

ENGLISH CONVERSATION THROUGH CLASSROOM DRAMATICS

by William Gallagher

Several students in the English Language Institute of the Church College of Hawaii this past semester, participated in an experimental approach to developing greater fluency in English conversation.

It is fairly established that language students acquire language skills by observation and participation. With this in mind, the conversation classes were asked to write and produce four classroom dramas or skits.

One student was chosen as the director. It was he who directed the writing and production of the drama. Under his leadership, with some limited teacher direction, the class outlined the plot and wrote the lines. In addition to taking roles, the ELI students arranged for props, sound

Before turning the students loose, the students wrote and acted out two short dramas in front of the classes in order to show the students how the writing and acting could be done.

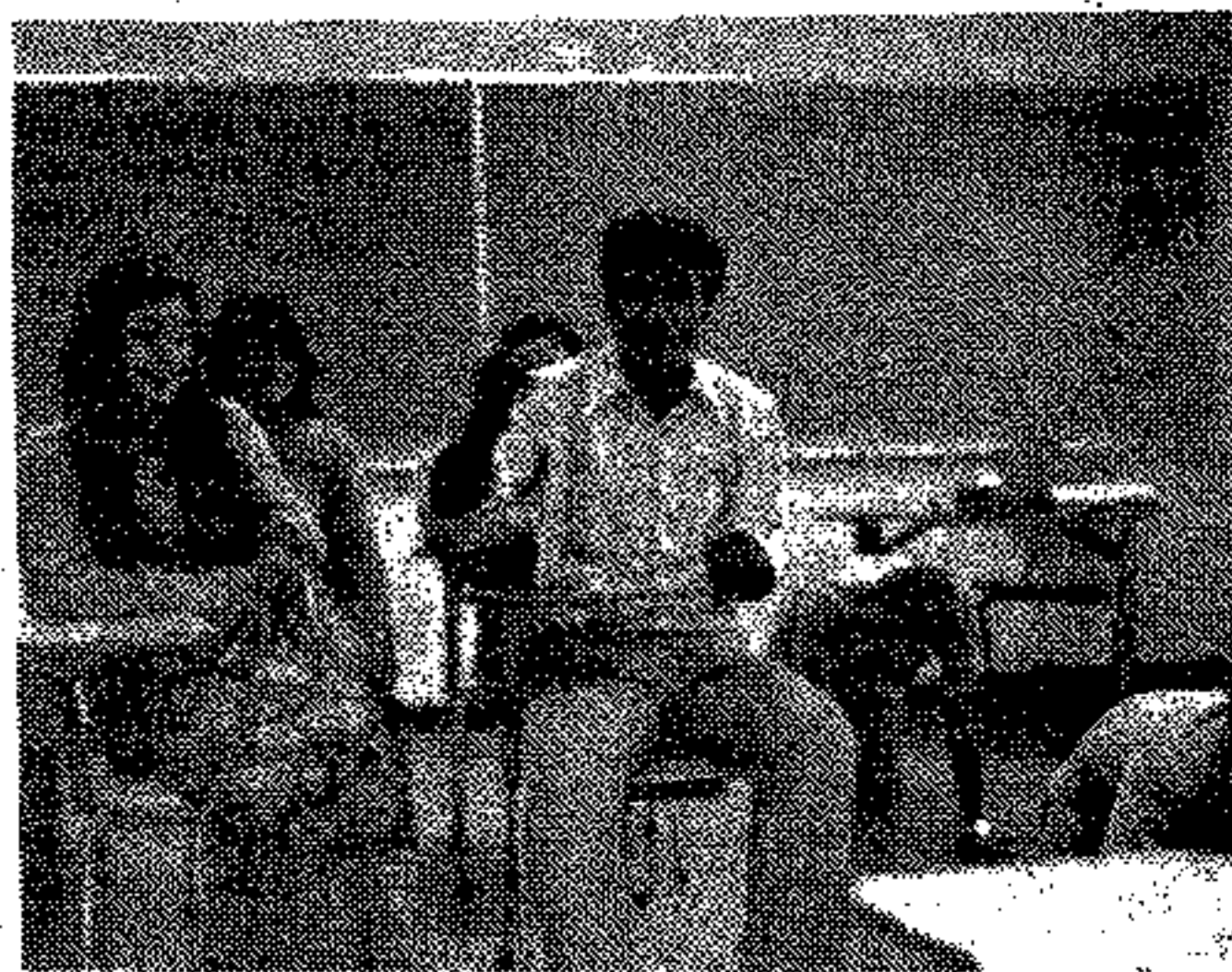
In writing a classroom drama, it was found helpful for the teacher to suggest a "typical" student problem for the first scene, such as no money, no date for the dance, or a lost text book two days before the big test. The next scene would show a solution to the problem which in the final scene often proved to be a false solution.

