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Class Writing Projects with Computers: Student Collaboration and Autonomy

Nancy Erber Cadet, LaGuardia Community College

Teaching Students to Revise: Problems and Proposed Solutions

To many ESL writing students, the route from first draft to final copy is short and direct. There are simply two steps: ideas are put down on paper and the paper is turned in to the instructor. While reading it over, the instructor may "catch" a few surface errors of spelling, word choice, punctuation or syntax. These are brought to the student writer's attention, and the student "fixes" them. The paper is finished. Next!

Despite students' expectations, proofreading is not the writing instructor's principal function. Nevertheless, when we as writing instructors focus on content, style or organization in student writing, and ask for revisions that go beyond surface errors, our suggestions are often ignored. Students may resent what they consider overly harsh criticism of their efforts and the extra work such global revisions entail. They may actively resist the demand for revision by turning in second drafts that are virtually copies of their first ones.

Consequently, the questions arise: How can we make style and organization as important to student writers as it is to us, their readers? How can we open up the closed circuit of student-teacher communication in ESL composition classes?

Many solutions have been proposed, among them enlarging the potential audience

for student writing through small group and whole class readings of student writing. This "writing workshop" technique has the additional advantage of involving the students themselves in the editing of each other's work. Class activities like pair work and small group sessions of peer criticism serve both these purposes. But over the course of a fifteen-week semester, these too can become mechanical activities since there's no real reason for students to want to incorporate their peers' suggestions in their writing. Revision means rewriting, and rewriting is tedious.

A Solution Using Micro-Computers for a Group Writing Project

Having access to micro-computers has opened up a lot of possibilities for ESL writing classes. Storage on disk and reading text on the computer display screen helps to make rewriting physically easier and quicker. Using micro-computers too can allow ESL classes to work on class writing projects like anthologies, magazines and newspapers.

More than any other classroom activity, a group writing project makes peer criticism appropriate and provides students with a reason for multiple revisions. When seventy-five or one hundred copies of a class anthology are going to be printed and distributed, students become very concerned with what they have written, how it looks and how it will be received. Since students know that their class anthology will be judged as a whole, they become more

interested in each part of it and will more openly express criticism and praise of content (i.e. "This is boring," "This is funny," "This is too long") as well as offer suggestions and help to their classmates. Until my class started working on their anthology, I never saw students (unless they were already "best friends") take turns word processing each other's work.

Introducing a long-term goal in an ESL writing class radically changes classroom dynamics since students take on new roles as editors or illustrators and previously hidden talents and strengths are uncovered in the group. A group writing project using computers as word processors also challenges students' speaking, listening and reading skills since they must ask questions, read instruction sheets or manuals, and describe processes to their peers. In addition, a group writing project fosters both independence and collaboration among students. First of all, each student has a role as a writer or contributor. Secondly, each student has a responsibility to the group: to get his or her work done on time, to submit something that the writer's classmates think is interesting and worthwhile, to provide a finished product that meets the standards the project's "editorial staff" has proposed, and finally, to keep at it until the submission wins general approval and is printed out in final form. This is a far cry from the usual two-step "get it down on paper and turn it in" procedure.

Procedural Guidelines

To start on a project, use a magazine, book or newspaper as a model. Examine the contents and format of the publication with your class. Read the masthead or title page and determine what production jobs need to be done (cover art, illustrations, layout,

editorial work). Choose functions appropriate to your class project and give each job a specific title.

In general, a class project should have an editor-in-chief and two associate editors. All three make up the editorial board and are responsible for collecting and proofreading all written work. A layout person is needed to determine the page order of the finished product and to make a table of contents. Two illustrators should also be chosen and put in charge of generating computer graphics (if the software is available) or producing artwork to complement the written work. Ending a class anthology with an index of contributors (paragraph-length biographies) is a nice touch and an editor is needed for this too. List the jobs and titles and hold class elections.

Since the editorial staff is responsible for coordinating the work of other class members and keeping everyone to a deadline, they take over, in part, the instructor's usual "monitoring" function. Student illustrators must negotiate with other writers about the type of pictures they want, describe what is available, and learn how to use computer graphics programs. All students, whether they have just one role as a contributor or multiple roles on the production staff, participate in decision-making processes and have to accept the consequences of their actions or inaction (delayed publication, missing items, etc.). Peer pressure and each individual's desire for excellence become the motivators of good writing.

Even a simple group project takes many hours in the computer lab or classroom, so instructors should plan on spending a minimum of twelve hours on the actual word processing and layout of the work.

Begin with a session on computer use. Most word processing software in college computer labs has a self-teaching program or an introductory user's manual. After the students have gone through the introductory program, have them word process and print out something they've already written by hand. Seeing their own work printed out is usually a new and very gratifying experience.

Check with your institution's duplicating service before you begin your class project to find out their specifications for written material. Many copy services will not accept hand-written or hand-drawn work, and almost all require black and white originals. Be sure to inform your illustrators and layout person of these specifications. When you're preparing the final copy of your project in the computer lab, set all printers in letter or near-letter quality mode and install new ribbons if possible. I also ask students to highlight all computer graphics with black ink since most computer printers produce graphics in draft mode only, and the product doesn't always copy well.

