

ELT-44

The Practice of Communicative Teaching

Milestones in ELT

Milestones in ELT

The British Council was established in 1934 and one of our main aims has always been to promote a wider knowledge of the English language. Over the years we have issued many important publications that have set the agenda for ELT professionals, often in partnership with other organisations and institutions.

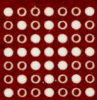
As part of our 75th anniversary celebrations, we re-launched a selection of these publications online, and more have now been added in connection with our 80th anniversary. Many of the messages and ideas are just as relevant today as they were when first published. We believe they are also useful historical sources through which colleagues can see how our profession has developed over the years.

The Practice of Communicative Teaching

Edited for the *ELT Documents* series by Christopher Brumfit and published in 1986, this book complements an earlier volume on *General English Syllabus Design*, looking at the implementation of communicative syllabuses. In the first section of this book, on Specific syllabuses, JPB Allen calls for a variable focus curriculum which provides both for analytical work on functions and structures and an experiential view of language (fully communicative activities based on 'authentic language data'), while Janice Yalden describes the 'proportional' – or adjustable – model of 'frameworks' she had been using in work with Indonesian teachers. The second section looks at Materials and methodology. HG Widdowson describes problems in developing communicative teaching materials, while JT Roberts examines the use of dialogues in teaching transactional competence, and Alan Maley addresses the total teaching context, asking if communicative competence really can be 'taught'. The third section, on Criticism and research, comprises two papers, by Dawei Wang, and Rosamond Mitchell and Richard Johnstone, respectively. The importance of the kind of systematic classroom *research* into implementation which characterises this final paper is highlighted by Brumfit in his Introduction.

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The Practice of Communicative Teaching



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The Practice of Communicative Teaching

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The Practice of Communicative Teaching

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Introduction: Communicative Methodology

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Communicative language teaching has had a history of 15 years or so (the earliest reference to the term that I have found is in Candlin's paper, 'Sociolinguistics and communicative language teaching', presented to the IATEFL Conference in London in 1971). However, many of the characteristic features of the movement were found in earlier language teaching, and important traditions in communicative language teaching, for example the Council of Europe work, did not start using the term until it was widely used elsewhere.

Nonetheless, the shift away from a view of language as a static, observable system to be learnt to the view that it is a fluid, negotiable system to be performed is fundamental to recent developments from a wide variety of sources. In the early years of the communicative movement the emphasis was largely on syllabus design, with a concern for specifications rather than organization of the specified elements (see van Ek, 1975, for Council of Europe work on English; Wilkins, 1976, and Munby, 1978, for more general discussions). The tendency of this tradition was to move towards a needs analysis and consequently to concentrate on those learners whose needs could be predicted with some degree of accuracy. The kind of work on general syllabuses for ordinary school learners that had been characteristic of earlier periods failed to attract much theoretical attention, though its findings were well summarized in Alexander *et al.* (1975). More recently there has been an increase in interest in general syllabuses (see ELT Documents 118 for a collection of papers on this theme), but this has been accompanied by an increased interest in classroom processes. Some have argued that this interest can be expressed through a redefinition of the role of the syllabus (Breen and Candlin, 1980); others would see a conflict between the concern with process and the role of the syllabus (Brumfit, 1980, 1984).

But a syllabus for a teaching institution, like a scheme of work, must be seen as essentially an administrative document. It is necessarily static, whether or not the categories of description are functional, grammatical or notional, for a list of specifications, even when ordered for teaching, can only be translated into activity by means of the decisions taken by particular teachers and learners in particular classrooms. A syllabus is a guide for teachers, something which should help them to

be as clear-thinking as possible about teaching – but it will always operate at a high level of generality. Groups of teachers, or individuals, responding to their own local circumstances, will have to modify for their own classes whatever is stated in general terms in any syllabus. This process of modification will be expressed in the lesson plans, the selection of materials, and the impromptu decisions taken by teachers in class.

The purpose of this issue of *ELT Documents* is to examine some ways of implementing communicative syllabuses. This discussion can concentrate on a number of different areas. Some writers (Allen, Yalden) give accounts of the ways in which they have tried to design specific syllabuses for particular conditions. Widdowson describes problems in developing communicative teaching materials, and illustrates with examples from what must be one of the very few genuinely notional coursebooks ever written. Maley, too, discusses problems in relating classroom teaching to communicative principles, though he looks more widely at the total teaching context. Roberts offers a detailed examination of the use of dialogues for teaching. Wang offers a fascinating personal account of response to communicative assumptions from a very different tradition of language learning.

