GOLDY LOCKS OR CHOCOLATE CAKES?

by Gary R. Oddous

Goldy Locks or chocolate cakes may not have an integral part in most classrooms, but they have become ways to actively interest and engage students in meaningful and imaginative conversation.

As many other authors have noted in the *TESL Reporter*, conversation is only progressive to the point that it interests and encourages the student in an active expression of the target language.

Having taught ESL to the French people, adults and teenagers, I have found that "story telling," and the demonstration of a student's favorite recipe, are two ways to activate the student's desire to speak and learn a language.

Story telling is based on the idea that both student and teacher are somewhat familiar with the story to be told. Universal children's stories are excellent for this, such as *Goldy Locks, The Three Bears,* etc. Familiarity with the story gives both the student and teacher a framework from which to work. Before—usually the day before—each story is told, the students are warned which story will be chosen so that they can refresh their memories and mentally prepare the dialog of the story.

When first introducing this method, I have found it best to group four to six capable students in front of the class as a demonstration group. The teacher starts, then calls on each succeeding student in the group so that each might have an equal part in telling the story. The purpose of such a demonstration group is only to show the other students how it is done.

There are two variations of the story telling method which I have found to be successful. One is to place a group in front of the class (like the demonstration group) and, after the story is told, class members ask previously prepared questions about the story which they direct to specific members of the group who told the story. Students are encouraged to ask imaginative questions. For example, with *The Three Bears,* students have asked: "How old was the baby bear?" or, "What color was the bear's house?" Such questions are not contained in the actual dialog of the story, but encourage the students to think on their own. Such a method also facilitates a conversation between fellow students. They become the instigators of conversation, not the teacher. It also gives the narrators a chance to hear and understand a fellow student's question, then to provide, or invent, an answer. The teacher must preface, however, that they answer in complete sentences.

Another variation possible is to break the class up into groups of four or five students, and to have each group tell an assigned story. However, students should have the chance to choose their stories first. Then, instead of asking each other questions, the students are encouraged to be imaginative and to add details to the story that aren't actually in it.

The underlying theory of such a conversational method is two fold: 1) The student will speak more easily if the dialog is already familiar to him, thus encouraging success which begins to carry over into more original, spontaneous speech. 2) Each student sees himself as an integral part of the goal to complete a story, and most of all, to do it well. Each student begins to take pride in his part, making it as flawless as possible, and use his imagination, both by inventing details within the story, and by asking imaginative questions.

This conversational method has proved to aid students who are shy, as well as those who are more bold. Shy students find this method easy and fun. They have a pretext to speak. They don't have to answer the teacher; instead, they answer and converse among themselves. Once they gain confidence in themselves, and are aware that others see and hear

them speak, they shed their shyness and become some of the most enthusiastic students.

On the other hand, the more bold students begin to perfect their already mildly fluent speech. They can use their minds to delve deeper into imaginative situations; which usually means delving deeper into English grammar and idiom.

Another method to encourage conversation is through the demonstration of a favorite recipe. Each student is asked to prepare his favorite recipe in English, and to demonstrate it in front of the class explaining the process and going through the motions of its preparation. Such a demonstration requires

Gary Oddous, a student at the Provo Campus of the Brigham Young University, is currently completing an M.A. in TESL.

the student not only to learn new vocabulary, but to explain a process, which requires transitional elements and often requires the use of many English idioms.

In order to help create situational language use, the teacher should bring some basic culinary utensils to class which the students can use while demonstrating the recipes.

Male and female students alike find this an enjoyable way to use the language. It is interesting for every one to hear these recipes from different parts of the world.

Several variations as sequential follow-ups can result from the original demonstrations: 1) The next week, each student who demonstrated a recipe can actually bring the product for others to taste and see what the demonstration represented. 2) Students observing the demonstration can be asked to take notes on the demonstration then try to make the dish at home and bring it the following week. (This tests the exactness of communication between demonstrator and observer.) 3) The recipe can be duplicated and handed to each student after which already prepared foods from the recipe are given to the students to try.

The emphasis on the actual preparation of the recipes is to give a meaningful insistence to the simulated demonstration. Students enjoy using language for meaningful purposes. The psychological aspect of a physical representation, such as food, of one's efforts in a second language, is rewarding to the students. It creates a real-life situation and a relaxing and sometimes humorous atmosphere results in the language-learning setting.

Such methods as these, however, obviously are not answers to all of the conversational needs of the ESL classroom. Rather, they are examples of an underlying theory much needed in the ESL setting. The demonstration of a recipe, an explanation of how to repair a flat tire, and a story-telling experience in which the student is an integral link, provide the student with a meaningful experience of involvement in the target language.

The teacher himself must feel he has an important part in the act of the student's language acquisition. A book with blanks requiring lexical fills does not create a meaningful experience for the student—teachers can and must create those experiences for students. The classroom is a place in which the student should learn for himself that a second language isn't just a classroom language, but one that can be meaningful *outside* the classroom and one that actually exists to be so used.

TESL REPORTER

A quarterly publication of the Communication and Language Arts Division of the Brigham Young University—Hawaii Campus.

Editor . . . . . Alice C. Pack
Staff . . . . . Kenyon Moss
Lorraine Swapp

Articles relevant to teaching English as a Second Language in Hawaii, the South Pacific and Asia, may be submitted to the editor through Box 157, Brigham Young University Hawaii Campus, Laie, Oahu, Hawaii 96762. Manuscripts should be double-spaced and typed, not exceeding six pages.