To guard against accidental loss of students' work, have each student buy his or her own data disk and use it consistently. Store all disks in the computer lab in a

clearly marked storage box, so that the texts are accessible even if individual writers are absent. Keeping all the disks in one place also allows students ready access to their work if they decide (and many do) to put in extra time on the project outside of class.

Working on a class project, whether it's a brief collection of autobiographies or a weighty anthology of poetry and prose, is one of the most rewarding activities a writing class can undertake. For me, one of the best moments occurs when students, one after the other, approach me and say, "You know, I read this over last night and..." That's when I know that they have begun to care as much as I do about their writing.

About the Author

Nancy Erber Cadet received an M.A. in TESL in 1981 and is currently completing her doctoral dissertation, entitled Colette: the Making of a Writer, for the Department of Romance Studies at Cornell University, Ithaca, New York. She teaches ESL at LaGuardia Community College in New York City.

Building Community Through Structured Interviews

Randall Wulff, Clark College

Language Learners' Need to Share and Communicate

The English as a second language instructor can easily be overwhelmed at times when he is confronted with the dual responsibilities of teaching language acquisition and acculturation, all of which are operating on a multitude of levels and individual needs. There are valid pedagogical and psychological reasons to disengage from these responsibilities at certain times and return them to the community of students, where they may be shared.

Research in intercultural communications and the experience of sojourners have supported an issue that should be of significant interest to the ESL profession. People who have chosen to come to a new country and struggle to acquire a new language and culture are much more likely to be successful if there is a strong support group waiting there to offer understanding and encouragement throughout most of their acculturation process (Brislin 1981). It is meaningful for students to see that others, who have gone through the process they are just beginning, have not only survived but have to varying degrees prospered. As teachers, it is important to remember that this process of community building needs facilitation and a modest amount of structure to succeed.

Instructors of adult students know that they bring a rich potpourri of experience and insights to any learning situation. What

they also bring is the need for relevant content (Selman 1979). Learning for adults must be based on adult situations which require them to draw on their experience and knowledge as they reach to become linguistically and culturally independent from the teacher. Adult learners often attend ESL classes to satisfy certain social needs also. It is an opportunity to share of themselves and to compare experiences and concerns with other non-native speakers who are struggling to learn the English language.

This need to share and communicate experiences, both the successes and frustrations, can reinforce students' perceived need to use the language in a meaningful context. It is one thing to practice contrived language and situations with the instructor; it is quite another for a student to realize that certain structures are needed to communicate personal shared experiences with other students.

Structured Interview: Procedure

A language acquisition process which I have found to enhance both the building of community and, concomitantly, the need to communicate has been the structured interview. Students work in pairs in the classroom and follow guidelines provided by the teacher as they interview each other. This format and technique is flexible enough that it can be used with learners at all levels—even low beginners—provided that provision is made for adequate oral and aural practice before the exercise.

Pairs are assigned by the teacher, and it is important to keep them as heterogenous as possible (i.e. different sex, different native-language background, etc.). This encourages communication in English.

Once the teacher decides on a topic for the interview, eight to twelve questions focusing on likely areas of interest are composed as a handout and distributed to pairs of students. During the first week of my intermediate class I use the following handout, with plenty of space left between questions. It usually takes two class sessions for students to work through it.

(Session one)

1. What is your name?
2. Where are you from?
3. Are you married? Do you have children?
4. When did you come to America?
5. What did you do in your country?

(Session two)

6. Do you have a job now? What do you do?
7. What is the biggest problem for you in America?
8. What do you like least about America?
9. Why do you study English at Clark College?
10. What do you like best about America?
11. What kind of work would you like to do in the future?

Students take turns interviewing each other, and the interviewee's response is recorded on the interviewer's paper. The recorded answers need not be lengthy or grammatically correct. The focus is on community conversation.

Once both partners have asked and recorded responses to all the questions, it is time for the students to share with the group what

they have discovered about their partner. As they do so, they are free (and are encouraged) to contribute additional information not requested on the handout. Listening classmates are also encouraged to ask follow-up questions about what they are learning about other pairs of students. After this has been done several times, there tend to be comments and asides, which are also an important part of the community building process.

Structured Interview: Benefits

It has been my experience that students respond positively to sharing of themselves and to learning about their classmates. Several of the most obvious effects of this learning procedure are...

1. At any given time, English is being generated by half the class and being used meaningfully and communicatively.
2. There is a perceived need for communication because people are talking about themselves and their concerns.
3. Perhaps most important, the teacher is not talking. This encourages linguistic independence on the part of students, and allows the instructor the opportunity to monitor areas where language or culture may need further attention or where new topics of structures interviews may be developed at a later date.

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Randall Wulff received his M.A. in English and his TESOL Certificate from Portland State University. He teaches ESL at Clark College in Vancouver, Washington and is co-founder of "East by Northwest," Intercultural Consultants.

Self-Introductions

(continued from page 20)

When everybody is present, introduce yourself, casually, while facing the class. Speak as you would normally to a group of native-speaking strangers, in a friendly tone of voice. Then go to the board and introduce yourself again, drawing attention to each of the sentences as you say them. Do this a third time, pausing after each sentence to give the students time to focus on the different utterances.