All of these papers are concerned with description of implementation by experienced teachers, methodologists or applied linguists. But what actually happens when teachers committed to communicative teaching try to use the principles they believe in? This is the key question for teacher training, and ultimately for the theory of language teaching itself. Unless we can support our intuitions and good ideas with some understanding of the impact that such work has on the practice of normal teaching, we risk irrelevance and impracticality. And of course the practice of language teaching may well vary considerably from one teaching situation to another, or between teachers at different levels of the system, or between native-speaking and non-native-speaking teachers. Indeed, if we are concerned for the well-being of language teaching, we must interest ourselves particularly in non-native-speaking teachers, for most language teaching will always be performed by them.

The paper by Mitchell and Johnstone with which this collection concludes reports an investigation of French teaching, but the procedures used could valuably be adapted to the EFL situation, and the conclusions should be of considerable interest to those working with English teachers. Certainly there is a strong case for replication and modification of this kind of work in many different countries. It is to be hoped that the next decade will see a great deal more observational work on language learning classrooms. A future issue of *ELT Documents* will, it is hoped, provide more detailed accounts of research in this area.

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1. Specific Syllabuses

Functional-Analytic Course Design and the Variable Focus Curriculum¹

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1. Introduction

In recent years there has been a marked increase in the number of books and articles on text linguistics and discourse analysis, on cross-cultural pragmatic failure and the importance of including a cultural component in language teaching, and on the need for communicative or 'interactional' grammars which will provide us with an account of how native speakers use language together with guidelines for the teaching of spoken and written discourse. All this activity is based on the belief that the appropriate use of language in context is not an impenetrable mystery, but something that can be analysed, understood, and systematically taught. At the same time, however, a review of the L2 curriculum literature shows a continuing tendency to assume a simple dichotomy between analytic 'skill getting' and experiential 'skill using' or – to adopt a more recent terminological contrast – between micro-language learning and macro-language use (Rivers, 1983). It has always seemed to me that rather than confining ourselves to a discussion on two widely separated levels we need to construct a bridge between the two extremes; in other words we need to develop a more comprehensive, trifocal curriculum model in which the principal components will correspond to a structural-analytic, a functional-analytic, and a non-analytic or experiential view of language (Allen, 1983).

In order to avoid any premature conclusions about the relative importance of these components, I will simply refer to them as Type A, Type B, and Type C teaching. In this framework a Type A focus corresponds to the medium-oriented level of micro-language learning, and a Type C focus corresponds to the message-oriented level of macro-language use. The Type B approach, incorporating a functional-analytic view of language, lies somewhere in between the two extremes, is typically concerned with the interaction between medium and message which lies at the heart of effective discourse, and involves us in considering how we can lead the learner towards the achievement of greater communicative efficiency without losing the benefits of a systematic and well-designed syllabus. The main characteristics of the three types of curriculum focus can be summarized as follows:

Type A: structural-analytic

Focus on grammar and other formal features of language

Controlled grammatical teaching techniques

Medium-oriented practice

Type B: functional-analytic

Focus on discourse features of language

Controlled communicative teaching techniques

Medium- and message-oriented practice

Type C: non-analytic

Focus on the natural unanalysed use of language

Fully communicative, experiential teaching techniques

Message-oriented practice

I would like to suggest that the three instructional approaches are not in opposition to one another, but form complementary aspects of any practical second-language teaching programme. In other words, the various L2 teaching methods that are currently competing for our attention may be revealed at the end of the day as relatively superficial variants of a single underlying curriculum model, in which provision will need to be made for a combination of structural, functional and experiential teaching techniques. The type of practice that is primarily in focus, however, will vary from one programme to another, and should be determined not *a priori*, but by a careful consideration of the teacher and learner variables which characterize each instructional setting.

It will be apparent that Type A and Type C teaching are located at opposite ends of a structural/functional continuum. We are all familiar with Type A classrooms in which the main concern is to encourage students to establish fluent speech habits and to ensure that they acquire a knowledge of basic sentence structures and vocabulary. In the rush for innovation it is important that we should not overlook the value of this type of programme, in which it is appropriate to have some degree of formal structural control over the presentation of material. In a typical Type A textbook the reading passages will be simplified structurally in that the more difficult sentence patterns are omitted in the early stages and then introduced step by step in a carefully graded series. Most of the exercises will be concerned with practising one or more of the formal features of language. Thus, we can say that the principal aim of Type A teaching is to provide practice in the *structural* aspect of language proficiency, which many people see as a necessary first step in the development of communicative competence.

