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In This Issue

The articles in this issue of the TESOL Quarterly explore the theoretical foundations of our field and practices in second and foreign language instruction. Following an outline of the requirements for a general theory of second language learning, the remaining articles examine the influence of two speaker variables on listening recall; recent research in first language acquisition that challenges conventional views of native language development; a framework and classroom activities for dealing with second language communication anxiety; the findings of a study of the effects of prereading activities on EFL reading comprehension; and principles and techniques for promoting fluency within a communicative learning context.

Bernard Spolsky outlines the “requirements for a general theory of second language learning that can account both for the fact that people can learn more than one language and for the generalizable individual differences that occur in such learning.” The preference model that Spolsky proposes to describe second language learning is based on a general approach that has been applied to semantics, music, and literary interpretation. The model distinguishes among conditions necessary for language learning to take place; graded conditions, in which “the more something is true, the more its consequence is likely to occur”; and typicality conditions, which describe what will often—but not invariably—shape second language learning. Spolsky also discusses issues related to formalizing and testing a preference model of second language learning and describes Parallel Distributed Processing, or connectionism, which, according to the author, may ultimately suggest how a preference model of second language learning can be further refined.

Paul Markham reports the findings of a study that investigated the influence of gender and the perceived expertise of a speaker on listening recall by ESL students. Using a matched-guise methodology, the study examined the number of major idea units that subjects could recall from a 4-minute taped presentation on the Amish. The results of the study were consistent with previous sociolinguistic research: The perception by students that the speaker was an expert (a perception based on a short, fictitious introduction of the speaker) affected recall,
particularly in the case of the female speaker. In addition, both advanced and intermediate subjects recalled considerably more from the presentation by the “nonexpert” male than from that by the “nonexpert” female speaker. Markham suggests that the results might well “reflect long-standing patterns of bias that appear to exist in many different international speech communities” and that the study underscores the importance of investigating further the variety of variables that may influence listening comprehension in a second language.

- Virginia Gathercole argues that some of the assumptions that second language acquisition researchers have made about normal first language acquisition reflect “inaccurate accounts, or at best half-truths.” The author examines first language acquisition research related to three such assumptions: that comprehension precedes production; that first language development is systematic and rule-governed; and that “the underlying impetus behind language acquisition is a need to communicate.” Gathercole’s review suggests “that the relationship between comprehension and production is not unidirectional, that children’s first steps toward acquisition are haphazard and piecemeal, and that children acquire at least some aspects of language simply ‘because it is there.’” The article concludes with the recommendation that second language teachers and methodologists reconsider the relationship between first and second language development and reassess current principles and classroom practices of second language instruction in light of a fuller understanding of first language acquisition.

- Karen Foss and Armeda Reitzel discuss communication anxiety as a general phenomenon and as an aspect of second language acquisition. Arguing that a critical factor in dealing with this problem is students’ perceptions of their “communication abilities and performances,” the authors propose a relational competence model for managing second language anxiety. This model, developed in the field of speech communication, comprises five components and processes—motivation, knowledge, skills, outcomes, and context—and it emphasizes the need for the second language teacher to focus not only on the individual performances of students in particular communication contexts, but also on the way in which students perceive their own behaviors in specific contexts and communication episodes. Foss and Reitzel describe and discuss a variety of techniques and activities—including rational emotive therapy, oral interpretation, and journal writing—to manage second language communication anxiety.

- Loni Taglieber, Linda Johnson, and Donald Yarbrough report a study of the effects of three prereading activities on the reading comprehension of undergraduate Brazilian EFL students. Their study found that each of these activities—the presentation of a pictorial context, preteaching of vocabulary, and prequestioning—produced
higher scores on multiple-choice reading comprehension items than did the control condition, in which subjects had no prereading activity. However, preteaching of vocabulary was less effective than prequestioning and the presentation of a pictorial context in enhancing comprehension. The authors discuss possible reasons for the lesser effectiveness of preteaching vocabulary and for the finding that the prereading activities did not improve subject performance on open-ended questions. In general, however, the findings of the study lend support to the idea, derived from schema theory, that prereading activities, by activating knowledge structures or by building background knowledge that the reader lacks, promote greater comprehension.

- Elizabeth Gatbonton and Norman Segalowitz describe a rationale and procedures for the development of “creative automaticity,” which they describe as the ability “to execute a basic repertoire of commonly needed phrases with little effort.” Following a summary of the role assigned to formulaic speech in recent characterizations of the second language acquisition process and a discussion of the traditional classroom approach to the development of fluency, the authors describe activities that will promote “intensive rehearsal while avoiding the pitfalls of traditional pattern drills.” In the authors’ view, such activities must be genuinely communicative and psychologically relevant. In addition, they should involve “basic functions and notions that learners are likely to handle in everyday life” and should elicit the use of short, memorizable utterances that can be used in a variety of situations. Finally, the activities should be inherently repetitive.

Also in this issue:

- Reviews: Cheryl Roberts reviews Tony Wright’s Roles of Teachers and Learners; Sandra Savignon reviews Edith Harding and Philip Riley’s The Bilingual Family and J.P.B. Allen reviews N.S. Prabhu’s Second Language Pedagogy.

- Brief Reports and summaries: Roberta Abraham and Barbara Plakans report an assessment of a program to screen nonnative English-speaking teaching assistants at Iowa State University; and Kayiba Kadia reports a case study of the effect of grammatical instruction on the spontaneous and monitored language performance of an adult Chinese learner of English as a second language.

- The Forum: Tony Silva’s comments on Vivian Zamel’s recent TESOL Quarterly article, “Recent Research on Writing Pedagogy,” are followed by a response by the author.

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INTRODUCTORY DISCOUNT!

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This article explores the requirements for a general theory of second language learning that can account both for the fact that people can learn more than one language and for the generalizable individual differences that occur in such learning. Such a general theory will be able to explain and describe differences between second and foreign language learning, between learning for general and special purposes, between formal and informal learning, and between developing knowledge and skills. It will need to be precise and clear on the nature of the goals and outcomes of learning and to recognize the complexity of the concept of knowing a second language, which can vary almost without restriction in both kind and amount. The model must be integrated and interactive, to assume that all or many parts of it apply to any specific kind of learning and that there is close interaction among the various parts. The theory proposed allows for a formally valued eclecticism, provided by the use of a preference model. This article considers the formalization of such a model in an expert system and the more recent implications of the Parallel Distributed Processing model.

Second language learning theorists, seduced by the language teacher’s natural longing for simple solutions, have often preferred the stark appeal of a crisp advertising slogan to the elegant parsimony of a scientific theory. Their goal has been translatability (even translation) into a teaching method rather than accounting for the empirical facts.

After the audiolingual method had been successfully challenged, a general acceptance of eclecticism in language teaching seemed for a while to be relaxing this pressure to discover panaceas. There was hope, Stern (1985) remarked, that the profession would get over its “century-old obsession” with the search for the perfect method, but
in the 1970s a new boom in the promotion of methods began (see, for instance, Krashen & Terrell, 1983; Oller & Richard-Amato, 1983). Where once language teachers were faced with Berlitz methods, Army methods, Ollendorf methods, the Direct Method, and the Series Method, they are now offered the Total Physical Response, the Natural Approach, Community Language Learning, and Suggestopedia (for a survey of recent approaches and methods, see Richards & Rodgers, 1986).

There are serious weaknesses with the theoretical bases of these various methods (see, for instance, Krahnke, 1985); more generally, any theory of second language learning that seems to lead to a single method is wrong. If one looks at the complexity of the circumstances under which second languages are learned, or fail to be learned, one immediately sees that a theory must not just be equally complex but must also be able to account for the successes and failures of the many different methods that have been and are used throughout the language-teaching world.

My goal, then, is not to propose a new method; it is rather to explore the requirements for a general theory of second language learning by examining the conditions under which languages are learned. I describe the theory as general to distinguish it from theories of formal classroom learning (e.g., that proposed by Gardner, 1979, although Gardner, 1985, concedes that his theory might be more general than he originally proposed), or of informal natural learning (e.g., Schumann’s [1978] acculturation model, although Schumann, 1986, has now been persuaded that it might be relevant to classroom learning too), or of the learning of one part of a language, such as sentence-level syntax (the level to which second language acquisition studies, such as those summarized in Ellis, 1985, are generally restricted). I use the term theory to mean a hypothesis or set of hypotheses that has been or can be verified empirically (for a discussion of various uses in language learning of the term theory, see Stern, 1983, pp. 25-27).

I use the term second language learning to refer to the acquisition of a language once a first language has been learned, say after the age of 2, without any technical definition or jargon or in-group implication for the words learning or acquisition. Klein (1986), who distinguishes between “bilingual first language acquisition” and “second language learning,” would set this age a little higher: “at the age of 3 or 4” (p. 15).

Within these definitions, I see the task of a theory of second language learning as being able to account both for the fact that people can learn more than one language and for the generalizable individual differences that occur in such learning.
First, it is always the case that some individuals are more successful than others in mastering the language, even though the language experience has in all cases been ostensibly identical. Second, for a particular individual, some aspects of language learning are mastered more easily than are others. (Bialystok, 1978, p. 69)

A general theory of second language learning will relate in significant ways to a theory of first language learning. Its task is similar in many ways to that of understanding first language learning at more advanced stages. It must be pointed out, however, that psycholinguistic interest in first language acquisition has tended to focus on the initial stages of learning and on the universal acquisition of language rather than on the individual variations in ultimate accomplishment that are the normal concern of second language learning research.

Ideally, rather than seeking separate theories of first and second language learning, I should perhaps be pursuing a unified theory of language learning (Carroll, 1981). (A general model of this kind is also sketched out in Titone, 1982, and Titone & Danesi, 1985.) Such a theory should, within itself, distinguish between first and second language learning, including, for instance, the fact that when learners start to learn a second language, they have already mastered in their first language such crucial abilities as distinguishing the sounds of language from the noise around them and recognizing the basic working of speech acts. (Omitting this initial stage of first language acquisition, much of what I propose here can easily and usefully be applied to first language learning, to the learning of additional dialects and registers, to the development of control of standardized and classical varieties of one’s first language, and to the complex variation of individual achievement in all language learning.)

In spite of the attractiveness of this challenge, I have chosen at this stage to accept the constraint of working to develop a theory of second language learning independently, accepting the common scientific practice, when faced with complex systems, of attempting to deal with one definable part at a time. But it is an essential part of my approach to consider all kinds of second language learning together, calling on the model (and not some a priori limitation of scope) to show the differences proposed between, for example, second and foreign language learning and formal and informal learning.

If I may borrow a rhetorical form favored by the distinguished sociolinguist Joshua Fishman, the critical issues to be dealt with may be set out in the following question: Who learns how much of what
language under what conditions? The complexity of this question (see B. Spolsky, 1985b) suggests something about the nature of the model that might provide a satisfying solution to it.

Such a model is most unlikely to be a simple basic principle such as any of those proposed by the New Key methods: Gouin in the 19th century, Lozanov, Gattegno, and Asher in the 20th have all surely made important contributions, but none of their panaceas—or even a more sophisticated combination of half a dozen hypotheses such as Krashen (1982) has proposed—can be accounted as filling the need for an overall model. (For detailed discussion of Krashen's model, see Gregg, 1984; Klein, 1986; McLaughlin, 1978, 1987; and B. Spolsky, 1985a, 1985c.) The claims behind these method-supporting theories of course all have a measure of truth: They are “correct” with certain interpretations under certain conditions; they capture certain facts. But they are either so loosely worded as to be unprovable, or when they are made precise, they are wrong.

I argue rather that a general theory of second language learning is best expressed as a complex collection of typical and categorical rules or conditions and can be usefully stated in terms similar to the preference model in linguistics proposed by Jackendoff (1983), and not by models consisting only of well-formedness conditions nor certainly by single-factor or simple models. Language learning results, the theory will claim, from the interaction and integration of a large number of factors and not from any single factor.

FIVE FEATURES OF THE GENERAL THEORY

The model that I propose derives its strength from five features. The first of these is its unabashed immodesty in attempting to be general, to combine in a single theory all aspects of second language learning. Its very generality makes it possible to consider within one model, and so to attempt to explain and describe, the relevant differences that exist between second and foreign language learning, learning for general and special purposes, formal and informal learning, and developing knowledge and skills, to mention just a few of the ways theories are sometimes specialized.

There is a danger, as McLaughlin (1987, p. 157) remarks, in a general theory becoming too broad and so blurring the details. A necessary response to this broadness of coverage, then, is the second feature of my approach, its emphasis on the need to be precise and clear on the nature of the goals and outcomes of learning. The theory requires us to recognize the complexity of the concept of knowing a second language, which can vary almost without restriction in both kind and amount.
There is no simple and single criterion according to which one can be said to know a language. There are varying criteria for successful learning that can be described in terms of linguistic knowledge (as the items of a grammar or a lexicon, for instance); in terms of generalized skills (reading, writing, speaking, listening); in terms of pragmatic or communicative functions (persuading, asking, apologizing, etc.); in terms of topic (e.g., “He knows Italian well enough to read a sports page”; “She can give a lecture in Hebrew on nuclear physics”), situation (e.g., “He knows kitchen French), or interlocutor (e.g., “She knows enough English to talk to a bank manager”); or in terms of ability to perform a described task (usually a test, e.g., “He scored 625 on the TOEFL”.

A general theory of second language learning must not only be able to define all these possible outcomes, but it must also show how various combinations of conditions will be most likely to lead to each of them. Thus, a general theory of second language learning must allow for all the complexity of what it means to know and use a language. In doing this, it will need, in particular, to combine the macrolevel of developing various kinds of functional proficiency with the microlevel of learning specific items and structures.

The third important feature of the model is that it is integrated and interactive: It assumes that all or many parts of it apply to any specific kind of learning and that there is close interaction among the various parts of the model. In some cases, some of the components of the theory may not be relevant, but all are potentially so; and when they work, they work together. For example, the theory attempts to show not just how motivation affects learning, but how a particular strength and kind of motivation, with a particular kind of learning, leads to specific kinds of learning of certain parts of language in certain circumstances. Its generality requires that all potential connections be tested.

The fourth feature of the model, and a major innovation in second language learning theory, is that it is a preference model, an approach that allows for a kind of formally valued eclecticism. This is achieved through accepting that not all the various conditions for language learning are necessary for learning to take place. Many of them are graded conditions, in which the more something is true, the more its consequence is likely to occur; others are typicality conditions, which apply typically but not necessarily. (Graded conditions are similar in many ways to the probability statements on linguistic variables that Labov, 1972, proposes; typicality conditions are similar to the approach of prototypical semantics.) The preference model was proposed by Jackendoff (1983) and has been
applied to semantics, to music (Lerdahl & Jackendoff, 1983), and to literary interpretation (Schauber & E. Spolsky, 1986).

Jackendoff (1983), in his description of the preference model, distinguishes between well-formedness or necessary conditions, on the one hand, and typicality or preference conditions, on the other, tracing his work to problems tackled by Gestalt psychologists, such as Wertheimer (1923/1938), in their attempts to deal with grouping. The key point of this work was to establish the notion of stronger and weaker judgments as a result of the convergence or conflict of competing criteria. Jackendoff demonstrates the principle as it applies to word meanings: It provides, in particular, formal properties that will account for “the gradation of judgments and...the existence of exceptions to many apparently defining conditions” (p. 139). Jackendoff argues convincingly that preference rules are to be found throughout the range of human psychological processes; they provide “a way to accomplish what psychological systems do well but computers do very badly: deriving a quasi-determinative result from unreliable data” (p. 157).

Jackendoff’s proposal is important in its claims not just about the nature of language, but also about the nature of learning itself. It thus provides a model for the form of the theory of second language learning. E. Spolsky (1985) has shown that a preference model, with its rejection of purely binary logic, is consistent with some current views of the physiology of the brain. The preference model, although still at the level of gross generalization, is a further step toward the complexity of a model like that envisaged in Parallel Distributed Processing, which is discussed in more detail in the final section of this article.

The fifth feature of the model is its recognition of the need to establish a general theory of second language learning firmly and clearly in a social context. Language learning is individual but occurs in society. Although the social factors are not necessarily direct in their influence, they have strong and traceable indirect effects on the model at several critical instances.

CONDITIONS FOR SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING

Using the preference model as my base, then, I propose a first form of a general theory of second language learning as follows. The achievement of the various possible outcomes in second language learning depends on meeting a number of conditions. Some of these are necessary conditions, without which learning is impossible; many are graded conditions, in which there is a relation between the amount or extent to which a condition is met and the
nature of the outcome; others again are typicality conditions, which apply typically but not necessarily. All this allows therefore for the existence of a varied but limited set of alternative paths to the various possible outcomes.

The model aims not only to be internally consistent but also to make verifiable claims (for fuller details, see B. Spolsky, in press). Although its complexity means that verification in practice is difficult, it must make clear what kind of evidence will show that the theory is wrong.

Because of the implication of multiple paths to a complex set of outcomes in the model, something that Ellis (1985) recognizes when he says that “it is also possible that a single phenomenon is the result of more than one cause” (p. 297), the model has been oversimplified if it seems to have direct applications or to lead to a single approach to language teaching. Any intelligent and disinterested observer knows that there are many ways to learn languages and many ways to teach them, that some ways work with some students in some circumstances and fail with others. (This is why good language teachers are and always have been eclectic: They are open to new proposals and flexible to the needs of their students and the goals of their course.) At the best, the theory aims to explain these variable successes; at the same time, it suggests the possibility of modifications in practice and the evaluation of methods that are most appropriate, for given kinds of students with certain kinds of motivation, to achieve certain defined kinds of second language knowledge and skills.

One way to present a model of second language learning, a formalization that will permit empirical testing, is in the form of an underspecified mathematical formula, based on Carroll’s (1962) model for instruction. Let us call the linguistic outcome in which we are interested $K$, a symbol standing for the knowledge and skills in the second language of the learner. We can then say that $K_f$ (knowledge and skills at some future time) is a result of four groups of factors: $K_p$ (knowledge and skills at the moment, including general knowledge of the learner’s first and any other languages); $A$ (various components of ability, including physiological, biological, intellectual, and cognitive skills); $M$ (various affective factors such as personality, attitudes, motivation, and anxiety); and $O$ (opportunity for learning the language, consisting of time multiplied by kind, the latter covering the range of formal and informal situations in which the learner is exposed to the language).

Simply stated, the formula $K_f = K_p + A + M + O$ is, then, a claim that each of the parts will make a difference to the result: If any one is absent, there can be no learning; and the greater any one
is, the greater the amount of learning. In this form, it encompasses such cases as the specially able or the highly motivated learner who takes advantage of minimal opportunity and shows the critical importance of amount of opportunity (time) in accounting for success. The formula will receive greater specification, so that we will see not just the composition and contribution of each of the factors, but the degree to which differentiation in one element can lead to different results. In its initial simplicity, then, it invites the elaboration that will capture the complexity of the phenomenon being studied.

The special interest of the formula is that it seems to be applicable not just to the macrolevel, the development of larger levels of proficiency especially dealt with by the descriptive model, but also to the microlevel, the learning of single items. (The definition of an item, a complex issue, is discussed in the final section of this article.) For learning a language involves learning one item—sound, word, structure, speech formula, usage, whatever—at a time; the larger proficiencies are made up of the smaller particles.

At the macrolevel, the elements of the formula are complex, but in the learning of single items, they are necessarily more simple and compressed effects of other factors. Thus, whereas the conditions making up M in developing a general proficiency have a strong enough effect to vary according to the kind as well as strength of motivation, M in learning a single item is more likely to be a single measure of willingness to persist in the effort to understand, memorize, or practice the item. It is here that one might look for the connection between microlevel and macrolevel.

The additive model is a useful starting point, but it does not go far enough in capturing the complex interaction or all the interlocking influences that a preference model will demonstrate. The preference model involves the interaction of several clusters of interrelated conditions. I have so far identified about 75 conditions that I find relevant to second language learning. These conditions are the natural and logical conclusion of current research in second language learning; they form, in other words, a description of the state of the art. It must, however, be stressed that I do not claim that they are novel or original (although for some my position is somewhat different from that of other scholars); the originality is in the claim that they all interact to form a general theory.

A PROSE DESCRIPTION

Because the model is interactive, it might be useful to sketch roughly how its parts go together. Second language learning of any
kind takes place in a social context, which makes up the first cluster of conditions. The social contexts of both the family or home and the community, city, and state are relevant. The social context includes components such as the sociolinguistic situation, the general exposure of learners to other languages, the roles of the target language and other languages in the outside community and in the home, and the general perception of the value of the target language and of bilingualism. The social context is expressed formally in language policies of various kinds: At the state level these may be laws or provision of language education; at the home level these include decisions to speak a certain language or to encourage or discourage language learning. (For a detailed consideration of the relation of the community to second language teaching, see Ashworth, 1985.)

The conditions described for the social context influence language learning in two ways. First, they lead to a learner’s attitudes, which are divisible, following Gardner (1979) and Gardner, Lalonde, and Pierson (1983), into those toward the community speaking the target language (integrativeness) and into those toward the learning situation. In this latter set, I would include the learner’s expectations and perceptions of the learning task and its possible outcomes. These two kinds of attitude and specific learning goals lead to the development of motivation on the part of the learner.

The second influence of the social context is in the provision of opportunities for language learning; these may be grouped roughly into formal and informal situations. Formal situations are the various institutionalized educational opportunities provided by a society for language learning. The availability of formal or informal learning opportunities (ranging from formal instruction to exposure to the language in use) itself also depends on the social context.

More precisely, when there is formal instruction in a school, the social context and various parent factors (their education; their level of religious, ethnic, or national allegiance; their socioeconomic status; their place of birth; their knowledge of languages) determine parents’ rationales, goals, and priorities. The social context (including any political expression of it), together with parents’ rationales, goals, and priorities and modified (or replaced) by any independent ideology of the school offering the program, determines the school’s rationales, goals, and priorities. The school’s rationales, goals, and priorities account for formal learning opportunities.

The social context is also the source of informal opportunities for language use and learning. Informal situations are available in different kinds and amount, according to social conditions that
determine the potential opportunities for a learner to interact with speakers and writers of the target language. Thus, the social context determines the actual nature of possibilities for social intercourse and other communicative transactions.

The second cluster comprises conditions of the learner. The language learner brings to the language-learning task, besides the motivation already referred to, a number of capabilities and a body of previous knowledge and experience. Some of these capabilities are universal, such as an innate capability for deriving a grammar, an innate or learned capability of inferring interpretation from speech acts, and presuppositions about the uses of language. Although these universal capabilities are basic in that they set necessary conditions for any learning, they are not of special interest in explaining variation in the outcomes. This is because they are theoretically available in all learners—they are as characteristic of human learners as are arms and legs.

Other capabilities are specific to each learner’s own background, whether linguistic or nonlinguistic. Of particular importance among these personal learner characteristics are previous knowledge (of the first or other languages); age; language-learning aptitude (especially important in formal learning situations); learning style and strategies; and personality factors, of which anxiety is the most clearly relevant. The combination of these learner factors accounts for the use the learner makes, consciously or unconsciously, of the socially provided formal or informal learning opportunities.

The interplay between language learner and learning opportunity (and in particular language addressed to the second language learner as modified by communication and performance strategies of learner and source) determines the learner’s success in achieving the linguistic outcomes (linguistic and communicative competence of a variable nature) and nonlinguistic outcomes (including changes of attitude) that have been determined personally (by the learner) or socially (by home, school, state, etc.). As a result of the interaction of “strategies” used by the potential learner and by the teacher (or any other source of the target language), various outcomes occur, which may be linguistic or nonlinguistic. I have already mentioned the complexity of linguistic outcomes; nonlinguistic outcomes include changes in attitude and satisfaction or frustration of personal learning goals.

The schematic layout of the model so far described, which is presented in Figure 1, is no more than a rough representation: The claim I am making is that the preference model offers a method for formalizing what is left unspecified.
FIGURE 1
Schematic Representation of the Model

| SOCIAL CONTEXT leads to | ATTITUDES of various kinds that appear in the learner as MOTIVATION (M), which pins to other personal characteristics such as AGE, PERSONALITY, CAPABILITIES (A), and PREVIOUS KNOWLEDGE, all of which explain the use the learner makes of the available |
| SOCIAL CONTEXT provides | LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES (FORMAL or INFORMAL) (O). |

The interplay between learner and situation determines LINGUISTIC AND NONLINGUISTIC OUTCOMES for the learner (K).

FORMALIZING AND TESTING A PREFERENCE MODEL

I have so far talked about the preference model quite informally. Essentially, my goal is to understand rather than replicate; a language teacher does not make learning happen but rather facilitates it. The very basis of the theory is the belief that there are in fact a very large (perhaps unlimited) number of ways to learn. My claim is that the 75 (or more or fewer) preference conditions form part of a kind of competence model; they model the underlying system and account for it without making particular claims about how it works.

Of course, there would be no more sense in claiming that every learner sits there with a preference model in his or her head than there would be in a claim that speakers of a language proceed to apply the rules of a transformational grammar as they speak and understand. The model is a formalization; it substitutes reality and claims that the actual process must involve at least something as complex as this system.

To establish the correctness of the model, two tasks must be accomplished. First, the correctness of individual conditions or rules must be established, and then the correctness of the complete set of conditions and their interactions must be shown. Establishing
that something is correct requires also that it can be falsified. A theory or any individual rule in it is generally considered to be falsified by the existence of a clear counterexample. This principle applies to necessary conditions, whether graded or not. If there is a case in which the condition should apply but does not or a case in which the strength of the condition should affect the strength of the outcome but does not, this is a counterexample that challenges or falsifies the condition. For example, if I had proposed that normal hearing was a necessary condition of second language learning, the existence of deaf learners would show it to be wrong. Similarly, if I had proposed that language aptitude was a graded necessary condition, the lack of correlation between aptitude and Hebrew learning found in one study (B. Spolsky, in press) would be counterevidence.

What is the case with typicality conditions? Seeing that there is no claim that they work all the time, is there any way to falsify them, or are they so powerful, so unfalsifiable, as to be useless in constructing an empirically verifiable theory? First, a typicality condition is wrongly labeled if no cases exist (can be shown) in which it does not apply—that would make it a necessary condition. Second, it has no claim on typicality if it does not apply in a reasonable number of cases. The term typical suggests in fact that it should usually apply; counterexamples do not falsify a typicality condition but rather show that it is correctly labeled.

The important effect of typicality conditions, subject to empirical testing, is that they strengthen the probability of the outcome; they are not necessary but additive in their effect. Thus, setting normal hearing as a typicality condition for second language learning is a claim that learners with normal hearing will generally, other things being equal, learn better than those with hearing impairment. Setting language aptitude as a graded typicality condition says that students with some kind of aptitude that is highly developed will learn faster than others. It is thus possible to look for evidence supporting any claim for a typicality condition. However, the fact that typicality conditions are additive means that the effect of any one condition can be masked when there is strong influence of some other conditions such as attitude or learning opportunity.

The issue of how to test the model as a whole is more complex, depending on an answer to the question of how a preference model might work, how its various rules and conditions go together and produce results, or better, how they explain the results that might be observed. The most useful analogy I can think of is an expert system.
Expert systems are models developed in computer research in artificial intelligence to emulate the activities of human experts in solving complex problems. An example is how one goes about diagnosing the cause of a nonfunctioning system. When my computer suddenly stops working, I check out a number of possible causes in turn, depending on my experience and expertise. If the lights in the house have also gone off, I am fairly sure the problem is lack of electrical power. If it is daytime, my first step might be to check whether the lights work. If they do not, I need to follow up on the electricity problem (check my fuses, check the neighbors) rather than worry about the computer.

Underlying the action I take is a set of beliefs about the nature of the system I am dealing with: A necessary condition for the computer to work is electricity. If the computer does not work, one cause is lack of electricity. If the house lights work, there might be another cause why the computer is not receiving electricity. And so on. An expert (especially one who uses a computer in a city with regular power cuts) quickly develops a more-or-less efficient system of checking out causes and trying remedies.