The Next Steps

Next you should teach the correct pronunciation and intonation of the various sentences, perhaps having the students repeat them chorally after you. At first you can have them repeat your own self-introduction, and later have them substitute their own names, hometowns, jobs, etc. (after all, not everybody is named Rube).

When you feel that the class has learned these sentences fairly well, go back to the board and try to solicit appropriate questions for each of the sentences you have written. Even in beginning classes there will usually

be at least one student able to come up with the right question, i.e., "What is your name?" Write these student-generated questions on the board, suggesting changes when absolutely necessary. Then, if desired, go over the material showing some of the important differences between written and spoken language. Pedagogically this can be very important, as it points out from the very first day of class one of the major difficulties of learning English as a foreign/second language. You can then go on to have students practice the questions.

The next step is to have volunteers take turns asking you the questions, in any order. You will, of course, answer them truthfully, in a communicative manner.

Pair or Group Work

The next step is very important. You have finished presenting the material, using a whole-class technique. Now you want the class to practice, using a small-group or paired technique, moving from rote work to a more communicative activity.

Divide the class into pairs or small groups and have them practice their own self-introductions. This not only introduces the students to each other, which is extremely important in a humanistic classroom (you have to know something about someone else in order to begin to feel at ease with him and to begin to form some kind of a relationship), but also initiates them to pair practice (or small group work). The students will begin to rely on themselves and each other from the very first day of class. While the students are practicing, you, the teacher, go around the class, working with each group or pair, correcting when asked to, and supplying the necessary vocabulary for each individual self-introduction.

You can end up the period (or activity) with a "mixer," where the students go around the room introducing themselves to the other members of the class. Or, if you want, you can call on volunteers to introduce themselves in front of the class, or have the class ask selected volunteers some of the questions they have been practicing.

It is important to use only volunteers in these activities, as many people are naturally shy about speaking (even in their own language) in front of strangers. Others may not want to show what they know until they feel that they have mastered it. Still others just might not want everybody to know who they are or where they come from. (To get around this I let the students know that they always have the right to "pass" or, better yet, to make something up rather than sticking strictly to the "truth.")

Advantages to Teacher & Students

The self-introductory activities described above can help you on that all-important first day in class in several important ways.

Perhaps most importantly, they can help you create an atmosphere where real language learning can take place. People get to know each other in a friendly, supportive atmosphere, using real language to talk about real and important things—themselves.

Students also begin to learn to count on themselves and to take responsibility for their own learning.

Pedagogically, the students are learning some of the differences between spoken and written language which are so important in English, and to work in pairs and small groups—techniques that they and you will find useful throughout the course.

You, the teacher, will also be learning a lot about the individuals who make up your class right from the beginning, and this is a must if you are going to have an open, humanistic class, where people know, and are interested in, each other.

And finally, it is a "fun" activity, and for better learning to take place, the foreign language class should be fun.

About the Author

Michael "Rube" Redfield (M.A. Stanford) is currently teaching Spanish and English in Nagoya and Osaka, Japan. He has published in the TESL Reporter, English Teaching Forum, Cross Currents, Guidelines, and Hispania, and has given presentations at various conventions: TESOL, RELC, JALT, LAA, and USIS. He is the International Representative-Japan for the TESOL Teaching English Internationally Interest Section.

English for Educational Purposes: A Place for the Instrumental Function of Language in the Classroom

Stephen Dunbar, University of Malawi

To state that it is important in any language teaching situation to determine the purposes for which a second language is being learned is not new. However, as trite as the phrase may be, it has still failed to make much of an impact on the teaching of English in many situations where English is used by students to learn in other subject areas.

Functions of English and Language Tasks

English serves four general functions at an international level: instrumental, regulative, interpersonal and imaginative (Smith and Kachru 1985). It is the instrumental functions that are frequently ignored and which are essential to learners who need competence in the language to deal with English for academic purposes.

As teachers of English we must realize that it is essential that we teach to the needs of our students. On an interpersonal function level we would not teach students to barter at the local market in English. It would be a false situation, one that the pupils would not encounter. Yet it would be considered inappropriate not to teach students how to make introductions. However, at an academic level, with English viewed as serving educational purposes, we too frequently fail to teach to the specific types of reading, writing, listening and speaking situations the students encounter. It is like

teaching someone to barter and then expecting that ability to automatically transfer to making appropriate introductions. Learning to read a 'tale' or 'fable' does not equip students to deal with subject texts. Learning to write a letter or narrative does not equip students to write history essays and science reports.

Being aware, therefore, of the language tasks the students actually encounter should enable us to select more appropriate material to teach the types of reading, writing, listening and speaking tasks that students need.

The Problem

The problem is particularly serious with regard to reading comprehension. English teaching in Malawi, which is likely to be similar to that found in many other countries, generally fails to teach students to read a variety of types of materials. The English texts that are in use in the secondary schools deal almost exclusively with tales, myths and legends. Not until late in the third year of secondary school do passages dealing with some aspect of science, history and technology appear.

These passages not only appear too late in students' academic careers to be useful to them but are also written in narrative style, which does not represent the type of writing found in their subject texts.