It should be emphasized that when Type A practice is set in a meaningful context it constitutes a form of communication, although one which is necessarily limited in scope. A basic principle of this approach is that it constitutes a preparation for less formalized practice at a late stage. It follows that, although the materials in Type A

teaching emphasize the systematic acquisition of formal elements of language, under the guidance of a good teacher the classroom activities will be centred on worthwhile tasks and oriented towards discourse. The justification for a Type A focus is that beginning students can scarcely be expected to communicate in a second language until they have mastered the underlying principles of sentence structure, and acquired a basic vocabulary. However, in no circumstances should Type A teaching be seen as an end in itself, as it tended to be in the more rigid applications of the audiolingual method. The main purpose of a Type A course is to provide a coherent structural foundation on the basis of which a genuinely spontaneous use of language can be developed. Thus, in Type A teaching there will inevitably be a relatively high degree of structural control; but at the same time it is important that the methodology and the exercise material should be kept as flexible and meaningful as possible, consistent with the communicative aims of the overall curriculum.

At the opposite end of the continuum we find the Type C approach. Whereas in Type A teaching the materials are subjected to various degrees of language-internal control, in a Type C classroom there is no attempt to draw special attention to any particular aspect of language structure or function. Rather, in this approach the aim is to achieve, as far as possible, a fully spontaneous use of language in real-life social interaction. Classroom practice is designed to promote the *experiential* aspect of language proficiency, which involves the ability of the learners to use all available resources of the target language in the achievement of their own personal, social or academic goals.

As indicated in the list above, the emphasis in Type C teaching is on the free, unrestricted use of language as an instrument of communication. In this approach we expect to find that the reading passages and exercises are drawn from authentic language data. Classroom and out-of-class activities will include plenty of practice based on the personal interests of individuals, guided not so much by the teacher as by the learner's desire to communicate. At the experiential level of authentic language use the lesson content will be selected according to situational factors and the choice of topic, rather than by any language-internal features of grammar or discourse. However, the principle of control still operates in Type C teaching, since all communicative tasks can be analysed and graded in terms of their intellectual abstractness or in terms of the complexity of the interpersonal relationship involved. For example, asking the way in the street or being interviewed for a job both involve the authentic use of language, but there is no doubt that the latter task involves a far higher degree of experiential language proficiency. It is in Type C teaching that we find the most striking overlap between the objectives of programmes for second-language learners and those intended for students of the mother tongue. For L1

and L2 students alike, a comprehensive curriculum model provides for reinforcement at the level of Type A and Type B practice, if the nature of the task requires particularly close monitoring of the formal and functional features of the language being used.

Although most discussions about L2 education have taken place in terms of Type A or Type C teaching, there is a third option, which I will refer to as the Type B focus. This focus is particularly interesting since it is located in the middle between the two extremes of the structural/functional continuum. In terms of the general curriculum model outlined in the list, a type B programme can be seen as representing a controlled, functional-analytic approach to communicative practice, which aims to extend and activate the student's previously acquired grammatical knowledge, and serves as a preparation for the wholly spontaneous use of language at a later stage. In a Type B programme an extensive (though probably imperfect) knowledge of the basic principles of sentence structure can normally be taken for granted. Instead of simply being presented with more and more structures and vocabulary, students will be expected to acquire an understanding of the rules of use which govern the development of spoken and written discourse in the target language. This intermediate level of practice provides for the *functional* aspect of language proficiency, which is concerned with the ways the learner's formal linguistic knowledge is made use of in accomplishing a variety of communicative tasks: establishing social relations, seeking and giving information, determining the most effective fit between language abilities and subject-matter knowledge, and so on.

There is no doubt that there are compelling arguments for distinguishing an intermediate, functional level of communicative ability, as distinct from the more elementary level of basic structural practice. It also appears, however, that the continuing need for simplification and control in the early stages of communicative practice justifies us in distinguishing an intermediate level of ability from a more advanced level, i.e., that which is characterized by a fully experiential use of language.