The more elaborate the problem, the more complex the expert system. One area that has been fairly well studied is that of medical diagnosis, for which there are computer programs that lead through the steps of a diagnosis. Expert systems are important for being able to deal with uncertainty that occurs at two levels (see Cohen, 1985, for a detailed discussion of one way to deal with this problem). The first level is the accuracy of knowledge of the present situation. In the power failure, I attempted to reduce this uncertainty by checking whether or not other lights worked, but I still could not be sure that power was getting to all necessary parts of the computer. In the diagnosis, there may be certain relevant information that is hard to measure accurately or hard or even impossible to obtain. This means that the first part of a conditional statement in a rule system will usually need to be qualified with a probability statement, such as “If I know with a specified degree of probability that X is the case . . .” rather than the more simple condition in the form “If X is the case . . .”

In an expert system corresponding to the requirements of typicality conditions, the second part of the rule is also to be stated as a degree of likelihood: ‘If the car won’t start, the fuel gauge is on zero, and I can’t remember when I last bought fuel, the chances are very good that it is out of fuel.’ Because a failure in the car’s electrical system would produce the same result, we would check it (to reduce uncertainty on the condition) before setting off to buy
more fuel. There might be other causes of failure, but all this
evidence would usually be enough to make us ready to act.

The important feature of expert systems, then, is that they are
designed to deal with situations of uncertainty, with what in theory
are called fuzzy situations. They work by gathering as much
information as possible and then making a decision. They allow for
multiple causation of a result, for stronger and weaker judgments,
for formal systems that remain open to modification.

The general theory of second language learning that I am
proposing consists of a set of preference conditions that, I suggest,
go together somewhat as the rules of an expert system do. We might
think of our problem as a predictive one: What are the chances that
a learner will develop a new linguistic behavior? The theory shows
how we might determine which pieces of information are relevant
to that understanding. The more information there is available
about the conditions and the more precisely the outcomes can be
specified, the more accurate the prediction can be.

Let us try a couple of examples. To predict the likelihood of a
specific item being learned to a criterion level by an individual, the
simple model proposed by Carroll (1962) and summarized in the
formula presented earlier will be enough. The formula $K_f = K_p + A + M + O$
said that future knowledge and skills (in this
case a criterion level control of a specific item) depend on present
knowledge and skills, ability, motivation, and opportunity.

Can the formalization be improved? The additive nature of the
formula misses some key features—the characteristics of typicality
conditions in particular. Stating the formula on the basis of
conditions, it is better presented as something like this:
$P (C_k) = K (R)$. The probability ($P$) of a change ($C$) in knowledge
($K$) of a language (as specified in the first 20 conditions of the
model) is a function of present knowledge ($K$) and of the
application of the other 54 conditions ($R$).

To make the prediction more accurate, we need a precise
specification of the outcome, a method of assessing present
knowledge, information on the ability and motivation of the
learner, and a notion of how much and what kind of opportunity
can be given. The interactive nature of the model claims, for
instance, that less able learners will need more motivation or
opportunity; that as long as there is a wide choice of possible
opportunities, learners will be more or less successful according to
kind of ability and kind of motivation; that some kinds of learning
opportunity may well reduce motivation.

In considering the macrolevel of developing functional skills in a
defined domain, the degree of specification of ability, present
knowledge, motivation, and opportunity becomes more critical, for these conditions apply over a larger number of individual learning events. Social context will have more effect on the kinds of motivation that will keep the learner active and the kinds of opportunity that will be available; the ability effects will be magnified, and so differences in makeup will become more critical.

The theory I have been presenting suggests the basis for the “conceptual analysis” that Widdowson (1984, p. 33) points out is a first task of the informed language teacher. It also begins to identify the variables that can be controlled and those that need to be taken into account. The theory suggests the additive value of many different kinds of intervention; it also suggests criteria for finding more appropriate and so more efficient modes of intervention and for avoiding counterproductive activities, such as teaching techniques that may seriously reduce motivation in certain circumstances.

BEYOND THE PREFERENCE MODEL

The preference model highlights the problem of relating the learning of individual items to the learning of more general abilities, the distinction that I have referred to as micro- and macrolevel learning. An analogy that might help clarify this issue is the problem of modeling weather. The development of television weather reporting has given all of us a view of weather changes as a matter of macrolevel processes: We see on the screen clouds and rain moving in broad sweeps. But there are recent suggestions that the more generalized models fail to predict with accuracy because they do not capture the minute changes in each tiny sector that make up the broader picture. Scientists are working on models that permit the study of liquid flow not as a generalized process but as the result of changes in individual cells. The complexities involved in weather are easy to imagine: Local conditions partly determine local weather and in their turn affect neighboring cells; this is passed on further as general conditions, which in turn affect local cells.

Two scientific models currently being developed offer considerable promise. One is in the area of fractal geometry, where work by scholars following Mandelbrot (1983) is opening up new vistas for study, not just of physical phenomena but of diffusion among human beings. The second is the work in what is called Parallel Distributed Processing (Rumelhart, McClelland, & the PDP Research Group, 1986), which already is challenging basic assumptions in the area of language learning. Although it is risky to
be premature, it is worth considering briefly the implications of this potential revolution, which, Sampson (1987) argues, may well lead to a paradigm change as great or greater than that launched by Chomsky's *Syntactic Structures* (1957).

Parallel Distributed Processing (also called connectionism) sets out to build a model for human cognition on the basis of the complexity that is now known to exist in the brain. Just what possibilities this gives is made clear by the following account taken from *The Economist* (1987):

The brain is getting more complicated. Ten years ago scientists had a fairly simple picture of how it worked. The business of the brain, they believed, was conducted through circuits made of neurons which talked to each other via ten chemicals called neurotransmitters. . . . The new picture is messier but more fruitful. . . . each of the 100 billion nerve cells in the brain may form connections with up to 10,000 of its fellows. The brain is thus composed of a switchable network of neurons; it is not a vast electrical circuit with just one connection between each pair of neurons. . . . The brain, it turns out, has not ten but around 100 different neurotransmitters. (p. 95)

The proponents of Parallel Distributed Processing argue that the generalizations, rules, and axioms with which we have become accustomed to work are gross, approximate ways of dealing with the outcomes of processes made up in fact of large numbers of microscale elements, which themselves are not conceptually interpretable. The processes themselves involve large numbers of elements, varying in nonbinary ways, and made up of individual events that are stochastic in nature; they occur in large networks, which, as the above description of the brain suggests, may be connected internally in various combinations to each other or externally, receiving input from the outside world or sending output to it. A network learns a new behavior pattern by changing the “weight” of its various connections on the basis of patterns received from input. These patterns of weights rather than the fixed connections determine the new pattern of behavior.

The model is clearly very complex. By some, it is considered as a direct application of the brain model; more generally, it is assumed to be based on the brain metaphor, so that it does not directly depend on the neurophysiological evidence. The model has been used to explore a number of different questions that are reported on in Rumelhart et al. (1986). One of the most interesting to linguists is a study of the learning of past tense forms of English verbs. In the model, which requires a 460-member phonetic feature coding system, the input is paired base forms and past tense forms. After 200 training cycles in which high- and low-frequency verbs were
input, the model was generating 91% of the correct features of low-frequency verbs with which it had not previously been presented. Its responses were always plausible (if not always correct) and mirrored in a number of ways the behavior reported for children learning English as a first language.

Samson (1987), in a review, stresses that these results are achieved without the rules proposed by competence models; they seem to reflect much more closely the performance of normal speakers of a language. Although he does not claim that the model constitutes a disproof of the rule-based model or that it is complete, it does seem to offer a strong potential challenge and to show the nature of a model that will account for performance without postulating competence.

The argument is one that students of the history of language-teaching theory might find sympathetic. The theoretical failure (and practical problem) of the audiolingual method was its inability to show how to move from learned sentences to creativity; this was one of the best arguments for the post-Chomskyan language-learning models (e.g., Krashen’s [1982] championing of what he labeled acquisition, the first-language-like internalization of rules). But current theories have so far failed to show how to go from competence to performance, how to relate structural knowledge and rules to functional language use. Parallel Distributed Processing offers, then, a possible model for developing the kind of performance grammar that is widely called for. Its implications for second language learning theory are potentially immense.

Apply this analogy to second language learning. While a generalized functional ability is developing, it is developing through the addition of individual items. A critical question is what is meant by an item. In pre-Chomskyan days, linguistic items were fairly easily defined (phonemes, morphemes, structures); generative grammar has led to a major emphasis on the grammatical rule and its parts as critical items to be learned and on more complex phonetic and lexical features as part of the knowledge base; work based on Parallel Distributed Processing approaches suggests an even more complex composition of linguistic knowledge.

There is no fixed order in which most individual items are learned; if there is a natural order, it is limited in its scope. However, the order is affected by previous knowledge, ability, and the particular kind of exposure. The likelihood of learning a new item is affected in turn by the degree to which the last item learned satisfies, encourages, reduces, or maintains the motivation that led to the learner’s first exposure. Thus, each individual act of learning combines into the broader level of functional skill development.
The promise of this new model is enormous, but its realization will surely take years of work. In the meantime, the preference model is an important attempt to capture the enormous complexity. It goes, I believe, a useful step beyond the binary models that allow only for necessary conditions in dealing with human behavior. In the microscale terms of the Parallel Distributed Processing paradigm, even a preference is just a broad generalization, but it is more within our conceptual grasp than the complex mathematical models that one day might come to bridge the gap between competence and performance, between the macrolevel of our observations and the microlevel of the underlying systems. It is a model that permits us to see how to integrate and evaluate present knowledge, to consider its implications for practice, and to recognize gaps that need to be filled.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

A modified version of this article was presented at the 1988 TESOL Convention in Chicago. It is dedicated to the memory of H. H. Stern and Claus Faerch, who will both be remembered for their major contributions to applied linguistics and will both be missed for all they might still have given to the field, their colleagues, and their friends.

THE AUTHOR

Bernard Spolsky, Professor in the Department of English at Bar-Ilan University since 1980, was President of TESOL in 1978-1979. His most recent book is Language and Education in Multilingual Settings (Multilingual Matters, 1986); his next, to be published shortly by Oxford University Press, will be Conditions for Second Language Learning: Introduction to a General Theory.

REFERENCES


The study reported in this article examined the effects of gender and the perceived expertness of a speaker on the recall of orally presented material. A total of 45 advanced and 53 intermediate ESL subjects listened to an expository prose passage (536 words) concerning the Pennsylvania Dutch. The four treatment conditions were (a) presentation of the passage by a male speaker who was not introduced; (b) presentation by a female speaker who was not introduced; (c) presentation by an “expert” male speaker, preceded by a brief, fictitious introduction concerning the speaker’s educational training and publications; and (d) presentation by an “expert” female speaker, preceded by a brief, fictitious introduction concerning the speaker’s educational training and publications. The results indicated that the level of student proficiency and passage condition were significantly (p < .01) related to recall, with no interaction effects. Both advanced and intermediate subjects listened more attentively to the male speaker. Although the topic requires further exploration, the findings also indicated that the introduction (expertness factor) had the effect of neutralizing the gender bias.

A recurrent finding in sociolinguistic research is that men and women are not evaluated equally. Several studies have reported that listeners often attend to male speakers more carefully even when the presentations are identical (Gordon & Hall, 1974; Gruber & Gaeblein, 1979; Newcombe & Arnkoff, 1979; Sewell, 1985). Gruber and Gaeblein found that presentations by males were recalled better than presentations by females even when the topic concerned a traditionally feminine activity, such as sewing.

Evidence of sex role stereotypes has been presented consistently in the literature (Gordon & Hall, 1974; Kaplan & Goldman, 1973). Typical of these findings is that men are often considered to be
more intelligent, sincere, and competent than women (Spence & Helmreich, 1972). Although many studies document no observed differences in leadership behavior between men and women, substantial differences are nonetheless perceived to exist (Day & Stogdill, 1972; Wexley & Hunt, 1974). Currently, no empirical evidence documents sex bias in second language listening comprehension, but the continued existence of traditional sex role divisions in many countries suggests that such bias is highly probable.

Listener bias based on the social status of the speaker has been well documented in the sociolinguistic literature for some time (Hudson, 1980). For example, McCroskey and Young (1981) and Wolvin and Coakley (1985) investigated bias in listening comprehension due to source credibility. Source (speaker) credibility is the listener’s attitude toward a source of communication at a given point in time. These researchers indicate that source credibility is multidimensional and that one of the most commonly identified dimensions is expertness.

A classic study by Naftulin, Ware, and Donnally (1973) demonstrated that listeners were greatly influenced by an impressive list of fictitious degrees and publications. The speaker in the study was a professional actor who knew nothing about the topic of his presentation, “Mathematical Game Theory as Applied to Physical Education.” According to the researchers, the content of the actor’s presentation consisted of “an excessive use of double talk, neologisms, non sequiturs, and contradictory statements. All of this was interspersed with parenthetical humor and meaningless references to unrelated topics” (pp. 631-632). Despite these unusual conditions, three groups of sophisticated, well-educated listeners generally held very positive attitudes toward the speaker, “Dr. Fox,” and the content of the lecture.

In an ideal world, perceived expertness would apply to male and female speakers equally. As might be expected, however, males are often perceived as being more expert or competent than females in numerous different situations (Sewell, 1985). Clearly, gender and the perceived expertness of the speaker have an effect on the first language context of listening comprehension. The study reported in this article examined the effect of these variables on the listening performance of ESL students.

METHOD

The objectives of this study were to (a) establish the existence or nonexistence of sex bias as a factor in ESL student listening recall
and (b) examine the influence of the perceived expertness of the speaker as a factor in ESL student listening recall.

Subjects

A total of 45 advanced and 53 intermediate university-level ESL students participated in the study as intact classes (four classes at each level), of whom 56 were males and 42 were females. The students represented a considerable range of first language and cultural backgrounds; however, since 51 (52%) of the 98 subjects were north Asian, the generalizability of the results regarding other ESL student populations is necessarily limited.

The students in the intermediate group were enrolled in different intact sections of the same semi-intensive ESL course and had approximately the same level of English language proficiency. This assessment was based on their scores on the Comprehensive English Language Test (CELT) (Harris & Palmer, 1970) and the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL). Students enrolled in this course all have scores ranging between 180 and 220 on the CELT and between 490 and 550 on the TOEFL.

Similarly, the advanced ESL students were enrolled in different sections of a higher level university basic writing course. Most of these advanced students had completed the intermediate, semi-intensive ESL course during the previous academic year. The individuals in this group also possessed approximately equivalent levels of English language proficiency based on TOEFL and CELT scores that exceeded 550 and 220, respectively, and based on holistically graded writing performance scores that placed them in this special prefreshman English course.

Materials

“The Amish People and the Pennsylvania Dutch Country” (Duffy, 1986, pp. 178-179), an expository prose passage consisting of 536 words, was chosen for the study. According to the author, the passage was pilot tested with intermediate ESL students and found suitable for use with this group, based on numerous classroom applications. This topic was selected in an attempt to maximize student interest and, at the same time, to minimize the impact of

1 The sample included 17 subjects from South Korea; 13 from China; 11 from Taiwan; 10 from Japan; 5 from Puerto Rico; 4 from Hong Kong; 3 each from Pakistan and Italy; 2 each from Brazil, Iran, Indonesia, Colombia, India, Argentina, France, Chile, Lebanon, El Salvador, Haiti, Venezuela, and Laos; and 1 each from Cuba, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Poland, Yugoslavia, and West Germany.
prior knowledge on student recall. With the possible exception of ESL students who had lived in Pennsylvania or Ohio, it was considered unlikely that many of these participants would know very much about the topic.

The subjects were given a brief multiple-choice written survey to assess prior knowledge of the topic and interest level. According to the results, 95% of the advanced subjects and 90% of the intermediates found the passage to be interesting or extremely interesting, and the great majority of subjects (82% of intermediates, 76% of advanced) had little or no knowledge of the topic.

A male and female speaker read the passage, and an audiotaped recording of each was completed. Both speakers were natives of the same Middle-Atlantic state. The rate of presentation for the speakers was very close to the native-speaker norm of 175 words per minute (wpm) for speakers reading from a script. In this instance the actual rate of speech was 178 wpm for the male and 174 wpm for the female. The two taped presentations were recorded and played at the same volume level, and both speakers enunciated words clearly and spoke enthusiastically.

Procedures

Each level of students (intermediate and advanced) was randomly assigned to one of the four treatment conditions, which were as follows: (a) a male speaker presenting the passage material without an introduction, (b) a female speaker presenting the passage material without an introduction, (c) a male speaker presenting the passage material with a fictitious introduction, and (d) a female speaker presenting the passage material with a fictitious introduction. In the latter two conditions, subjects were told by the researcher present in the classroom that Dr. John Connor (Condition c) or Dr. Mary Montgomery (Condition d) was a distinguished professor of history at Harvard University and the author of several award-winning books and articles on the subject of early American history.

All subjects were tested during their regularly scheduled class periods in their usual classrooms. Each student was given a test booklet containing a short list of background information questions, instructions pertaining to the study, the prior-knowledge-and-interest survey discussed above, and blank pages for completing a recall protocol. The students were instructed to listen attentively to the audiotape without taking notes and then to write down all that they could remember using complete sentences. They were also told that the audiotape would be played twice.
The playing of the audiotape took about 4 minutes, and the subjects were given 5 minutes to recall/write. The audiotape was then replayed, and the subjects were given 4 minutes to recall/write. Afterwards they answered the background questions and completed the survey.

Scoring and Data Analysis

In their studies, Steffensen, Joag-dev, and Anderson (1979) and Carrell (1987) maintained that the number of idea units generated by students yielded direct evidence of comprehension as a reflection of recall ability. Thus, in the present study students who were attending to the speaker should have been able to recall more of the major idea units in the text, thereby demonstrating better comprehension. The advantage of this technique is that it provides an unobtrusive measure of student reaction to the speaker, as indicated by Stern and Cummins (1981). After the students’ written summaries were collected, the total number of idea units was tallied for each subject in each of the four different treatment groups. An idea unit was defined as a substantive, nonredundant proposition (Steffensen et al., 1979). The respective numbers of idea units were verified by two independent judges (interrater reliability = .92).

A 2 x 4 analysis of variance (ANOVA) was utilized in the study. The two variables were student proficiency in English and passage condition. The first variable consisted of the intermediate and advanced levels of student proficiency in English. The second variable included the four passage treatment conditions regarding the gender and the perceived expertness of the speaker, as previously explained. The sex of the listener was investigated as a separate variable (by means of univariate analysis) because of the small and disproportionate cell sizes that would have been generated by examining this variable in each of the four passage conditions with two levels of subjects.

RESULTS

The results revealed that student proficiency and passage condition were significantly \( p < .01 \) related to recall, with no interaction effects (see Table 1). Both the advanced and intermediate subjects recalled considerably more idea units from the presentation of the male speaker without an introduction (nonexpert) than from the presentation of the female nonexpert (see Table 2).
### TABLE 1
Summary of Two-Way ANOVA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of variation</th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student proficiency</td>
<td>519.83</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>519.83</td>
<td>19.90*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passage condition</td>
<td>645.17</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2,221.72</td>
<td>8.38*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student proficiency x passage condition</td>
<td>18.52</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6.17</td>
<td>0.23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p < .01.

### TABLE 2
Means and Standard Deviations by Gender and Expertness of Speakers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Advanced subjects</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>19.1</td>
<td>7.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>13.2</td>
<td>4.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male expert</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>21.1</td>
<td>5.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female expert</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>16.8</td>
<td>3.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>21.1</td>
<td>5.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>16.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Female</td>
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<td>Male expert</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>21.1</td>
<td>5.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>13.2</td>
<td>4.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate subjects</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>13.6</td>
<td>3.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>5.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male expert</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>15.5</td>
<td>4.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female expert</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>7.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>15.5</td>
<td>4.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male expert</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>13.6</td>
<td>3.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>5.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>13.6</td>
<td>3.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female expert</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>7.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male expert</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>15.5</td>
<td>4.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>5.93</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Similarly, the advanced group recalled more idea units from the male expert's presentation than from the female expert's presentation. Although this same finding was in evidence for the intermediate group, the means did not differ as markedly.

A particularly interesting finding was that both groups performed at a noticeably higher level when the presentation was given by the female expert than when it was given by the female nonexpert. This same expertness factor was not as obvious with regard to the male-expert versus male-nonexpert conditions. These results indicate that the brief, fictitious introduction had a decided impact on the subjects' perception of the female speaker. In effect, the introduction seemed to neutralize the male/female distinction.

The gender of the listeners (see Table 3) was also explored as a variable in the study. The findings clearly indicated that gender-related differences in listening recall ability did not account for the previously observed effects ($F = 0.66$). In keeping with the earlier findings, however, the means (see Table 4) revealed that female subjects who listened to the male speaker scored higher than female subjects who listened to the female speaker. The male subjects exhibited the same tendency, but the difference was not as great.

### TABLE 3
Summary of One-Way ANOVA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of variation</th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>$F$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between groups</td>
<td>24.29</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>24.29</td>
<td>0.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within groups</td>
<td>3,547.03</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>36.95</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Female group mean ($n = 42$, $SD = 6.63$) = 15.38. Male group mean ($n = 56$, $SD = 5.62$) = 14.38.

### TABLE 4
Means and Standard Deviations by Gender of the Listeners

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>$n$</th>
<th>$M$</th>
<th>$SD$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Females listening to</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>females</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>12.6</td>
<td>5.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>males</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>17.9</td>
<td>6.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Males listening to</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>females</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>12.9</td>
<td>5.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>males</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>16.2</td>
<td>5.30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

FACTORS IN ESL LISTENING RECALL
DISCUSSION

The results of this exploratory study are entirely consistent with the findings of the sociolinguistic research discussed earlier. Gender bias in listening recall also exists in the ESL context. It is somewhat disturbing to note that the female subjects also recalled more idea units by listening to the male speaker (see Table 4). The reason for this outcome is unclear. Perhaps female listeners are gradually conditioned to be more attentive to male speakers as a result of gender-related status divisions in the speech community.

Although this finding needs further investigation, the expertness factor presents a possible intervention strategy. The brief, extremely positive introduction greatly enhanced the subjects’ perception of the female speaker, as evidenced by substantial increases in the recall of idea units. The expertness factor did not appear to be as important with respect to the students’ perception of the male speaker.

In short, gender bias is a pervasive factor that exerts an influence on ESL students’ recall of orally presented material. However, these results should not be interpreted as providing evidence favoring male ESL teachers. A multitude of variables contribute to success in teaching, and teaching excellence cannot be associated with one gender. Most likely, these results reflect long-standing patterns of bias that appear to exist in many different international speech communities.

As mentioned earlier, much sociolinguistic research has been conducted concerning gender and source credibility issues in listening comprehension. The need for further investigation of these topics in the second language context is given some urgency by the fact that current classroom practice generally involves considerable listening/speaking activity. Although many second language educators have expressed concern for this topic (Byrnes, 1984; Chaudron, 1983; Markham & Latham, 1987; Richards, 1983), teachers need to know much more about a wide variety of variables that may influence second language students’ listening comprehension.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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REFERENCES


FACTORS IN ESL LISTENING RECALL


Some Myths You May Have Heard About First Language Acquisition

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This article focuses on three assumptions that have been made in recent work on second language acquisition about first language acquisition: Comprehension precedes production; children acquire language in a systematic, rule-governed way; and the impetus behind first language acquisition is communicative need. Research on first language acquisition challenges these assumptions. Empirical evidence indicates that the relationship between comprehension and production is not unidirectional, that children's first steps toward acquisition are haphazard and piecemeal, and that children acquire at least some aspects of language simply “because it is there.” Links that have been posited between first and second language acquisition and inferences drawn from them should be reviewed in the light of this evidence.

In recent years, a great deal of research into the acquisition of a second or foreign language has focused on exploring potential links between first and second language acquisition. In particular, the discoveries that L2 learners appear to use some of the same rule-formulation strategies as L1 learners, that they make errors similar to those made by L1 learners, and that they tend to learn grammatical constructions in an invariant order that is not dependent on language background, much as children follow an invariant order of acquisition, have led researchers to posit much stronger ties between the processes of first and second language acquisition than were attributed to these two groups during the heyday of contrastive analysis.

Among the theories that have drawn heavily on the similarities between L1 and L2 learners, one can cite Krashen’s acquisition/learning distinction (Krashen, 1976, 1981, 1982) and the corollary theory of the Monitor (Krashen, 1977a, 1977b, 1978, 1982), the Interlanguage Hypothesis (Nemser, 1971; Richards, 1974; Selinker, 1972), and the Natural Order Hypothesis (Bailey, Madden, &
According to the first of these, acquisition in the second language, or the learner’s subconscious acquisition of linguistic forms from information in the input, is seen as parallel to acquisition in the first language. Learning, or the conscious learning of explicit, formal rules, is taken as a much more artificial, less useful process that is ultimately beneficial only to the learner who is adept as a “monitor,” and, even then, only in certain settings.

The second of these theories, the Interlanguage Hypothesis, is based to a large extent on the discovery that the majority of errors produced by L2 learners are developmental or intralingual, based on the overgeneralization of rules that the L2 learner has discovered in the language being learned. These errors bear a striking resemblance to many of the errors produced by children acquiring their first language, leading some to infer that the processes of L2 learning are quite similar to, if not identical to, those observed in L1 learning.

Finally, work on the acquisition of grammatical morphemes has similarly led researchers to focus on the similarities between first and second language acquisition. Numerous studies (Bailey et al., 1974; Dulay & Burt, 1973, 1974, 1975, 1977; Hakuta, 1976; Krashen, Butler, Birnbaum, & Robertson, 1978; Krashen et al., 1977; Larsen-Freeman, 1976; see discussion in Dulay et al., 1982) have documented a relatively invariant sequence in the acquisition of these forms by L2 learners, regardless of L1 background and type of training. Although the sequence is distinct from that found for L1 learners, the fact that language background plays a minor role in the L2 sequence has underlined the importance of universal language-learning strategies and hypotheses to L2 learning and, by extension, has strengthened the link between L1 and L2 learning.

This discovery of the similarities between first and second language acquisition has influenced L2 teaching methodology in a variety of ways, often leading methodologists to seek ways of making the learning process and environment more “natural.” Often, these methodologies make assumptions, either directly or indirectly, about the processes underlying first language acquisition.

The purpose of this article is to argue that some of the assumptions that have been made present inaccurate accounts, or at best half-truths, regarding normal first language acquisition. The discussion focuses in particular on three assumptions: (a) Comprehension precedes production; (b) children learn their first language in a systematic fashion, by always formulating rules; and
COMPREHENSION PRECEDES PRODUCTION

The first assumption, that comprehension precedes production, can be found underlying a variety of approaches. It is an explicit element in the Input Hypothesis of Krashen (1982), who argues that we acquire language by understanding language containing structures just beyond our productive capacity—at a level he calls “i + 1”—and discovering regularities in those structures. He comments that the “child understands first, then this helps him acquire language” (p. 23). (The Input Hypothesis is based, at least in part, on the widely recognized fact that speakers modify their speech patterns in speaking to nonnative speakers and children. However, the precise role that these modifications play is far from clear; they probably serve a variety of pragmatic, social, and linguistic functions. See J. G. de Villiers & P. de Villiers, 1978, for review and discussion.)

The assumption that comprehension precedes production is also an important feature of Asher’s Total Physical Response (see, e.g., 1977b), in which teachers are encouraged to allow their students to gain comprehension of the language before attempting to produce it. The basic idea behind this approach is to delay speech from students until understanding of the spoken language “has been extensively internalized” (1977a, p. 1041). This assumption is likewise a feature of Terrell’s Natural Approach (Krashen & Terrell, 1983; Terrell, 1977), in which the teacher speaks the target language, but students are allowed to speak either the target language or their native language. Students do not have to produce until they are “ready” to do so. (The emphasis on delaying production, focusing on listening first, also stems from a concern for reducing the learner’s anxiety about production. This claim that encouragement to produce is more anxiety-producing than encouragement to comprehend is a separate issue that is deserving of debate in its own right but that is beyond the scope of this article.) The view espoused by these researchers and others is expressed succinctly by Gary (1978):

Clearly the case is that in second language learning, as in first language learning [italics added], there is a considerable lag between the development of one’s receptive competence and one’s productive competence. . . . One can learn a language much more efficiently if one
Differences Across Structures in the Relationship Between Comprehension and Production

The problem with this assumption with regard to first language acquisition is that the relationship between comprehension and production is a complex one, in which comprehension does indeed sometimes precede production, but also in which production sometimes precedes comprehension. Let us consider just a few cases in which the latter has been observed (for a list including other cases, see Chapman, 1978, p. 309).