A Solution

The solution to this problem is not simple. In fact, it can take a number of forms and will probably vary from one situation to another. The suggestions that follow have proven effective in my experience.

One aspect of reading that can enhance comprehension is learning to interpret graphs, charts, tables, diagrams and other forms of illustration that exist in texts. These illustrations present information visually to reinforce the content of the written material and can be used to teach students how to 'read' and interpret them as well as for work on general language development.

Take for example an illustration from *Physical Science: An Introductory Course* (see figure one), a first year science text.

The illustration contains a number of vocabulary items that the students need to know to cope with the science text, such as: *radiation*, *evaporate*, *vapour*, *work* (in a scientific sense), and *mechanical energy*. It also lends itself as a basis for paragraph writing, restating the information in note form, sequencing sentences, relating sentences to various parts of the illustrations, and models to pupils the use of illustrations to enhance reading comprehension.

On a grammatical level the illustration lends itself to practicing a number of important features of English:

- conditional sentences: *If water is not heated..., ...unless it is heated.*
- tenses: specifically the use of present tense to describe a 'general truth'.
- conjunctions: *Because of the force of gravity..., ...because of the loss of heat.*
- time clauses: *The sun must heat the water*

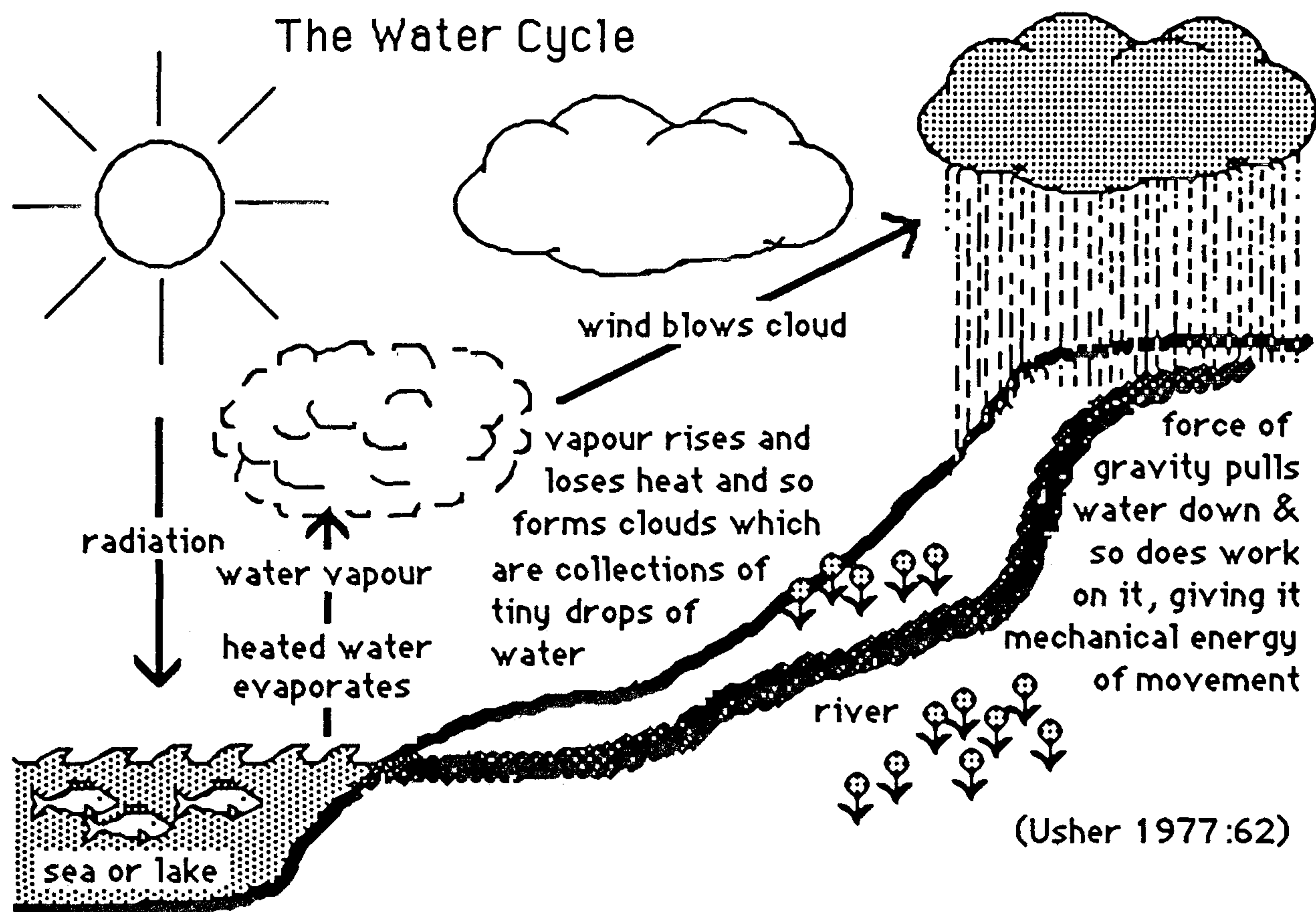


Figure 1.