Language is highly complex and we cannot teach all of it at the same time; it therefore follows that some form of grading, either implicit or explicit, is a universal requirement in language teaching. Since the emphasis in Type B teaching is on communicative functions rather than on formal structures, it would seem to be appropriate to utilize a system of grading based not on the principles of grammatical analysis, but on the grouping together of similar message types or rules of discourse. The concept of discourse control means that the curriculum researcher will develop materials in which different aspects of social interaction through the medium of spoken or written language will be

identified and practised systematically. Functionally simplified readers, for example, are those in which the logical progression of a conversation or written text is presented in the clearest possible way, thus helping the process of interpretation and focusing the learner's attention on the rules of discourse that are being used. As we have seen, it is usually assumed in developing Type B materials that the students have already acquired some degree of structural proficiency. However, as in the case of Type C materials, it is easy to make provision for students to 'loop back' to an earlier level if the teacher feels that they need additional practice in basic grammar and vocabulary.

2. The ESL modules project

In the introduction to this paper I have attempted to place the Type B approach in perspective and to indicate that it constitutes only one part of a comprehensive second-language teaching programme. It is, however, a focus which is particularly important for ESL students in Ontario who are faced with the challenge of developing their English communication skills within the context of other school subjects. ESL modules can be regarded as a continuation of the work which began with the Focus series in the mid-seventies (Allen and Widdowson, 1974a,b; Widdowson, 1978), and which has since branched out in a number of directions. One motivation for the modules project was to discover whether the techniques originally developed to teach English for special purposes at the upper secondary or first-year university level could also be used with ESL students at the intermediate level in Ontario high schools (i.e. approximately grades 9–10, when the students are 13–14 years old). In the present section a general description of the ESL modules project will be presented. This will be followed, in section 3, with a discussion of the types of materials that are needed for ESL students who are required to learn English as an aspect of other subjects 'across the curriculum'. Finally, in section 4, a number of conclusions concerning functional-analytic language teaching and its place in a variable focus curriculum will be discussed.

The province of Ontario is an excellent setting for L2 curriculum research, offering as it does a wide range of French immersion, core French, ESL, and Heritage Language programmes. Module-making research began in the Modern Language Centre at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education with the establishment of the French as a second language (FSL) modules project in 1969. During the 14 years of its existence the FSL project established a set of procedures for the construction and evaluation of modular second-language teaching materials, and published a total of 25 modules for use in high-school FSL programmes (Stern *et al.*, 1980; Ullmann, 1983). In 1979 the English as a second language (ESL) project was established (Allen and Howard, 1981, 1982). So far this project has published three modules,

with three at the first draft stage and another two in preparation. As is to be expected, FSL modules and ESL modules have a great deal in common, but they also provide some significant points of contrast. Although the work of the French module researchers provided us with some useful guidelines we were not able to adopt their FSL model in its entirety, since the teaching of ESL in English-medium schools gives rise to a number of problems which require a different approach.

The need for ESL modules arises from the fact that, as a result of recent trends in immigration, there are a large number of students in the Ontario school system who require special teaching in English as a second language. These students must learn the rules of grammar and, at the same time, they must develop a set of communicative skills in order to handle the work required in other areas of the school curriculum. Furthermore, as the number of special ESL classes in the province declines as a result of budget cuts, ESL students are being integrated earlier into regular subject area classes. The responsibility then falls on the regular classroom teacher or subject area specialist to assist these students in coping not only with the requisite content material but also with the difficulties of English language use. Given this situation, there is a need for supplementary ESL materials which will provide training in English language skills in the context of other school subjects. Bearing in mind the variety of problems faced by teachers, and also the need for maximum flexibility in the planning of courses, we decided that a modular format would constitute the best approach. The advantage of modules, already demonstrated by the FSL project, is that they are able to provide a selection of authentic cultural or other-subject content, combined with more natural communicative activities, in the form of relatively small, independent units which can easily be fitted into existing second-language programmes.

Ullmann (1983) provides details of a number of FSL modules which utilize a print and multi-media format to provoke discussion of serious political and cultural issues, and to encourage students' participation in a variety of stimulating activities and games. It is evident from Ullmann's description that the French modules are an example of communicative language teaching with a Type C focus. The emphasis is on the development of spontaneous classroom interaction, rather than on the step-by-step teaching of items derived from a predetermined grammatical or functional inventory. At the same time the problem of how to handle the more descriptive, analytic aspects of second-language teaching is avoided, since the module writers are able to assume that the necessary foundation of grammar and vocabulary has already been provided in the regular core French programme. For the development of ESL modules we turned to the functional-analytic, Type B approach, which permits a greater degree of control over the material presented in the classroom. There are currently several versions of this approach.