One case in which production appears to precede comprehension is the acquisition of *wh-* words. In production, children acquire *where* and *what* quite early, usually by the age of 2 or soon after (Bloom, Merkin, & Wootten, 1982, p. 1086; Ervin-Tripp, 1970, p. 83; Tyack & Ingram, 1977, p. 211). At the time at which children are using these question words appropriately in their own speech, however, they have difficulty in comprehending them. For example, Tyack and Ingram found that although children generally respond to *where* correctly when it occurs in sentences with intransitive verbs, they do more poorly in responding to *where* in sentences with transitive verbs, responding with a noun that would more appropriately have been questioned with either *who* or *what* acting as the object of the verb. In addition, *what* questions are often misinterpreted as if they were *who* questions. Errors of these types are found at all ages for subjects aged 3 to 5;5 (5 years; 5 months) (Tyack & Ingram, 1977, p. 219).

Similarly, in the acquisition of *why*, children around the age of 35 or 36 months (Bloom et al., 1982, p. 1086; Tyack & Ingram, 1977, p. 215) begin to use this question word extensively in their speech. But one researcher (Blank, 1974) has argued that children use *why* a great deal in production in order to be able to work out its complex semantic content. Only by focusing on the answers adults give to their *why* questions can children work out the complex semantics of this word and questions containing it.

A second example comes from the acquisition of word order. It is well known that children learning a language with rigid word order, like English, generally use correct word order in their speech, even at the two-word stage (R. Brown’s [1973] Stage I). However, in studies that have tested English-speaking children’s comprehension, subjects have been found not to rely on word order as the major guide to finding the subject of a sentence.
In J. G. de Villiers and P. de Villiers’s study (1973, p. 338), subjects with mean lengths of utterances (MLUS) between 1.5 and 4.25 used appropriate word order in their spontaneous speech at least 95% of the time. However, in a test of their comprehension of active and passive sentences, children’s performance was much less accurate. At MLU 1.0 to 1.5 (early Stage I), subjects performed at chance level on both active and passive sentences. At MLU 1.5 to 3.0 (late Stage I to Stage III), subjects understood active sentences appropriately 70% to 81% of the time, passives 28.9% to 42.3% of the time. At MLU 3.0 to 3.5 (early Stage IV), children performed better on actives (85.8% correct), but much more poorly on passives (down to 13.3%). At MLU 3.5 to 4.25 (late Stage IV to early Stage V), children’s performance on passives appeared to rise again, to 39.4% accuracy. These results showed poorer performance in comprehension than in production and suggested that it was not until MLU 3.0 to 3.5, when children treated passive sentences as if they were active, that children appeared to use a word-order rule in comprehension—agent before action—that they had been using all along in production.

Chapman and Miller (1975), whose subjects similarly showed better performance in production than in comprehension on word order in active sentences, found that children’s comprehension of active sentences appeared to be influenced by the animacy of the nouns in the sentences. Noun-verb-noun sequences in which the first noun was animate and the second inanimate were treated correctly 93.8% of the time as subject-verb-object. However, noun-verb-noun sequences in which the first noun was inanimate and the second animate were misinterpreted. Performance was at 50.1% accuracy on such sentences and at only 36.4% accuracy by the least advanced subjects (mean MLU 1.77, or roughly Stage I). Sentences with two animate or two inanimate nouns were interpreted correctly 66.5% and 65.2% of the time, respectively.

In a follow-up study, Chapman and Kohn (1978) confirmed the finding that children fail to fully understand active, semantically reversible sentences until 3½ to 5 years of age. However, this study showed that children do not use animacy of nouns as a guide to the subjects of sentences, but rather their understanding of probable events, or “how the child usually acts or what the usual state of the world is” (p. 759). These authors conclude that before children arrive at a full understanding based on word order, their responses appear to be based on a mixture of “some lexical understanding, past experience, and contextual information” (p. 759). Only later, after this nonsystematic responding, do children use word-order strategies as a systematic guide to understanding sentences they are hearing.
Similar results can be cited from work on the acquisition of relative clauses. Among the first relative clauses to emerge in children’s production are those that modify the object of the main clause. Just after around 2;6 (Bowerman, 1979; Limber, 1973), children begin to use relative clauses with place, way, and the like as head nouns in object position. Children soon after begin using relative clauses in which “empty” nouns such as thing and one in object position are modified. These clause types are followed by relative clauses modifying common nouns in object position. Still missing at 4;0 are relative clauses built on sentence subjects. This contrasts quite sharply with children’s comprehension of sentences involving relative clauses.

In a variety of studies (e.g., H. D. Brown, 1971; J. G. de Villiers, Tager-Flusberg, Hakuta, & Cohen, 1979; Sheldon, 1974, 1977; Tavakolian, 1977; see Bowerman, 1979, and Hamburger & Crain, 1982, for reviews), 3- to 6-year-old children’s understanding of relative clauses has been assessed. Although there are some conflicting results in these studies, all of them reveal one type of sentence for which children’s responses are consistently high: sentences involving relative clauses that modify the subject of the main clause and in which the subject of the embedded clause is relativized (subject-subject sentences). Responses to subject-object sentences (in which the subject of the main clause is modified by a clause in which the object noun is relativized) have been consistently poor, whereas responses to object-object sentences have been intermediate between subject-subject and subject-object sentences. Responses to object-subject sentences have varied widely, ranging from best (equal to subject-subject, J. G. de Villiers et al., 1979) to worst (Tavakolian, 1977) performance. The results of these studies indicate, first, that children have difficulty understanding relative clauses at ages well beyond those at which they are producing them and, furthermore, that the types of relative clauses that appear to be least difficult in comprehension are distinct from the types that appear to be least difficult for production.

Differences Across Children

Not only are there differences across structures in the relationship between comprehension and production, but there are also differences across children. For particular structures, some children have been observed to perform better in comprehension before production, others in production before comprehension. An example comes from the acquisition of color terms. In one study
(Rice, 1980), children who did not previously have color terms in
their lexicons were taught to respond to “What color is this?” in
relation to objects that were red, green, and yellow. After the
completion of training on this production task, subjects were given
a comprehension task, in which they were asked to “Give me a red/
green/yellow one” in the context of red, yellow, green, and black
objects. Rice found that 4 of the 8 subjects who were administered
the comprehension task, all of whom were able to respond correctly
to “What color is this?” (production), could not respond correctly to
“Give me the ________ one” (comprehension). That is, half of them
showed correct production of color terms before correct
comprehension.

Another example comes from K. E. Nelson and Bonvillian’s
(1978) study of the acquisition of object names. In this study,
children were taught names for made-up and rare objects in
seminaturalistic settings. Out of 25 preschool-age subjects, 7 showed
a comprehension bias, showing comprehension before production;
2 showed simultaneous acquisition in comprehension and
production; and 16 showed a production bias, or the ability to
produce correctly before performing correctly in comprehension.
These authors conclude:

The present data reveal . . . that the strategies of concept learning favor
comprehension as a leading edge for some children but production as
the leading edge for other children. . . . Our data indicate that initial
strategies favoring either production or comprehension are reasonable
approaches and that neither is developmentally more mature than the
other. (p. 537)

Reasons for Differences Between Comprehension and Production

Researchers have suggested a variety of reasons for the
asymmetries between comprehension and production observed in
these and similar studies. First, in the case of comprehension and
production in natural settings, some researchers have pointed out,
the tasks involved in comprehension and production are radically
different. To decipher what a speaker is saying (comprehension),
children and adults alike can rely not only on linguistic cues, but also
on nonlinguistic cues not directly related to the understanding of the
linguistic construction at hand. Information on the nonlinguistic
setting, on the topic of conversation, and on normal linguistic and
nonlinguistic protocols that take place in similar settings all facilitate
a proper interpretation of what is being said (Bloom& Lahey, 1978;
Chapman, 1978; Clark, 1980, 1982; J. C. Richards, 1985, pp. 189-
Thus, it may appear that one comprehends the linguistic message being received when in fact he or she merely comprehends the nonlinguistic information present in the social and environmental context.

At the same time, however, there are many linguistic and nonlinguistic strategies that can similarly lead to appropriate production of a linguistic construction before a complete command of that structure has been attained. Clark (1980, 1982) has cited many strategies used by children to produce utterances that are longer and more complex than they are capable of fully understanding. Among these are “coupling,” in which two short utterances are brought together under the same intonational contour, and “plagiarism,” in which the child adopts another’s utterance as is or incorporates it into another construction.

Clark argues that not only does production sometimes precede comprehension, but production of a structure may even lead to its comprehension. She points out that items in the child’s own repertoire may be more easily identified by the child in others’ speech and are readily available for comparisons with other constructions also in the child’s repertoire. Clark (1982) suggests that it would be inefficient and counterproductive for the child to delay production until comprehension is perfect. This would overload the child’s capacities and would prolong the process of acquisition. She claims instead that—contrary to the prevailing view—production, not comprehension, may be “the leading edge of development” (p. 16).

For more controlled settings, in which one can reduce or eliminate the normal situational and social cues provided by the nonlinguistic context, other explanations for differential results for comprehension and production have been offered. In some cases, it has been suggested, other types of nonlinguistic and linguistic cues may still sway children. At times, the experimental task may be too difficult for children to respond on the basis of their processing of the linguistic information provided, so they develop strategies that allow them to cope with the difficult tasks. Thus, for example, in the case of relative clauses, the response patterns noted above favoring subject-subject sentences over object-object, object-subject, and subject-object sentences may be due to some processing heuristic that relies on the sequence of the nouns and verbs on the surface (J. G. de Villiers et al., 1979), or perhaps to a linguistic strategy of treating the two clauses as if they were conjoined by and (Tavakolian, 1977), or to some other experimental coping mechanism (see Hamburger & Crain, 1982, for a review of alternative proposals that have been made).
Bowerman (1978a, 1978c) offers a similar explanation for children’s performance on the comprehension of word order. J. G. de Villiers and P. de Villiers (1973) had suggested that differences in performance in comprehension and production were due to the fact that semantic factors often constrain the choice of word order in production and that these factors were absent in the comprehension task in their study. Bowerman suggests instead that incorrect performance on comprehension tasks by children who produce appropriately ordered sentences is attributable to the use of processing shortcuts, such as semantic interpretations, that override actual syntactic knowledge. Similar strategies for dealing with experimental stimuli have been suggested for a variety of other constructions (see M. M. Richards, 1979, for the role of experimental strategies in the comprehension of a number of constructions).

It should be noted, however, that children’s use of nonlinguistic strategies in such studies may be a good indication of a total lack of understanding. As Bowerman (1979) notes with regard to children’s understanding of complex sentences, “Children seem to apply strategies to sentences that they cannot process fully. Once they can process these sentences, they no longer need the strategies and begin instead to interpret them on the basis of structural knowledge” (p. 304).

At times, however, the best explanation for asymmetries in comprehension and production seems to have nothing to do with children’s application of strategies for coping with difficult experimental tasks. Leonard, Newhoff, and Fey (1980) studied 4 young children’s acquisition of nonsense words. These children, aged 1;6 to 1;9, were able to comprehend 6 words that they never used in production, learned 24 words in production after comprehension had been demonstrated, but also used 17 words in production prior to comprehension.

These last 17 words were used in four ways. Four of them were used appropriately for the objects that they stood for. In addition, 7 were used in play—for example, they were produced “in a singsong or ‘squealy’ manner and were quite unrelated to any interactions with the referent object” (Leonard et al., 1980, p. 191). Nine were used in acknowledgment: In contexts that required a child to respond, the child might use a given word, regardless of the object name required. And 4 showed up in “phonological triggering,” in which the experimenters’ use of the experimental word triggered the child’s use of a phonologically related real word in its place.

The last three types of usage seem to indicate a lack of referential
knowledge for the word. The first type, however, demands some more extensive explanation. Leonard et al. (1980) suggest that the subjects’ “failure to perform on the comprehension task . . . may have been attributable to task factors or attention difficulties” (p. 191). But similar results in other studies suggest explanations that are more closely linked with the acquisition process itself, rather than with the demands of a particular experimental task.

K.E. Nelson and Bonvillian (1978), for example, propose that some of their subjects, unlike those investigated in previous studies, showed a production-first bias because of two factors. First, their subjects had never seen or interacted with the objects before being presented with them in their study, whereas children in other studies may have been introduced to the objects and their names long before they began acquiring those names. Thus, their study may have captured the process of acquisition at an earlier phase in development. Second, the children in K.E. Nelson and Bonvillian’s study were older than subjects in other studies, “and so their productive language skills may have been at a higher level, making the actual production of names in their productive vocabulary more likely and allowing a wider range of possible comprehension-production relations” (p. 538).

With regard to the comprehension and production of lexical items, Huttenlocher (1974) points out, comprehension involves the “recognition of words and recall of the objects, acts and relations for which they stand,” and production involves the “recognition of objects, acts, and relations and recall of the words that stand for them” (p. 335). Rice (1984) points out that comprehension entails the prior construction on the part of the child of a category of objects, acts, or relations, to which the lexical item can be linked. Correct production, on the other hand, does not depend on the presence of an overriding concept that organizes or relates objects.

Thus, in Rice’s (1980) study of color terms, the production task, which demanded a response to “What color is this?” demanded knowledge that this object could be labeled red, and so on. The child needed to know that color called for a color term, had to be able to recognize the color of this particular object, and then had to be able to recall which one of the three color terms corresponded to this color. “The subjects could manage the production tasks without knowing that color could be a criterial attribute for equating objects” (p. 110). In contrast, for correct performance in comprehension, “this knowledge appears to be very important for correct performance. . . . When asked to ‘Give me the red one,’ the child had to recognize the word ‘red’ and recall the relationship for which it stands” (p. 110).
Supporting evidence for this theory came from Rice’s (1980) tests of the children’s natural use of color as a criterion for grouping objects. Children were given a task in which they could choose to group toys according to their color or according to their shape. Those subjects who showed production before comprehension were also subjects who showed no evidence of color concepts in their spontaneous groupings of objects. In contrast, those who showed both comprehension and production of color terms did group according to color.

In assessing how to predict which will occur first—comprehension or production—Rice (1984) concludes:

If the content is easier to recall than the word, we would expect comprehension to be easier. That would seem to be the case with young children whose earliest comprehension is of labels for what they are likely to know, such as familiar persons, objects, and actions. On the other hand, when the content is more challenging to recall, and/or the word is made easier to recall, production may be easier than comprehension. Such circumstances as novel items that are frequently labeled for a child by an adult... would fit this profile, as would words such as why that are often used appropriately by children who show little awareness of the full meaning of the term. (p. 152)

To summarize, although comprehension does sometimes precede production in first language acquisition, the relationship between these two is much more complex than the comprehension-precedes-production stance allows. The demands of comprehension and production are distinct, and it is a mistake to conclude that one is more essential or facilitates acquisition more than the other.

CHILDREN LEARN IN A SYSTEMATIC, RULE-GOVERNED FASHION

The second assumption that underlies a great deal of the research linking second language acquisition to first language acquisition is that children learn by formulating rules in a systematic fashion. This assumption is sometimes linked to the previous one:

If the same rules underlie speaking and listening, why not work on speaking first and listening later? The obvious answer is that one cannot say what he does not know. That is, one has to understand how a language works—what its rules are [italics added]—before he can create a sentence in it. (Gary, 1978, p. 189)

Clearly, some depart from such a strict view (see, e.g., Hatch, 1978, 1983; Hatch, Peck, & Wagner-Gough, 1979). However, the notion that the nature of language acquisition, especially first language acquisition, lies primarily in the formulation and acquisition of rules
predominates, for example, in the Interlanguage Hypothesis, which emphasizes the overgeneralization of rules as a source of L2 errors and, as a result, draws strong links between L1 and L2 acquisition.

Initial Acquisition in Context

Of course, there is a great deal of evidence that children do indeed formulate rules and abstract structures in gaining a full command of the language. That evidence comes both from those who support a nativist approach to language acquisition (see, e.g., Roeper, 1982; White, 1985) and from those who do not (see, e.g., Bowerman, 1986; Karmiloff-Smith, 1983, 1985). Nevertheless, this is only part of the story.

For many structures it has been shown that rule formulation is often initiated by the child only after he or she has been using the relevant forms or constructions correctly for some time. Time and again, researchers have discovered that in their first attempts at acquiring new linguistic structures, children take steps that are quite haphazard and that the earliest information that children store about structures is often context bound, sometimes simply rote-learned routines. In many cases, it is not until the child has been using a form or construction for some time that he or she comes to understand relationships between linguistic forms or to posit or see more abstract rules that link those forms. In some work on second language acquisition, researchers have expressed the view that routines are more prevalent in the speech of L2 learners than in that of L1 acquirers (e.g., Dulay et al., 1982, pp. 232-242); recent research into first language acquisition leads one to question this view. (This section does not address the current debate on whether children posit rules or simply construct analogies [see, e.g., Maratsos, 1979; Maratsos & Chalkley, 1980; Rumelhart & McClelland, 1987]. Here, the terms rules and rule governed are used to refer to linguistic behavior on the part of the child that indicates some comparison of structures, recognition of similarities between those structures, and creative use of language based on those perceived similarities.)

One well-known example of rule-governed behavior in the language of the child is the overregularization of the regular rules for the formation of the past and the plural in English. Children apply the -ed past tense form to irregular verbs (yielding forms like goed, fullered, and hurted) and the regular -s ending to irregular nouns (producing, e.g., tooths, mouses, foots). This application of the regular pattern to the irregular roots continues often through the grade-school years.
However, it is also true that before children discover the regular rules, they use some correct irregular and regular past and plural forms. It is generally agreed that the child is initially able to use such forms correctly by learning the individual words, as isolated forms, in context and by extending their use to similar contexts. (See Bowerman’s [1982c, pp. 115-117] discussion of two kinds of analysis with regard to such forms.) Chapman (1978) hypothesizes a protracted sequence of development in which comprehension and production in context precede production and comprehension out of context:

Learning to understand language cannot take place in the absence of shared social and situational context. Meaning for the child arises from experience. Only gradually, through successful use of comprehension strategies based on lexical understanding, do children see the way in which language structures systematically reflect the sentence meanings they independently construct. (p. 322)

This point is emphasized in Bates, Bretherton, Shore, and McNew’s (1983) work on the early stages of the development of naming. These authors argue that very young children do not at first differentiate names or labels from the situations in which they are used. Rather, the child (at around 10 to 11 months) first gains some organized expectations, and appropriate actions, within familiar cultural frames or scripts like lunch. . . . Although the script has structure, it is still not well articulated. As yet, none of the gesture/object/sound links have emerged into a privileged naming status. . . . When the child participates in a given scenario, all of the links may be activated at once. . . . But the child does not yet actively select portions of this knowledge to stand for or remind him of other elements. This is, for example, the point at which a vocal procedure like “Bam” is used to accompany knocking over objects in a well-learned game. (pp. 110-111)

At a second stage (around 13 to 20 months), the child selects some portion (vocal or gestural) of the script to tag or label the whole or some segment of that script. Thus, bam might now be used to label or act as a reminder for the banging action that occurs in the script. At a third stage (around 16 to 22 months), sequences of symbols begin to be used to express semantic relations. Thus, doggie might now be used not only to label dogs, but to express a relation between a dog and its bowl—for example, the child might say “doggie” while pointing to the dog’s bowl.

Haphazard Acquisition of Related Forms and Meanings

Thus, one aspect of L1 learning that reveals the absence of
general rules that apply over a variety of contexts is initial acquisition in context. Only with linguistic maturity is the child able to dissociate language from the context in which it is embedded. A second symptom of the lack of general, overriding rules is haphazard beginnings in which (what the adult knows are) related forms are learned in isolation. This is readily apparent in, for example, the acquisition of two-word utterances and the acquisition of word meaning.

In a careful examination of children’s early two-word utterances, Braine (1976) found that children initially use “positional associative patterns” and “limited scope formulae” to produce utterances. The former consist of combinations of a constant-plus-variable form that have positional consistency but no productivity (e.g., one child, Andrew, used several phrases made up of all + X, but showed no productive use of this construction [pp. 7-9]): “The child has registered the frequent occurrence of the constant term in a particular position in phrases in adult speech and learned a fair-sized batch of phrases of the type, but without acquiring a formula for coining new phrases [italics added]” (p. 90). Limited scope formulae are rules that map meaning onto form, yielding either constant-plus-variable (e.g., Andrew’s use of more + X [pp. 7-10]) or two-variable utterances (e.g., utterances expressing agent + action or size + X) on a productive basis. However,

each formula expresses a particular, often rather narrow, range of semantic content. . . . There is no common order of emergence of formulae; indeed, there appear to be essentially no interdependencies among the formulae, indicating that each formula is an independent entity, independently acquirable. . . . As children develop by acquiring more formulae, children learning the same language will become more similar to each other and appear to converge on a common simplified grammar of that language. (p. 92)

Braine (1976) argued that the conclusions of prior research that had attributed more broad-based rules to children’s two-word utterances had often been based on only one or two combinations of the relevant type in the corpus of the child’s speech. He concluded that “the literature as a whole contains an analytic bias toward attributing considerably more grammatical structure to young children than is warranted by the corpora” (p. 93).

Similarly, in the acquisition of word meaning, Carey (1978) has theorized that children initially store haphazard examples of uses of words, haphazard because they come from children’s individual experiences with words. Thus, a child might know that tall applies to people and buildings, but not to poles and trees. Only after
Children have stored several exemplars can they draw out some generalizations (what Carey calls “lexical organizers”) about the use of the word in question. Eventually the child will discover that the important dimension in labeling all of the examples above with *tall* is the vertical one. Such lexical organizers then become available for use with other words the child has already or will later acquire.

Another, somewhat different, type of evidence for children’s haphazard beginnings comes from Karmiloff-Smith’s (1977, 1979a) work on the acquisition of multifunctional forms. Among the forms she has studied is the word *même* in French, which, like *same*, can mean “same one” (that is, same identity) or “same kind.” Karmiloff-Smith (1977) reports that in a study of children’s understanding of sentences like *The girl pushes a X and then the boy pushes THE SAME X*, children initially (at age 3) interpreted *même* exclusively to mean “same kind.” She argues that “initially, children seem to prefer to opt for a single function, or if they do use two different functions, these are isolated for the child and he is not aware that they are covered by the same surface marker” (p. 386).

Subsequently, at an intermediate stage (at age 4), *même* was interpreted in some cases to mean “same kind” and at other times to mean “same one.” At this stage, many children show signs of confusion and hesitate before responding to questions containing *même*, “as if there was a conflict for the child between the competing interpretations ‘same one’ and ‘same kind’” (Karmiloff-Smith, 1977, p. 385). Finally, at an advanced stage (beginning at age 5, but more well established at 6), *même* was consistently interpreted, as appropriate for the task, as meaning “same one.”

Karmiloff-Smith (1977) suggests that at an advanced stage such as this in the acquisition of multifunctional words, there is “a tendency to overmark a function . . . or to create new, and often slightly ungrammatical forms to differentiate the functions” (p. 386). Thus, in the spontaneous speech of some of the children over 5 years of age, there were attempts to distinguish “same one” from “same kind.”

These children when noticing one of the task objects would exclaim: *moi j’ai la même de vache* or *moi j’ai une de même de vaches* (literally: ‘I’ve got the same of cow’ or ‘I’ve got one of the same of cows’). Here, they seem to want to express ‘same kind’ . . . but at the same time avoid the correct, economic expression *la même* . . . The children have implicitly understood *le même* or *la même* as meaning ‘same one’ and created a separate expression for ‘same kind’ (p. 387).

In other words, children initially learn the separate meanings of multifunctional forms in isolation and only later do they come to bring those meanings together.
One final example comes from the acquisition of causative verbs, which are those that entail in their semantic makeup a causal component. In English, causative verbs fall into several types. First, there are pairs of verbs whose morphological shapes are unrelated but whose semantic content indicates they fall into causative-noncausative pairs. For example, *kill/die* and *drop/fall* are causative-noncausative pairs: John killed Sam. entails, or can be roughly equated with, John caused Sam to die; Karl dropped the vase roughly means Karl caused the vase to fall. A second type of causative verb in English shows an overt morphological relationship—for example, an affix is added or an ablaut (internal vowel change) is used—to its noncausative counterpart (e.g., *heat* means “cause to become hot,” *dramatize* encodes “cause to become drama”). A third type of causative has the same shape as its noncausative counterpart. Thus, John opened (causative) the door can be said to mean John caused the door to open (noncausative); Sam warmed the food, Sam caused the food to become warm; Joe froze the liver, Joe caused the liver to freeze; and so forth.

In a seminal paper, Bowerman (1974) proposed that in their acquisition of these various types of causative verbs, children initially go through a period of correct use, during which both causative like *bring* and *drop* and noncausatives like *come* and *fall* are used. However, after this initially correct use, children begin to make errors like those in the following selected examples from Bowerman (1982c), in which an adjective or verb is used causatively.

Christy 2;11 I’m gonna sharp this pencil. (= sharpen. Sticking pencil into pencil sharpener)

Christy 2;6 Mommy, can you stay this open? (= keep. C having trouble with refrigerator door)

Christy 2;9 I’m gonna just fall this on her. (= drop. Holding piece of paper over E’s head, then dropping it)

Rachel 2;7 Are you gonna nice yourself? (watching M put on eye shadow)

Jaime 3;11 I’ll put you in two cages and fat you up. (= fatten. Telling what witch in *Hansel and Gretel* says) (pp. 108-109)

Bowerman argued that children begin to make errors like those in the above examples because they have discovered that there is a rule in English that governs the use of causative verbs of the third type above. That is, children discover that there is a rule in English that allows some noncausative verbs to be used, without surface modification, with a causative meaning. (This is simplifying
somewhat; see Bowerman, 1974, 1982a, 1982c, for more thorough analyses. ) With this discovery, children begin to overgeneralize this rule to verbs to which it does not apply in the adult language, as in the above examples. Prior to this time, then, the children have been using forms like open and close appropriately on the basis of some information other than abstract rules that govern their mutual causative-verb status. That information is piecemeal, verb-specific knowledge that is learned on experiencing each verb in context and extending it to contexts similar to the one(s) in which it was first heard.

Thus, children do not initially begin with a productive causative verb rule. In fact, it has been argued that some children may never formulate a productive rule for causative verb formation. In an experimental study of children aged 4;6 to 6;2, Maratsos, Gudeman, Gerard-Ngo, and DeHart (1987) taught subjects a new intransitive verb, fud, and observed whether they used this verb transitively, with a causal agent, in six experimental sessions. In these sessions, animate and inanimate agents performed actions that resulted in clay becoming “fudded.” Although all but 1 of the 29 subjects who only heard fud as an intransitive verb used fud in their own speech as a verb, 10 of these never used it transitively or causatively. (The other 18 subjects used it as a transitive verb with varying degrees of frequency.)

Maratsos et al. (1987) conclude that there are individual differences among children in the degree to which this “rule” (and probably others) becomes productive. These authors hypothesize that it is because of the semantic irregularity of the relation of the causative verb to its intransitive, noncausative counterpart that some children do not develop a productive rule for creating novel causative. They suggest further that

since this particular property of the causative is a common one of word derivation processes, we can more generally hypothesize that all other things held equal, derivational processes that involve an idiosyncratic, unpredictable extra addition of meaning to the stem will be comparatively less productive than those which add meaning in a completely predictable way. (pp. 112-113)

These are just a few examples of the many cases for which early, haphazard, piecemeal, and context-bound knowledge has been documented. More extended discussions of these processes can be found in Maratsos, 1979; Maratsos and Chalkley, 1980; Bowerman, 1978a, 1978b, 1982c; Karmiloff-Smith, 1979b, 1983, 1985, 1986a, 1986b; K. E. Nelson and K. Nelson, 1978; and Bates et al., 1983.

The pervasiveness of this aspect of L1 learning should lead to a
reassessment of theoretical stances regarding rule-governed behavior in L2 learning. To some extent, the importance of contextualizing language acquisition has been recognized in attempts to make L2 learning relevant. However, what has received much less attention is the role of linguistic routines at early stages (however, see Hatch, 1978, 1983; Hatch et al., 1979). Rather than constituting an undesirable aspect of some L2 classroom experience, rote learning and routines may be essential first steps for L1 and L2 learners alike. On the basis of such knowledge, learners are eventually able to discover regularities that go beyond the isolated forms in context, and they can abstract more general rules that allow more creative use of the language.

