

TESL

Teaching English as a Second Language

REPORTER

Published by:

English Language Institute
The Church College of Hawaii

Vol. 3, No. 1

Laie, Hawaii

Fall, 1969

Feedback: An Anti-Madeirization Compound

BY HENRY M. SCHAAFSMA

The goal of second-language teaching is that of giving the students mastery of a skill, but the complications arise when we realize that the particular skill which we wish to pass on is a social skill, and as such differs from other learning, both skill and content, at many points.

Henry M. Schaafsma is Assistant Professor in the Department of English as a Second Language, at the Univ. of Hawaii. He was a lecturer in Eng. and Co-Director of the Languages Institute, Meiji Gakuin Univ., Japan, and was a lecturer in Contemporary Eng. at Univ. of Leeds, England. He is the author of: English Conversation Thru Pattern Practice, You Too Can Speak English, and Current American English as well as numerous articles on language and language teaching.

There is one very important part of second-language teaching in a classroom situation of which the teacher must, if he yearns for success, have a complete knowledge. Since we are, by any methodics, teaching a skill, the judgment of progress or nonprogress is of the essential. To ignore it for even a short time is to invite classroom madeirization and, almost surely, to court complete failure. The teacher must regulate his teaching by feedback and devise every means possible to insure

as much repetitive feedback as possible. The term feedback is one borrowed from cybernetics and as applied to second-language teaching stands for a form of negative or positive reinforcement.

Any educational attempt should be one of regular progression toward a known goal. It seems important that the goal in second-language teaching also be stratified so that levels of accomplishment can be talked of. The major goal of acceptable speaking, reading, and writing is just too all-fired immense. The attainment of these level-goals is the effect of a chain of planned movements. The classroom possibilities of feedback

CONTENTS

| | |
|--|--------|
| Feedback: An Anti-Madeirization Compound | |
| by Henry M. Schaafsma | Page 1 |
| Using the Personal Pronoun 'I' as a Compound Subject | |
| by G. Pang and D. Chu | Page 3 |
| The Consonant L in Initial and Final Positions | |
| by Mrs. Maybelle Chong | Page 5 |
| Sentence Expansion for the Elementary Level | |
| by Alice Brimhall | Page 6 |
| English Word Order | |
| by Alice C. Pack | Page 6 |

computation are three-fold with one tangential adherent:

1. Teacher-to-class and class-to-teacher,
2. Class-to-teacher and teacher-to-class,
3. Pupil-to-pupil and teacher observation,
4. Reportage of outside class experiences by pupils to teacher and class.

Most important from a methods-view is the teacher, since only he knows what has to be taught, how it should be taught, the degree of learning which is required, and the means of attaining this. He regulates his progression by the adjustment of his pace according to the positive and negative feedback signals.

Though feedback is an important factor in the teaching of both content and skill subjects, there is a difference in its relative importance as it applies to each discipline. It should not be put forth that there are no elements of skill in content subjects (history, geography), nor should it be said that there is no content in skill subjects; rather that skill or content predominates depending on which type of learning one is referring to.

Mathematics

Second-language learning and mathematics must be specially categorized, as in both of these each progressive step depends on an acquired skill or skills: the material is cumulative and must be mastered logically and sequentially. Failure at any single step vitiates the remainder.

Although we can generally classify mathematics and second language learning together, language presents one aspect not shared with mathematics. That is, the medium of instruction is also the material of the class: We use language to teach language. This increases the importance of structuring and the role of feedback.

The usual means of gathering feedback information is through examinations. In predominately content-centered subjects these may satisfactorily take place at long intervals. Unfortunately, a similar long-interval

system has been carried over to second-language teaching. Skill centered subjects require frequent feedback signals if progress is to be reliably governed. The teacher must have feedback information from class-to-class, if not from minute to minute.

Skills

We are in second-language teaching working with receptive and productive skills. Since this is the case, the feedback signals will take the form of overt responses, either verbal or nonverbal. The responses may be immediate or delayed.

These verbal and nonverbal signals on which we are so dependent are indeed a complicating factor, since in teaching verbal skills our signals are conditioned by the efficiency of our teaching. A vicious circle indeed, when we also realize that the verbal signals during the teaching of receptive skills (hearing and reading) must be expressed in the idiom of the productive skills (speaking and writing). The superior teacher depends at the beginning levels on non-verbal feedback signals, though the feedback information obtained from these subconscious motor responses is not the reason for them. The creation of these signals themselves is a part of the totality of the language learning process.

Productive skills monitor themselves. In the classroom the creation of these skills is in the same way dependent on the receptive skills. The student produces in response to verbal stimulation.

This is quite different from non-classroom activity where productive skills are to a great extent dependent on non-verbal stimulation. One of the greatest problems for the second-language student is the transferring of skills mastered in the classroom to the outside world in the cases where they have not learned to respond to a nonverbal stimulus.

All classroom activities are subject to feedback, exposition and explanation as well as practice and consolidation. It is of no use to the teacher nor the student to press on if

(cont. on page 11)

Feedback--

(cont. from page 2)

some point has not been mastered by the majority. Even if a point has been mastered by most, some extra activity must be designed for the have-not-learned minority. Failure to provide this will cause the group to continue to provide only negative feedback to the detriment of all involved. Even though we devise ways to teach inductively, teachers must be sure that induction has taken place.

Failure also to control the practice element as a result of feedback would mean overlearning here and underlearning there. This lack of control never produces a fair user of the language, but, as must be obvious, only a poor user. The teacher must know just how to teach well-prepared materials, and just when to stop with one form and pass on to the next.

The complexity of teaching a social skill places demands at every level. Sound materials must be devised by a marriage of methodics and linguistics. This material, different for each national learning group, must be taught under the control of feedback by well-trained, experienced teachers. Only with these factors met can we look for an optimum amount of success.

TESL REPORTER

A quarterly publication of the English Language Institute and the BA-TESL program of The Church College of Hawaii.

Editor.....Mrs. Alice Pack, Assistant Professor of English and TESL.

Staff.....David C. Butler, Instructor of TESL.

Technical Staff.....Marie Paongo

Articles relevant to teaching English as a second language in Hawaii, the South Pacific and Asia, may be submitted to the editor through Box 150, The Church College of Hawaii, Laie, Hawaii 96762. Manuscripts should be double-spaced and typed, not exceeding three pages.