One interpretation appears in the work of David Wilkins and other writers associated with the Council of Europe Modern Languages Project (Wilkins, 1976; Van Ek, 1975; Trim *et al.*, 1980) while another version, as I have already indicated, evolved during the mid-seventies in the context of English for special purposes (Allen and Widdowson, 1974a,b; Widdowson, 1978). We can say that ESL modules are an example of Type B, subject-related language teaching in which the aim is to explore the relationship between the language aspect of the curriculum and the content aspect. According to Widdowson (1978), this approach is valuable, not only because it 'helps to ensure the link with reality and the pupils' own experience', but also because it 'provides us with the most certain means we have of teaching the language as communication'.

Although in principle ESL modules could be developed for all subjects in the curriculum, from mathematics to family studies, we decided to base the first series of modules on material from the Canadian studies programme. There were two reasons for this choice. First, it seemed important that ESL students learn some basic geographical and historical facts about Canada in general, and particularly about the region of southern Ontario where many immigrants have settled. The second reason was of a more immediate and practical nature. In order to obtain a high-school graduation diploma, students must be able to obtain credits outside the ESL programme and in subjects other than those which make minimal linguistic demands, such as physical education, music and art. The history, geography or Canadian studies credit options which are available in Ontario schools are often difficult for the ESL students. Many students who might wish to enroll in these subjects are handicapped both by the amount and the advanced level of reading comprehension and by the written work required to complete assignments in the courses. They lack the specialized vocabulary and the communicative language skills required to express the complex relationships, concepts and process that form the core of academic work in the subject areas. The language difficulties often prove to be an insurmountable obstacle for these students. ESL modules were designed to help students overcome some of the language difficulties, thereby facilitating their entry into regular subject-area classes with their native English-speaking peers.

Before attempting to design ESL modules it was necessary to have a clear idea of the learner's needs in terms of the specific language features required in the context of Canadian studies. A review of Ministry of Education course guidelines, resource documents and Ministry-approved texts, as well as teacher-prepared class handouts and tests, provided an indication of the kinds of factual information, logical relationships and language forms that occur most frequently, and that must be handled by the student. As a result of this review we

formulated a set of general aims. The first aim involved the *integration* of content learning and language learning by basing all the materials on authentic, topic-related information, thus ensuring that each activity would contribute to the student's understanding not only of English but also of a major theme in geography, history or Canadian studies. The second aim was that, as far as possible, we would order the material in the form of a *recurring cycle of activities*, each cycle beginning with the manipulation of comparatively simple concepts and linguistic features, and progressing to a more sophisticated level of concept development involving more complex forms of expression. In this way all the students in a class could be working on the same content material, but at different levels of language complexity, with each student able to contribute something to the classroom interaction. Finally, in accordance with the principles discussed by Widdowson (1978), the materials we envisaged would be *controlled* in that learning items were systematically presented, *functional* in that classroom activities emphasized the discourse aspect of language in use, and *rational* in that simple explanations would be provided to make students aware of what they were doing when they undertook language tasks.

In the development of the first series of ESL modules, planning has been flexible in order to accommodate a variety of topics and themes, but all the modules have followed the same basic pattern. This can be exemplified by the first module in the Canadian Studies geography series (Allen and Howard, 1982), which is concerned with the relationship between geographical features and immigration patterns in the Great Lakes Lowland region. Information is presented through a variety of components: two sets of student reading booklets, 'Canada's Golden Horseshoe' and 'Toronto's changing mosaic'; a filmstrip accompanied by an oral presentation; a cassette recording entitled 'Canadians from many lands'; a set of 30 student worksheet masters; and a teacher guide with background information, a complete text of the reading and oral comprehension passages, questions and exercises with sample student responses, suggestions for the organization of classwork, and follow-up material. The aim, as with all the modules in the series, was to combine conceptual learning and language learning in a sequence of activities designed to develop subject-related communication skills. Thus, the materials provide practice in grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation as well as in functional and discourse features of language related to the subject area. At the same time they develop subject-area skills by representing relevant content information, providing opportunities for concept development, and providing practice in specialized techniques such as the preparation of maps, graphs, charts and other diagrams.