_____ *it becomes water vapor.*
 _____ *the cloud has cooled, gravity plays
 a part.*

By using this illustration in the language class whatever work is done in terms of reading, writing, discussion or grammar falls within a context that is both relevant and appropriate to the needs of the students. Compare how much thought the students will have to give in choosing an appropriate 'time clause' expression from the example given using the illustration with what appears in their English text:

Following a grammatical explanation, the teacher is advised to do the following substitution table:

- T: He has told me to work until everyone has gone.
 S: He has told me to work until everyone has gone.
 T: I expected her to stay with me . . .
 S: I expected her to stay with me until everyone had gone.
 T: I want to keep the money . . . etc.
 (Ogundipe 1980: 196).

The whole focus in their English text is on verb agreement rather than the relationship of the two events in the sentence. Whether *before*, *after*, *until*, etc. would be more appropriate is not a decision the student has to make. There is little input and decision making on the part of the students and no context to give meaning. Consequently, very little learning takes place.

A Trial Experience

In order to test this, I had one of my student teachers try the exercise from the English text with a group of students and then had him give the exercise from the illustration where the students had to select

the appropriate 'time clause' expression. Though they performed at nearly 100% level with the English textbook exercise they had extreme difficulty selecting the appropriate 'time clause' item for the sentences about the illustration as well as considerable difficulty reordering a set of sentences to match the illustration.

In addition, the students felt quite uncomfortable with the use of the illustration from their science text. They seemed unable to comprehend that they were studying about 'time clauses' within the frame work of information on the 'water cycle'. When asked at the next lesson what they had done in the previous lesson they explained that they had studied about evaporation. This illustrates, I believe, how unrelated their English classes have become to their actual use of and need for English outside the English class. Also, it reveals how much the language class has become a 'subject' in and of itself rather than a place to develop language skills within a suitable context. The students have become much more comfortable studying the language at a linguistic level, learning about the language rather than learning how to use the language for their personal and educational benefit.

A Sample Unit

In order to further assist teachers in the secondary schools here in Malawi I was asked by the local English teaching association to put together materials that could be used for the teaching of note-taking. Because of the lack of content material being used to integrate the English lessons with the students' need to comprehend these materials, I chose selections from the students' subject texts. The following passage from *A Geography of Malawi* and the accompanying page from the pupils

workbook will illustrate how these subject texts can be used to expand the types of materials used in the classroom, improve reading comprehension, improve study skills in general, and build general competence in the language.

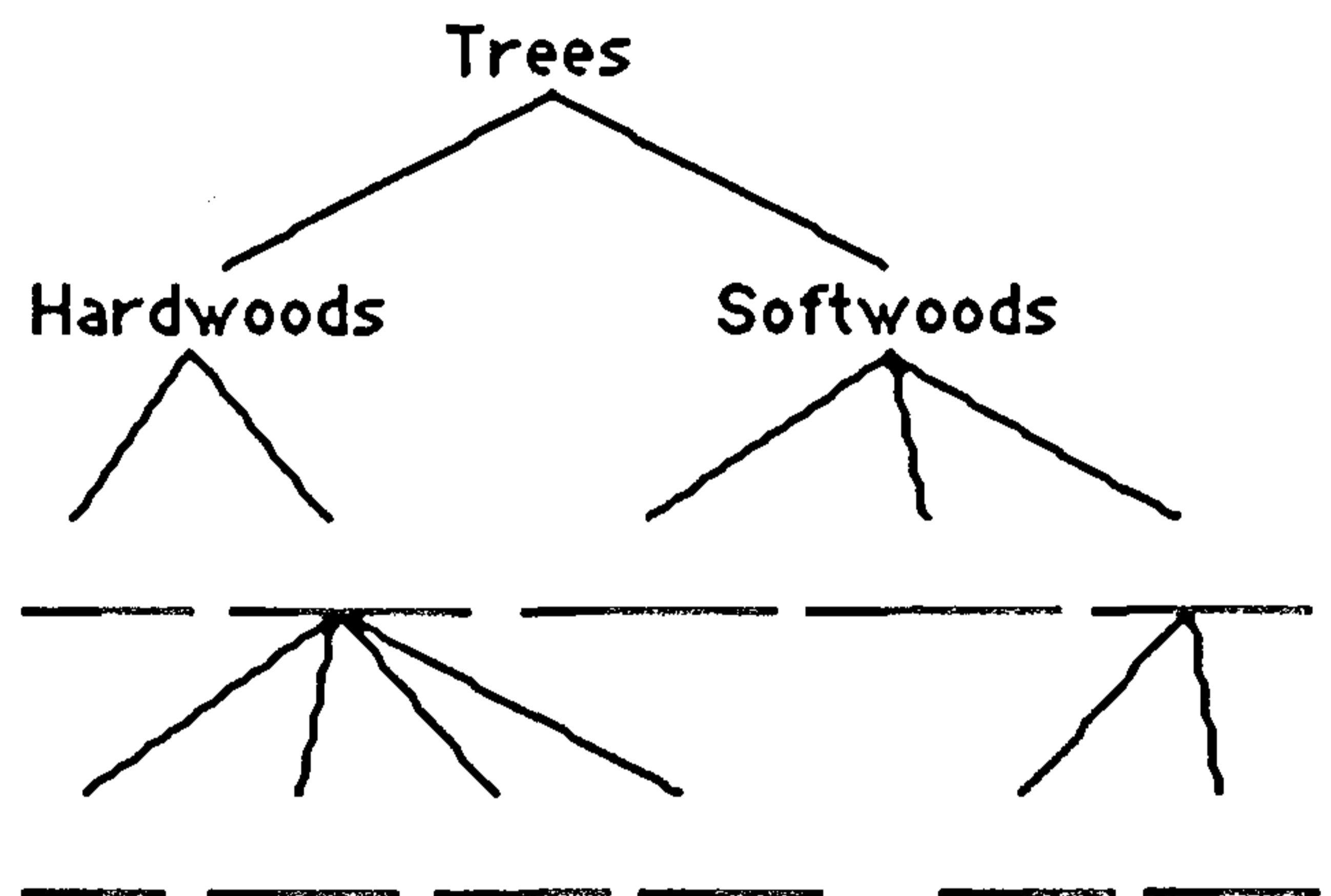
Trees are divided into hardwoods and softwoods. Nearly all the trees that grow in the woodland and savanna of Malawi are hardwoods. Mlombwa and Mbawa are two hardwoods that produce good timber. Hardwoods are the best kind of timber for making furniture. They are also made into mortars, used for pounding maize into flour. People depend on hardwoods to provide firewood as fuel for cooking.