CHILDREN ACQUIRE LANGUAGE FOR THE PURPOSES OF COMMUNICATION

A third assumption, to be addressed only briefly, is one that is less directly linked with any particular second language acquisition theory. However, a great deal of work in the last two decades has aimed at broadening or strengthening the communicative basis of second language acquisition and teaching. Communicative competence is at the heart of a notional-functional syllabus and of any approach that emphasizes meaningful communication in the classroom.

The rationale behind these approaches has included a variety of factors that have nothing to do with first language acquisition (see J. C. Richards & Rodgers, 1986, pp. 64-86, for review and discussion). However, assertions such as “language learning is learning to communicate” and “the target linguistic system will be learned best through the process of struggling to communicate” (Finocchiaro & Brumfit, 1983, pp. 91, 92) must be viewed with an element of caution, if they imply that the underlying impetus behind language acquisition is a need to communicate.

Such a position, viewed from the vantage point of first language acquisition, would be, at best, a half-truth. Although clearly the system resulting from the acquisition process is used for communication, the impetus behind language acquisition appears to be, to a large degree, motivated by children’s desire to make sense of the world around them, which world includes language and linguistic structures (for a competing view, see Bates & MacWhinney, 1987).

Positing that the child learns language simply “because it is there” is the only way to explain certain phenomena observed in language acquisition. In particular, it is the only way of explaining reorganizational processes that have been observed for a variety of linguistic structures—and for a variety of nonlinguistic structures as
well (see Strauss, 1982). In innumerable cases, children can be observed to begin by using a set of structures correctly and appropriately and then to depart from that correct use at a later stage. As noted above, this is the case with, for example, irregular past tense forms, irregular plural forms, and causative verbs. It is also the case with, for example, causative verbs incorporating manner (Bowerman, 1982c) and with verbs prefixed with un- (Bowerman, 1982b).

As Bowerman (1982c, 1986, in press) and Karmiloff-Smith (1983, 1985, 1986a, 1986b) have pointed out, the child would have no need to go beyond these initially correct stages if the only factor motivating language acquisition were the need for communication. At this point, the child already has all the means necessary for communication and should not need to go any further.

Yet, for structure after structure, it is clear that children go beyond these initial stages to draw out abstract principles underlying the structures they already know and to arrive at a more complete, more comprehensive understanding of those structures. Karmiloff-Smith (1979b, 1983) argues that children constantly compare and systematize the knowledge they are gaining simply to organize it into a system. In so doing, they discover regularities that might otherwise go unnoticed and, more to the point, need not be noticed for the purposes of effective communication. As Bowerman (1982c) points out, “The onset of errors in domains of language that the child already appears to have mastered... poses a challenge for the development of an adequate theory of the motivating force(s) behind language acquisition” (p. 102). Theories that attempt to explain how the child acquires an adult-like system by appealing to corrective feedback from the adult, to the child’s attempts to move toward a closer match with the adult forms, or to the child’s efforts to communicate more effectively are powerless to explain changes from correct to incorrect forms in the child’s system.

The errors... point instead to a significance that language has for the child other than its usefulness as a tool for communication.... This is the role of language as a ‘formal problem space’ (Karmiloff-Smith [1979b]): a complex ‘object’ in the child’s environment whose formal properties and structure the child explores just as he or she explores other aspects of the environment without immediate instrumental payoff. (Bowerman, 1982c, pp. 102-103)

IMPLICATIONS FOR SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION AND TEACHING

If researchers are correct in drawing links between first and
second language acquisition, the questions raised with regard to the three assumptions discussed above have certain implications for theories of second language acquisition and language-teaching methodology.

First, the fact that the relationship between comprehension and production is not unidirectional—that progress in either may lead to progress in the other—suggests that language teachers should recognize that production may, in some cases, precede and even facilitate comprehension of structures. The overemphasis on comprehension before production seems to be ill-founded, and a more flexible approach that aims at a two-way interaction between these two skills appears more desirable.

Second, rote learning and routines are not unique to second language acquisition. It may be, in fact, that routines and acquisition of structures in context are a necessary first step to the acquisition of most forms.

Third, although a focus on communication in the classroom may be desirable for other reasons, it should not necessarily be assumed that this is an essential component for an incentive to learn a language. If L2 learners are like children learning their first language, a great deal of work carried out naturally has to do with deciphering and organizing the linguistic information itself. The acquisition process entails (for the child, usually subconscious) consideration and reconsideration of relationships between forms that have already been acquired, in order to come to a deeper, more comprehensive understanding of those relationships.

Fourth, everything that has been learned in recent years about first language acquisition argues in favor of an eclectic approach to language acquisition and teaching. It is clear that L1 learners make use of every “trick” available to them to acquire the structures at hand. The mechanisms identified by Clark (1980, 1982), by which children make the most of simple structures they have learned or have heard used by others, and the strategies that children have been observed to use in studies of comprehension area reminder of children’s resourcefulness and creativity in using every means available to them—whether involving linguistic or nonlinguistic knowledge—to make sense of the language they are acquiring. There is no reason to believe that L2 learners lose this resourcefulness.

All of the above assumes, of course, that L2 learning is like L1 learning. However, one might question this link, or at least the extent to which it can be stretched. Clearly, in some respects, second language acquisition is indeed like first language acquisition.
As noted, in the acquisition of grammatical morphemes, there seems to be some kind of “internal program” followed by all language learners in acquiring these morphemes, regardless of their linguistic background, regardless of the setting in which they have learned the language, regardless of the age at which they learn English as a second language.

As also noted, however, L1 and L2 learners do not follow the same sequence in the acquisition of these forms. The best explanation for the difference seems to lie in the factors that are most influential in determining those orders. For L1 acquirers, cumulative semantic and syntactic complexity, perceptual salience, and functional load appear to be most important. And although there has been some recent debate on the role of the input in determining this order (Moerk, 1980, 1981; Pinker, 1981), the frequency of use of these morphemes in the input does not appear to play a significant role (R. Brown, 1973; Dale, 1976). This contrasts with hypothesized determinants of the order found for L2 learners. Here, frequency of use in the input may play a (the?) major role. Larsen-Freeman (1976) found that there was a significant correlation between order of acquisition by L2 learners and frequency of use in everyday speech.

This difference in the probable determinants of the order of acquisition may be related to two other important differences between L1 and L2 learners. The first of these is the difference between the two in cognitive abilities. L2 learners, normally older than L1 learners, have a more well-developed understanding of the world around them. This could be to their advantage. L2 learners will have already developed many of the concepts necessary for the comprehension of word meaning, observed above in Rice’s (1980, 1984) work. For example, L2 learners will not have to learn the concept of number while learning the language that refers to numbers. This should make it easier for L2 learners to learn numerals than for L1 learners. This difference in L1 and L2 learners may lead to different relationships between comprehension and production for the two groups. In cases in which concepts are well developed and are similar for the two languages, one can expect to find few cases of production preceding comprehension in the development of L2 learners.

\[1\] A case in point is that of Genie, the modern-day wolf-child found at the age of 13. Although not an L2 learner, Genie’s cognitive development went far beyond her linguistic development. It is notable that among her earliest words were numbers and color terms (Curtiss, Fromkin, Krashen, Rigler, & Rigler, 1974), which for normally developing children are relatively late to be acquired. Genie’s advantage on these items appears to have been linked to her relatively well-developed cognitive and intellectual understanding (Curtiss, 1982).
However, well-developed concepts will work in the L2 learner’s favor only when the concepts named by the first and second languages are equivalent. Where concepts named by the two languages are distinct—particularly if they are not dramatically different but show some similarities (Andersen, 1983; Ard & Homburg, 1983; Corder, 1983; Krashen, 1983) or are at least perceived by the learner to be similar (Kellerman, 1983)—then the L2 learner may experience greater difficulty. New concepts will have to be constructed. In these cases, one might expect to observe some production before comprehension.

A second important difference between L1 and L2 learners is that the L2 learner has already acquired a language. As noted by McLaughlin (1978), Schachter (1983), and J. C. Richards (1985), the L2 learner can draw on information provided by the first language. This information may be structural (syntactic, semantic, etc.) or may have to do more generally with the nature and role of language. With regard to the three issues discussed here, it has already been noted how this might affect the relationship between comprehension and production. The L2 learner may also have preconceived notions regarding the status of rules in language and regarding the communicative function of language. Any prejudices with regard to any one of these could influence the manner in which the L2 learner approaches the language-learning task.

**CONCLUSION**

Recent attempts to draw on insights from research on first language acquisition in order to understand second language acquisition better have shed considerable light on the nature of the language-learning process. They have led to a more natural environment in the classroom, a greater tolerance for and understanding of learners’ errors, and perhaps more patient teachers, who understand that a learner can consciously “know” a rule yet not know that rule in a way that is useful for speaking and understanding the language in naturalistic contexts.

Care must be taken, however, to ensure that conclusions about the nature of first language acquisition are based on empirical evidence. Three areas in which greater care is needed have been addressed here: It is not the case that comprehension always precedes production, nor that all learning is systematic and involves rule-governed behavior, nor that communication is always the primary motivating force behind acquisition. These facts should be taken into consideration in reviewing the relevance of first language
acquisition to second language acquisition and in drawing any inferences from hypothesized links.

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A Relational Model for Managing Second Language Anxiety

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Researchers and teachers in the fields of speech communication and second language acquisition have been concerned with the phenomenon of communication anxiety. Although the anxieties experienced by native speakers of a language differ somewhat from those experienced by nonnative speakers, we suggest that students’ perceptions of their communication abilities and performances must be taken into account when dealing with the anxiety responses of both groups. This article proposes that a relational model of communication competence developed by Spitzberg and Cupach (1984) can be used as a foundation for understanding and working with students experiencing anxiety in using a second language. Specific exercises for helping students manage their perceptions of their communication are offered.

Why can’t I speak what to think a lot in English? I’m so bitter, trying hard. I’d like to speak a lot, however, I can’t. Finally, I think My basis abilities of English ran short. I’m disgusted with myself.

This comment, taken from a student’s journal in an ESL class, captures the anxieties experienced by many second language learners in their efforts to master a new language. The relationship between communication competence and communication anxiety has concerned theorists in speech communication and in second language acquisition. Members of both disciplines are concerned with the teaching and enhancement of communication capabilities and recognize that anxiety about communication often functions as an impediment to that goal.

Although communication competence and communication anxiety have been defined in various ways, there is general agreement about the meanings of the terms. Communication competence is the knowledge of and ability to use appropriate...
communication patterns effectively in an interaction (Bostrom, 1984, p. 25). Communication anxiety is the abnormally high and debilitating level of fear associated with real or anticipated communication with one or more persons (McCroskey, 1977). It can manifest itself as a trait—a general reluctance on the part of an individual to communicate regardless of context—or it may occur only in specific situations, such as when giving a speech or conversing in a foreign language.

Although anxiety reactions of various kinds have been recognized and studied extensively by psychologists and educators, foreign language classroom anxiety only recently has been isolated and distinguished from other forms of anxiety (Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986). Foreign language anxiety seems to share certain characteristics with communication anxiety, for example, high feelings of self-consciousness, fear of making mistakes, and a desire to be perfect when speaking (Friedman, 1980; Horwitz et al., 1986).

However, the anxiety associated with foreign language learning also differs from general communication anxiety. It seems to be a “distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors . . . arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process” (Horwitz et al., 1986, p. 128). Language learners have the dual task not only of learning a second language but of performing in it, whereas anxious speakers in a communication classroom generally have only performance concerns. In addition, second language learners may have difficulty understanding others, a problem that usually is not common for native speakers. Furthermore, foreign language anxiety entails a risk to self beyond that experienced by a native speaker because the speaker knows he or she cannot present the self fully in the new language. Horwitz et al. (1986) summarize:

Adult language learners’ self-perceptions of genuineness in presenting themselves to others may be threatened by the limited range of meaning and affect that can be deliberately communicated. . . . Probably no other field of study implicates self-concept and self-expression to the degree that language study does. (p. 128)

Various methods for treating communication apprehension in general communication and in language classrooms appear in the

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2 For reasons unrelated to their knowledge of the second language, nonnative speakers may experience—just as some native speakers do—a phenomenon called receiver apprehension, which refers to “the degree to which students are fearful about misinterpreting, adequately processing and/or being unable to psychologically adjust to messages” (Cooper, 1984, p. 254). Very little is known about the causes and treatment of this type of apprehension.
literature. Foss (1982) describes the range of treatment techniques that have been used in speech communication classes, including learning theory approaches, such as biofeedback, cognitive restructuring, and systematic desensitization; approaches based on skills training, such as oral interpretation, assertiveness, and conversational skills training; and treatment via the basic communication skills course. Several methods of treatment also are outlined in a volume edited by Daly and McCroskey (1984). McCoy (1979) describes how three of the most common treatment methods—systematic desensitization, cognitive restructuring, and modeling—can be applied to second language classrooms. Finally, Lucas (1984) offers a series of exercises based on the assumption that skills practice will eliminate much language-learning anxiety.

In much of the previous work on language-learning anxiety, however, the methods presented have not been adapted to the specific characteristics of the second language classroom. Many of the methods suggested, such as systematic desensitization, hypnosis, or biofeedback, demand levels of training and expertise beyond those of ESL teachers. In addition, language teachers often have neither the time to devote to handling extreme cases of anxiety nor the funds for the special equipment involved (Horwitz et al., 1986).

Even skills approaches—which can be handled within the constraints of the language classroom—have been less effective than expected because of the special difficulties of second language learners. By skills approach we mean any method based on the assumption that correct performance of a behavior results in competence. The speaker, however, must simultaneously recognize and consider his or her behavior as competent if skills approaches are to be rewarding. No matter how competent a performance is, some students will not judge their communication positively and thus are not reinforced for their skill levels. For these students, skills approaches may increase anxiety because such approaches place them in a situation that they continually evaluate negatively. What is needed, then, is an approach to language-learning anxiety that takes into account the significance of self-perception throughout all phases of language learning and performance and that can be handled within the time and funding constraints of the classroom.

We see self-perception as a critical factor in both language-learning anxiety and communication anxiety. In fact, its role has been widely recognized by researchers in both fields (Friedman, 1980; Horwitz et al., 1986). Communication apprehensives—whether those speaking their native language or those learning a new one—typically have low self-esteem, perceive themselves as less worthy than others, perceive their communication as less
effective than that of their peers, and expect continued failure no matter what feedback they actually receive (McCroskey, Daly, Richmond, & Falcione, 1977). With second language learners, there are the additional feelings of incompetence about grasping the language in the first place and about the inability to present oneself in a way consistent with one’s self-image. In both forms of anxiety, negative self-perceptions set in motion a perpetuating cycle of negative evaluations that may persist in spite of evaluations from others to the contrary.

Perception of self plays a key role in how students approach the acquisition and use of a second language. Learning to reflect upon experiences and going through some introspection can help students become more in tune with their impressions of their second language competence and provide them with a means for modifying their approaches to language learning. Sometimes student perceptions of self may correspond to the instructor’s evaluations of students’ strengths and weaknesses. For example, the following excerpt from a student’s journal shows his concern with listening comprehension, an area in which one of us, as his ESL instructor, also felt work was needed:

Today I was in a trouble. Because I’m not good at hearing. The I. E. L. I. consists of three levels. Now I’m in the best class. . . . But it is a miracale. I guess I’m the lowest in the highest class. And it is very difficult to me. . . . But I must do my best. So after today I’ll make sure every assignment every day.

In other situations, however, the instructor’s perception of a student’s ability and the student’s own perception of ability may differ. One of the best students in a high-level class wrote the following: “But basically I think I’m in low level of the class. That could be a good chance to try to study as hard as I could. Then if I catch up other students, it shows that I can make progress.” This admission came as a surprise, since she was perceived by the instructor to be one of the top students in the class. Thus, students’ perceptions of their competencies may differ from those of their instructors, and it is those self-perceptions that students must learn to analyze and work with in order to overcome communication apprehension in second language situations.

What is needed, then, to deal with communication anxiety in the second language classroom is a model of competence that incorporates the steps involved in language acquisition and performance as well as the role of self-perception as it operates across communication interactions. We propose that the model of relational competence developed by Spitzberg and Cupach (1984)
for use in the field of speech communication provides such a framework and deserves the attention of ESL scholars and teachers.

THE RELATIONAL COMPETENCE MODEL

Spitzberg and Cupach (1984) call their model relational because they argue that competence can be determined only in the context of a particular relationship:

We choose to view relationship as a confluence of behavior and perception. To us, it is at least as important to know how people view the behavior of self and other in terms of relational definitions as it is to know what behavior is actually performed. (p. 151)

In this model, then, competence is not an objective performance but a matter of perception that varies across interactions: “Competence is not something intrinsic to a person’s nature or behavior; it is an impression that a person has of self or other” (p. 115).

Although Spitzberg and Cupach (1984) do not ignore the fact that actual behaviors play a role in perceptions of competence, they simply emphasize “the importance of discovering these norms anew in each contextual episode” (p. 107). The relativity of competence is emphasized in a recent elaboration of the model: “The relational competence model does not argue against the importance of objective behavior. . . . The question changes from ‘what behaviors are competent?’ to ‘what behaviors are most likely to be viewed as competent?’” (Spitzberg & Hurt, 1987, p. 30). Competence, then, is a matter of degree, and perceptions of competence can vary from situation to situation and even within a particular episode. For example, a behavior that someone perceives to be a terrible faux pas on one occasion might pass unnoticed by that individual and others on another.

Spitzberg and Cupach (1984) make perception crucial to all stages of their model of competence. If competence is assumed to be an interpersonal impression that depends on the individuals involved, their relationship, and the nature of the particular encounter, the perceptions of those involved must take priority. They suggest that a communicator is competent if perceived so by self and/or others. The process of perception becomes the link between cognitive aspects of learning and performance aspects. In terms of language learning, then, Spitzberg and Cupach’s model suggests that distinctions between the stages of acquisition/learning and performance are less important than the recognition that perception will determine how a student handles each phase.

This relational model makes a distinctive contribution to the
notion of competence as it has developed in the discipline of communication. Whereas most conceptualizations have treated competence as an individual trait, determined by judging an individual’s behavior in isolation, Spitzberg and Cupach (1984) insist that self-perceptions and interfacational contexts be taken into account before making assessments about competence. The notion that competence can be determined only by looking holistically at the interfacational situation makes this model truly communication oriented. This focus seems to us a useful framework for conceptualizing how anxiety interferes with the attainment of competence in second language classrooms and for developing ways to reduce that anxiety. The focus is placed not on the individual performances of students but on self-perceptions of behaviors as they occur in specific episodes and contexts.

Spitzberg and Cupach’s (1984) relational model of competence includes five fundamental components or processes: motivation, knowledge, skills, criteria outcomes, and context. Each of these is discussed in turn, with an elaboration of the special factors involved in the application to the second language classroom. Taken together, these components provide a comprehensive starting point for developing exercises to help students recognize and handle their anxieties as they interact in a variety of settings.

Motivation

Motivation is the foundation of the model, since it means the difference between communicating and not communicating. By motivation, Spitzberg and Cupach (1984, p. 119) mean the affective approach or avoidance response to a particular communication situation. Obviously, if a person avoids a particular situation, the opportunity to communicate simply is not available. Some second language learners may choose not to communicate in a situation because they judge their capabilities in the new language to be so poor that not communicating is perceived as more rewarding than doing so. For some, symptoms of anxiety—excessive perspiration, shakiness, and the like—may be what keeps them from communicating. Avoidance at the motivational level reinforces the perception of incompetence because the individual never puts himself or herself in a position to increase skill levels and to be evaluated positively by others. Indeed, many students may resort to skipping classes or dropping out of language programs completely. Scovel (1978) summarizes: “debilitating anxiety . . . motivates the learner to ‘flee’ the new learning task; it stimulates the individual emotionally to adopt avoidance behavior” (p. 139).
At times, students may rebel against the second culture/language because of culture shock. Dodd (1982) suggests that foreigners sometimes may fight or flee the second culture during the transitional stage of culture shock. For instance, students may choose not to associate with native speakers or use the second language as a way of “fighting” against the second culture. They are not motivated to use the language because they do not view the second culture in a positive light. Others may cope with culture shock by withdrawing (“fleeing”) from contact with the second culture. The motivation to learn and use the second language, then, depends on students’ perceptions of their abilities in the second language and their feelings toward the second culture. Again, it is the students’ perceptions of the context of communication, including the culture within which the communication is to take place, that plays a big role in students’ responses to communication activities.

Knowledge

Once a person decides to approach a situation, a certain amount of knowledge about how to communicate in that context is necessary. Knowledge, then, is the second step in the model. It consists of a repertoire of behavioral patterns and strategies upon which a person draws in order to decide how to communicate in a given situation (Spitzberg & Cupach, 1984, p. 123). This stage, for the second language learner, is the process of intuitively acquiring and consciously learning the language. For many, this stage of the process may be especially anxiety producing because the task of tackling a second language appears overwhelming. Again, the symptoms of tension, fear, or panic that accompany some students’ efforts to study the new language may render their efforts at learning ineffective. The efforts of students who perceive themselves as incompetent only reinforce rather than dispel this perception.

Skills

Closely related to knowledge are skills, the third component of the relational competence model. This refers to the fact that although a person may be motivated to interact competently and may understand, theoretically, how to manage the fundamentals of a language, he or she needs certain skills to converse successfully in the new language. Again, Spitzberg and Cupach (1984, p. 129) do
not negate the importance of skills training but argue that it must be viewed as part of an integrated process, heavily dependent on self-perception. Students’ perceptions may or may not be consistent with their actual skill levels: Their actual performances may be adequate or even extremely fluent according to the perceptions of others, but they themselves may not evaluate them positively.

Outcomes

The fourth component of the model is outcomes. Spitzberg and Cupach (1984) identify several outcomes likely to be taken as evidence of communication competence, including communication satisfaction (how satisfied one is with the interaction), relational trust (the extent to which all parties involved feel positively toward the other in the interaction), and interpersonal attraction (an individual who is more satisfying and confirming to talk to frequently is seen as more likable).

In the second language classroom, the instructor typically is seen as responsible for establishing and evaluating appropriate outcomes. Students also need to become evaluators of outcomes and levels of competence in order for them to develop realistic perceptions of their performances. In addition, fluctuating expectations for competence should be emphasized over absolute determinants of behavior. Students need to become used to the idea that “a ‘negative’ outcome involving some dissatisfaction may still reflect competence if that outcome is relatively better than its alternatives” (Spitzberg & Cupach, 1984, p. 110).

Context

Context is the final component of the relational model. It demands that attention be given to the subjective dimensions of environment as well as to its objective features. Each person, via his or her perceptions, creates an environment that facilitates or hinders language learning. For Spitzberg and Cupach (1984), the self-perceptions of the context often are more important than the context itself and can fluctuate greatly across time and situation. Perceptions of the general context—that is, the second language culture—may vary in an individual as knowledge and feelings toward the culture develop. In addition, an individual’s views toward specific situations—dating, for example—may differ due to factors such as past experiences, present mood, and locale.
STRATEGIES FOR MANAGING ANXIETY

The balance of this article discusses treatment strategies for handling language-learning anxiety at each step of the relational model. In each case, these sample exercises are designed to highlight the role of perception as a critical but often overlooked factor in language learning and to concentrate on developing competence in various interfactional settings. Although the exercises we describe are appropriate for particular ESL levels, they can be easily adapted to other levels as well.

Motivation

Anxiety during the motivational phase of competence development has consequences for each subsequent stage of the relational model—knowledge, skills, outcomes, and context—and must be addressed by the second language teacher if satisfactory progress at the following stages is to occur. The two approaches described for dealing with high motivational anxiety address individual perceptions that may block the initiation of communication activity. One approach is based on rational emotive therapy, whereas the other is an exercise designed to help students determine precisely what part of the process of speaking the new language produces the most anxiety for them personally.

Rational emotive therapy. Rational emotive therapy is based on the assumption that irrational beliefs are the source of much anxiety when anticipating a communication situation such as conversing in a second language (Grieger & Boyd, 1980; Straatmeyer & Watkins, 1974). If these beliefs can be recognized, students can learn to interpret such situations in more realistic ways and thus may choose to approach rather than avoid situations demanding conversation.

The language teacher can begin by presenting the idea that we all operate, to some extent, from individual irrational belief systems. Some of these are given to us by our culture, some by our families, and others simply are picked up unconsciously from life experiences. Much of the time these beliefs are harmless—or at least do not interfere with our abilities to live effective lives. Such beliefs, however, can be detrimental to second language students if they interfere with language learning.

Following this discussion, the instructor asks students to generate a list of their fears about speaking the new language. Simply putting these on the board and allowing students to realize that they are not alone in their fears can, in and of itself, encourage students to relax in their efforts to speak the second language. Each of these
beliefs—from “I’ll make mistakes and people will laugh’ to “My accent is awful” —can be shown to be grounded in irrational and unproductive assumptions.

For instance, the fear of making mistakes may come from a basic belief that one is not worthy unless one is thoroughly competent and adequate in all aspects of life. The fear of being laughed at may come from an unconscious yet entrenched belief that one must be approved of by every person one encounters. Similar irrational ideas that cause and sustain anxiety for language learners are the following: (a) “It is catastrophic when things are not the way I would like them to be—that is, I cannot speak this language fluently and that is horrible”; (b) “It is easier to avoid than to face certain of life’s difficulties and responsibilities”; and (c) “There is one correct way to handle a particular situation, and if I don’t do it correctly, the outcome will be disastrous.”

Each student selects two or three beliefs from the list that seem to be contributing most to his or her anxiety. For each belief, students work through a series of questions designed to convince them of the lack of logic behind this belief. These questions, with a sample set of responses, are listed below.

1. **What irrational belief do I want to dispute?** That I must speak the language perfectly in order to be liked by those with whom I converse.

2. **What evidence exists of the falseness of this belief?**
   a. No proof exists that people will not like me if I cannot speak their language perfectly. Who knows—they may appreciate my efforts to try to speak the language and will end up liking me just as much as if I spoke fluently.
   b. If someone I like rejects me for not speaking the language perfectly, that will be unfortunate, but I will not die.
   c. No law of the universe says I must be liked by everyone.
   d. If I am not liked by one person, I can still be liked by others.
   e. In the past, I have done things imperfectly—and people have still liked me.
   f. I might speak the language perfectly, and people could still not like me.

3. **Does evidence exist of the truth of this belief?** No, not really. I can’t think of a situation in which I knew for a fact that a person didn’t like me because I couldn’t speak the language perfectly. Even if my greatest fears are realized, and no one in my host country likes me because I cannot speak their language well, I can still cope. I know there are people in the world who like me, who appreciate my efforts to learn a second language, and with whom I can have meaningful relationships.
Students can refer to and rethink these worksheets throughout the course to remind them that much of their anxiety is a matter of beliefs that really do not make much sense when examined seriously. If worksheets are shared in small groups, students gain considerable support from their peers and develop more realistic expectations about their own performance.

**Anxiety graph.** A second activity especially useful for helping students confront anxiety when contemplating a communication situation is the anxiety graph. The technique was devised by Brownell and Katula (1984) for managing anxiety in public-speaking situations, but we have adapted it for use in the second language classroom. Although the literature on communication anxiety implicitly acknowledges that anxiety is not a constant phenomenon throughout a communication interaction, instructors often fail to point out that not every phase of an interaction is equally anxiety producing for every student. Thus, students typically contemplate an event in its totality, evaluate it negatively, and end up with an inaccurate perception of the amount of anxiety actually experienced.

The anxiety graph is designed to help students to gain an accurate understanding of the nature of their anxiety, to pinpoint when anxiety is highest in a given interaction, and to approach the situation more realistically, given this information. On the graph, a completed example of which is shown in Figure 1, students chart their anxiety about a conversational encounter immediately after it occurs. This can be repeated throughout the course to graph an individual’s anxiety over time. An instructor can also use the graph in individual conferences, discussing with each how best to cope with the anxiety experienced most frequently. We prefer for students to share their graphs in groups, a process that enables them to see how similar their responses are to those of other students.

Again, the point of the exercise is for students to perceive a situation realistically and to be rewarded by others for the appropriate and effective aspects of their communications. The anxiety graph can help students internalize the fact that speaking a new language is not a uniform process that is consistently difficult and anxiety provoking.

