of topics or themes which are likely to be used in the course. For such an awareness to evolve, he needs to acquire information about his students' sociocultural traditions by consulting reliable sources in cross-cultural studies and other relevant fields. In addition, he might use his students as guides to building insights into their world views. Only then can he equip himself with his students' culture-based background knowledge and cognitive processes in order to set up an epistemological basis on which to construct accurate meaning from their compositions— to be

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sure, in their own experiential and conceptual terms. Otherwise, it would not be unlikely for him to misinterpret the student's intended message in the light of his own culturally determined content schemata. For example, an American teacher of ESL writing who is accustomed to thinking along the lines of what Scovel calls "the typically American worship of individualism" (1983:90) may assess a Chinese student's composition in the light of the individualistic norms and values of his conceptual universe and ask the student to change the nominative case of the first-person plural pronoun (We) to the first-

person singular form (I) whenever he is referring to himself. The teacher's rationale in this case may be to help the student avoid one type of grammatical inaccuracy or stylistic pompousness in his writing. Though seemingly appropriate on the surface, this sort of recommendation may in fact be unsuitable in the light of the student's content schemata that are characterized by the Confucian concept of people's being interdependent rather than independent. Thus, it is likely that the student's use of "We" to refer to himself is not symptomatic of a grammar or style problem but simply a manifestation of the Oriental belief in "I am many; I am not alone" (Scovel 1983:90). To put it in another light, the teacher's judgement concerning what appears to be a case of simple pronoun change in the student's composition might introduce a new world view into the discoursal context that is alien to the student's content schemata, and consequently cause more learning difficulties than are solved at that point.

In addition to the unwitting infusion of his own consciousness into the student's discourse, it is possible that, in the absence of shared content schemata between the parties, the ESL writing teacher may regard certain papers written by foreign students as being inadequate or illogical, not necessarily for textual reasons but perhaps due to one of the parties' lack of background knowledge about the topic or the parties' lack of understanding of each other's cultural consciousness. For example, in a composition on courtship patterns, a Nigerian student tried to describe the differences between Nigerian courtship patterns and those of the United States. The grammar in the text was virtually impeccable, and the overall rhetorical structure was appropriate; yet the composition was graded down for lack of development and substantive content in the paragraph devoted to the American patterns of courtship. That particular paragraph was only half the length of the paragraph on Nigerian patterns, and it said, in essence, that there is an absence in the United States of the patterns of courtship which exist in Nigeria, without mentioning the actual nature of the American patterns. In other words, the section about

American patterns was treated in terms of what *does not* exist vis-a-vis the Nigerian context rather than what *does* exist in the American context. In this case, the student had only sketchy knowledge of American courtship and was thus able to offer only gross oversimplifications; he was sure only that the Americans do not have the same patterns as the Nigerians, and this knowledge was based primarily on his limited personal observation of male-female relationships in this country. Similarly, on a writing assignment dealing with water pollution, an Egyptian student's paper was found to be "illogical" because of the mismatch between the reader's expectations and the writer's product. Whereas the teacher anticipated that the student would associate water pollution with urban industrial areas, the student thought of water pollution in connection with rural regions. Obviously, each party was approaching the topic from his own cultural framework—the teacher thinking of the chemically contaminated water sources in industrial settings as opposed to the clean water of non-urban areas (most often the case in the U.S.), and the student associating water pollution with the lack of proper sanitation facilities in remote rural contexts as opposed to the clean potable water supplies of urban areas in Egypt.[2]

As these few illustrations suggest, an appropriate evaluation of student compositions in ESL necessitates the native English-speaking teacher's taking into account not only textual properties but also the intended message. This is possible only if the teacher is acquainted with the culture-based content schemata of the students on a variety of topics or themes that will be assigned in the course. The teacher's access to this distinct background knowledge and cognitive processes will enable him to perceive the meaning(s) of the text in its own cultural terms and judge the suitability of the grammatical and/or rhetorical patterns used to convey that meaning. Such a thorough perspective of the text on the part of the teacher, encompassing discoursal and textual properties as well as their inter-relationship, is likely to bring about proper interpretation and/or evaluation as well

as better learning on the part of the student.