Softwoods grow more quickly than hardwoods. A softwood that grows wild on Mulanje Mountain is Mulanje cedar. Softwoods from other countries have been introduced and are now grown in Malawi. Pine trees grow best in cool climates, and are therefore planted on plateaus (Young 1978: 40).

II (category 2)

- A
- B
- C

4. List four uses made of hardwoods. List two places softwoods grow.
5. How can this information be shown in your notes?
6. Present this same information by completing the following 'tree diagram':



1. This passage divides into two categories. These are _____ and _____.

2. Indicate which of the categories each of the following points gives more details about:

- _____ grow quickly
- _____ grow in woodland
- _____ both imported and local
- _____ have many uses
- _____ grow in cool climates

3. Complete the following notes by filling in the information you have so far:

Trees

I (category 1)

- A
- B

7. Can you think of another way to show this information?

8. a) Can you think of any other ways trees could be classified? Discuss these alternate classifications with a friend.

b) Write down any facts you know, or can find out, about your way of classifying trees.

c) Choose a way to illustrate your classification (Dunbar 1986:1).

Summary

As the examples that have been given show, students frequently fail to see the

relationship of their English lessons to their need for English in comprehending reading material in subject courses, that they frequently do have severe problems with comprehension of that reading material and that adaptation of that material for use in their English classes is possible.

The instrumental functions of the language need to be given more emphasis, especially in areas where students need English for educational purposes. The other functions should not be relegated to positions of less importance but rather a more equitable form of teaching that provides a more complete look at the various functions for which English is used needs to be developed.

The end result of implementing a more concentrated instrumental function approach to teaching English will be a more useful program for the students, one that should reduce the mechanical nature of so much of the material in English texts, provide a move away from a skills centered approach, and present material that is immediately relevant and useful to the students.

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Stephen Dunbar (M.A., University of Minnesota) has taught English and/or methodology in Nigeria, Yugoslavia, Spain, Canada, and the United States. Presently, he is employed as a methodologist at Chancellor College, University of Malawi.

Teacher-Made Materials: Video Tape

John R. Goldberg and Rebecca Eichelberger,
West Virginia University

It is not surprising to hear that more and more language teachers are turning away from the traditional textbook and are seeking more up-to-date materials, more relevant materials, and even more class-specific materials. As foreign language teachers, we are acutely aware of the myriad problems that abound with any materials that are to be used in the classroom. This seems to be particularly true in the field of foreign language teaching.

One solution to this problem that has become more and more a reality in recent times has been the introduction of more and more teacher-made materials. At first these may have been used to supplement classroom instruction. In time, for some teachers, these home-made materials have undoubtedly been used as the primary means of instruction. In this article, we propose neither a temporary, stop-gap measure nor a panacea for all of the problems with existing textual materials. Rather, we merely suggest an addition to whatever is currently being used in the classroom.

With today's emphasis on high tech and with the video revolution that has encompassed not only the United States, but many other countries in the world as well, it stands to reason that a very convenient and contemporary means of producing materials would involve video.

By definition, teacher-made materials are simply those materials that are made by the teacher. Teacher-made video tapes, therefore, are not those which are professionally made

and/or available through normal, commercial outlets. Instead, the teacher-made video tapes we will discuss in this article are based on regularly broadcast television shows.

Advantages of Teacher-Made Video Tapes

The wide range of readily available material on commercial and cable television today offers many advantages.

First of all, currently taped material can be extremely relevant in today's ever-changing world. It is quite difficult to be more up-to-date than last week's or even last night's programming. In contrast, commercially produced teaching materials, such as 16 mm movie films, are not only expensive but often outdated before they can be used.

A second reason for using teacher-made materials is that they are quite adaptable on a class-by-class basis. That is, the particular needs of a given class can be more easily met by having an inexpensive and widely available choice of materials at hand.