**Knowledge and Skills**

Although we recognize that the cognitive process of knowing a language is distinct from the ability to put that knowledge into practice, the following exercise addresses the anxiety associated
FIGURE 1
An Anxiety Graph


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Anxiety Level</th>
<th>Category 1</th>
<th>Category 2</th>
<th>Category 3</th>
<th>Category 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very high</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Moderately high</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderately low</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No anxiety</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

with these two phases in an integrated fashion. Thus, we have chosen to treat the knowledge and skills components of the competence model together here.

Three activities commonly used in communication classrooms to help students gain knowledge of and skills in the language and culture are role playing, drama, and oral interpretation. Since many second language teachers already employ role playing and drama in their classrooms, the use of oral interpretation is discussed here as another possible vehicle for lowering anxiety at the knowledge and skill levels.

Oral interpretation, an integral component of most speech communication programs, involves the practiced oral reading of a script before an audience. Performances may be done solo or in groups. Oral interpretation requires the careful selection and practice of material before the actual performance. A set of scripts (poems, portions of poems, or portions of stories) is selected by the instructor, who may or may not choose to involve students in this process. The scripts typically reflect a central theme, such as “the challenge of being an immigrant in the United States” or “the changing roles of women and men.”

The scripts are practiced for correct pronunciation, intonation, volume, and timing. Emphasis is placed on interpreting the texts in
terms of the meaning in and behind the words on the paper. Nonverbal communication—facial expression, hand movements, eye contact, and so on—is planned and practiced. After the groups and/or individuals have practiced, they perform their interpretations in front of an audience. The scripts are not memorized, but they are practiced well enough that students do not have to read every word from the scripts they are holding. The group preparation, evaluation, and performance lessen communication anxiety for many students, as does the fact that they are performing the works of others (Hopf, 1970; Mier, 1983; Pelias, 1984; Schmitt, 1975; Washington, 1983).

As an introduction to oral interpretation, we have had beginning ESL classes perform quality children’s literature—stories that have become classics for American children and can be thought of as modern folktales. Such stories can lead into discussions about cultural beliefs, values, and behaviors in addition to serving as material for performance. Among the literature available for use is Charlotte’s Web, The Velveteen Rabbit, The Phantom Tollbooth, and all of Dr. Seuss’s writings. We have arranged for students to perform a selected piece for several audiences, including other ESL classes and local elementary school classes.

We had special success recently with Dr. Seuss’s Green Eggs and Ham. Students thoroughly enjoyed all aspects of the exercise, from discussing the vocabulary and the cultural values suggested by the poem to practicing pronunciation, delivery, and appropriate facial expressions. Many students really “hammed it up” while performing the piece to the various audiences. One student, who did a wonderful job of playing the character who did not want to eat green eggs and ham, wrote about the experience in her personal journal: “Oral Skills class yesterday was so fun to me. We read the topic continued from the day before yesterday loudly.” This student normally complained about not understanding and not being able to speak in English, but she did an excellent job of interpreting her part. More important, she also felt that she did a good job with her performance. Such positive responses on the part of both students and teachers suggest that oral interpretation can be an upbeat way to help students overcome some of their performance anxieties.

Outcomes

The outcome component of the relational model involves the individual’s impressions of the communication event. What is important is how he or she views and feels about the communication that
has occurred. The opportunity to reflect upon the outcomes of communication is necessary for developing specific objectives for continuing competence. At the same time, it allows students to realize, once again, the importance of their perceptions in determining the outcome of a particular communication episode.

Journals have become a common practice in many English, language, and communication classes (Popkin, 1985). In addition to dialogue journals, which encourage “personal communication and mutual understanding between each individual student and the teacher” (Staton, 1983, p. 2), journals may be used to examine personal value systems (Highnam & Geist, 1981), to explore intercultural issues encountered in the new culture (Mansell, 1981), and to assess current competencies (Hunt, 1979).

We have used journals as a vehicle for intrapersonal reflection on the language-learning process. Daily journals can help students track their feelings of apprehension in the second language situation. In addition to talking/thinking through anxieties, students also can write through their feelings of inadequacy to arrive at a more realistic, positive sense of their progress. The following excerpt is a representative sample of the evolution in perceptions—from negative to increasingly optimistic—that we observed among our students:

Oh, my god, at Reading class and writing class I couldn’t understand what they said. I could understand a little. I don’t know whether what is correct or not. I understand what they said roughly in some parts though I couldn’t speak a word. What should I do? I remembered what Kumi’s saying, “The student of University may teach you English as a tutor.” Before returning on my way, I told Tom my troubles. Tom said to me it passed two weeks. Don’t worry, but try to look for someone who be able to speak in English. I’m relieved. There is no hurry. Remember “Slow and steady won the race.”

Journals also can be used to help students develop realistic communication goals. The student begins by recording all instances of interpersonal communication during a 3-day period. The recording should include with whom, about what, when, where, and why conversation occurred. Subjective impressions should be noted whenever possible, since these reveal the perceptual set from which the student is operating. Instructors can use this information to help students sort out the typical perceptions of situations that consistently produce high anxiety.

With this information, each student then develops a hierarchy of specific goals to work toward in the remainder of the class. Instructors should help students develop realistic goals so that they
experience success as they progress up their chosen hierarchies. The journals continue during this phase as well, with students keeping track of their perceptions about their interactions as they attempt to accomplish their goals.

Toward the end of the course, another 3-day sample of interpersonal communication is recorded and evaluated by the student. The second sample is compared with the first to determine whether changes have occurred and whether the student’s level of confidence has increased.

Context

Context, the fifth and final component of the Spitzberg and Cupach (1984) model, involves identifying the objective environment and the subjective perceptions that influence how students interact in that environment. The use of case studies is discussed as a way of encouraging students to examine contextual differences and to understand the role perceptions play in understanding context. A cultural artifact exercise that facilitates students’ understanding of the culture they are studying is also described.

Case studies. Case studies involving an ethical issue are excellent for helping students become aware of their perceptions of situations and how important context is to those situations. One case study we have used asks students to consider what they would do if they discover that cheating is going on in a class in which they are doing poorly. Students need to deal with two levels of analysis: (a) What is the situation/problem? and (b) What should be done about the situation/problem? Not only are there many different perceptions about what should be done, but there are as many different ways of describing exactly what the situation or problem is.

Students become aware of the different ways of looking at a specific situation from a variety of individual and cultural viewpoints. More important, students can get in touch with their own ways of perceiving and discussing events. Such objective awareness of their own subjective reactions to situations and people can increase students’ understanding and interpretation of their communication competence in various contexts.

Cultural artifact exercise. This exercise requires students to bring to class one or two physical objects that signify some aspect of their culture. Students share their objects and ideas about the objects with other students in small groups or with the entire class. For example, in order to introduce the assignment to students, we have brought in such items as McDonald’s Big Mac containers or
microwaveable TV dinners to illustrate the “fast food” syndrome of many Americans who are constantly on the run and prefer to eat quickly rather than enjoy leisurely meals.

This activity allows students and teachers to compare and contrast their cultural “artifacts” and what those artifacts symbolize to them in a nonthreatening manner. By bringing in physical objects, students focus on tangible entities; these serve as concrete visual aids to assist in the explanation of a bit of their culture. The concrete object, then, helps students present more subjective, abstract concepts in the second language and to understand the variations possible within and across cultures.

CONCLUSIONS

In this article, we have used a relational model of communication competence as a starting point for discussing ways of handling communication anxiety in second language classrooms. Although the communication anxiety a native speaker suffers is not identical to that experienced by ESL students, self-perceptions of competence are crucial in the management of anxiety for both groups of students. Thus, the exercises we have suggested for each stage of the competence model acknowledge and work with students’ perceptions.

We hope that this article will serve as a catalyst for future work— theoretical and pragmatic—about the relationship among perception, anxiety, and competence. Ultimately, we hope the ideas we have offered here will directly benefit students by helping them to feel increasingly positive about their communication experience. Rather than having students say “I can’t,” we hope to have students who can deal with their anxieties by working through their feelings, as the student who wrote the following excerpt did:

We had a awful discussion today. Before the discussion, I was afraid that most of students speak too fast. That was a fact. In the discussion they speak too fast. But I could understand. Because if I could not understand, they speak slowly again. I could understand. I concentrated and tried to understand. So it was hard, but very interesting. And I found out that [my teacher’s] voice was the fastest one. I’ve never hear such fast voice like a machine-gun-fire. But now I know that I’m getting used to American’s voice slowly.
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REFERENCES


Effects of Preceding Activities on EFL Reading by Brazilian College Students

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This study investigated the effects of three prereading activities (pictorial context, vocabulary preteaching, and prequestioning) and a control condition on the reading comprehension of 40 undergraduate Brazilian EFL students. In a Latin square design, all subjects read four different reading passages, each passage under one of the four conditions. Immediately after reading a passage, subjects answered an 8-item open-ended test and a 10-item multiple-choice test. Multivariate analysis of variance tests on the two measures revealed significant effects for prereading and passage. Further investigation through Tukey’s HSD revealed that all three prereading activities produced significantly higher multiple-choice scores than the control condition. Vocabulary preteaching resulted in increased comprehension compared with the control but was significantly less effective than the other two strategies. Results of the study are interpreted through a schema-theoretic view of the reading process.

Students of English as a foreign language experience considerable difficulty in comprehending English texts when reading them for the first time. Not only do these texts usually contain unfamiliar vocabulary, but they also may contain unfamiliar concepts and cultural allusions that make comprehension difficult. In addition to elements that make comprehending a text in the native language difficult, there are sources of difficulty that are unique to reading in a foreign language.

Traditionally, attempts to improve the comprehension of texts for EFL students have focused on familiarizing the student with the vocabulary needed to comprehend the passage (Bernhardt, 1984). However, such instruction is unlikely to raise the students’ interest in
reading the text or to prepare them for the culturally and conceptually novel elements of the text.

Studies of prereading activities for native speakers have demonstrated the facilitative effects of activating readers’ prior knowledge relevant to understanding the new text (Mayer, 1984). Not only do prereading activities prepare native speakers for the concepts that follow, but by making the reading task easier and connecting the new content more meaningfully to prior knowledge, prereading activities make reading a more enjoyable task (Hansen, 1981).

Schema theory (Rumelhart & Ortony, 1977) may help explain why prereading activities improve reading comprehension. According to this theory, meaning is constructed through interaction between the reader’s schemata (i.e., knowledge structures in memory) and the text. Schemata are activated during reading and meaningfully related to the knowledge to be learned from the text (Rumelhart, 1981). If the reader lacks appropriate schemata or fails to activate them, comprehension may be impaired. Prereading activities are intended to activate appropriate knowledge structures or provide knowledge that the reader lacks.

EFL readers’ comprehension also depends on their schemata (Carrell & Eisterhold, 1983). If these readers are faced with highly unfamiliar content, particularly materials with many culturally loaded concepts, comprehension will be difficult, if not impossible, because the readers lack appropriate background knowledge (Hudson, 1982; P. Johnson, 1981, 1982; Steffensen, Joag-dev, & Anderson, 1979).

Three prereading techniques that seemed most practical for EFL learners were examined in the present study. Two of the techniques, pictorial context and vocabulary preteaching, have been shown to improve comprehension of native speakers of English under some circumstances (e.g., Hudson, 1982). The third, prequestioning, has earned some research support for both native and nonnative speakers (e.g., Royer, Bates, & Konold, 1984).

A large body of research supports the effectiveness of presenting pictures to aid L1 students’ reading comprehension (Bransford & M.D. Johnson, 1972; Dean & Enemoh, 1983; Dean & Kulhavy, 1981; Rasco, Tennyson, & Boutwell, 1975; Schwartz & Kulhavy, 1981; Sherman, 1976). Two studies have dealt with the effects of pictures on L2 readers’ comprehension of texts. Hudson (1982) found that the technique of displaying, discussing, and writing predictions about pictures was significantly more effective for reading comprehension than presenting a vocabulary/written prediction activity before students read. However, the activity was not more
effective overall than a task that involved reading the text, taking a
test, and then rereading the text and retaking the test (this second
test score was included in the analysis). Omaggio (1979) found that
of the pictures he presented before reading, only the one related to
the general theme of the passage improved comprehension.

The value of preteaching vocabulary to native speakers as a
method to improve comprehension is a good deal more complica-
ted and has only recently begun to receive support in the research
literature (Kameenui, Carnine, & Freschi, 1982; Stahl, 1983). So far,
preteaching vocabulary has been effective when researchers have
employed contrived paragraphs with a high incidence of rare words
and little contextual information or when they have pretaught
relevant vocabulary over extended periods of time. The consensus
of theorists of reading comprehension, however, is that vocabulary
plays an essential role in L1 reading comprehension (Anderson &
Freebody, 1979; Davis, 1968).

In L2 instruction, what is taught is not usually the vocabulary
important to the story, but rather vocabulary important to the
lesson. These words may have limited value in facilitating
comprehension of the story. At present, two studies have dealt with
preteaching relevant vocabulary to nonnative speakers of English
(Hudson, 1982; P. Johnson, 1982), and neither demonstrated an
effect on comprehension of subsequent reading passages.

The third prereading activity investigated in the present study
was prequestioning. Similar to the preposed questions advocated
by Singer (1978) for teaching active reading to children,
prequestioning is taught by having the instructor ask questions
about a passage and the students answer with new questions.
Through prequestioning, students set purposes for reading and ask
questions whose answers require understanding the text. The
method is supported by research in both L1 reading (Hansen, 1981;
Singer & Donlan, 1982) and in foreign language reading (Royer
et al., 1984).

These three prereading methods are intended to help EFL
students overcome three major problems that interfere with their
comprehension: (a) lack of vocabulary knowledge, (b) difficulty in
using language cues to meaning, and (c) lack of conceptual
knowledge (Steffensen et al., 1979; Yorio, 1972). Limited
vocabulary knowledge occasionally results in readers stopping to
identify unfamiliar words and disrupts comprehension because
readers may forget the earlier part of the sentence (Seliger, 1972;
Yorio, 1972). This is also a problem with L1 readers, particularly
those with decoding problems (LaBerge & Samuels, 1974; Samuels,
1977). Limited vocabulary knowledge also disrupts comprehension
when the meaning of a sentence or paragraph turns on knowledge of certain words. Preteaching vocabulary may help address these problems.

The second problem involves what Yorio (1972) calls the “triple process” of recalling syntactic cues, making associations, and predicting future cues, a process that L1 readers perform automatically (Goodman, 1970). EFL learners, due to interference from unfamiliar words and grammatical patterns, find it difficult simultaneously to remember earlier textual information, predict what is coming, and connect phrase and sentence meanings. The prereading activities of providing pictures and prequestioning help students make predictions about content that may assist them in resolving meaning problems when the syntax interferes.

The third major problem, lack of conceptual knowledge, is also common to L1 readers. According to Anderson, Reynolds, Schallert, and Goetz (1977), the message of a text can be distorted if there is insufficient correspondence between the schemata contained in the text and the schemata by which the reader assimilates the text. Such distortion can happen particularly when readers do not share the writer’s culture, beliefs, and assumptions. This problem can seriously interfere with EFL readers’ comprehension. It is well exemplified in a study by Steffensen et al. (1979), in which college students from India and the United States read letters describing Indian and American weddings. Subjects read more rapidly and recalled more information when they read the passage about their own culture than when they read the passage about the foreign culture. Furthermore, they produced more culturally based distortions of the foreign passage. The prereading activity of pictures, in particular, may help reduce some of these distortions.

METHOD

The present study was undertaken because of the evidence of the effectiveness of prereading activities in L1 reading and the scarcity of research in this area in EFL reading. The purpose of the study was to determine whether the reading comprehension of EFL students would be improved when they did different prereading activities (pictorial context, vocabulary preteaching, and prequestioning). Four reading passages of between 500 and 1,650 words were read by Brazilian EFL students, who then took open-ended and multiple-choice tests. Based on the results of previous studies with native speakers of English, it was expected that subjects’ comprehension scores would be higher when the reading was
preceded by any of the three prereading activities than when reading was not preceded by a prereading activity.

Subjects
The subjects were 40 sixth-semester EFL students at a college in the southern part of the state of Santa Catarina, Brazil. They were selected randomly from a group of students who had scored in the midrange (30-73) of correct items on a 105-item English proficiency test that covered listening comprehension, vocabulary, grammar, and reading comprehension. The test was a shortened version of the Michigan Test of English Language Proficiency (Division of Testing and Certification, 1963), used routinely by the faculty at the university. The results for students who scored in the midrange on the shortened version, although not comparable with the norms of the full-length test, suggested average ability for these students.

Materials
Materials consisted of four modern English passages, each representing a different genre, which were taken from illustrated collections of readings used by Brazilian students of English. A group of five English-language professors at Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina examined a pool of five examples from each genre (fairy tale, legend, nonfiction article, and fable) and made its selection on the basis of the following criteria: (a) length (500-1,600 words), (b) number (at least three) and appropriateness (nonambiguity) of illustrations, (c) appropriate conceptual and vocabulary difficulty, and (d) use of contemporary English.

The length criterion reflected the need for passages that were both representative of those usually read by students and not too long for the time constraints of the experiment. The fairy tale was the longest (1,646 words), whereas the other three types ranged from 500-750 words. It was necessary to use two fables to have a combined length of slightly more than 500 words.

For each passage three pictures were selected from the illustrations accompanying the original passage and were made into slides. One of the three pictures was general in nature, and the other two were more specific. Earlier studies with native speakers of English (Brody & Legenza, 1981; Dean & Enemoh, 1983) suggest that global pictures are more effective than pictures that present specific scenes from a text.

The final considerations were that the passages be appropriately difficult for the subjects and be in contemporary English. These
judgments were made by the five English-language professors, based on their experience with similar texts read by similar students and on their knowledge of contemporary English.

The final selections were a fairy tale, “The Laziest Man in America” (Stuchl, 1979, pp. 169-174); a legend, “Paul Bunyan” (Reader’s Digest Association, 1978, p. 356); an article, “Thanksgiving Day” (Willson, 1982, pp. 153-154); and two short fables, “The Ducks and the Fox” and “The Cat and His Visions” (Lobel, 1983, pp. 5, 19). They differed on a number of dimensions, including length, prior content familiarity, vocabulary, and writing style. One of the selections (the fables) included considerable dialogue, whereas the others were more expository.

The purpose of this heterogeneity was to ensure that any effects found for prereading techniques would not be the result of a particular passage characteristic. However, the intent was not to investigate differences in passage characteristics, and in any case, the design, with its intentional confounding of order, length, type, and other characteristics, would not be able to illuminate any such differences.

Instrumentation

For each passage, 8 open-ended and 10 multiple-choice English-language questions were written. Both tests included items addressing text-explicit and text-implicit (inferential) information. Care was taken to avoid including words or concepts directly discussed in the prereading activities to prevent subjects from answering questions above chance level without having read the passage. The 18 questions for each passage were pilot tested with a group of 8 subjects from another Brazilian university. The directions and test questions were tested and revised following a pilot study with 21 students at the same institution.

The eight open-ended questions were scored by two teachers, whose scores were combined to produce the final score. The interrater reliability (intraclass correlation adjusted for pooled ratings) was estimated to be .85. Internal consistency reliability estimates (coefficient alpha) ranged from .59 to .69 for the items specific to each passage.

The 10 multiple-choice items specific to each passage were summed separately to yield a total score for each passage. The internal consistency estimates for two of the passages were very low (.19 for “Thanksgiving Day” and .36 for the fables), indicating that items were not consistently measuring the same thing. Internal
consistency estimates for the other two subtests were an acceptable .50 and .60.

Finally, in addition to the tests, a 25-item participant questionnaire was developed to obtain other information to help interpret the data.

Procedures

The design was a 4 x 4 Latin square, such that subjects were randomly assigned to groups of 10, with each group reading all four passages and receiving all four treatments but in different combinations. Passage and order of reading were confounded, but treatment was not. Thus, all subjects served as their own controls; that is, treatment and passage were within-subjects variables. Treatment consisted of three different prereading activities: (a) pictorial context, (b) vocabulary preteaching, and (c) prequestioning. There was also a control condition, in which there was no prereading activity.

The four groups of subjects were randomly assigned to four different rooms. Next, each group was randomly assigned to a different condition for each reading passage. For example, on the first day, when “The Laziest Man in America” was read, 10 subjects in one room read the passage preceded by the pictorial context prereading activity; in the next room vocabulary preteaching was done; and so on. For each subsequent passage, the four treatment conditions were rotated among the four groups so that each group received each treatment. For each of the four experimental groups, a helping teacher was randomly assigned to supervise subjects’ activities, while the first author moved from one group to another to carry out the prereading activities. On the first day of the 2-day experiment, subjects read and took the short-answer and multiple-choice tests on “The Laziest Man in America” and “Paul Bunyan.” On the following day, they read and completed the tests on “Thanksgiving Day” and the fables passage.

In the pictorial context condition, the first author showed the subjects three slides of pictures related to the content of the reading passage. While subjects looked at the pictures, the experimenter encouraged discussion by having them describe the content of the pictures, try to connect the three pictures, and, finally, make a guess about the content of the reading passage.

In the vocabulary preteaching condition, subjects were taught eight words from the reading passage. The words were selected by five English instructors at the Universidade Federal de Santa
Catarina on the basis of (a) their importance to understanding the passage and (b) the likelihood that they would not already be known to the students. The experimenter presented these words on the board in meaningful, but unrelated sentences. Students took turns reading the sentences and predicting the meanings of the words. When a word was not adequately defined, it was defined through class discussion.

Prequestioning consisted of giving subjects a one-sentence oral summary of the reading passage and asking them to formulate some questions that they thought the passage might answer. For the “Paul Bunyan” passage, for example, the first author said, “This text contains a story about a lumberjack called Paul Bunyan. What questions do you have that you think the story might answer? Make a list of your questions on paper in English or in Portuguese.” These questions were subsequently written on the board, where they remained while the students read the passage.

This technique intentionally combines prequestioning with receiving a very short (i.e., one-sentence-long) summary, which then directs students’ self-generated prequestioning. The rationale for giving the one-sentence summary with the prequestioning is twofold. First, the summary guides the prequestioning activity, thereby focusing the students’ prequestions on the passage to be read. Without the introduction of the topic of the passage, the prequestioning activity could remain vague and abstract. Second, there is no theoretical or practical reason for not presenting the one-sentence summary. It takes very little class time or prior preparation. Moreover, it was not the purpose of this study to investigate the teaching of a general prequestioning technique.

Each of the prereading activities lasted 10 minutes and was carried out immediately before the reading task. When participants in the control condition received a passage, they began the reading task immediately after receiving their instructions. All prereading activities were directed by the first author. Because participants had to wait occasionally for the researcher to conduct the prereading activities, participants were given passages not related to the study to read while they waited. Time limits for reading the passages ranged from 8 minutes for the two fables (taken together) to 20 minutes for the fairy tale. Students were given 20 minutes to complete each open-ended test and 5 minutes to complete each multiple-choice test.

A multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) with repeated measures was used to examine the two variables of passage and
prereading activity. Scores of the multiple-choice and open-ended tests were the dependent measure.

RESULTS

The hypotheses tested were that subjects would attain different comprehension scores with passages preceded by different prereading activities and that all prereading activities would result in higher comprehension scores than the control condition. The comprehension measures were the combined multiple-choice and the combined open-ended item scores of the subjects. The multivariate criterion, Wilks's lambda with the alpha for the $F$ set at .05, was used to test significance. Results from the MANOVA indicated a significant effect for both passage type and prereading activity (see Table 1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>$F$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between subjects</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Groups</td>
<td>6, 70</td>
<td>0.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within subjects</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passage</td>
<td>6, 214</td>
<td>11.68*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prereading</td>
<td>6, 214</td>
<td>10.60*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passage x prereading</td>
<td>12, 214</td>
<td>1.16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* $p < .05$.

Univariate analyses of variance and Tukey’s HSD test (cited in Kirk, 1968) were used to determine that there was a significant passage effect on both the open-ended questions, $F (3, 108) = 20.48$, $p < .05$ (see Table 2), and multiple-choice questions, $F (3, 108) = 7.98$, $p < .05$ (see Table 3). The average open-ended item score on the “Paul Bunyan” passage ($M = 15.50$) was significantly lower than for “Thanksgiving Day” ($M = 31.75$), for “The Laziest Man in America” ($M = 35.12$), and for the two fables ($M = 38.25$). The average multiple-choice item scores for the four passages were in the same rank order, but Tukey’s HSD test suggested significant differences only between the average scores for “Paul Bunyan” ($M = 4.68$) and the fables ($M = 5.98$).
There was also a significant prereading treatment effect on subjects’ comprehension scores, \( F(6, 214) = 10.60, p < .05 \) (see Table 1). Subsequent univariate analyses indicated a significant effect only on the multiple-choice item scores, \( F(3, 108) = 23.62, p < .05 \) (see Table 3), but not on the open-ended item scores, \( F(3, 108) = 0.78, \) n.s. Further investigation of the treatment effects on the multiple-choice scores, using Tukey’s HSD test, revealed significant differences between the control condition (\( M = 4.08 \)) and each of the three prereading activities: vocabulary preteaching (\( M = 4.90 \)), pictorial context (\( M = 6.05 \)), and prequestioning (\( M = 6.35 \)). There were also significant differences between vocabulary preteaching and prequestioning and between vocabulary preteaching and pictorial context (see Table 4).

DISCUSSION

Theorists in L1 reading have suggested that providing students with some assistance before reading can help them understand a text. Some research with L1 readers supports the effectiveness of prereading activities on reading comprehension.

The findings of the present study indicate that prereading activities also facilitate EFL students’ comprehension. Of the three prereading activities examined in the study, vocabulary preteaching, although superior to the control condition, was less effective than prequestioning and pictorial context. It could be that although knowledge of these words’ meanings was essential for adequate comprehension to occur, heightened background knowledge from the other two prereading activities made students more able to use context to arrive at a satisfactory meaning for the passages even when all the words were not known. Stanovich (1981), in his discussion of an interactive-compensatory model of reading fluency, cites evidence that readers compensate for poor word recognition ability by relying on contextual information.

The present study supports Hudson’s (1982) contention that students may use their background knowledge about a reading selection to override problems they are having with the language. Such a strategy was thought to be prevented by weak second language ability (Clarke, 1979; Cziko, 1978).

A second reason that vocabulary preteaching was less effective than the two other prereading activities may be due to how the words were presented. Although the words were put in a context by illustrating their meanings in sentences, the sentences were not meaningfully connected. Moreover, there was no attempt to relate
TABLE 2
Summary of Univariate Analyses of Variance for the Effect of Passage and Prereading on Open-Ended Test Scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between subjects</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Groups</td>
<td>1,785.46</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>595.15</td>
<td>0.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error between</td>
<td>36,404.37</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>1,011.20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within subjects</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passage</td>
<td>12,301.71</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4,100.50</td>
<td>20.48*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prereading</td>
<td>400.72</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>133.58</td>
<td>0.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passage x prereading</td>
<td>884.88</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>147.44</td>
<td>0.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error within</td>
<td>21,628.12</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>200.36</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < .05.

TABLE 3
Summary of Univariate Analyses of Variance for the Effect of Passage and Prereading on Multiple-Choice Scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between subjects</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Groups</td>
<td>27.12</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9.52</td>
<td>1.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error between</td>
<td>245.05</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>6.85</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within subjects</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passage</td>
<td>32.72</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>14.93</td>
<td>7.98*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prereading</td>
<td>130.07</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>44.18</td>
<td>23.62*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passage x prereading</td>
<td>18.42</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3.04</td>
<td>1.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error within</td>
<td>202.23</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>1.62</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < .05.

TABLE 4
Tukey's HSD Test for Differences Among Prereading Treatments on the Multiple-Choice Items

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Treatments</th>
<th>M1</th>
<th>M2</th>
<th>M3</th>
<th>M4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>M1 = 6.35</td>
<td>0.30</td>
<td>1.45*</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.28*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M2 = 6.05</td>
<td>1.15*</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.98*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M3 = 4.90</td>
<td>0.83*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M4 = 4.08</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: M1 = prequestioning; M2 = pictorial context; M3 = vocabulary preteaching; M4 = control.
*p < .05.

EFFECTS OF PREREADING ACTIVITIES
the words to the content of the reading selections. In the Hudson (1982) study, vocabulary preteaching was conducted similarly but included a prediction component. Students were actively involved in writing predictions about how the words might relate to the selection. Nevertheless, Hudson’s vocabulary activity did not surpass performance of those who did a read-test/reread-retest activity or a pictorial/prediction activity.