The ESL modules project incorporates a *variable focus* approach to

curriculum, the purpose of which is to emphasize the interaction between a 'central' language syllabus and a 'concurrent' Canadian studies syllabus. When we examined Canadian studies programmes in terms of both content and language it became apparent that the level of conceptual skills involved in a learning task, and the degree of language complexity required for the performance of that task, were closely interrelated. At the same time, it was clear that the internal structure of the language system (the medium) must be independent of the principles of organization which characterize a particular content area (the message), since many languages can be used to express a single message, and many messages can be expressed through the medium of a single language. It seemed to us, therefore, that it was useful to distinguish a 'vertical' dimension of syllabus planning where we could consider the relationship between successive segments in a cumulative L2 teaching programme, and a 'horizontal' dimension where we could consider the relationship between language and medium, and the message content in various situations and subject areas that the target language can be called upon to express (cf. McNeil, 1981).

The aim of the 'vertical' language syllabus is to develop the various aspects of linguistic competence, in particular: (a) the learners' knowledge of grammatical categories (formal systems of lexis, morphology-syntax, and phonology); (b) their knowledge of communicative functions (semantic categories such as ordering, requesting, and instructing, which represent the different values that sentences may acquire when they are used in specific contexts); (c) their knowledge of the rules of discourse, which refer to the ways in which grammatical and functional categories are joined together in meaningful sequences.

Turning to the concurrent Canadian studies syllabus (cf. McNeil's 'horizontal' dimension), we find that knowledge of the subject area can be divided into factual information, and logical organization of content. When we analyse the content and organization of Canadian studies programmes we find that we can identify a progression of conceptual skills, moving from a lower or less analytic level to a higher or more analytic level. The first-level skills are mainly descriptive and include such operations as defining terms, providing an account of an event, or stating simple temporal and spatial relations. The language needed to express these concepts is comparatively simple and straightforward. The higher-level analytic skills involve more abstract thought processes, and the language required is correspondingly more complex. At this level, for example, the students may have to identify facts as opposed to personal opinion, distinguish primary causes from secondary influences, or argue a point of view complete with supporting evidence. Each ESL module represents a variation in the basic pattern whereby conceptual content, organizational skills and linguistic knowledge are

brought together in a way which hopefully will lead to more efficient learning in all three areas.

In ESL modules a distinction is made between *syllabus planning*, which is the level at which we compile inventories of items and establish general principles of selection and grading, and *classroom methodology*, which is the level at which we create texts, exercises, simulations, 'authentic' practice and other activities which provide the context within which organized teaching takes place. A major aim of the project has been to discover ways in which different types of activities interrelate in an instructional sequence. The particular curriculum focus of ESL modules is shown in Figure 1, where the two outer boxes represent the language syllabus and the content (Canadian studies) syllabus, and the circles in the middle represent different aspects of classroom methodology. The basic unit of organization is that of the communicative setting, which may be expressed in terms of topic, theme, or task.

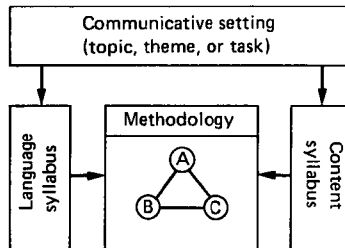


FIGURE 1. Curriculum focus in ESL modules

It will be seen from Figure 1 that the language syllabus and the content syllabus both feed into classroom methodology, which contains three interconnected activity components: structural practice (A) which is medium-oriented and focused on the formal features of language, functional practice (B) which consists of controlled communicative activities, and experiential practice (C) which is organized entirely in terms of the task being undertaken or the message being conveyed. In the diagram the three methodology components, or focal areas, are joined by paths which can be traversed in either direction to form a cycle of activities. The cycles thus created can be either symmetrical (i.e. consisting of structural, functional and experiential segments in an equal balance) or asymmetrical (i.e. those which are 'weighted' in favour of one particular type of practice). In Type B teaching we expect that controlled discourse, or functional practice, will predominate. It does not follow, however, that the other types of practice will be excluded. On the contrary, structure-based and experiential activities have an important role to play in Type B teaching, although they do not constitute the main focus of attention.

The combination of three focal areas, together with the principle of cyclicity which permits various degrees of emphasis, allows for a great deal of variation in the organization of classroom activities, without losing sight of the basic principles which are common to all L2 teaching programmes. The variable focus model is one expression of the current trend towards a more comprehensive language teaching methodology which, when fully developed, should enable us to utilize different teaching techniques at different points in an overall programme. The approach outlined here may be compared with other proposals for a 'balanced' or 'proportional' curriculum (Yalden, 1983), or for a 'multi-dimensional' view of course design (Johnson, 1982).