Thirdly, and just as important, teacher-made materials are relatively inexpensive to create. The VCR is no longer a plaything of the upper income class. It is certainly affordable. A simple unit, capable of recording from a television set and playing back the recording is readily available for purchase at less than two hundred dollars. Consequently, more and more VCR's are appearing in private homes.

There is one small problem in this area. Make sure that your VCR is completely compatible with the equipment that is available in school. Most of us have at home and are now using the half-inch VHS format. BETA format VCR's are priced even lower in many cases, but may not be available in many school audio-visual departments. Many universities still have 3/4 inch U-Matic format.

Two Important Caveats

There are two problems that must be considered before proceeding any further. First, there is the problem with tape speed. Newer home units have 3 speed possibilities. In contrast, even some very sophisticated multi-format machines play at only one speed. Recordings made at extended play cannot be replayed at standard speed unless the VCR is capable of switching the speed automatically.

The second potential problem is a bit more serious. This is the matter of United States copyright laws, which are a bit complex at first. However, the "guidelines," as they are called by our local Public Broadcasting System station, can be broken down to a few, understandable references for our needs.

The guidelines that follow apply only to off-air recording by non-profit educational institutions. A teacher in such an institution can act as an agent for the institution for taping purposes.

A broadcast program may be recorded off-air simultaneously with the broadcast transmission. Such a program may be kept for a period not to exceed 45 consecutive days after the date of the recording. At the end of the 45-day period, the recordings are to be erased or destroyed.

The recordings may be used once by individual teachers in the course of relevant teaching activities. They may be repeated once only for the purpose of instructional reinforcement. This may occur only within the first 10 days of the 45-day retention period.

Off-air recordings are to be made only at the request of and used by individual teachers. These are not to be regularly recorded in anticipation of requests. No broadcast program may be recorded off-air more than once at the request of or for the use of the same teacher regardless of the number of times that the program may be broadcast.

Reasons for Using Video in the Classroom

We find that there are several justifiable reasons for using video in the classroom. One of the problems that our ESL students have is a gross misconception of what American culture is. In part this is due to their exposure to American television programs that are highly rated in their own countries but that give a distorted view of America. Such programs include Dallas, Dynasty, T. J. Hooker, and so forth. Watching these shows without time to discuss the cultural implications leads to a stereotypic view of America and Americans in terms of sex, violence, dress, and so forth. We can use these same television shows to help teach parts of American culture as well as to obviate some of the problems that they cause.

We live in a visually oriented society. More and more we are exposed to video as a medium for news, entertainment, and education. Our students are used to video and respond well to it. Some students may

respond more favorably to video than to traditional book learning.

Suggestions for Using Video Programs

Assuming that the teacher has decided to pursue the possibilities of using video in the classroom, and that the equipment and legal technicalities have been taken care of, the first order of business is to decide what topics are suitable for classes, followed by deciding which of the cultural ideas are to be related. Finally, we must decide which of the skills are to be actively involved with the presentation.

The following list of television programs is tentative, at best. You will notice that many of the programs listed are found on cable television. With more and more of America being wired for cable and with the range of usable programming that is available on cable rather than on commercial television, we have decided to use cable listings as well as commercial.

We have listed several possible topics that we find useful for English as a second language at the university level. With modification, many of these can be successfully used at the secondary level as well as for adult education. We do not find them particularly useful, at this stage, for elementary school.

For each of the programs cited, there are possibilities of using all four of the language skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The fifth skill, culture, is implicit in the programs themselves.

1. FOOD. "On the Menu" gives ideas of popular dishes in different areas of the country and helps to do away with the

misconception that hamburgers and pizza are all that Americans eat and that there is no American cuisine.

2. CLOTHING. "Style" shows popular clothing styles in the U.S.

3. ENTERTAINMENT. "At the Movies" and "Sneak Previews" offer a discussion of currently popular movies.

4. SPORTS. "ESPN Sportscenter" provides a discussion of the days' results in different sporting events, rather than simply watching a ball game, which generally does not require much use of language skills.

5. HOLIDAYS. "The Grinch Who Stole Christmas," "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer," "Frosty the Snowman," "The Great Pumpkin," "Homecoming," "The Easter Bunny Show," and so forth are all good for discussion of traditional American holiday celebrations.

6. HUMOR. "Family Ties" and "The Cosby Show" portray situations which are probably closer to real family settings and relationships than those on any other shows, unless reruns of "Family" are available.

7. RECENT HISTORY. "Father Knows Best," "Leave it to Beaver," and "The New Leave it to Beaver" are also popular. The first two, while somewhat dated, may be useful in contrast with the last one in showing changes in dress and lifestyle of typical middle America.

There are, of course, many more programs—too many to list here. The preceding was meant only as an introduction to the possibilities of using home-taped programs in the classroom. We have not

made mention in this paper of the various activities that may be carried out. These would of course include listening comprehension exercises, cloze activities, writing exercises, and so forth. That topic, however, will be reserved for future discussion.

About the Authors

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He has taught all levels of ESL, as well as linguistics and French. He is currently assistant professor of ESL, French, and linguistics at West Virginia University and coordinator of the ESL Program there.