Third, the observations of the experimenter suggest that participants in this study reacted differently to vocabulary preteaching than to the other two prereading activities. The latter two activities appeared to produce a deeper and more active involvement of the subjects prior to reading. Discussion of words in sentences unrelated to each other and unrelated to the upcoming reading may not have been novel or interesting to the students.

Pictorial context and prequestioning, the two schema-building tasks of the present experiment, both dealt with a few concepts related to the reading passage and were presented in a larger, more unified context. It might be that prereading activities that introduce words and concepts from the passage in a more global context are more effective in evoking or building readers’ appropriate schemata for a passage than prereading activities that introduce words in isolation. Even when words are evocative of the content of a passage, as in Hudson’s (1982) study, and students make predictions with them, there is no guarantee that the strategy will surpass direct knowledge of the task at hand.

The success of the pictorial context condition of the present experiment in surpassing performance of vocabulary preteaching adds weight to Hudson’s (1982) conclusion that a picture-discussion-prediction condition produces higher test scores than a vocabulary-preteaching-with-prediction condition.

That prereading affected multiple-choice scores but not open-ended scores is open to several interpretations. First, in a previous study (Taglieber, 1981), the first author found that when the reading comprehension of EFL students with low- and average-level English proficiency is measured only through open-ended questions, the results can be misleading. These students often have difficulty in expressing their answers clearly in the foreign language even if they comprehended what they read. Lee (1986) found that subjects recalled more idea units of an L2 passage when writing in their native language than in the language of the passage.

Second, this finding may reflect differences in the type of knowledge measured in each type of test and the degree to which prereading activities affect each type of knowledge. It is possible that prereading activities focused more on details than on central
ideas in a passage and that for this reason, subjects remembered the
detailed information needed to answer the multiple-choice
questions.

Finally, a shortage of time for reading the passages and for
answering the open-ended questions might have produced this
result. Of the subjects, 61% declared on the questionnaire that the
time allowed for reading each passage was insufficient, and 46%
states that the time for answering the open-ended questions was
insufficient. Future studies should provide more time for reading
and answering open-ended questions.

It should be noted that although the internal consistency
reliability estimates for the multiple-choice items for two of the pas-
sages were disappointingly low (.19 for “Thanksgiving Day” and .36
for the fables), they did not seriously undermine the experiment
because of the use of multiple measures and the pooling of scores
over passages. However, they introduced additional error into the
statistical model and reduced the power of the experiment to find
treatment differences. The low reliabilities no doubt reflect very
easy and very difficult as well as poor items, especially in the article
“Thanksgiving Day.” The items also require different skills and may
well be reflecting performance subfactors.

Future studies should include 20 or more items so that other
psychometric approaches (e.g., factor analysis and subfactor scores
or item deletion) can be brought to bear on the problem of internal
consistency in these measures of reading comprehension with
nonnative speakers.

The passage effect was mainly due to the “Paul Bunyan” passage,
which had the lowest mean score. Looking at the answers on the
participant questionnaire, one is tempted to attribute this result to
the difficulty of the passage (even though passage is completely
confounded with other factors). The “Paul Bunyan” passage was
rated as the most difficult of the four selections by 76% of the
subjects. It is possible that this passage was inherently more difficult
than the other passages. A legend often makes implicit references to
knowledge about ways of thinking, ways of acting, and ways of life
of the people of the particular cultural setting about whom it is
written. Thus, certain culturally specific concepts in the American
legend may have made it difficult for the subjects, especially
because there seems to be no counterpart to this legend in Brazilian
folklore. An alternative interpretation is that the test questions were
simply more difficult for this passage.

Because the passages differ from one another on several
confounded dimensions (e.g., length, vocabulary, content, style,
and reader prior knowledge, to mention several) and because the
independent tests of comprehension for each passage cannot be equated for difficulty, little productive speculation can be offered about the main effect for passage. It is best viewed as a product of the methodology. The value of including such heterogeneous passages is to improve the external validity of inferences to the different kinds of passages that students must comprehend in typical foreign language instruction. It is also worth noting that the prereading treatment did not interact with passage comprehension as measured on either the open-ended or the multiple-choice test.

Results of this study suggest that prereading activities might become a useful tool for teachers of EFL to facilitate students’ reading comprehension. Teachers may want to use one of the three prereading activities, depending on students’ needs and the characteristics of the text, or they may want to combine all three in the same class.

These prereading activities also may have value for independent study. Prequestioning in particular can be taught to students wishing to improve their comprehension. Modern textbooks on reading for EFL students already present pictures and other types of aids before text selections. The findings of this study support the usefulness of this idea.

Prereading activities are also motivational devices. According to the questionnaire, the students in this experiment said they appreciated and found it helpful to do prereading activities before reading a passage. They suggested that prereading activities be used more frequently in their actual foreign language classes. Activities of the type used in this study might not only increase students’ comprehension of the passages they read, but might also make reading more enjoyable and thus encourage more extensive reading. Additional reading will, in turn, no doubt result in a better grasp of the language.

Future investigations of prereading activities might be designed to address three issues not well addressed by this study. First, the prereading activities in this study were very much confounded with the experimenter providing the activities. The alternative explanation—that it was participants’ responding to their perceptions of the experimenter’s expectations or to the novelty of the experiment rather than to the prereading techniques—is not plausible for these results in light of the large passage effects, the differences between prereading techniques, and the participants’ responses on the questionnaire. However, future studies need to investigate whether participants can implement these techniques in independent study and whether other instructors can use them as beneficially.
Second, future studies need to address the extent to which different kinds of passages benefit from different prereading techniques. For example, highly concrete passages might benefit equally well from pictorial context and prequestioning techniques, whereas abstract passages might be better addressed by preteaching vocabulary and prequestioning techniques.

Third, each of these prereading treatments can be viewed as one example of a general class of treatments. For example, for a more global context and possibly more interesting activity, vocabulary preteaching might involve semantic mapping (D. D. Johnson & Pearson, 1984) or the predict-o-gram (Blackowicz, 1986). Future studies could investigate the relative effectiveness of general prequestioning training versus passage-specific prequestion generation.

In the interim, EFL teachers and students can be well served by adaptive use of prereading techniques. Teachers and students can try the various techniques and develop their own personal knowledge about what works and does not work for them with different texts and reading purposes.

THE AUTHORS

Loni K. Taglieber teaches graduate EFL courses at the Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina, Brazil. She is presently organizing a cross-disciplinary reading lab, the first of its kind in Brazil, which will be open to both Portuguese and EFL students, and later to students from other departments. This article is based on her doctoral dissertation (University of Iowa, 1985).

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Donald B. Yarbrough, Assistant Professor of Educational Psychology, taught English as a second language for 3 years in West Germany and currently teaches graduate courses in the cognitive psychology of learning and the psychology of writing. His major research interests are the psychology of writing and learning from text.
REFERENCES


In this article we discuss the theory and practice of a “creative automatization” process by which learners can develop the automaticity component of fluency in second language production in a classroom setting. The techniques for this approach are designed to provide students with ample opportunities for repetition and practice within a wholly communicative context, without the shortcomings usually characteristic of pattern drills or other more traditional methods. Five specific design criteria are presented to help teachers in developing their own activities for promoting fluency within this framework.

Automaticity is viewed here as a component of fluency. In considering fluency, one can broadly distinguish between skills concerned with the selection of utterances (knowing what to say, to whom and when) and skills concerned with the actual production of these utterances (producing them rapidly and smoothly, without hesitations and pauses). For a speaker to be fluent, both kinds of skills are important. The development of utterance selection skills, however, does not necessarily imply the mastery of utterance production skills. This is illustrated by the fact that one can mentally formulate utterances in the second language in anticipation of a forthcoming communication situation, monitor their forms and correct them if necessary, and still be unable to produce them.
rapidly and smoothly when they are actually needed. This production component of fluency involves automaticity and is the main focus of our discussion here.

Automaticity can be considered in at least two different ways. In one sense, it refers to the speed and ease of handling utterances; the greater the automaticity, the faster the recognition and production of grammatically correct and communicatively appropriate utterances. Here, the emphasis is on the speaker’s ability to respond without needing an inordinate amount of time to formulate an utterance and the ability to understand and produce sentences without undue groping, hesitations, or pauses. In a more psychological sense, automaticity refers to the operation of those mechanisms underlying performance that function quickly, without interference from other ongoing cognitive processes, and that draw relatively little or no attentional resources away from other concurrent processing activities. Processes become automatic in this sense as a result of a great deal of practice (Schneider & Fisk, 1982; Shiffrin & Schneider, 1977).

In this article we use the term automaticity in both senses. We are concerned with the development, through extended and consistent practice, of rapid, smooth, comfortable speaking skills that do not consume the attentional resources necessary for other aspects of performance. Strictly speaking, of course, at this time we can only know that the activities described in the following discussion promote automaticity in the first sense, since only rapid, smooth, comfortable speech can actually be observed as the outcome of these activities. Specific laboratory research is needed to determine whether, as we will assume to be the case for now, the achieved automaticity conforms to the more psychological definition. (See Logan, 1985, for a discussion of the psychological aspects of automaticity in relation to a variety of different skills; see Favreau & Segalowitz, 1983, and Segalowitz, 1986, for a discussion of automaticity in L2 reading.)

Utterances that are automatized in the senses just described resemble in many ways what others have called formulaic speech, or speech forms produced as unanalyzed wholes, prepatterned expressions, or routinized utterances (Brown, 1973; Hakuta, 1974; Peters, 1983; Wong Fillmore, 1979). Many authors have recognized that such forms of automatic speech have a natural place in both L1 and L2 development (Bahns, Burmeister, & Vogel, 1986; Coulmas, 1981; Ellis, 1984; Peters, 1983). Our aim is to suggest that the acquisition of formulaic utterances, understood here more broadly as any routinized utterance and not just idiomatic expressions,
greetings, exclamations, and the like, can be usefully and successfully promoted in the L2 classroom within the communicative framework.

Automatizing certain aspects of performance in order to free up attentional resources is fundamental to skilled performance in a number of areas because it allows performers to allocate their limited capacities to where they are most needed (e.g., reading, see Perfetti, 1985; music, see Sloboda, 1985, p. 93). That is, to a large extent, fluent performance in such areas as music or reading (e.g., performing particular runs or arpeggios on the piano; word recognition) involves being able to carry out certain activities with little or no investment of psychological resources (memory capacity, limited attentional capacity).

For L2 learners, this can also be of considerable importance. Not only do learners have to attend to certain linguistic aspects of communication, but they also have to attend to complex sociolinguistic and intercultural social factors (Segalowitz, 1976; Segalowitz & Gatbonton, 1977). One goal of L2 instruction should be to help learners avoid becoming bogged down with the mechanics of performing frequently used utterances in order that their attentional resources may be placed where they are most needed. Peters (1983) writes:

There is a limit on the availability of resources, such as working memory, information-holding capacity, processing time, and so on, that can be expended in an interaction. [Thus,] in order to concentrate on one aspect of the communication, shortcuts may have to be made in another. (p. 87)

Pawley and Syder (1983) point out that having control of a wide range of such utterances enables a speaker to channel attention to other things such as “matching the timing, tone and rhythm of his utterances to his conversational purpose” or “constructing a larger piece of discourse by expanding on, or combining ready-made constructions” (p. 208).

Another potential benefit of automatization early in L2 development is that smooth, unhesitating speech in conversations with native speakers can provide the learner with increased access to native input (Kirkland, 1984). This is because listeners are more likely to continue interactions with someone whose speech is relatively smooth than with someone who falters or hesitates. Krashen and Terrell (1983) make a similar point with regard to young language learners: “This ‘premature’ kind of output does allow early production and thus invites input. . . . Correctly used, routines and patterns can help acquirers gain more input and
manage conversations’” (p. 43). Finally, the ability to produce simple, common utterances easily from the very beginning will also increase the learner’s self-confidence and pleasure in using the second language, with obvious motivational benefits.

Some researchers have proposed an even more central role for formulaic speech in language development. Peters (1983), for example, goes further than Krashen and Terrell (1983) and suggests that formulaic speech during acquisition not only invites additional input but also serves as further input for the creative construction process. She cites evidence indicating that children eventually analyze their early acquired formulaic speech as learning proceeds (Clark, 1974; Hakuta, 1974; Huang & Hatch, 1978; Peters, 1977; Wong Fillmore, 1979). Ellis (1984) proposes a second language development process model that has as a starting point the acquisition of formulaic speech. Thus, beyond the benefits of automatized speech we cited earlier (freeing of attentional resources, increased access to native speakers, improved motivation), work such as that offered by Peters and Ellis may eventually support an even more direct role for routinized speech forms in L2 development.

Although we argue for the benefits of automatization, we recognize that automatic performance does not constitute all that is involved in skilled performance, whether that be reading, instrumental playing, or speaking a second language. Speaking fluently is not simply a matter of being able to string memorized phrases together appropriately. Nor does the ability to automatically execute certain utterances necessarily imply, by itself, that the speaker has or will have possession of the underlying language competence that is the goal of language training. However, being able to execute a basic repertoire of commonly needed phrases with little effort enables a learner to perform other aspects of speaking more easily and fluently, including devoting attentional resources to learning while being engaged in L2 communication. Our position, then, is that within certain limits, there is an important place for the promotion of formulaic speech through automatization in L2 learning.

In this article we describe how to generate the kind of extensive practice that may promote such automaticity within the context of the communicatively oriented classroom. Basically, this involves placing students in settings where they repetitively desire to use target utterances as appropriate responses in genuine communication situations. We call this process creative automatization because students themselves generate (create) communicative intentions and produce the correspondingly appropriate utterances based on
their understanding of the communicative situation. In using this label, we do not mean to imply that students generate or create the target utterances from knowledge about the internal structure of sentences; they may well lack such knowledge at this point. We simply mean that students participate in the creation of a situation and produce utterances on the basis of created intentions; they do not merely repeat a sentence explicitly identified by the teacher (as in drill methods).

In the following discussion we describe, first, the place of automatization in language learning in the past. Next, we suggest where it might legitimately belong in present language classrooms and discuss how a creative automatization activity actually proceeds. Finally, we present a set of general criteria to guide teachers who wish to introduce creative automatization in their own L2 classrooms without compromising the communicative approach to instruction.

THE TRADITIONAL VIEW OF AUTOMATIZATION

For years it was assumed that learning grammar rules and practicing them through exercises and drills would invariably lead to the attainment of fluency (Brooks, 1964; Finocchiaro, 1958; Paulston, 1971). It is now generally acknowledged that the gains have been minimal and that many students, despite success on tests of their grammatical competence, fail to achieve automatic fluency (Lamendella, 1979). In our view, an important reason for this failure is that automatization in traditional (noncommunicative) methodologies has been geared toward the mastery of specific structures or rules (Paulston & Bruder, 1976, p. 18), not of utterances as such.

To highlight a structure, most exercises must operate on sentences that possess similar structures but that are often incompatible in terms of their meanings. Consider the following substitution drill typical of many used in traditional methods (see Dacanay, 1967, pp. 110-115; Paulston & Bruder, 1976, pp. 18-26; Richards & Rodgers, 1986, pp. 40-41, for samples from textbooks representing the oral, situational approach):

Teacher: I found the book.
Students: I found the book.
Teacher: Pen.
Students: I found the pen.
Teacher: Bought.
Students: I bought the pen.
Clearly, the goal here is mastery of the structure of the utterances rather than the memorization of the utterances themselves. For example, each sentence is mentioned only once or twice, whereas an exercise promoting fluent utterance production would have to provide opportunities to elicit many tokens of each utterance.

To bridge the gap between structure and meaning, many teachers have proposed using so-called meaningful drills and communicative drills (Littlewood, 1981; Paulston & Selekman, 1978, p. 36). These drills improve upon pattern drills by promoting practice in meaningful contexts. However, their focus is still on structures and consequently they generate only a few tokens of each utterance.

The failure of traditional teaching methodologies led in the early 1960s to a reevaluation of the assumptions underlying these approaches (Savignon, 1983; Widdowson, 1978) and to the rise of new approaches (Joiner & Westphal, 1978; Littlewood, 1981; Richards & Rodgers, 1986). One innovation, the so-called communicative competence approach (Savignon, 1983), represented a major step forward by emphasizing the attainment of communicative ability rather than the learning of abstract rules. This approach attempts to hasten the attainment of fluency by focusing directly on the learning of functional utterances rather than rules. Although the approach aims at improving general communicative skill (knowing what to say, when, where, and how), however, there is still little explicit focus on the development of rapid, effortless speech production, or automatization. Except for a small class of obviously memorizable utterances such as greetings and idiomatic expressions, students learning with communicative methods are not encouraged to pursue what Palmer (1917/1968) calls “integral assimilation,” or the learning of language items by heart. In many typical activities (e.g., interviews, role playing, discussions) within this framework, students are exposed to no more than a few tokens of each utterance to be learned.

The reason for this may be that unsuccessful experiences with traditional automatizing activities have led many proponents of communicative approaches to readily assume that all automatization is incompatible with these approaches. Closer examination, however, reveals that this incompatibility may be more apparent than real. As is shown below, it is quite possible to capitalize upon the advantages of the communicatively oriented learning setting to explicitly promote automatization.
CREATIVE AUTOMATIZATION

We suggest that if one directs automatization toward the mastery of specific utterances rather than of their structures, one can develop automatization activities compatible with a communicative approach. As stated previously, automatizing structures requires students to produce semantically unrelated sentences that could not occur naturally in a normal communicative situation. Automatizing utterances, on the other hand, requires students to repeat utterances that would occur naturally in a normal communicative situation; the difficulty is how to make the repetition itself natural. Thus, what is needed is an activity designed to enable learners to practice (repeat) many tokens of target sentences while they are engaged in real communication. This raises two important issues: which utterances should be the targets of automatization and how to design activities to promote their repetition.

The Selection of Target Utterances

The question of which utterances to automatize is, at this time, the more difficult one to answer. In general, the goal is to identify a set of common, everyday utterances that would be useful if they were highly routinized in speech. One class of utterances that immediately comes to mind is the obviously formulaic utterances such as greetings, leave-taking phrases, and various idiomatic expressions. One should, however, look beyond such utterances and select as targets those sentences and productive sentence frames that are intimately associated with the basic language functions that learners can normally be expected to need to know, such as requesting (e.g., Can you give me two, please?), directing (e.g., Stay here), asking questions (e.g., Where did you go?), describing past activities (e.g., I went shopping; I went to bed late), and so on. Because these and similar sentences are tied to basic functions, they are likely to be used by speakers in day-to-day interactions and thus would be useful when routinized (Coulmas, 1981, p. 9).

In addition, although these sentences are not as obviously formulaic as greetings, leave-taking phrases, and idioms, they do possess important characteristics of formulaic sentences: They can be easily remembered as single prefabricated items (Brown, 1973; Hakuta, 1974) and are multisituational. For example, request sentences such as Can you give me two, please? can be used unchanged at the ticket window at the cinema, at the post office, or in a restaurant, or they can be altered slightly for other situations (e.g., Can you give me a dollar, please?). Sentences used in talking
about a past weekend event, such as *I went to the cinema last Saturday*, can be used with slight modification in describing a past summer activity (e.g., *I went to Paris last summer*), in making excuses (e.g., *I didn’t come to see you because I went to Paris last summer*), or in explaining (e.g., *I bought this new dress when I went to Paris last summer*). Such sentences and sentence frames abound in everyday speech. Pawley and Syder (1983) write that “memorized clauses and clause-sequences form a high proportion of the fluent stretches of speech heard in everyday conversation” (p. 208). Peters (1983) also notes that “normal adult speakers actually store and call into play entire phrases that may be many words long—phrases that are not constructed from their ultimate grammatical constituents each time they are used” (p. 2).

Ideally one would like to have a rigorous, possibly statistically determined way to define what is meant by a “common” or “frequent” expression. To our knowledge, however, very few studies have focused on systematically collecting huge samples of spontaneous speech in specific situations and analyzing them for repetitive expressions (Bahns et al., 1986; Coumas, 1981). We can, however, intuitively recognize that in any given situation there are likely to be some expressions and sentence frames that occur more frequently than others and that would be useful in that context and others, if automatized. Some sociolinguists, in fact, have begun to look at sentences associated with basic speech acts such as apologizing, complimenting, and inviting and have found many of them to be formulaic (Manes & Wolfson, 1981; Ohlstain & Cohen, 1983).

In our own work in preparing classroom activities of the sort described below, we have tried out candidate activities with native speakers and with L2 learners, and we have noted that there are regular, predictably frequent occurrences of certain utterances for each situation. Teachers can quickly discover for themselves which utterances are likely to be good targets for automatization in a given situation simply by trying out the activity beforehand with a small group of native speakers and noting the expressions used and their frequency. (Gatbonton, 1987, provides lists of suggested target utterances for a wide variety of situations.)

The Design of Activities to Promote Automatization

We turn now to the question of how to promote automatization within a communicative framework in the classroom. We propose a two-phase automatization process. The first phase, the main activity, aims to create in the learners a need to use target utterances
repetitively while conveying genuine messages. The second phase, the follow-up activity, aims to provide more controlled but still communication-based exercises focusing on target sentences already elicited in the main activity. To illustrate this two-phase automatization process, we present below two sample lessons (taken from Gatbonton, 1987). The first lesson, Class Photo, is designed to promote the automatization of utterances whose illocutionary force is to direct, instruct, or command people to occupy certain positions or locations in the room. The second lesson, Family Tree, is designed to automatize utterances describing familial roles and relationships (e.g., He is the father of X; She is Y’s mother).

**Class Photo.** For the main activity the teacher informs the students that photographs will be taken of the class to be added to the teacher’s souvenir collection. The students’ task is to take turns telling one another where to stand and what pose to assume. The teacher begins the activity by asking one of the students to take the first position: “Carlos, please stand up.” (Pause while Carlos stands up.) “Please go to the front of the class.” (Pause while Carlos goes.) “Stand in front of the blackboard.” When Carlos has taken his place, the teacher asks other students to say where their classmates should go and to direct them to their places. From here on, the students take turns giving directions until everyone is placed. During this activity the students should not be allowed to point or use gestures to indicate where they want the students to go. This restriction forces students to use sentences. Invariably they will try to use utterances like Please, stand beside X, Stay on his left, and so on to make their intentions explicit.

When everyone has been placed, the teacher asks several students, one at a time, to examine the pose and make sure they are satisfied with it. If not, the group must be rearranged (e.g., the taller ones may be moved to the back; some may need to stand, others to sit or kneel; the group may have to move closer together or farther apart while others change places; and so on). When a satisfactory pose is finally attained, the teacher (or students, if they have been notified beforehand to bring cameras) takes a picture. In a beginning class of 15 or more, this activity can last from 45 minutes to an hour. Depending on the need and interest of the students, practice can be extended by relocating in a different area of the room, by asking the men to photograph the women, and vice versa, and so on.

To accomplish the nonlinguistic goal of taking the photograph, the students repeatedly have to use or attempt to use specific target
utterances containing location words, such as *beside, near, between, in front of, in the middle of,* and utterances with directing, commanding, and instructing verbs, such as *go, stand, stay, move, sit, kneel.* The teacher’s role in this activity is to aid the students in finding the right utterances for expressing their ideas. Thus, when a student makes an unsuccessful attempt to say something, the teacher supplies the missing utterance or provides the correct model. The teacher’s involvement should be to intervene only to provide help and to keep the activity going until the students are able to say the target utterances correctly on their own.

After much practice, a follow-up activity is conducted to focus more closely on the target utterances previously used. One such follow-up activity makes use of the drawing in Figure 1. In this exercise the students have to indicate all the possible poses that the six people in the picture can assume to make a good class photo (e.g., have the girls sit while the boys stand behind them). To describe each possible pose, the students are likely to use utterances elicited in the main activity with slight modifications, for example, *Marie should sit on the chair, Pierre should stand behind her.* The teacher can exercise some control over the utterances likely to be repeated by selecting which person or pose to focus on. In this exercise teachers can provide rehearsal opportunities for selected utterances while still maintaining a communicative environment.

To summarize, in this approach, students first participate in a main activity that focuses on a nonlinguistic goal and that elicits from each student, in a natural and unobtrusive way, many repetitions of a large set of target utterances known to be useful in this and other settings. The main activity thus initially establishes the repertoire of utterances in a specific psychological context of intentions to communicate. This is succeeded by a follow-up activity that provides further, more focused and controlled opportunities to repeat and rehearse the target expressions without compromising the communicative nature of the lesson. The two activities together provide students with the kind of consistent speaking practice with the selected utterances that leads to their automatization.

**Family Tree.** The second sample lesson, Family Tree, is the first in a series of activities designed to focus on the description of household chores and daily routine activities. In Family Tree, the target utterances are those commonly used in describing family roles (e.g., father, mother) and in asking about and describing family relationships (*How are you related to X? He is my brother. He is the father of Y; He is W’s cousin.*). In the main activity, the teacher
Note: Students are asked to suggest a better pose for the individuals shown.

divides the class into two groups (A and B) of at least six to eight students. Each group is instructed to pretend to be members of one extended family by discussing with one another what their relationships to each other will be (e.g., who is the father, the wife, the grandfather, etc.). Then each member of Group A interviews a member of Group B about the B-family relations in order to draw a family tree of Group B (and Group B members have the same task with respect to Group A). Later, members of each group compare
and discuss their information to arrive at an accurate description of
the other group. The family trees are retained for use in subsequent
activities not discussed here.
In a beginners’ group of 15 or 16, this activity usually lasts about
an hour. Most of the first part of the lesson is devoted to the
students’ trying to figure out and remember the relationships in their
“family.” Because of the size of the group and because the students
often become carried away with identifying complicated
relationships, it is sometimes not easy to keep track of who is related
to whom and how. The teacher’s task in this activity is to go from
group to group asking what relationships have been determined so
far, thereby providing utterance models and more opportunities for
repetition.
A follow-up activity could make use of the pictures presented in
Figure 2. The students’ task is to use the depicted people’s names
and appearances to determine who is related to whom. For this, the
students will naturally use the utterances practiced in the main
activity.
As in Class Photo, the main activity elicits in students a genuine
need to use and hear relatively predictable utterances over and over
again in a natural way. The follow-up activity allows the teacher to
provide additional, more controlled practice with these utterances,
still within a communicative context.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES
Except for the teacher’s goal of promoting repetition of specific
utterances, in many respects the activities we are suggesting for
creative automatization need not be very different from those
already used in communication-oriented classrooms. There are
infinite possibilities for such activities, and the imaginative teacher
will have no difficulty developing new ones. The important thing is
to ensure that the activities chosen to promote automatization meet
certain criteria, particularly those concerned with promoting
intensive rehearsal while avoiding the pitfalls of traditional pattern
drills. Five such criteria are discussed below.
1. Be genuinely communicative: Although it is now almost taken
for granted that effective communication activities must be genuinely
communicative, we highlight this criterion because it is what most distinguishes creative automatization activities from traditional pattern practice. An activity is genuinely communicative if it results in the student’s making use of utterances from a genuine desire to communicate or to receive information rather
FIGURE 2
Illustration Used With the Follow-Up Activity for Family Tree

Note: Using names and appearances as cues, students are asked to explain how each person depicted is related to each other person.
than from a desire to say something simply for the purpose of serving a language-learning goal. In Class Photo, for example, the student’s use of a target utterance such as *Stand beside X, on his left* results from a primary decision to place someone in a desired location, not from a decision to say some particular utterance. In Family Tree, a student’s use of *How are you related?* is propelled by a genuine need to know what the relationship is. In both activities, the need to know the information is inherent in the nature of the activity. The attainment of the nonlinguistic goal (the class photo or family tree) requires the use of these linguistic forms.

2. Be psychologically authentic: The activity should be designed to allow learners to experience some of the normal psychological pressures felt by people engaged in real communication. These pressures include having to anticipate the next turn of events and making appropriate utterances to continue, redirect, or terminate the course of the conversation without outside help. Although in normal conversations these pressures are often very subtle and even possibly imperceptible, in second language conversations involving learners they can become significant and disruptive. The classroom activities must provide learners with the opportunity to experience these pressures so that they can develop strategies for dealing with them. For the activities to meet this criterion, it is important there be no explicit prior rehearsal of what to say, when, and to whom. The activity must be designed so that the learners plunge directly into an event in which they must figure out for themselves what to do or say at each moment. The main activities of Class Photo and Family Tree accomplish this by avoiding elaborate instructions, beyond those necessary to take a picture or construct a family tree. No time is allotted for learners to study beforehand the utterances they will need. Learners are left to figure out for themselves how to accomplish the task and in so doing to decide what utterances to use.

