

# 'Password,' Anyone?

BY NORMAN J. YOSHIDA

A major difficulty the TESL instructor faces is that of maintaining student interest. In the case of the advanced learner of English, the student who has had his fill of pattern practices yet still needs to polish off rough spots in his conversation (pronunciation and grammar), this is especially true. More pattern practices and too many pronunciation drills only bore him; still, he needs to be guided gradually from structured to free (unstructured) conversation to avoid his perpetuating errors in both pronunciation and grammar. One possible solution to the problem of working on conversation with advanced learners has been outlined by Robert G. Bander in his article "From Pattern Practice to Conversational English" (TESL REPORTER, vol. 2, no. 2, winter 1969).

## Variety Is Needed

Such a conversation class as described by Bander provides an opportunity for students to engage in dialogue that approaches real conversation despite, of course, the limitations of an artificial environment created by their being in a classroom with an instructor. The sequence of activities outlined by R. Bander offers enough of a variety to prevent boredom. But not every hour of class can be spent on conversation and on making oral presentations (e.g. reports on magazine articles, book reports, storytelling, etc.) There would need to be occasional "breaks" now and then, times when students could feel they were engaging in activities that were fun as well as educational. I would

suggest, then, playing the following word game (I have patterned it after the TV game show "Password") to provide a respite from the rigors of purely academic activities.

## Procedure

1. The instructor prepares a set of cards for each two players in his class ahead of time. (This assumes that the class is small--that there are no more than eight students at a time. If the class is larger, the instructor might divide the class up into smaller groups.) On each of these cards the instructor prints a word, possibly taken from a vocabulary list the class has studied or is studying. There should be a word card for each two players (each team).

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Norman J. Yoshida is an Instructor of English and TESL at the University of Hawaii, Hilo Campus.

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2. The students sit, each facing a partner. The instructor gives one member of each team a card on which is written the "password." The object is for that member to give his partner a clue as to what the "password" is. For example, the word might be CUP. The member of the team who has the word card might say to his partner, "Drink." The response from his partner, "Coffee." The next clue might be "Mug"; the response, "Beer." Only one-word clues may be given at a time, and these clues may not contain the "password." (For example, if the word is cup,

## **“Password” --**

then “CUPcake” may not be used as a clue.) This process of clue-giving and responding goes on for ten seconds. If the responses within that time are, as in the example above, incorrect, the next team gets the chance to start guessing.

3. The opportunity to question and answer is passed from one team to another until one team succeeds in guessing the “password.” That team that successfully guesses the word is then given the chance to begin the next round of questioning, this time with the opposite member of the team giving the clues.

4. Scoring is done this way. If the team that begins the round guesses the word on the first attempts, it is awarded five points. If the first team misses the word and the second team gets it, the second team is then awarded four points, and so on. Should the round go full cycle without any team guessing the word--that is, until there are no more points to be awarded--the instructor then passes out another set of cards and the next round begins.

## **Students Enjoy It**

Advanced students really enjoy playing this game occasionally, for not only does it break the monotony of the everyday lesson, but it also affords them the opportunity of ranging the extent of their vocabularies, searching for synonyms or other words related to the “password.” While some TESL instructors might consider a game such as this rather “gimicky” and therefore of little value in the classroom, I feel it is a good way of maintaining student interest. Not only does the student feel that he is exploring the range of his vocabulary--he has fun!