For example, if the problem was "no money", the second scene had a friend loan him some money which, in scene three, was found to be counterfeit!

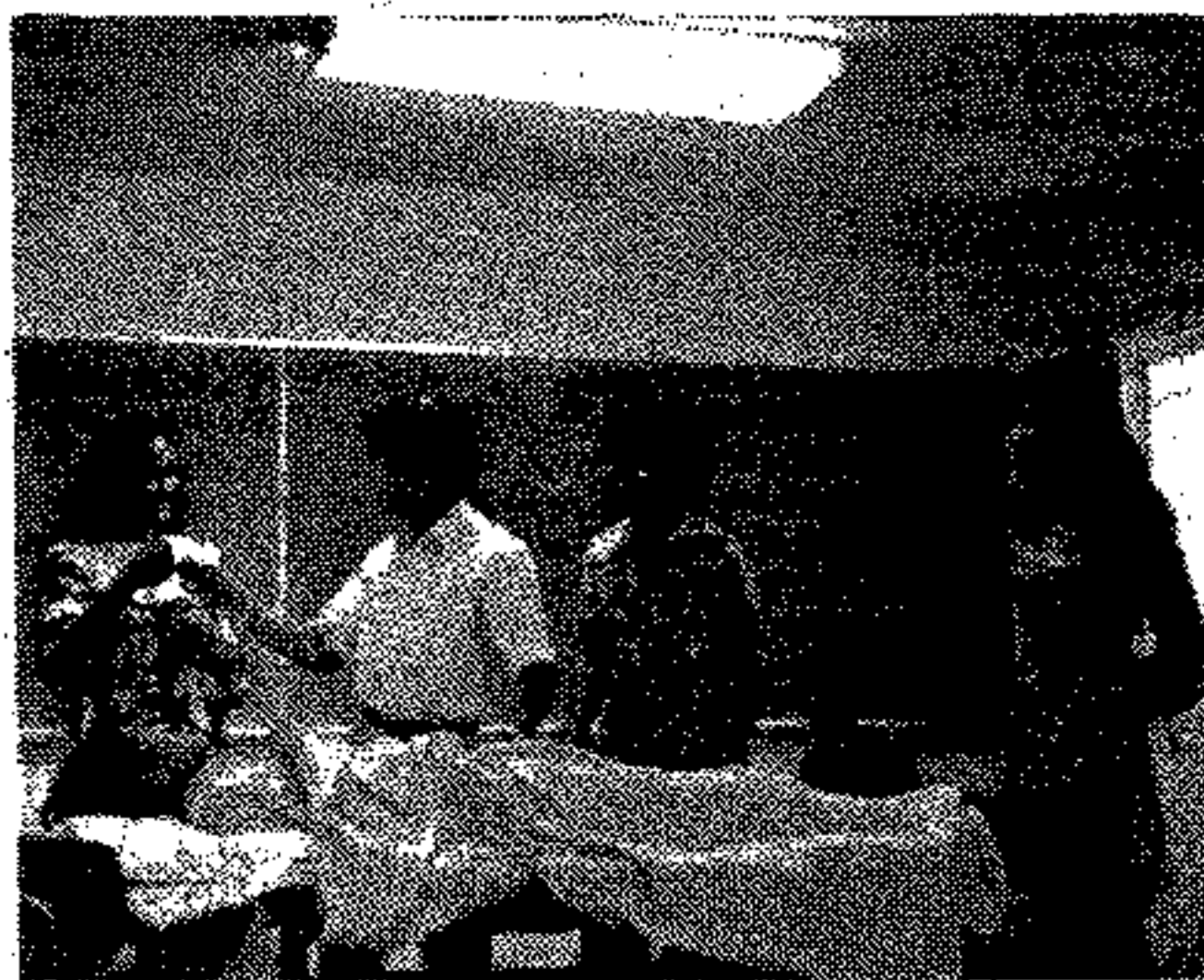
The students thoroughly enjoyed themselves in this activity. In addition to the English the students learned by memorizing their lines, their most valuable activity linguistically, was in the conversation necessary for the planning, writing, securing props, and providing invitations and programs.

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effects, costumes etc. Invitations and programs were also mimeographed and distributed by the students. One group even appointed a business manager who "sold" tickets.



When Viliami and Susana took their "children" for a ride in the country, one by one the "tires" went flat and they had to hitchhike back to school.



David got a headache and was taken to the hospital where a nearsighted "doctor" removed his appendix!