In psychological terms, this means the activity requires the student to allocate attentional resources in a manner similar to a natural language environment (nonclassroom situation). This brings two important training benefits. One is that it really forces the student to learn how to allocate attentional resources to the various demands of communicating. To be a fluent-sounding speaker, the student will have to be able to produce appropriate utterances while still devoting attentional capacity to monitoring...
the way events are unfolding and while trying to influence those events. The second benefit is that the student hears and uses the various expressions while in a particular psychological state (i.e., acting with certain intentions; engaging in certain perceptual activities such as monitoring the interlocutor, predicting the next few moments of the event, etc.), and this approximates the state he or she will be in when later required to remember the expressions outside the classroom. This similarity of the learning context to the recall context (i.e., the real-world situation where the learned material has to be recalled) should facilitate later access of memories of the utterances when they are needed. (See Tulving, 1983, for a general discussion of the importance for memory of reinstating the original learning conditions at the time of recall; Segalowitz & Gatbonton, 1988, present a fuller discussion of the application of this "encoding specificity" principle to L2 learning.) Thus, creating realistic psychological demands during the classroom event should help students learn how to use appropriate utterances while meeting these demands, and it should facilitate later memory access of the utterances.

The main activities of Class Photo and Family Tree meet this criterion by being open-ended and by allowing the learners some control over the course of the activity. In Class Photo the students decide individually and collectively who is to be placed next, where, and what the general arrangement will be (standing, sitting, kneeling, etc.). In Family Tree the students decide for themselves the family roles they will assume. Most select the common ones based on birth and marriage, but nothing prevents them from selecting others such as stepsisters through divorce and remarriage, siblings by adoption, and so on. In other words, there are few restrictions on their choices except those inherent in the nature of the task.

3. Be focused: The activities should be designed around basic functions and notions that learners are likely to have to handle in everyday life, such as directing, describing, and apologizing (Wilkins, 1971). Each activity should highlight only one or two functions from among the many that would usually be required in a situation. Building the activity around one or two functions ensures that the majority of utterances elicited will be of the same type, that is, those that are easily recognizable as "exponents" of that function (Morrow & Johnson, 1977). In Class Photo the focus is upon directing, and the majority of sentences used are of this kind. In Family Tree the focus is on asking questions and describing.
4. Be formulaic: The activity should be designed so that short, memorizable utterances or utterance frames are naturally elicited. These utterances should be multisituational; that is, they should be usable in many situations with little or no modification. The requirement that elicited sentences be short and memorizable helps to ensure that automatization can take place within a reasonably short period of time. This is especially important during the early stages of language learning. That the sentences are multisituational ensures that they are worth the effort of automatization. In Class Photo and Family Tree the target utterances are, on average, about four to five words long and are generally simple clauses. They can, however, be used as sentence frames or combined with other similarly short utterances to form longer ones.

5. Be inherently repetitive: This feature is perhaps the most crucial: The repetition should be natural to the activity. There are at least three ways to achieve this. One is to select an activity whose nonlinguistic goal can be attained only through numerous repetitions of a single task. Class Photo is a good illustration of this. In order to organize the class for a picture, every student must be assigned a place, and this necessitates the natural repetition of directions. Family Tree also requires a great deal of repetition because students discuss the same issue with every other student.

A second way to ensure inherent repetition is to select a communication activity whose nonlinguistic goal requires carrying out a series of related activities in a specific sequence. Suppose the activity involves role-playing how to get a machine (e.g., a photocopier) repaired. One could conduct the activity so that the following steps are carried out in order: (a) Bring the problem to the attention of the first appropriate person (e.g., secretary in a workplace setting), who (b) in turn notifies a superior, who (c) instructs someone to get in touch with the appropriate company, who (d) notifies the appropriate staff person (e.g., a repairman), who (e) comes to repair it, and then (f) reports back to his company. As each stage is carried out, the individual making the report is required to reexplain the nature of the problem with the machine.

A third way to foster repetition is to conduct activities in large groups (15 or so students) rather than with individuals or pairs. A large group affords more opportunities for learners to hear, use, or attempt to use many tokens of the same target utterances. In
both Class Photo and Family Tree the number of occurrences of items is, in part, a function of the number of people in the group. Of course, there is still a place for small-group work in the automatization process, and individual, paired, and small-group work are important (Long & Porter, 1985). However, for the purpose of automatization, there are certain advantages to conducting the main activity in a way that involves everyone in a large-group setting.

Although we have illustrated these five criteria with reference to the main activities of Class Photo and Family Tree, by and large they apply to the follow-up activities as well. The main difference between the two is that the main activity is a full-fledged conversational event involving numerous unpredictable exchanges among individuals and in which individuals have control over the flow and drift of the conversation. The follow-up activity generally requires only one or two exchanges per person and is more closely constrained by the teacher.

CONCLUSION

We have tried to show how it is possible, by shifting the focus from the learning of structures to the practice of specific utterances, to devise activities that promote repetition practice and hence automatization, without resorting to mechanical and meaningless drills. These activities must, however, meet certain criteria if they are to avoid undermining the benefits of the communicative approach. The five criteria presented are by no means exhaustive, but we hope that this discussion will lead to further development of methodological guidelines. The progress made in language teaching brought about by the use of communicative approaches has been considerable. We believe that assigning a rightful place for the promotion of automatic fluency skills within this framework will enhance those benefits.

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REFERENCES


REVIEW

The TESOL Quarterly welcomes evaluative reviews of publications of relevance to TESOL professionals. In addition to textbooks and reference materials, these include computer and video software, testing instruments, and other forms of nonprint materials.

Edited by POLLY ULICHNY
University of Massachusetts at Boston

Roles of Teachers and Learning

Roles of Teachers and Learners is one of a series called Language Teaching: A Scheme for Teacher Education, edited by C.N. Candlin and H.G. Widdowson. The series, the purpose of which is to “engage language teachers in a process of continual professional development” (p. x), focuses on three areas: language knowledge, modes of behavior, and modes of action. Roles of Teachers and Learners belongs to the third category and is itself made up of three sections. The first defines social roles and factors affecting the roles of teachers and learners; the second describes the above roles in the classroom; and the third provides opportunities for application and investigation so that readers can discover for themselves critical characteristics of actual teaching situations. Tasks are provided throughout the book as a means of involving the reader more fully.

The first section, approximately 50 pages long, provides basic information on roles in general and of teachers and learners in particular. The author then looks at factors that influence such roles and examines these in terms of interpersonal factors, including social roles and social distance, and task-related factors, including interactivity and interpersonality. He also discusses group processes, including types of behavior, communication patterns, and procedural and content topics.

This section is one of the best parts of the book, as it draws on various disciplines, such as sociology and psychology as well as applied linguistics, to provide a coherent account of roles, networks, conflicts, and so on. Wright also addresses the differences between cultures and asks readers to examine their own values and beliefs in light of the teaching/learning situation. Tasks in this
section are appropriately introspective as well as interactive. For example, Task 11 consists of a list of statements such as “People are basically well intentioned” and “All people have roughly the same level of intelligence” (pp. 22-23). Readers are to consider which they subscribe to, what values they feel support those beliefs, and so on. They can then share their responses.

The second section is the largest, about 75 pages, and consists of two main parts: teaching tasks and strategies and language-learning tasks and activities. The first part examines teaching style, instructional tasks and strategies, and instructional materials and resources. A number of examples of actual teaching materials are included. This part is primarily evaluative in that situations and opinions are presented for readers to judge in terms of criteria and information previously discussed. For example, after discussing control and discipline as aspects of teaching style, Wright presents an excerpt from Harmer’s *The Practice of English Language Teaching* dealing with the teacher in the role of controller. The reader is led to evaluate the excerpt by considering questions such as “Do you think that the author is concerned with teaching or learning ‘efficiency’?” (pp. 55-56).

The second part of this section, dealing with learning groups and activities as well as the individual learner, seems less well developed. Clearer definitions and examples of learner strategies would have been helpful. For example, according to the author, learning style “is to an extent observable,” and learning strategy is “more a set of cognitive processes” (p. 119). Examples of strategies must be inferred from the following tasks, which ask readers to evaluate specific activities in terms of requiring rote learning, original thinking, risk taking, guessing, and so on (pp. 119-120). Although these presumably represent typical learning styles and/or strategies, it might have been helpful to present a brief sample of current approaches and some identified strategies, as was done in the area of instructional tasks and strategies in the first part of this section. In addition, the author does warn the reader that various descriptions are not “cut-and-dried” (p. 26); however, the repeated categorization of types of behaviors, beliefs, personalities, styles, and so on by different authors whom Wright quotes may confuse readers and make it difficult to see the whole picture.

The third section deals with investigating teacher and learner roles. It provides a number of examples of possible investigations, for example, finding out preferred working patterns in a group of learners (p. 129). Wright then delineates a process for setting up one’s own investigation, from finding a topic to collecting data by a variety of methods to interpreting the results of the investigation.
One weakness of this section is that it may give an overly simplistic view of the process of investigation: What occurs in a classroom is enormously complex, yet some of the examples consist essentially of observing a situation, keeping a record, discussing the results with a colleague, and perhaps deciding to introduce a change, after which the procedure may be repeated. This might imply that one can be relatively sure that the change introduced caused the result seen—which could be an inappropriate conclusion, given the number of uncontrolled variables. However, getting teachers involved in investigating their own classrooms is a valuable goal, and the specificity of the examples in this section should promote that goal. A glossary of terms and a list of suggestions for further reading conclude the book.

Overall, the book is an excellent addition to the field of teacher training. Existing texts seem to focus on “how to” and to draw most heavily on educational insights. This text, however, draws on social psychology and second language research as well as the field of education. It focuses on the participants in a classroom as complex individuals with personal, social, psychological, and cultural characteristics.

The book is accessible to readers with little previous knowledge of language learning and teaching and is well written. The tasks are for the most part quite good, though as is usually the case when there is little variety of activity, they can seem repetitious. A great many tasks are presented in the book, and readers need access to classrooms that can be observed and (ideally) taught. However, there is also flexibility—users of this book could select among tasks and among parts of tasks according to their needs. I believe the book would be a valuable addition to a TESOL methods class or practicum or for pre- and inservice teacher training.

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The Bilingual Family

Linguists/parents Harding and Riley have teamed up to bring us a straightforward, firsthand account of the joys and challenges of bilingual parenthood. The practical issues they address are those commonly raised by parents who have the linguistic resources to
rear their children in more than one language. What is bilingualism? Is simultaneous acquisition better than successive bilingualism? What is the relationship between bilingualism and intelligence? What is the effect of bilingualism on family relationships? on cultural identity? on academic success? Why is it that some parents seem to rear bilingual children with relative ease, whereas others experience a disappointing failure?

As a linguist/methodologist who has documented the acquisition of French by her own three (now grown) bilingual children (Savignon, 1983), I was particularly happy to discover this well-written and authoritative discussion. The professional and personal experiences of the authors are apparent throughout the volume and contribute to its success. Edith Harding, a native speaker of French, is Assistant Director of Research in the Department of Linguistics at the University of Cambridge, England. She is married to a native speaker of English, and they and their two children speak French at home and use English for work and school. Philip Riley, an Englishman, works at the Centre de Recherches et d’Applications Pédagogiques en Langues (CRAPEL) at the University of Nancy, France. He is married to a Swedish-speaking Finn, and they have three children, who use English and Swedish at home and French at school.

Described as a “handbook” for parents who are considering rearing their children as bilingual, the volume is divided into three parts. Following a brief presentation of the uses of language for all children, bilingual or not, and the definition of terms used in talking about language and language acquisition, Part I summarizes the research that has been done on individual bilingualism and the development of the bilingual child. It concludes with a discussion of the factors that parents should consider in deciding whether to bring up children as bilingual. Among these factors are the parents’ attitudes toward the languages involved, the potential impact on established patterns of communication within the family, and the availability of continued linguistic support both inside and outside the family. Part II consists of a number of case studies of bilingual families, 16 in all, highlighting different styles of bilingual parenthood. The contexts are for the most part West European and involve a variety of languages, including English, French, German, Spanish, Arabic, Danish, Swedish, and Portuguese. Part III is an alphabetical guide to a number of related topics or notions likely to be useful to parents. Among them are accent, optimum age, aptitude, code switching, correcting, interpreting and translating, refusing to speak a language, spelling, and stuttering.

The authors take the commonsense approach that language
learning results from a combination of motivation and opportunity and that the best thing parents can do for their children is to play down their bilingualism. Bilingualism, after all, is not rare; over half the world’s population is bilingual. Scolding, badgering, correcting errors, and teasing are all likely to hinder, rather than promote, bilingualism; it is the parents’ responsibility not only to refrain from such behavior themselves, but to protect children in settings where it is likely to occur. “Although many people, especially teachers, have great difficulty believing it, there is no evidence that correcting helps people to learn” (p. 121). As for the development of literacy, this depends similarly on motivation and opportunity. “Generally speaking, the more a child reads, the more likely she is to reach a reasonable level in writing and spelling” (p. 137).

Consistent with their relaxed approach to learning, Harding and Riley emphasize the social benefits of bilingualism. In the words of one bilingual couple they cite, children should be encouraged to maintain both languages as “some sort of heritage rather than an investment!” (p. 103). Research findings on the interrelationship of bilingualism and intellectual development are inconclusive. From a strictly intellectual point of view, the effects of bilingualism cannot be said to be either positive or negative. The daily experience of millions of people, however, demonstrates the immediate practical and social value of knowing two or more languages.

This perspective will be reassuring to parents who not infrequently hear words of caution from doctors, teachers, and other “experts” on the risks of multilingualism. Such caution often claims “scientific” support that has more to do with social concepts—for example, the “melting pot” in the United States—than empirical evidence. Bilingualism is most likely to be attained in those contexts where it is viewed as natural and socially desirable.

Not only parents, but teachers and others interested in promoting second/foreign language learning will find encouragement and support in The Bilingual Family. The discussion and illustrative case studies underscore familiar themes in communicative language teaching:

1. Language is first and foremost a social phenomenon, and language learning, therefore, is a social activity.
2. Language learning is not a neat, linear process. Syntactic and semantic “errors,” code mixing, and periods of apparent linguistic regression are all part of the natural process.
3. Learning a language is not the same thing as learning about a language. Many people use a second language fluently without any explicit idea of its grammar. Similarly, acquisition can and
does occur in the absence of formal training, provided there is motivation and opportunity for use. Classrooms do have an important role to play, however, in providing both an expanded social context and systematic training in the development of higher levels of symbolic functioning associated in particular with reading and writing.

4. Bilingual competence is a matter of degree. Idealized notions of “mastery” or “perfect bilingualism” do not reflect the real world of bilingual and serve only to discourage learners.

The themes are familiar, but they bear repeating. Harding and Riley have done so in a most responsible and straightforward manner.

REFERENCE


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Second Language Pedagogy


The Bangalore Communicational Teaching Project has attracted a great deal of attention in recent years, but detailed accounts have not always been easy to come by. This first book-length discussion of the project, and of the pedagogic insights that grew out of it, is therefore to be welcomed.

The Bangalore project resulted from a dissatisfaction with the structural approach to English language teaching that had been implemented on a wide scale in south India during the 1980s. By about 1975, basic assumptions about the efficacy of planned progression, prelection, and form-focused activity were being increasingly questioned. At the same time, the fashionable alternative of a notional/functional syllabus did not seem to constitute a significant advance on structural methodology. It was therefore proposed to set up a project that would explore the hypothesis that the development of competence in a second language requires “not systematization of language inputs or maximization of planned practice, but the creation of conditions in which learners engage in an effort to cope with communication”
A major aim of the project was to develop a series of task-based, problem-solving activities that would require students to focus on the message rather than the code.

The project was school based from the outset. In other words, there was no attempt to “prove” a teaching method by controlled experimentation; rather, the aim was to provide a forum for debate, in a practical context, as a result of which teachers could develop new insights into what they were trying to achieve. Eight classes of children aged 8-13 were involved in the project over a period of 5 years. For the most part the classes were at different schools, in different towns or districts, at different stages of both schooling and instruction in English, and received project teaching for various lengths of time (from 1-3 school years depending on local circumstances). In the early stages of the project most of the work was done with postinitial classes, whereas in the later stages the emphasis shifted to beginners. All the classes were in state schools where the language of instruction was the mother tongue of the students and where contact time consisted of one teaching period of 40 minutes a day, 5 or 6 days a week.

Eighteen people participated in the teaching on a voluntary basis; these were either teacher trainers, teachers with specialist qualifications, or regular teachers at schools. Project teaching was done according to the project’s task-based principles, but otherwise there was minimal departure from the normal conditions of school life. There was no strict, preconceived idea of how teaching would proceed; the researchers started with a general idea of what they wanted to bring about in the classroom, but detailed procedures emerged as a result of trial and error over a period of time.

It was important to the project that there should be constant interaction between theory and practice as well as frequent opportunities for focused debate. To this end, a review seminar was organized at the end of each year’s project teaching, and bulletins and newsletters were regularly circulated to ensure continuous public discussion both in India and in the ESL profession at large. In the fifth year of the project, an independent evaluation was carried out by Alan Beretta and Alan Davies of the University of Edinburgh. A report on this evaluation, providing tentative support for the hypothesis that grammatical knowledge can be acquired through a focus on meaning alone, is provided in Appendix VI.

The project is remarkable not only as an outstanding example of practical classroom-oriented research, but also because of the powerfully articulated theory that grew out of it. This theory, although similar in some respects to the work of Krashen, developed independently of the current debate in North America.
The following points about the project and its underlying principles are particularly noteworthy:

1. The focus of the project was not on “communicative competence” in the sense of achieving native-like situational appropriateness in the use of the second language—this was not seen as a high priority in the Indian context—but on “grammatical competence itself, which was hypothesized to develop in the course of meaning-focused activity” (p. 1).

2. Second language acquisition is an internal, self-regulating process, which is not likely to be uniform across individuals and which cannot be specifically controlled by the teacher; it is also a holistic process that is in principle irreconcilable with the concept of controlled step-by-step grading. Moreover, there is no reason to believe that the inner logic of language learning bears any resemblance to the descriptive grammars of linguists and course designers.

3. In the classroom, there is a fundamental difference between display (language evoked in response to elicitation by the teacher) and deployment (the utilization of internalized linguistic knowledge in response to a need to communicate). If we attempt to regulate input, the grammar that results is only (or primarily) available in display contexts. If we want to develop an ability to use grammar in deployment, then display techniques are irrelevant.

4. Instead of input regulation, we should concentrate on achieving optimum intake conditions. The aim should be to encourage intensive contact with “manageable samples of language,” relevant to a given problem or task. This results in “ad hoc simplification,” seen in terms of natural recurrence rather than contrived repetition. The regulation of task demands is considered more important and feasible than simplifying the language as such.

5. Communicational task-based teaching is not an attempt to eliminate all attention by learners to language as form; it is, however, an attempt to ensure that any attention to form is “contingent to dealing with meaning” and “self-initiated (i.e., not planned, predicted, or controlled by the teacher)” (p. 76). It follows that error correction will be incidental rather than systematic; it should be seen as facilitative and not directive, its main purpose being to enable learners to get on with the activity that they are currently interested in.

6. Opportunity for revision or extension of the developing
grammar occurs when the learner encounters “superior data,” that is, samples of language that embody a more highly developed internal system. Since in south India the ESL teacher is the primary source of superior data, sustained interaction between learners is likely to provide less opportunity for system revision and may lead to fossilization. For this reason the researchers assume a major role for the teacher and do not encourage group work in the classroom.

Communicational tasks are defined by Prabhu as activities that require learners “to arrive at an outcome . . . through some process of thought” (p. 24) in such a way that the teacher is able to provide a significant element of guidance. In communicational teaching the basic format for lessons is teacher-class interaction in the form of question and answer (or instruction and response). As a result, the teacher is able to maintain control over the development of each activity, adjusting the difficulty level where necessary and providing “parallel” activities to ensure that students at various proficiency levels receive the support they need.

In the early stages of the project, teachers experimented with a number of different types of tasks. These included (a) information-gap activity, involving a transfer of information from one person to another; (b) reasoning-gap activity, requiring students to derive new information from given information; and (c) opinion-gap activity, which involves articulating a personal preference, feeling, or attitude. Both information-gap and opinion-gap activities were found to be unsatisfactory, the former because they typically involve a one-step procedure with little negotiation, the latter because they are open-ended and lack clear criteria for judging right or wrong outcomes. Consequently, preference was given for reasoning-gap activities, which have clearly defined rules and objectives and which require sustained involvement in the task on the part of the student.

All the lessons in a communicational curriculum have a similar pattern, consisting of three basic elements: a pre-task to be attempted by the whole class under the guidance of the teacher, a main task to be attempted by each student individually, and an evaluation of students’ work on the basis of content rather than formal accuracy. The pre-task and the main task are similar in that they involve the same situations, sets of facts, and reasoning processes. Each stage of the lesson, however, requires an “independent effort of the mind”; that is, it is not possible to transfer the procedures mechanically from one stage to the other.

The purpose of the pre-task is to provide a context for identifying
any difficulties that the students might be experiencing, thus allowing the teacher to reduce the difficulty level or to provide appropriate assistance. The pre-task is not merely a rehearsal, however; it is regarded as an activity in its own right. One of its functions is to provide an opportunity for the more proficient students to undertake a public demonstration of the task, while their less confident companions learn by observing. Another function of the pre-task is to provoke a discussion between the teacher and the students, which leads to a jointly negotiated agreement of what is to be achieved during the lesson.

In a communicational syllabus, sequences of lessons are planned in order to develop an activity at various levels of complexity, to allow for replication at the same level, or to encourage alternation between oral and written media. In order to avoid boredom or fatigue, a regular change in task-types is made after every few lessons, different task-types being used cyclically. Tasks are graded on a commonsense basis, involving reference to a number of criteria: How complex or varied is the information required? How many steps are there in the reasoning process? How much precision is called for in conveying the facts? How familiar will students be with the type of task involved? How abstract are the concepts that the students will be required to handle? All communicational tasks involve a principle of “reasonable challenge,” which implies that the students should not be able to perform the task without an effort but that at the same time, they should be able to succeed if they make an honest attempt.

The following are typical examples of tasks used in the Bangalore project: interpreting railway timetables and filling in reservation forms; interpreting rules for concessional bus fares and relating them to the needs of individual students; reconstructing a school timetable and working out when various people can meet; deciding how quickly or cheaply to get from A to B with the help of a map; and so on. Clearly, these activities are unremarkable in themselves, and it would not be difficult for teachers to think of many more of a similar nature. As in the case of all task-based language teaching, however, what matters is not the predesigned content but the way in which the content is utilized in the classroom.

Prabhu’s theoretical position—a strong version of the natural growth hypothesis—stands in staunch opposition not only to structural and notional-functional syllabuses, but also to recent proposals for a “variable focus,” or a “componential” or “mixed” approach to L2 teaching. On what basis should these conflicting claims be evaluated? According to Prabhu, empirical verification is not possible, since there is a fundamental conflict between
controlled experimentation and conditions of natural language use. Since there are no procedures with guaranteed outcomes, we are not able to claim that any particular approach constitutes the “best” solution in any absolute sense.

What matters most, Prabhu suggests, is not the precise pattern of classroom events but how much our “sense of plausibility” is invested in these events. A teacher’s sense of plausibility—the opposite of routine—is directly related to the concept of professional growth. It follows that teacher education should be based on a sharing of perceptions, enriched by theory but ultimately derived from personal experience. This process of sharing will lead to a higher degree of articulation and in turn to an enhanced awareness of what we are trying to achieve.

This book is highly recommended for all second language teachers and researchers. The main text includes chapters on the Indian background, the Communicational Teaching Project, task-based teaching, the learning process, and pedagogic change. There are several useful appendixes, including lesson transcripts and a list of task-types used on the project. By providing rich insights into L2 teaching and learning, the author enables us to reflect profitably on our own classroom practices.

J. P. B. ALLEN
Modern Language Center
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BRIEF REPORTS AND SUMMARIES

The TESOL Quarterly invites readers to submit short reports and updates on their work. These summaries may address any areas of interest to Quarterly readers. Authors’ addresses are printed with these reports to enable interested readers to contact the authors for more details.

Edited by D. SCOTT ENRIGHT
Georgia State University

Evaluating a Screening/Training Program for NNS Teaching Assistants

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Iowa State University, like many other institutions, has recently developed a program for screening potential teaching assistants (TAs) who are nonnative speakers (NNSs) —to see whether they have the necessary speaking proficiency and teaching skills to be placed in undergraduate classrooms—and for training those who demonstrate deficiencies. From the beginning, in 1984, we have attempted to assess the effectiveness of the program to discover how we could improve it and have reported to interested parties (students, their parents, administrators, and state legislators) how well we were succeeding. This report describes some of our measures and results.

The screening instruments used in the program have been Educational Testing Service’s Speaking Proficiency English Assessment Kit (SPEAK) (1982) and an in-house test called TEACH (see Abraham, Klein, & Plakans, 1986), a classroom teaching simulation that provides information on an examinee’s speaking and listening ability, awareness of the culture of the U.S. classroom, and teaching skill. Our training consists of several courses addressing the various needs of students who do not pass the screening.

In setting up our evaluation, we have attempted to follow principles that others have set out for ongoing program evaluation (Barak, 1982): comprehensiveness (achieved by use of multiple criteria); fairness and objectivity; cyclical and timely review so change can be observed; communication of findings to secure active cooperation of all parties with a vested interest in the program; careful piloting and implementation of evaluative tools; and utility (after finding answers, putting them to use).

The questions addressed in this report areas follows: (a) Is the SPEAK/TEACH combination a good predictor of acceptable classroom performance by NNS TAs, as judged by faculty supervisors and undergraduate
students? and (b) Were any background characteristics of the potential NNS TAs related to success on SPEAK/TEACH?

DATA COLLECTION

To answer the first question, we used responses to questionnaires that are filled out annually by TA supervisors or chairs of 35 departments employing NNS TAs. Among other things, these administrators reported complaints from students about the performance of NNS TAs who had passed the screening.

In fall 1986, we obtained additional information about the effectiveness of the screening from evaluation forms completed by 1,667 undergraduates in 108 sections about their 53 first-year TAs (32 native speakers [NSs] and 21 NNSs, some teaching more than one section) in recitation/discussion classes in three departments—Mathematics, Physics, and Chemistry. (We collected evaluations of both NS and NNS TAs in order to compare their performance.) These departments were chosen because they employed a large number of TAs in recitation/discussion sections. Two already had student evaluation procedures in place, and one had assisted us in carrying out a pilot evaluation of NNS TAs the previous year.

Although the student evaluation forms differed slightly from department to department, the same general procedure was followed in all. Students of all TAs, both NSs and NNSs, were asked to use a 5-point scale (1 high) to rate their instructor on questions such as the following:

The recitation instructor
1. has command of the subject; understands its relation to other fields.
2. is well prepared to discuss the assignments.
3. explains ideas and methods clearly and at the right level for the students.
4. enjoys teaching; is enthusiastic about [the subject].
5. stimulates interest in [the subject]; helps to make the course interesting and rewarding.
6. encourages class discussion; grasps questions quickly, answers them carefully and fully.
7. is accessible and friendly to students; respects students and is interested in them.

In addition, students of NNS TAs were asked about various aspects of their instructor’s language ability, again to be answered on a 5-point scale.

To answer the second question on background characteristics of potential NNS TAs, we compared information collected when the potential TAs came for screening with their speaking proficiency as measured by SPEAK and the speaking score on TEACH.

RESULTS

Predictability of SPEAK/TEACH Combination

Department TA supervisors and chairs reported very few complaints
about the speaking ability of NNS TAs who had passed the screening. This finding should be interpreted with care, however, since undergraduate students dissatisfied with their NNS TAs do not always voice their complaints to the administrators who were asked to respond to our questionnaires.

The undergraduate evaluations of TAs provided more information because of the large number of students surveyed. In our analysis, we first looked at the questions asked about all TAs, comparing, by department, the mean responses for the NS TAs with the corresponding mean responses for the NNS TAs. Then, after establishing an “acceptable” level of response to each question (3, or Average, on the 5-point scale), we determined, again by department, whether the mean response to each question for each group of TAs was at or above this level.