Although the teacher's familiarity with the content schemata of his students is quite beneficial, one must realize that this knowledge should not lead to the utilization of instructional strategies whereby students are encouraged to write English compositions primarily within the experiential and conceptual framework of their own world views, with the anticipation that their ideas will always be properly interpreted by the teacher. While this might be a suitable pedagogic strategy in numerous EFL contexts overseas where student populations tend to be culturally homogeneous—with the teacher himself being most likely from the same cultural background, in ESL programs in English-speaking countries conscious efforts should be made to use the teacher's knowledge as a point of departure for guiding students to write for the expectations of the target audience whose culturally determined content schemata are different from their own. Teachers of ESL writing in English-speaking countries already concentrate on training their students to write in tune with the linguistic and rhetorical criteria of the British or American culture. For one thing, students learn how to make an accurate and appropriate use of grammatical constructions and lexical forms in their written discourse in English. For another, they acquire the necessary rhetorical signals which would help the native English speaker to understand the purpose of their writing (to inform, to convince, to entertain), their attitude toward their topic (committed, aloof, ironic), and the logical strategies (induction, deduction, comparison and contrast) they pursue (Eskey 1979). What needs to be done, in addition, is to enable students to develop an awareness of the differences between their own content schemata and those of native English speakers in order to satisfy the expectations of the target audience on discoursal grounds as well. In this respect, they should be led to realize that their target audience may not be as cross-culturally sophisticated as their teacher on one hand, and that interpretation and/or evaluation problems which their compositions might face cannot solely be attributed to textual reasons on the other.

Hence, if they are to write for readers from the English-speaking culture, they need to know about the content schemata of the target audience so as to be able to make themselves adequately understood. And it is up to the ESL writing teacher to provide them with the necessary cross-cultural insights to facilitate their cognitive transition from writing for the consciousness of the native audience into writing for the consciousness of the target audience.

Notes

[1] If there appear to be tints of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis in some of the ideas presented in this article, it must be pointed out that the authors do not view individuals as being imprisoned within the conceptual system imposed on them by their language. Instead, what is suggested here is a weak version of the hypothesis in whose framework the contrastive study of rhetorics at the discourse level is considered useful, not only because of differing rhetorical structures among cultures but also because of different individual and social modes of constructing reality according to cultural context.

[2] The examples used in this article have been taken from situations involving foreign students in post-admission ESL writing courses at Ohio State University.

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EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Story Grammar Application in ESL Reading

by Joselito W. Lalas

In ESL reading comprehension, one of the areas of interest that has attracted attention recently is the notion of story grammar. Story grammar represents the internal structure of stories and the relationships among the parts. It consists of a set of rules governing the types of story information that occur and the types of interrelationships that connect the different story components. This notion is based on the premise of schema theory which takes into consideration what a reader brings to reading and how a piece of text is written (Rumelhart 1977, Meyer 1981).

In schema theory, a distinction is made between *formal* schemata and *content* schemata (Carrell 1983). Formal schemata include the rhetorical and organizational structures of stories and expository texts. Content schemata consist of the reader's "background knowledge about the content area of a text" (Carrell 1983:6). Content schemata must be considered in relation to particular text topics, which for example, may range from celebrating fiestas in Latin America to making bamboo flutes, from the U.S. bases in the Philippines to the history of Nigeria.

Story grammar can be classified as a type of formal schemata. Recent studies (Singer & Donlan 1982, Whaley 1981) have demonstrated that instruction in story grammar can help students improve their comprehension of complex short stories.

Story Grammar Categories

Several investigators have formulated rules for a simple story grammar. The most frequently mentioned grammars (Thorndyke 1977, Stein and Glenn 1975, Mandler and Johnson 1977) will be described briefly in this paper. The following is a sample story taken from Stein (1978) parsed into story grammar representations by Mandler and Johnson (1977) and Stein and Glenn (1975). Note the basic similarities between Mandler and Johnson's and Stein and Glenn's grammars:

Story	*M & J*	*S & G*
1. Once there was a big gray fish named Albert. 2. He lived in a big icy pond near the edge of the forest.	Setting	Setting
3. One day, Albert was swimming around the pond. 4. Then he spotted a big juicy worm on top of the water.	Beginning	Initiating Event
5. Albert knew how delicious worms tasted. 6. He wanted to eat that one for his dinner.	Reaction	Internal Response
7. So he swam very close to the worm. 8. Then he bit into him.	Attempt	Attempt
9. Suddenly, Albert was pulled through the water into a boat. 10. He had been caught by a fisherman.	Outcome	Consequence
11. Albert felt sad. 12. He wished he had been more careful.	Ending	Reaction

The *setting* introduces the protagonist and the physical, social, or temporal context of the story. The *initiating event (beginning)* describes an action which causes the character to demonstrate a certain response. The *internal response (reaction)* indicates an emotional response and the thoughts of the protagonist to achieve a certain goal. The *attempt* includes all overt actions to attain the goal of the protagonist. The *consequence (outcome)* includes the character's final actions and results which mark attainment or nonattainment of the goals of the protagonist. The *reaction (ending)* expresses the character's feelings and thoughts about the goal attainment effort and indicates the response of the character to the consequence.

On the other hand, Guthrie (1977:575) differentiates and summarizes a simple story grammar by Thorndyke this way:

> The first rule simply defines a story as consisting of a setting, theme, plot, and a resolution, which usually occur in that sequence. The second rule is that the setting consists of the characters and usually the location and time of a story. The third rule is that the theme of a story consists of the main goal of the main character . . . . The plot consists of a series of episodes, which are designed to help the main character reach the goal. Each episode consists of a subgoal, and a resolution of the attempt . . . . After several episodes, an outcome occurs which matches the goal of the main character, ushering in

a final resolution. These rules apply to many stories, folktales and dramas, and give us a common framework for understanding them.