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Listening Tasks: For Intermediate Students of American English

Review by Nobuo Tsuda, Brigham Young University

LISTENING TASKS: FOR INTERMEDIATE STUDENTS OF AMERICAN ENGLISH. Sandra Schecter. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press., 1984. pp. 41, \$4.95. Student Book \$7.95. Teacher's Manual \$13.95. Cassette.

Listening Tasks offers a variety of task-centered listening exercises for low-intermediate to intermediate ESL/EFL students. The author states that students often find it difficult to understand natural spoken English "because they try to comprehend every word that they hear and miss the overall message as a result." For that reason, the primary purpose of this text is to help the students learn how to listen effectively and get important information from the context.

Listening Tasks contains twenty different units (topics) such as leaving a message, making travel plans, apartment hunting, sightseeing, etc. In each unit, there are

topic-related reading and writing tasks. The teacher's manual has tapescripts, pre-listening suggestions, reading and writing task procedures and follow-up activities. This manual has flexible suggestions on how to teach efficiently in a variety of classes. Key functions, vocabulary, and structures are listed in each unit.

The main strength of this text is that speakers on the tape use natural spoken English. Many of them use rejoinders (*Yeah, Oh*), hesitations (*Uh, Um*), disagreement (*Uh-uh*), acknowledgement (*Mm*) etc.

Another important strength is that the text is very attractive. Its many pictures and photographs create interest for students and make them feel that the listening comprehension exercises can be active. I also like the variety of meaningful activities such as filling in information, choosing the

correct picture or photograph, writing the numbers according to the sequence of the oral instruction, etc.

Perhaps the most challenging aspect of teaching with this text is knowing how to implement it in a classroom. Each unit has only one listening passage (which lasts less than three minutes), and one exercise, thus making each unit quite short. It would be difficult to use more than one unit in each class period because of the different vocabulary and situations in each. The teacher's manual does offer suggestions for oral and written activities/assignments that can round out a 50-minute period, if one is not adverse to spending time during a listening class on other skills.

The author also suggests that students can listen to the material as many times as they desire, while completing the exercise, but my teaching experience has shown that

students who cannot perform the listening task within three times of repeated listening may have a problem with the level of the material, and only become disinterested and discouraged with further attempts.

Despite this problem with implementation in actual classroom use, *Listening Tasks* is one of the few textbooks available in natural spoken American English for improving the listening skills of intermediate ESL/EFL students. For this reason, I feel that it is well worth the effort to use the many useful and realistic activities in this text to supplement and enrich one's listening course.

Nobuo Tsuda, a graduate of BYU-Hawaii's TESL program, has produced listening comprehension materials for ECC Foreign Language Institute in Japan. He is an M.A. candidate at Brigham Young University in Utah.

The American Language Institute of the School of Continuing Education of New York University and Language Innovations, Incorporated (LINC) are pleased to announce the inauguration of the annual Fred W. Malkemes Prize. Fred, a member of the faculty of the American Language Institute of NYU for nearly twenty years and an active member of LINC, had many areas of interest. He devoted special attention to helping adults develop listening, speaking, and conversational skills; the application of the principles of Sector Analysis to classroom practice; exploring the special nature of teaching English in Puerto Rico and Kenya; developing materials for use in ESOL classrooms for beginning students; adult literacy; and computer-assisted language learning.

The prize of \$1,000 will be awarded for an article in English published in the two years preceding the submission deadline. While special consideration will be given to articles which explore topics that interested Fred, articles on any topic which make a contribution to our knowledge of teaching and classroom practice will be welcome.

Authors, editors, publishers, and readers are welcome to submit articles deemed worthy of special recognition. In a cover letter which includes the name(s) of the author(s) and the date and place of publication, please remark briefly which special feature of the article makes it outstanding and appropriate for the Malkemes Prize. No later than November 1, 1987, send the letter, together with six copies of the article to The Malkemes Prize, The American Language Institute, #1 Washington Square North, New York, NY 10003.

Self-Introductions for that First Day in a Humanistic Classroom

Michael "Rube" Redfield, Nanzan Women's College

Many beginning (and sometimes veteran) language teachers are understandably nervous before the beginning of their first class meeting in a new term. They are faced with meeting anywhere from six to sixty individuals whom they do not know and who do not know them. They want the year to start off right, but realize the difficulties of getting students who do not know each other to work together using a foreign language.

One successful way to meet this challenge is to start off with self-introductions. I have found the technique described below to be very effective (and affectively valuable also) with beginning to advanced classes in the Orient, the Middle East, and in the Americas.

The Teacher's Self-Introduction

The first thing you should do is to write your own personal self-introduction on the

blackboard before class. This will naturally get the students' attention right away and will show the class that you are prepared, organized, and competent. I prefer an informal classroom, so I use the following self-introduction:

- My name is Rube.
- I am from Chicago.
- I am 34.
- I am a teacher.
- I live in the barrio Buenos Aires.
- I speak English, Spanish, German, French, and Japanese.
- I am married, but have no children.
- I like sports, books, and beer.

You might prefer a more formal self-introduction or more "difficult" structures, depending on your teaching situation.

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