In all departments, the responses for the NNS TAs were consistently below those for the NS TAs, with the differences being statistically significant at the .05 level for a small percentage of questions. However, when we looked at whether the mean responses were acceptable, we discovered that (a) for the NS TAs in all three departments and for the NNS TAs in Physics and Chemistry who had passed the screening, all mean responses were above the “average” cutoff and (b) for NNS TAs in Mathematics, mean responses for all but two questions were acceptable. (These two questions dealt with presentation skills and language proficiency and were rated at 3.1 and 3.3, respectively, slightly below average.)

The Chemistry Department provided us with an additional check on the validity of our screening procedures. Because of a staff shortage, the supervisor of freshman chemistry had placed three NNS TAs who had not passed the screening tests into seven sections. Undergraduates rated these instructors lower on all questions than they did those who had passed the screening.

The next step in analyzing the undergraduate evaluations was to look at responses to the language questions asked of students taught by NNS TAs. We established the same “acceptable” level for responses and compared the means of student responses with these. The patterns from all departments were similar, and for all but one question (which in retrospect appeared to be ambiguous), the mean responses for all NNS TAs who had passed the screening were either above the acceptable level or within a quarter of a point below it.

Background Characteristics of NNS TAs and Success on SPEAK/TEACH

We have only begun our analysis relating background characteristics of potential NNS TAs to their scores on SPEAK and the speaking portion of TEACH. However, two interesting relationships have already emerged. First, as indicated by a scatter plot, the length of time spent in an English-speaking country was not related to SPEAK scores, except when the number of years in the country was over 5, in which case almost all of the examinees had SPEAK scores above 200. Second, again as indicated by a
scatter plot, TOEFL scores were not related to SPEAK scores, except when the TOEFL scores were over 600, in which case almost all of the examinees had SPEAK scores of 230 or above. Similar patterns were observed using the speaking scores from TEACH instead of SPEAK scores.

These findings suggest that departments should be wary of using length of time in an English-speaking country and TOEFL scores to predict the success of applicants for teaching assistantships, unless very high cutoff levels can be set. Departments with large numbers of positions to fill will likely need to draw from applicants who have recently arrived in the United States, with TOEFL scores in the 500-600 range, and these students will require further screening.

Interestingly, the best outside indicator of speaking ability turned out to be examinees' self-rating of proficiency, which was obtained at the time of the screening. Using modified Foreign Service Institute descriptors on a scale of 1 to 5, examinees sorted themselves out in much the same way as did the SPEAK/TEACH raters. For those rating themselves as 5 ("like an educated native speaker"), the average SPEAK score was 270. For those rating themselves as 4 ("fluent/accurate for professional purposes"), the average SPEAK score was 240, whereas for those giving themselves a 3 ("effective in most conversations"), the average was 207. For examinees giving themselves a 2 or 1 ("can satisfy routine travel/courtesy requirements" and "can satisfy limited social/work requirements," respectively), the average scores were in the 170-180 range on SPEAK. A similar relationship was observed between self-ratings and TEACH scores. As we continue our analysis, we will look at the above characteristics, along with others (e.g., first language and previous teaching experience), within a regression model to provide a better picture of the factors that predict success.

Our work thus far suggests that it is possible to set up a screening program for NNS TAs and to measure its effectiveness in rather convincing ways. We plan to continue collecting and analyzing the type of data discussed above and also to evaluate the training portion of the program in order to improve and, if possible, to simplify our procedures.

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The role of grammar instruction in second language acquisition is one of the most controversial issues in second language teaching and second language learning research. Advocates of formal instruction (e.g., Seliger, 1979; Sharwood Smith, 1981) argue that focusing on the formal characteristics of L2 input data facilitates hypothesis formulation and testing. In this respect, formal instruction is a shortcut to learning and enhances formal accuracy. On the other hand, critics (e.g., Krashen, 1982) maintain that grammar knowledge is of limited use and can even be counterproductive in spontaneous communication.

Two theories of L2 learning that make explicit claims about the role of formal instruction are Krashen’s (1982) and Bialystok’s (1979) models. Krashen maintains that the knowledge language learners get through formal instruction is available for use only in monitored situations, when the user focuses on form, and that it cannot be used in spontaneous production, when the focus is on meaning. Bialystok’s theory claims that formal instruction followed by formal practice is beneficial for both spontaneous and controlled performance.

Studies on the effect of grammar instruction on formal accuracy in language use (e.g., Pica, 1983; Schumann, 1978) have arrived at incongruous findings. Schumann looked at the effects of formal instruction on the development of English negation in an adult learning ESL in a naturalistic environment. The instruction had a major effect on monitored elicited language use but not on spontaneous production. Schumann reported that his subject appeared to have very low motivation to learn English and that his attitude toward the English-speaking community was negative. He concluded that the subject’s interlanguage did not develop because he was socially and psychologically separated from the English-speaking community and that instruction was not strong enough to overcome pidginization caused by social and psychological distance. However, he did not explain why formal instruction affected monitored performance but not spontaneous production.

Pica (1983) examined the contribution of formal instruction to second language acquisition by studying the spontaneous production of English grammatical morphology by adult learners learning English in three different contexts: formal, naturalistic, and mixed. Her findings showed that formal instruction promotes accuracy in language use but that it may lead to overuse of the learned pattern. Pica’s study provides valuable insights into the effect of analyzed knowledge on formal accuracy in spontaneous language use. However, with respect to Krashen’s and...
Bialystok's arguments, it would have been even more informative if it had considered the relationship between accuracy and spontaneity.

THE STUDY

The case study reported here investigated the effect of grammar instruction on formal accuracy in spontaneous and monitored second language performance. It was conducted over a period of 9 weeks.

The Subject

The subject was a female Chinese graduate student at the University of Toronto. When the study began, she had been in Canada for 5 months. Prior to coming to Canada, she had taken an English for academic purposes course in China for 2 years. She reported that the course focused on reading and writing and that the teaching approach used was the grammar-translation method. Shortly after her arrival in Canada, she took a TOEFL course for 2 months. Because she did not attain the required score the first time she took the TOEFL, the subject had to take the test a second time and was preparing for it at the time the experiment began. Since her unsatisfactory performance on the TOEFL was due to her weaknesses in grammar and her poor vocabulary, she was enthusiastic about receiving some formal instruction and participating in the project.

Procedures

Through observation of the subject’s spontaneous speech over a period of 3½ months, the experimenter noticed that some of her errors were systematic. (The experimenter and the subject were living together during this period and the whole period of the study.) The study focused on one of the rules that the subject had trouble applying in spontaneous speech: the placement of pronominal direct objects of ditransitive and phrasal verbs. At the time the study began, the subject constantly placed the direct object after the indirect object in the case of ditransitive verbs and after the particle in the case of phrasal verbs, as in the following examples (the asterisks indicate the sentences are ungrammatical):

1. *Last time I show Beth it.
2. *He told me that he will call up me this evening.

In English, the direct object of a ditransitive verb can be placed either before or after the indirect object. However, if it is a pronoun, it is always placed before the indirect object. In informal speech, it can be placed afterwards if the indirect object is also a pronoun in its reduced form, as in I sent’em it.

The placement of the direct object of phrasal verbs is determined by the type of verb involved as well as by the direct object itself. There are two
types of transitive phrasal verbs: separable and inseparable. The direct object of a separable phrasal verb is placed either before or after the particle when it is a noun. When the noun is long and complex, it comes after the particle. However, when the direct object is a pronoun, it always precedes the particle. A small number of separable phrasal verbs are always separated. The direct object of such verbs always precedes the particle. However, such verbs have inseparable counterparts with a different meaning (Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 1983). For example:

3. They managed to get through that message.
4. They managed to get that message through.

The study began with a pretest followed by formal instruction. Then, the experimenter observed the subject’s oral production for a period of 9 weeks, at the end of which a posttest was given.

**Pretest.** The purpose of the pretest was to verify if the subject’s interlanguage behavior was systematic across modes of language use (oral versus written). The test was written and had two parts. On the first part, which consisted of a continuous text, the subject’s task was to change some nouns into pronouns. On the second part, which had 10 isolated sentences containing a total of 12 ditransitive and transitive phrasal verbs, the subject’s task was to judge the grammaticality of those sentences and to correct the errors in them, if any. After she had completed the two tasks, the subject was asked to go through the two texts again to check if the grammaticality of the items was consonant with her intuition.

The subject’s errors on test performance were not as systematic as those in spontaneous production, and for this reason, the experimenter had to appeal to the subject’s own introspection to determine what rules she operated with in performing the test tasks. The experimenter and the subject looked over the test items together, and the subject had to judge their grammaticality once more and verbalize her internalized rules.

The subject’s statement of the rules on which her decisions were based revealed a rich metalinguistics knowledge. This is not surprising, considering that the English courses she had taken had an analytical orientation. She stated five rules for transitive phrasal verbs and three for ditransitive verbs. Two of the rules, one in each set, were incorrect: (a) A nominal direct object of a separable phrasal verb always follows the particle, except when the verb is always separated from the particle; and (b) if both the direct object and the indirect object of a ditransitive verb are pronouns, the direct object can either precede or follow the indirect object. There was a closer relationship between her internalized rules and her written test performance than between those rules and the patterns in her spontaneous production.

An interesting feature of the subject’s performance on the pretest was that the grammaticality-judgment-and-correction task seemed to have presented less difficulty than the substitution task. On the judgment task, only 1 item out of 12 was wrongly judged. (The item wrongly judged as incorrect was *ring my friends up*; it was corrected *ring up my friend*,
which is perfectly correct. The experimenter decided to include nominal direct object of phrasal verbs in the study because the subject’s placement rule for such objects was incomplete, although it could allow her to produce correct sentences.) Five items out of 12 were judged as incorrect and were subsequently corrected. One item out of those 5 was wrongly corrected, although correctly judged as incorrect. (This item was *give him it back*, which was corrected *give it back*. Word order was not the problem for the subject; rather, it was *him*, which she considered redundant.) On the substitution task, however, 5 items out of 10 were misplaced. This difference is possibly due to the fact that the two tasks require relatively different levels of analyzed knowledge, the substitution task being more demanding than the judgment-and-correction task.

**Formal instruction.** Formal instruction was provided for approximately 40 minutes immediately after the subject had taken the test. What the subject needed was simply to modify some of her rules and to reorganize her internal categorization of phrasal verbs. Formal explanation was provided, followed by formal drills (mechanical and meaningful drills).

**Observation.** During the 9 weeks following formal instruction, the experimenter observed the subject’s oral language, paying special attention to her use of the structures involved in the study and noting down, as much as possible without her knowledge, instances of their use. In this way, the experimenter avoided interfering with the subject’s speech spontaneity.

On the day instruction was given and on the following 2 days, the subject monitored her use of the structure. Because of the monitoring, she did not make errors at all for those 3 days. But after that, no monitoring was observed, and her performance was no different from what it had been before instruction was given. The subject’s spontaneous production did not seem to have benefited from formal instruction. Of the 30 instances of pronominal direct object use collected during the observation period, the pronominal direct object was correctly placed only 8 times (26.6%).

**Posttest.** Two months after formal instruction was given, the subject took another test, the purpose of which was to determine the effects of instruction on her controlled performance. Like the pretest, the posttest consisted of a substitution task and a grammaticality-judgment-and-correction task. However, the judgment-and-correction task on the posttest had an oral component as well as a written one. The oral part was conducted in the form of an informal conversation, and the subject’s task was to judge and correct the experimenter’s utterances as well as her own.

It is interesting to note that the subject’s score on the written grammaticality-judgment-and-correction task declined by 20.3% from her pretest score. On the posttest, 10 items out of 14 (71.4%) were correctly judged, and 4 items (28.6%) were wrongly judged (versus 91.7% correctly judged, 8.3% wrongly judged on the pretest). Only 2 items were judged as wrong and therefore needed correction, and both of these were accurately corrected. As on the pretest correction task, one of the items wrongly
judged as incorrect involved a nominal direct object (*put their cigarettes out*), and again, correction did not yield an ungrammatical pattern.

Although the subject’s score on the judgment-and-correction task declined, her performance on the substitution task improved considerably. Only 1 pronoun out of 12 (8.3%) was misplaced on the posttest, compared with 5 out of 10 (50%) on the pretest.

The subject’s statement of rules showed that she had modified the phrasal verb rule but not the ditransitive verb rule. Her errors on the pretest were all due to application of a wrong rule for ditransitive verbs and were due partly to application of a wrong rule and partly to verb misclassification in the case of phrasal verbs. On the posttest, however, only ditransitive verb errors had resulted from application of a wrong rule; all phrasal verb errors were due to verb misclassification.

The subject’s performance on the oral judgment-and-correction task was very poor compared with her performance on the written task. The conversation from which the subject’s ability to judge the grammaticality of items in spontaneous language use was assessed consisted of four short exchanges containing five transitive phrasal verbs altogether. The items on the judgment task were scored on the basis of the spontaneity of the response; that is, only the first reaction to the experimenter’s utterance or to the experimenter’s reaction to the subject’s own utterance was taken into account. The score was 0/5 for the judgment task and 4/4 for the correction task. The subject failed to give any spontaneous correct response on the judgment task but managed, after some reflection, to give the correct response and subsequently the correct form.

The overall performance on the oral test revealed that the subject’s ability to use the form correctly depended on her use of the monitor. She could judge the grammaticality of sentences only when she focused on form. The experimenter tried to help her detect faults in incorrect utterances by highlighting the erroneous part (e.g., by repeating it), but she was unable to detect them immediately because she was concentrating on the semantic and pragmatic value of the utterances rather than on the form. Only when the experimenter deliberately led her to focus on the form (e.g., by asking if the structure was correct) was she able to pinpoint the errors and correct them.

**DISCUSSION**

In the study reported here, formal instruction seemed to have had very little effect on spontaneous production, but it was beneficial for controlled performance. These findings are similar to Schumann’s (1978) in this respect. However, the conclusion that formal instruction is beneficial only for monitored speech remains highly speculative for various reasons. First, the particle movement rule that applies to English phrasal verbs is not straightforward. Although the subject knew the rule, she had difficulties deciding when the verb and the particle should be split and when they should remain adjacent. Second, we cannot generalize from a single
pattern and a single subject, since interlanguage behavior is idiosyncratic. In spite of her rich L2 metalinguistics knowledge and her immersion in the target language community for 8 months, the subject’s spoken English remained pidgin-like in form, not much different from the English of some immigrants who have never received any formal instruction. Interestingly, the subject apparently met most of the conditions necessary for successful second language learning, but as far as pronunciation and grammar accuracy were concerned, she made very little progress over a period of 8 months of residence in the target language community. Schumann (1978) accounted for the pidginization of his subject’s interlanguage and the little effect of instruction in terms of social and psychological distance. This study suggests that social and psychological factors by themselves cannot account for the resistance of fossilized errors to formal instruction.

This study attempted to look at the effect of formal instruction on monitored and unmonitored interlanguage performance. In interlanguage experimental studies, spontaneous speech data are often collected by controlling the content of the communication, especially when there is a need to encourage the use of a specific grammatical structure. However, the control itself takes away the naturalness of the communication. Moreover, it is well known that however spontaneously speakers perform when they are aware that they are being observed, there is always the danger that performance will not reflect real, authentic language use, since speakers will then tend to pay attention to form.

In this regard, the strengths of this study rest on the richness and authenticity of the context of language use in which the spontaneous data were collected. The longitudinal observation of the subject’s use of ditransitive and phrasal verbs in an informal context of ongoing authentic language use allowed the systematic nature of her performance to be captured when language form was not being attended to. Such naturalistic data make possible a comparison of monitored and unmonitored language use, thereby allowing the testing of hypotheses regarding the differences between attended and unattended performance.1

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1I would like to express my thanks to Dr. Merrill Swain for her comments on an earlier version of this article.

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Comments on Vivian Zamel’s “Recent Research on Writing Pedagogy”

A Reader Reacts . . .

TONY SILVA
Purdue University

Vivian Zamel is, without a doubt, a potent force and an acknowledged leader in the area of ESL composition. Her work is always interesting and provocative, and her latest TESOL Quarterly offering (Vol. 21, No. 4, December 1987) is no exception. However, I find some aspects of this piece quite troubling.

First, there seems to be little, if any, recognition of the difference between L1 and L2 composing in this article. The article’s bibliography contains about three times as many references to L1 as to L2 writing studies; L1 and L2 studies are mixed throughout the article as though they were equally relevant to L2 composition; and the author seems to offer no caveat about using the findings of L1 writing studies in L2 composition situations. Thus, there seems to be a tacit assumption here that L1 and L2 writing are essentially the same phenomenon—that the linguistic, cultural, and experiential differences of L2 writers are of negligible or no concern to ESL composition teachers.

This assumption seems counterintuitive and would appear to militate against the experience of most ESL composition teachers and L2 writers, including Raimes (1985), who notes that “all of us who have tried to write something in a second language . . . sense that the process of writing in an L2 is startlingly different from writing in our L1” (p. 232). Although there is certainly much to be learned from developments in L1 composition theory, research, and practice, it seems wise to interpret these lessons very carefully into L2 writing contexts.

Second, this article argues for a view of composition research
design that is one-sided and counterproductive. That is, it enthusiastically promotes qualitative descriptive designs (ethnographies and case studies), whereas it hostilely dismisses experimental designs (controlled comparative studies). In attacking experimental designs, the article introduces sweeping and unsubstantiated generalizations.

For example, the article alleges that experimental studies of composition have “provided us few significant findings” (p. 697) and implies that experimental studies are not a matter of much interest in composition research circles (p. 702). In addition, it suggests that “classroom-based research” (that is, qualitative descriptive studies in which students are observed in classroom settings) “has revealed far more . . . than previous empirically designed studies comparing different methods and approaches” (p. 702). (I find the author’s use of the terms classroom based and empirically designed curious in that most experimental studies have taken place in classrooms and qualitative descriptive designs are indeed empirical research designs.)

These assertions about experimental studies are, at best, very debatable. Those interested in the other side of the story should see Hillocks (1986), who gives a sympathetic, well-documented, and, I believe, more realistic account of experimental research in composition. Furthermore, although Zamel is certainly justified in identifying problems associated with experimental research on writing with regard to such issues as indistinct instructional treatments, variable interpretations of criteria for writing quality, artificial writing conditions, and uninspiring writing tasks (p. 702), in fairness, it should be noted that these problems are neither peculiar to nor necessarily inherent in experimental designs but can afflict other types of designs as well, even qualitative descriptive ones.

Although the article is clearly hard on experimental studies of composition—unreasonably so, I would venture—it presents qualitative descriptive studies in rather glowing and uncritical terms. Nowhere do we see a discussion of problems commonly associated with such studies, for example, those discussed by Hillocks (1986; see pp. 51-58 for a detailed discussion of these issues):

- tendencies to present data selectively rather than systematically, to interpret data without a consistent analysis, to infer cause-and-effect relationships without adequate warrant, and to ignore the range of possible effects which the presence of researchers might have on results. (p. 51)
In short, this article’s discussion of qualitative descriptive studies seems to put them in an exalted position, beyond concerns of intellectual rigor, validity, and reliability—beyond reproach. In any case, it seems rather unwise to try to privilege one research design over another at this time. In a developing discipline such as ours, we need to expand, not narrow, our options with regard to tools for empirical research. (For a clear, cogent, and accessible classification and discussion of empirical designs available for composition research, see Lauer & Asher, 1988.)

Third, the article reflects a view of ESL composition teachers that I feel is overgeneralized, unduly negative, and unjustified. For example, Zamel states that (presumably all) ESL writing teachers seem to read and react to a text as a series of separate pieces at the sentence level or even clause level, rather than as a whole unit of discourse. In fact, they are so distracted by language-related problems that they often correct these without realizing that there is a much larger, meaning-related problem that they have failed to address. (p. 700)

These blanket assertions seem to be largely based on findings from Zamel’s 1985 study, in which she examined only the written “comments, reactions, and markings” (p. 85) of 15 ESL composition teachers on a total of 105 student texts at a single institution. In this study it appears that (a) none of the teachers’ classes were observed; (b) none of the teachers were interviewed; (c) no attempt was made to contextualized the teachers’ responses, that is, to look at them in light of what was going on in the teachers’ classes; (d) only one judge (the author) analyzed the data; and (e) data were presented rather selectively, those supporting the author’s case being privileged. I resist the sweeping negative characterization of ESL composition instructors in this article not only because I find the evidence on which it is based less than compelling, but also because it simply does not reflect my own views and, more important, the views of the majority of ESL writing professionals with whom I normally interact.

I realize that criticism of a colleague’s work seems indecorous and unpleasant to some. I do not share this view. Informed and principled criticism is a means of opening important basic issues to close examination and vigorous debate. Such criticism is healthy and essential in a young, growing, and vital discipline such as ours. What we do not need at this point in our development is to line up neatly behind one particular orientation to or ideology of L2 composing. What we do need to do is to make our own individual decisions on what the relevant research is and says and on how it
should inform our theories of L2 writing and our classroom practices.

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*The Author Responds.* . .

VIVIAN ZAMEL
University of Massachusetts at Boston

I agree with Tony Silva that debate and inquiry are critical if we are to better understand composition studies, an area that is undergoing fundamental, even revolutionary, changes in both research and practice. I therefore welcome his remarks about my recent review of research on writing instruction and offer mine in the same spirit.

Although Silva draws attention to critical issues in composition, his first argument reveals an underconceptualized understanding of how I view L1 studies in relation to L2 composing. It is certainly true that my bibliography is heavily informed by work in L1 writing, at the most obvious level, but this is because there is still little research available about L2 composing processes or about L2 composition pedagogy. It is not therefore surprising that I and other researchers (Edelsky, 1982; Krashen, 1984; Raimes, 1985; Urzúa, 1987) have all looked to L1 research and emerging theory for direction. The extensive bibliography offered by Hughey, Wormuth, Hartfiel, and Jacobs (1983) for ESL composition teachers is a revealing example of the considerable influence that L1 studies have had on L2 teaching.

This influence does not, however, stem from the sheer number of studies undertaken in the L1 domain. Work in native language
composition has had a powerful impact because it has established the prima facie need to examine what writers do, what strategies they employ, what problems they experience, what notions they adhere to, in order that we may determine appropriate and effective instruction. It is this fundamental assumption that connects the work in L1 and L2 domains and that accounts for our engagement with L1 studies.

As for the other claims made about my references to L1 and L2 composing, I do not “mix” L1 and L2 studies, but rather am quite explicit about what population each of the studies refers to. And far from suggesting that there are no differences between composing in a first and second language, the findings that I draw upon for my discussion of classroom implications suggest that it is the very recognition of differences that should inform pedagogy. L2 students do bring different constraints to bear to the act of composing. Some of these language-specific factors are revealed in my research (Zamel, 1982, 1983) on ESL students’ composing processes. But these constraints, we should remember, may be as variable within a classroom consisting entirely of ESL students as they may be for ESL and native language students.

Given the inevitability of these differences, the studies I reviewed suggest that students are more likely to develop as writers if we adopt a model of instruction that acknowledges students, gives them “numerous opportunities to write,” apprentices them into a “community of writers,” encourages risk taking, establishes trust, allows for the sharing of choice and authority, and views writing as a “meaning-making event” (pp. 707-708). Thus, although making no claims here about the extent to which L1 and L2 writers are similar (this question has been addressed by L2 composing-process research), I do nevertheless maintain that on the basis of the studies reported, what seems to promote writing development transcends the L1/L2 distinction.

Silva’s second argument has to do with the ways in which I “enthusiastically promote” ethnographic classroom studies. (I do not want to quibble with Silva about the terms I used to differentiate the two research paradigms; let me only say that they are not my terms, but those found in the literature.) I do not deny my bias here, nor do I apologize for the “glowing” terms. Qualitative studies of writing and writing instruction are having a far greater impact on teachers and the teaching of writing because they are not “stripped” of context, because they involve the complexity of constraints and variables that more tightly controlled experiments seek to hold constant, and because they do not remove writing from the reality that most teachers can identify with. The
National Writing Projects and the teacher-as-researcher movement (see, for example, Bissex & Bullock, 1987; Goswami & Stillman, 1987) are an outgrowth of this classroom-based work.

Furthermore, Silva—perhaps understandably—attributes to me what he characterized as “sweeping and unsubstantiated generalizations.” In the article (Zamel, 1976) that I cited, I was not simply asserting my own views, but rather reporting the conclusions of Braddock, Lloyd-Jones, and Schoer’s (1963) review of research, conclusions that pointed to the insignificant and contradictory findings of empirically designed composition studies. More recently, other researchers (for example, Connors, 1983; Emig, 1982; Graves, 1980; Holzman, 1983) have pointed to the same limitations and have even raised questions about whether or not the rigor of scientific methodology is appropriate for the study of developmental and humanistic phenomena:

What ethnographic research does that experimental research does not do is preserve the web of factors and circumstances that make up the complicated process of language learning. Writing is thinking. For an activity so interwoven with the whole of one’s mental and social life, ethnography seems especially appropriate. Where an author’s material comes from, who or what the author is writing for, what inhibitions he or she is running up against, how subjects are inwardly verbalized and outwardly vocalized, how trials bring on revisions—a myriad of factors go into writing that only an ongoing, flexible, and pluralistic sort of research can do justice to. (Moffett, 1986, p. x)

It is ironic that Silva points to Hillocks (1986) for “the other side of the story.” For one thing—and this relates back to Silva’s first argument—Hillocks reviewed no ESL research whatsoever. For another, Hillocks found the control of variables within experimental designs so problematic that of the 500 experimental studies he identified, only about 60 met his criteria for comparability! This in and of itself suggests that the design of much experimental work leaves much to be desired. In other words, I come out “hard on experimental studies of composition,” but so does Hillocks. And although Hillocks is important reading for all interested in research in composition, I find problems in some of his analyses and conceptualizations (for other critiques, see Irmscher, 1987; Larson, 1987; Stotsky, 1988; Witte, 1987). I further take issue with Hillocks’s obvious attempt to “privilege one research design over another” (this, despite the problems he encountered), for I agree with Silva that we should embrace a variety of research methodologies to further our understanding of the complexity of writing. I stated as much in my review article: “Future studies may need to combine a
number of research methods to provide us with fuller and more
genuine representations of writing experiences” (p. 707).

Silva’s final comments concern my 1985 study of ESL teachers’
responding behavior. Although it is true that I did not investigate
overall instructional context, I noted this very limitation and called
for contextualized research that would help us better understand
the extent to which classroom instruction and responding behavior
inform and reinforce one another. This acknowledged limitation
notwithstanding, I view this study as a first attempt to explore more
naturalistically teachers’ reactions and comments, for unlike
previous research that looked at what teachers do within situations
and in response to texts controlled by research conditions, this study
examined what teachers actually do when they respond to their own
students’ texts. Furthermore, this study was in no way meant to be
definitive; hence, I recommended that we research our own
practices and examine our own responding behavior in an effort to
discover how each of us can best meet our students’ needs.

As to the suggestion that my 1987 article reflects an “unduly
negative” view of ESL teachers, it should be noted that the purpose
of the state-of-the-art article was to report recent research on
writing instruction. Unfortunately, much of this research still reveals
the predominance of mechanistic and reductive approaches to
writing. On the other hand, the studies of ESL classrooms that I
reviewed demonstrate the kinds of change and growth that are
possible when writing is promoted in meaningful ways. They thus
serve to confirm the implications of composing-process research as
well as to provide us with positive models of teaching.

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THE FORUM


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The "ISJ" is a forum for views, ideas and research of international schools' educators. The Journal is unique in its field, reflecting that education in a multi-cultural, multi-lingual setting is recognized as an important goal in national and international education systems. Articles have included research reviews on bi-lingualism and cognitive development; learning disabilities of the bi- or multi-lingual; culture and language shock; the International Baccalaureate; Japanese education; and culture-fair testing. Authors have included Jacques Barzun, Neil Postman, HRH Prince Philip, and Sir Asa Briggs.

THE INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS DIRECTORY

560 pp, published annually, US$25/£13

The ECIS Directory of International schools is the most complete volume of its kind; included are one-page descriptions of each of the 275 schools worldwide affiliated with The Council; there are in total some 750 international schools and each is listed in tabular form, giving the enrolment, fees, language of instruction and curriculum, in addition to basic name and address information.

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LANGUAGES AND CULTURES IN INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

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