Figure one illustrates this story structure.

Classroom Implications

The following are story grammar strategies that can be used to improve reading comprehension:

1. Use story grammar in the design of comprehension questions. Such questions enhance learning by directing the reader's attention to relevant and related information needed to answer them. Questions that are based on story grammar categories (setting, beginning, reaction, attempt, outcome, ending) elicit responses that require both literal and inferential levels of thinking. These questions allow students to understand the various types of information that make a story coherent and, therefore, may help them develop knowledge of story structure. The following are six generic questions derived from Mandler and Johnson's grammar:

1. Where and when did the story event/ events happen and who was/were involved in them? (Setting)
2. What action or event caused the character to demonstrate a certain response? (Beginning)
3. What was the emotional response and thought of the character to this action or event? (Reaction)
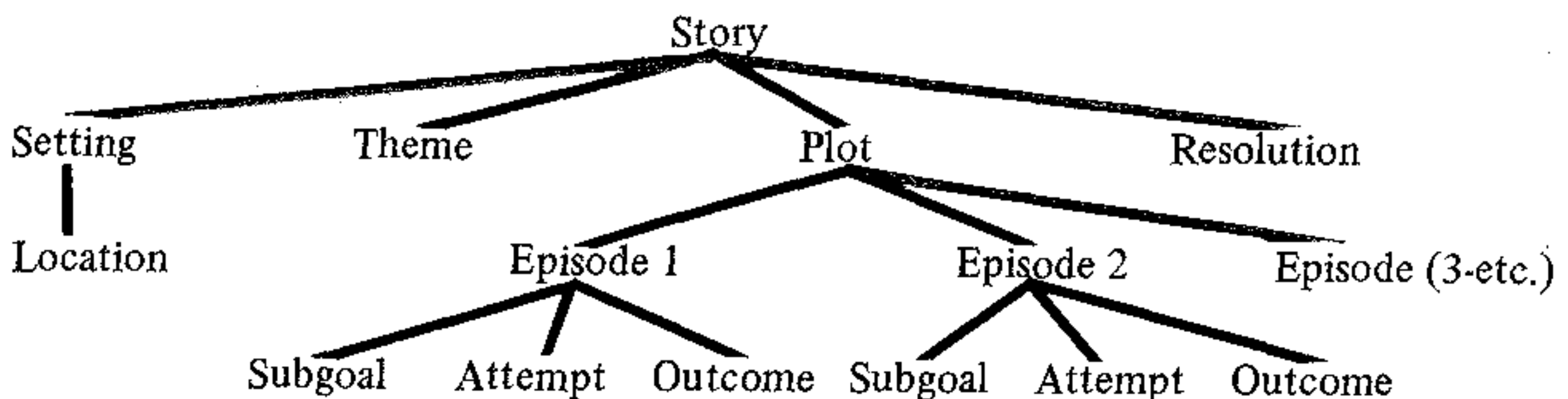

FIGURE 1

Thorndyke's Story Grammar

4. What overt actions did the character demonstrate? (Attempt)
5. What happened as a result of the overt actions demonstrated by the character? Was the goal attained? (Outcome)
6. What was the character's feelings and thoughts about the goal attainment effort? (Ending)

Using the story of "Albert" as an example, the teacher can ask students to answer the following questions: When and where did the story about Albert happen (setting)? What was Albert doing one day and what did he see (beginning)? What did Albert think of the worms and what did he want to do (reaction)? What did Albert do (attempt)? What happened to Albert (outcome)? How did Albert feel at the end (ending)? Answers to these specific questions identify the story propositions (statements) in each story category.

2. Use story grammar in reading comprehension instructions. Cunningham and Foster (1978) deduced some strategies for teaching story grammar and claimed to have been very successful in increasing students' comprehension. Using a simplified diagram of Thorndyke's story grammar, students were asked to complete it by writing the location, time, characters, goal, subgoal, attempt, and outcome and resolution.