3. Towards a subject-related approach to ESL

As a result of several years of experience with ESL modules it is possible to reach some general conclusions about the type of materials which are required for use with immigrant children who need to develop their English language skills in the context of other school subjects. In this section I will review some of the ideas underlying both the Focus series and ESL modules. Taken together, these projects offer a wide range of materials for subject-related language teaching across the curriculum. The nine Focus books and the six ESL modules which have been produced so far contain a variety of exercises and activities which can easily be adapted for students at various proficiency levels, beginning about the age of 12 and extending upwards to the first year of university.

(a) Oral aspects of classroom interaction

Many published courses nowadays contain simulations and role-play based on real-life situations outside the classroom, but for the most part academic discussions originating within the classroom are expected to develop spontaneously. ESL students, however, need to be prepared for participation in English-medium subject-area classrooms. For example, they should be made familiar with the relatively fixed patterns of elicitation, answer and follow-up which are a characteristic of teacher-centred discourse. The nature of the classroom environment within which immigrant children must learn to operate is suggested by the following interaction, recorded during an English-medium grade 9 biology class in Toronto (Kilbourn, 1982):

- T: Insects, why insects?
- S: Because it's shorter; they can peck.
- T: OK, uh, any other ideas? Anyone else?
- S: Worms.
- T: Worms. What makes you say worms?
- S: Because of the beak. They're curved.

T: Curved. Why would it need a curved beak?

S: Then he can go under to pick the worms up.

T: Any other ideas? How about fish? Would it eat fish?

S: No, too short.

S: Berries.

T: Berries, sure. What kind of bird do you think feeds on berries?
Sparrow? Budgie? OK, they all have that short kind of beak.

Successful participation in classroom routines like the one illustrated above requires a great deal of practice, which is available to Canadian children as a matter of course from kindergarten onwards. Immigrant children, however, may have difficulty in adjusting to the more active roles which students are expected to assume in Canada, especially if their previous educational experience has been limited to reading, listening and rote learning. Such students need to be introduced gradually, by means of controlled discourse practice, to the patterns of interaction that they will encounter in a North American educational setting.

When the emphasis in classroom discussion moves from the teacher to the students, non-native speakers need to know how to hold their own in argumentative discourse. This involves the use of conversational 'gambits' which will enable them to express an opinion with varying degrees of certainty, and to organize the content of an argument with different kinds of linkage. Coulmas (1981) provides a useful overview of recent work in describing the regularities in form and function of various 'prefabricated patterns', 'stock phrases', or 'conversational routines'. Set routines of this type, which in many ways recall the 'model dialogues' of an earlier era, have begun to feature prominently in L2 teaching materials in many parts of the world. The following examples taken from a pedagogic grammar (Edmondson and House, 1981), based on data from a sociolinguistic research project at the University of Bochum in West Germany, are equally relevant to subject-related language teaching in Canada:

First of all/to begin with/for a start/the first thing is

And then/next/further/moreover/another thing/not only that but

Finally/lastly/and the last thing I want to say is

But then/mind you/all the same/still/even so

In addition to becoming familiar with discourse markers such as the above, ESL students in mixed non-native/native speaker classes need practice in interpreting the speech patterns which will be encountered when members of their peer group engage in discussions or give class presentations. To illustrate the type of discourse that will be involved, the following is part of a transcription of a grade 8 native speaker giving a talk based on a diagram that he has just drawn in his notebook:

OK this is a microscope here. And um I'm supposed to tell you how it works so um-well, how you use it at least. And there's um there's twelve things from the base to the eyepiece. But the ones you use are the um at least the ones I use are the coarse adjustment and the fine adjustment. You use the coarse adjustment to fine-tune it, right? So like the thing's really small, it's hard to get it into good focus with a thing that makes that much of a difference with a really small you know a little twist um . . .

It will be apparent that the recorded speech of native speakers differs quite markedly from the abstract, idealized sentence patterns often found in ESL textbooks. A useful type of listening practice is to provide a selection of oral discourse on tape, representing a variety of speaking styles, and to get the students to make a summary of the contents. Such exercises can easily be controlled, partly by varying the difficulty of the presentation, and partly by providing notebooks with incomplete outlines that the students have to fill in.