3. Use story grammar in writing short stories. The story structure provides the framework for ESL students to create simple stories. For example, students can be asked to supply the ideas or propositions for each of the story grammar categories. This can lead the students to write their own simple stories. The following are examples of one-episode stories written using the Mandler and Johnson story grammar:
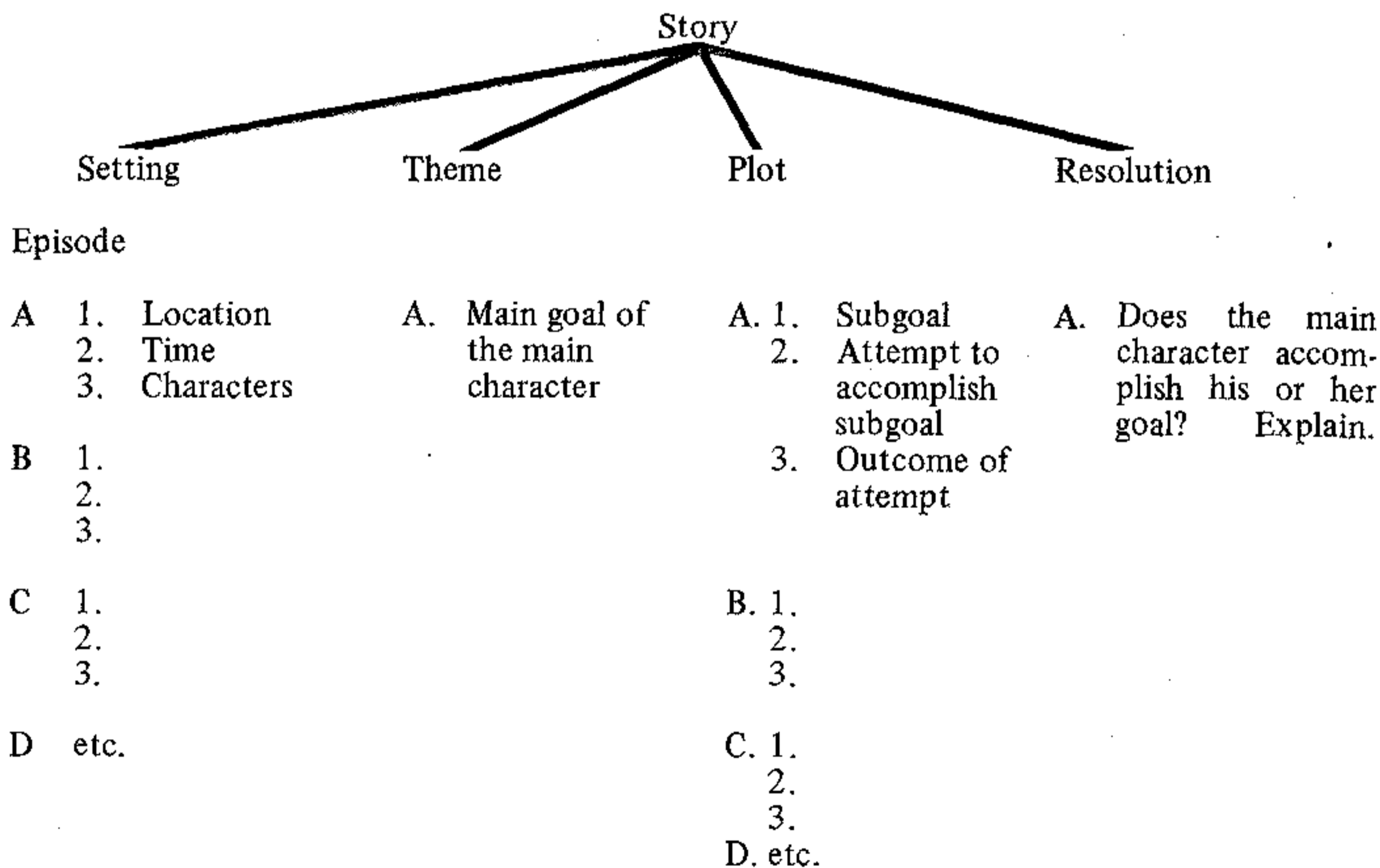

	Story		
Setting	Theme	Plot	Resolution

Episode

A	1. Location	A. Main goal of	A. 1. Subgoal	A. Does the main
	2. Time	the main	2. Attempt to	character accom-
	3. Characters	character	accomplish	plish his or her
			subgoal	goal? Explain.
B	1.		3. Outcome of	
	2.		attempt	
	3.			
C	1.		B. 1.	
	2.		2.	
	3.		3.	
D	etc.		C. 1.	
			2.	
			3.	
			D. etc.	

FIGURE 2

Simplified Diagram of Thorndyke's Story Grammar
(taken from Cunningham & Foster, 1978)

STORY I

Once upon a time, Chun and Chin and their mother Mei Lam, were standing by the river in a small mountain village in Southern China. It was the fall of the year and the mother and daughters were dressed in their rich clothes. They were walking when they saw a water buffalo. The two daughters laughed at the water buffalo and called it an ugly beast. "Look how beautiful we are in our noble clothes," they said. Suddenly, the mother climbed on the buffalo's back. The buffalo began to talk to the mother. "Thank you, for sitting on my back gracious lady." "Not at all. I remember our last encounter." Mei Lam told her surprised daughters that when she was a young girl she fell into the

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river. This water buffalo swam over and saved her. "So daughters, do not judge nobility by appearance." The daughters were ashamed and bowed their heads and cried.

STORY II

Billy had been out skateboarding. His mother warned him not to go down Beacon Street because it was too dangerous. Billy headed for Beacon Street anyway, remembering how great the wind felt blowing through his hair. He jumped on his skateboard and took off. Just as he turned the last corner, he discovered men working on the sidewalk. It was too late to stop and he crashed through the barricades. Later in the bathroom, Billy's sister Barbara helped mend

his knee. Barbara said, "You shouldn't have been on Beacon Street. Wait until Mom finds out."

STORY III

One day Tom and his friends were riding to school on the school bus. Tom had his horn with him for his music lesson. He started to play a song. Tom's friends didn't like the song. One girl tried to take his horn away from him. The horn hit the window next to Tom. It broke the window. That night the bus driver called Tom's mother. She was very upset. Tom was sorry. He promised not to play his horn on the bus again.

Conclusions

Through story grammar it is also possible to evaluate the ESL students' knowledge of story categories and their overall comprehension of a story. Story grammar studies imply that what is essential in story comprehension is the reader's experiences with story discourse and internalization of the story parts. The use of story grammar in designing comprehension questions, reading strategies, and creating short stories illustrates its potential as a means of developing ESL learners' reading comprehension.

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How Do You Get to Timbuktu? Improving ESL Listening/Speaking Skills Through Team Competition

by Ruth Todd-Chattin and Keith S. Folse

English as a second language teachers often encounter students in their classrooms who are capable of learning, but who have attitudinal problems which keep them from progressing in their acquisition of English. For example, there is Juan, who truly believes that he should have been admitted to a higher level English class in spite of his low placement scores. Each new lesson is boring for him. Then, there is Kyoko, who copies everything the teacher writes on the blackboard neatly into her notebook. Her test scores are almost perfect. Yet, if you ask her a question, she freezes. Finally, there is Ahmed, who did not want to enroll in English classes at all. Studying English was his father's idea. No matter what the lesson, his mind is always elsewhere. How can the ESL teacher challenge the bright student like Juan who believes he knows the material already, put at ease the inhibited student like Kyoko who has difficulty communicating orally, or involve the disinterested student like Ahmed who is not motivated to learn? One answer is games.

Certainly, games are not a miracle cure for all pedagogical problems and not the basis for a teaching method, but they can serve as a complement to an ESL curriculum which might otherwise become tedious. Games challenge students like Juan to use what they know. They provide students like Kyoko with an opportunity for real communication in an informal situation. They capture the attention of students like Ahmed who might otherwise remain mentally disengaged.

One particular game which has helped students like these to overcome attitudinal problems is "ESL College Bowl". "College Bowl" was originally a TV game show in which teams of university students from various universities across the United States tested their knowledge by answering questions such as "Who was the first man to set foot on the moon?", or "What is the square root of 625?", or "Where is Timbuktu?" (The answers are respectively Neil Armstrong, 25, and in Mali.) Not only did this game entertain the audience, but it also demonstrated which school had the brightest, most well-informed students. Though the game decreased in popularity as a TV show over the years and eventually was cancelled as a network program, many local TV stations across the U.S. still offer their own weekly version as a competition among local high schools. Moreover, university student associations often hold their own in-house trivia competitions based on the original TV show format. This game continues to be played in one form or another because it is so entertaining for both the audience and the participants.

Advantages of ESL College Bowl

"College Bowl" can also be fun for ESL students. But more importantly, it can provide them with an opportunity to improve their listening and speaking skills in English. At times the classroom situation, with the convenience of books and paper, makes it easy for students and teachers to focus attention on reading and writing rather than listening and speaking. Playing "College Bowl" forces students to pay attention to the oral skills. In this game, the students must listen intensively in order to understand and answer questions. They must also pronounce words correctly in order to be

understood. Thus, oral skills are tried, practiced, honed, and tested.

Game Procedure

The object of the game is for participants to try to answer as many questions correctly as possible and thus score as many points as possible for their team. The first team to reach 300 points wins the game.

The game requires two teams made up of an equal number of students. In the classroom, three students per team works best. Other students in the class may observe and listen or may function as score keepers, time keepers, judges, or emcees. The two teams should sit facing each other with the team captain sitting between his team members so that he can consult easily with everyone on his team. The emcee, who could be the teacher or a student, should stand so that all participants can see him clearly.

The emcee will give two kinds of questions—a toss-up, which either team may answer, and a bonus, which is answered by the team that gave the correct answer to the toss-up. The toss-up is a question which is to be answered by any individual on either team. However, the individual should signify that he knows the answer by raising his hand (ringing a bell, pressing a buzzer, etc.). The emcee then recognizes the first individual to raise his hand by saying the student's name. If the student answers the question correctly, he wins ten points for his team. If his answer is not correct, the opposing team gets an opportunity to answer the question. In this situation, the opposing team may consult and the team captain will give the answer. If the answer is correct, this team scores ten points. If neither team can give a correct answer, the question is eliminated and the emcee will ask another toss-up question to be answered by either team. Toss-up questions are usually about general knowledge. For example, "What is the largest landlocked country in the Western Hemisphere?" (Bolivia is the answer.) The team which answers the toss-up ques-

tion correctly has won not only ten points, but also the right to attempt the accompanying bonus question.

The bonus question is generally a listing or naming question within the same field of knowledge as the toss-up. The team will list four items for five points each. Therefore, a bonus question carries a maximum value of twenty points. Again, a bonus question may be attempted only by the same team which correctly answered the toss-up question. After the emcee has read the entire bonus question, the team members may consult for 30 seconds to come up with their four answers. At the end of the thirty seconds, the emcee will ask the captain for the team's answers. Once the captain has given all four answers, the emcee should reveal the correct answers and the points to be awarded. Because the bonus question has four answers which are worth

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five points each, the team might receive five, ten, fifteen, twenty, or no points. For example, a bonus question appropriate for the toss-up given in the example above would be: "For five points each, name four other South American countries."

Question Selection and Construction

The difficulty and content of the questions asked will depend on the background and proficiency in language skills of the students in the class. One game can in-

clude a variety of questions ranging from geography to mathematics. Students most often enjoy questions which ask them to recall English vocabulary and grammar which they have previously learned. The questions can be made up by the teacher or by groups of students. Whoever is responsible for inventing the questions needs to remember a few things in order to come up with effective questions. First, every question must have a specific answer. A question such as "How do you get to Timbuktu?" is unacceptable because a variety of answers could be given. A question such as "What do you think of nuclear disarmament?" is also unacceptable because the answer would involve personal opinion rather than a specific fact. Secondly, true/false and yes/no questions should be avoided. A question such as "Is the earth round?" is unacceptable because if Team A answers incorrectly, then Team B already knows the correct answer by elimination. Finally, the bonus question should be kept simple. The best bonus questions require students to name four items in a category related to the toss-up question. Asking four separate questions requires students to retain too much information before answering. For example, "Name four planets" is a better bonus question than "1. Name the largest planet. 2. Name the smallest planet. 3. Name the hottest planet. 4. Name the coldest planet."

Guidelines

For the teacher as manager of the ESL classroom it is also necessary to remember that a few basic guidelines need to be followed in order for the game to be successful. First, the teacher should be sure that the questions are not beyond the student's language level. Secondly, the students must understand the rules of the game completely before they play. Thirdly, the students should be permitted to use only English while playing the game. The emcee should penalize students for using their native language by disallowing the question. Fourthly, the emcee must control answering out of turn by recognizing only the team captains' answers to the bonus questions. Finally, in every situation the rules must be applied fairly but inflexibly.

Conclusion

"ESL College Bowl" generates a great deal of enthusiasm in students. It motivates students to learn English, gives students a chance to practice their listening and speaking skills, and provides them with a break from the tedium of the textbook. ESL teachers at the University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa, Alabama and at Spring Hill College in Mobile, Alabama found that their students enjoyed the game so much that they took this classroom activity a step further. In July of 1982, students met for an "ESL College Bowl" competition between the two schools. The activity was so successful that it is now an annual event to which teachers and students alike look forward.

Appendix: Sample Questions

25 toss-up/bonus questions for ESL students (various levels)

1. Toss-up: What language is spoken in Argentina? (Spanish) Bonus: Name four other countries in which Spanish is the official language? (Spain, Mexico, Venezuela, Colombia, Cuba, etc.)

2. Toss-up: In what sport would you hear phrases such as "the 25 yard line, safety, touchdown"? (American football) Bonus: Tell the number of players on these teams: 1. soccer (11) 2. baseball (9) 3. basketball (5) 4. American football (11)

3. Toss-up: inch, gallon, century--Which is a measure of time? (century) Bonus: What do these terms measure? 1. mile (distance) 2. pint (liquid) 3. ounce (weight) 4. week (time)

4. Toss-up: What is the shortest month? (February) Bonus: Each of the four seasons generally lasts for three months. Tell in which months these seasons occur. 1. spring (March, April, May) 2. winter (December, January, February) 3. summer (May, June, July) 4. fall (September, October, November)

5. Toss-up: In order to see better, people often wear a pair of __?__ . (glasses) Bonus:

Name four other pairs of things people wear. (earrings, pants, shoes, socks, cufflinks, contacts, underwear)

6. Toss-up: What is the longest river in the U.S.? (Mississippi) Bonus: In what country is each of these rivers located? 1. Volga (USSR) 2. Ganges (India) 3. Loire (France) 4. Yangtze (China)

7. Toss-up: Say and spell the past participle of the verb 'spend'. (spent) Bonus: Say and spell the past participles of these verbs: 1. write (written) 2. read (read) 3. drive (driven) 4. swim (swum)

8. Toss-up: am not, are not, is not--Which one does not have a contraction? (am not) Bonus: Give the contractions for these words: 1. we are (we're) 2. did not (didn't) 3. will not (won't) 4. have not (haven't)

9. Toss-up: What is the chemical symbol for iron; (Fe) Bonus: Give the chemical symbol for these minerals: 1. salt (Na) 2. sulfur (S) 3. uranium (U) 4. copper (Cu)

10. Toss-up: What is 144 divided by 12? (12) Bonus: Solve these division problems: 1. 295 divided by 5 (59) 2. 21 divided by 7 (3) 3. 49 divided by 7 (7) 4. 100 divided by 10 (10)

11. Toss-up: What relation is your father's father to you? (grandfather) Bonus: What relation are these people to you? 1. your mother's brother (uncle) 2. your brother's daughter (niece) 3. your father's mother (grandmother) 4. your daughter's son (grandson)

12. Toss-up: Panama, Nicaragua, Argentina-- Which is not considered part of Central America? (Argentina) Bonus: Give the capitals of these Central American countries: 1. Honduras (Tegucigalpa) 2. Nicaragua (Managua) 3. El Salvador (San Salvador) 4. Panama (Panama [City])

13. Toss-up: What is the past tense of the verb freeze? (froze) Bonus: What is the past of these verbs: 1. steal (stole) 2. ring (rang) 3. grow (grew) 4. fly (flew)

14. Toss-up: Say and spell the past tense of the verb wear (wore) Bonus: Say and spell the past tense forms of these verbs: 1. wake (woke) 2. break (broke) 3. write (wrote) 4. choose (chose)

15. Toss-up: yard, quart, hour, ton--Which one measures weight? (ton) Bonus: What do each of these measure? 1. foot (distance/length) 2. decade (time) 3. acre (area) 4. gram (weight)

16. Toss-up: Say and spell the plural of 'tooth' (teeth) Bonus: Say and spell the plural of these words: 1. woman (women) 2. loaf (loaves) 3. mouse (mice) 4. child (children)

17. Toss-up: What is the longest river in the world? (Nile) Bonus: On what continent is each of these rivers located? 1. Seine (Europe) 2. Congo (Africa) 3. Nile (Africa) 4. Amazon (South America)

18. Toss-up: Say and spell the past form of the verb 'begin' (began) Bonus: Say and spell the past form of these verbs: 1. drink (drank) 2. take (took) 3. know (knew) 4. sit (sat)

19. Toss-up: Who was the U.S. president immediately before Reagan? (Carter) Bonus: Name any other 4 U.S. presidents before Reagan. (Etc.)

20. Toss-up: What is the capital of Austria? (Vienna) Bonus: Name the capital of these European countries: 1. Poland (Warsaw) 2. Italy (Rome) 3. Hungary (Budapest) 4. Switzerland (Bern)

21. Toss-up: 3 times 3 = 9. In other words 3 squared equals 9. What is 4 squared? (16) Bonus: Give the result when these numbers are squared. 1. 2 (4) 2. 5 (25) 3. 10 (100) 4. 12 (144)

22. Toss-up: Which large South American country has no coastline? (Bolivia) Bonus: Name 4 of the 5 countries that surround Bolivia. (Brazil, Peru, Paraguay, Argentina, Chile)

23. Toss-up: Albania, Argentina, Australia-- Which one is completely surrounded by

water? (Australia) Bonus: Name 4 countries which begin with the letter 'B'. (Belgium, Bolivia, Bhutan, Brazil, Bulgaria, Burma, Burundi)

24. Toss-up: What is the capital of the U.S.? (Washington, D.C.) Bonus: Give the capital cities of these U.S. states: 1. New York (Albany) 2. Georgia (Atlanta) 3. Colorado (Denver) 4. Texas (Austin)

25. Toss-up: What language is spoken in Syria? (Arabic) Bonus: What language is spoken in these countries? 1. Brazil (Portuguese) 2. Japan (Japanese) 3. the Netherlands (Dutch) 4. Norway (Norwegian)

Announcements

"Technological Applications and Language Knowledge (TALK)" is the theme of the annual Advances in Computerized Education symposium presented by CALICO (Computer Assisted Language Learning and Instruction Consortium). The symposium will be held January 22-27, 1984 at the Baltimore Convention Center. Contact: Frank Otto, 229 KMB, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah 84602.

The 1984 ABC Summer Workshops organized by the TESOL program at Teachers College, Columbia University will explore models, practices, and issues in language teacher preparation between June 25 and July 14. Contact: John F. Fanselow, ABC Workshops Director, Box 63TR, Teachers College, Columbia University, New York, New York 10027.

Looking at English
Book Review by Nobuo Tsuda

LOOKING AT ENGLISH. Fred Malkenes and Deborah Singer Pires. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1981. $8.95.

Looking at English is a three book series designed especially for beginning through intermediate adult ESL students. The textbooks are based on sector analysis, the position-oriented "x-word" grammar devised by Dr. Robert L. Allen of Columbia University. The authors claim that the most important point of x-word grammar is the changing positions of words in different types of sentences, such as statements, questions, and answers. As the students practice x-word movement, they learn to recognize positions in English sentences.

The textbooks are designed for an intensive course and approximately 60 to 80 hours may be spent in each book.

The series also includes a teacher's handbook which gives the instructor some good ideas to use in class. The instructions in each lesson seem to be very easy to follow. The authors suggest that the teacher begin by giving a spoken model. Secondly, with pictures as aids, the students produce the new structure orally, and finally, read and write it. In this way, the students don't have to read lengthy explanations about the grammar, but learn the rules inductively.

The text emphasizes written English, with exercises on grammar, spelling, capitalization, organization, punctuation, etc. There are also a number of other exercises geared towards the skills of reading, listening and speaking. Overall the texts are varied and interesting. However, with the emphasis on writing being diluted by these other exercises, one is inclined to ask if the material presented will be adequate for the needs of the students.

In the area of speaking, the students need to understand how to pronounce different consonants and vowels. However, because the lessons are so simplified, each lesson doesn't provide a sufficient number of models or exercises. More exercises for minimal pair practice, intonation, reduction, assimilation, etc. are required.

In the area of writing, I feel that the textbook takes too much for granted. The authors say, "Native speakers automatically manipulate x-words for questions and answers. Non-native speakers must be taught this simple but essential movement." It sounds like the second language learners should learn grammar in a very natural way without being taught specific rules. The debate on the similarities and differences between first and second language learning, however, is far from being settled. Many adult learners have a tendency to be very conscious about rules and feel a need to reason out why a sentence works in such a way. They often require a more precise explanation of grammar than children do to function well in a second language classroom setting.

Because the texts provide exercises in all the language skills, they are suitable mainly for ESL programs where the skills are taught together in one class. This series could work in a mixed-skills program, but it would require some effort on the teacher's part to provide the necessary supplemental exercises and activities to insure adequate opportunities to practice and master what is introduced in the text. An interesting sidenote: to the reviewer's knowledge, this is the first series that employs x-word grammar or sector analysis to teach spoken as well as written English. It will be interesting to see how well it works in this new application.

Nobuo Tsuda is a recent graduate of BYU—HC's TESL program.

Announcements

The Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO) Regional Language Centre (RELC) will hold its nineteenth regional seminar April 23-27, 1984 in Singapore. The theme is "Communicative Language Teaching." Contact: Director, (Attention: Chairman Seminar Planning Committee), SEAMEO Regional Language Centre, RELC Building, 30 Orange Grove Road, Singapore 1025, Republic of Singapore.

The Writing Lab Newsletter is intended as an informal means of exchanging information among those who work in writing labs and language skills centers. Brief articles describing labs, their instructional methods and materials, goals, programs, budgets, staffing, services, etc. are invited. Contact: Professor Muriel Harris, Editor, *Writing Lab Newsletter,* Department of English, Purdue University, West Lafayette, Indiana 47907.

The Association of B. C. TEAL (Teachers of English as an Additional Lanugage) announces its seventeenth convention. TEAL '84 will be held March 15-17, 1984 in Richmond, British Columbia. The theme is "Culture, Contact and Communication." Contact: June Dragman, c/o V.C.C., King Edward Campus, 1155 East Broadway, Vancouver, B.C. V5T 4N3, Canada.

The Culture Learning Institute of the East-West Center announces a seminar for educators on the topic "English as an International Language (EIL): Issues and Implications" to be held in Honolulu July 3–August 10, 1984. The application deadline is February 15, 1984. Contact: Larry E. Smith, EIL Coordinator, Culture Learning Institute, East-West Center, 1777 East-West Road, Honolulu, Hawaii 96848.

The 1984 meeting of the Popular Culture Association will be held March 10–April 1, 1984 in Toronto, Canada. Panels on "ESL and Popular Culture" will be featured. Contact: Ravi Sheorey, TESL Coordinator, Department of English, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma 74078.

Reading in a Foreign Language is the title of a new journal published twice a year by the Language Studies Unit (Modern Languages Department) of the University of Aston in Birmingham, England. The journal publishes articles concerning both the practice and theory of learning to read and teaching reading in any foreign or second language. Subscriptions, manuscripts, and advertising enquiries are welcomed. Contact: Ray Williams and Alexander Urquhart, Co-editors, *Reading in a Foreign Language,* Language Studies Unit (Modern Languages Department), University of Aston in Birmingham, Birmingham B4 7ET, England.