(b) Reading

The teaching of reading in a second language can be approached from a number of different angles. Assuming that the basic reading skills are well established, students still need practice in recognizing the linguistic devices which signal the semantic links among the sentences in a written text, and which help to identify the logical and rhetorical relations in a given piece of writing. In addition they should be taught to recognize and interpret the patterns of organization in written paragraphs, so that they will read more efficiently and 'avoid getting bogged down in sentence-by-sentence decoding' (Saville-Troike, 1979). It is also important that students should be helped to develop reading strategies which will be appropriate to the task in hand: 'scanning' to find a specific point; 'skimming' to get the author's general idea; detailed reading to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the text; and critical reading to find out how the new information fits into one's existing system of knowledge and beliefs (Clarke and Silberstein, 1979). There are important implications for reading in the fact that language considered as communication no longer appears as a separate subject, isolated in its own time-slot, but as an aspect of other subjects 'across the curriculum'. The study of physics or social science, for example, is seen to be not only a matter of becoming familiar with the facts, but of learning to recognize how language is used to give expression to certain reasoning processes; how it is used to define, classify, generalize, to make hypotheses, draw conclusions, and so on.

The technique of careful and concentrated reading is a difficult skill for the second-language learner to acquire. All too often reading becomes a mechanical, word-by-word translation exercise rather than a dynamic

process of information sorting and synthesizing. However, if we can make students more aware of their active role as information processors and provide practice which will enable them to read for overall comprehension rather than attempting to extract the meaning from a text one sentence at a time, there is no doubt that their reading performance will improve. In the Focus series (e.g. Allen and Widdowson, 1974b) use is made of a type of exercise which involves a true/false comprehension check followed by a solution statement which directs the student's attention to the way in which the relevant information is distributed through the reading passage. Each comprehension activity is presented in three parts. The first part requires a 'true' or 'false' response. The prompt question is based on information from the reading passage, but the idea is expressed without repeating the exact wording of the passage. Therefore the student cannot simply match the question against a parallel statement in the passage, but must process the information contained in several sentences in order to extract the general meaning. In the first of the ESL modules (Allen and Howard, 1982) these exercises, originally developed for use at the first-year university level, were successfully modified to suit the needs of grade 9 students. In some of the later modules we have experimented with a variety of question-and-answer formats, all of which – given a clear understanding of the pedagogic objectives – can be used to encourage development of the students' interpretative capacity. This provides an interesting illustration of the fact that insights obtained during a period of methodological innovation can be applied retrospectively to more traditional types of exercise, which may take on a new lease of life as a result.

In preparing reading passages for subject-related language teaching the question often arises of whether the texts should be selected from books originally written for native speakers, or whether the material should be specially designed for the second-language classroom. The problem is a real one since the first type of text may be too difficult, while the second type may lack 'face validity' in that it is not representative of the academic styles of discourse which the students will eventually have to handle. It has been suggested (Widdowson, 1983) that the solution to this dilemma lies in distinguishing between a preparatory, simplified phase of language *for* communication, followed by a fully experiential use of language *as* communication. The implied sequence of activities is fully in accordance with the aims of a functional-analytic, Type B curriculum. Clearly, ESL students who are still having difficulties with the target language cannot be expected to utilize a full range of native-like interpretative procedures when they read. Such students need to go through a stage of instruction involving the use of functionally simplified reading materials. It is characteristic of such materials that the logical progression of each passage is presented clearly and systemically, thus aiding the process of inter-

pretation and focusing the student's attention on the rules of discourse that are being used. It follows, according to Widdowson, that we need to distinguish between (a) texts which are simplified but authentic in terms of the classroom activities that they promote, and (b) those which are genuine instances of discourse but not necessarily suitable for teaching purposes.

Occasionally we can expect to find texts which are genuine instances of discourse and which at the same time can be utilized for an authentic pedagogic purpose. This situation occurred during the preparation of the first ESL history module (Beattie and Howard, forthcoming), which the authors were able to base on a collection of letters written by a pioneer family in Ontario to relatives in England during the period 1840–1867. These letters, which had not previously been published, were written in a clear and straightforward style, and contained a great deal of information about family life, farming, the backwoods, food, shelter, housing, and other daily activities during a critical period of Canadian history. This authentic data base provided an ideal opportunity to develop a series of classroom activities which enabled the students to combine language learning with the development of their historical research skills. In this comparatively rare instance, then, we can say that language *for* communication and language *as* communication became one and the same thing. Usually, however, the materials writer is faced with a conflict between the desire to utilize genuine sources and the students' pedagogic needs, and has to decide which consideration should have priority. In a subject-related approach at the grade 9 level, the main emphasis is likely to be on simplified reading passages designed to encourage the development of appropriate interpretative procedures, rather than on those which aim to represent the students with actually attested instances of natural language use.

(c) Writing

There is no doubt that developing an effective methodology for the teaching of writing is one of the greatest challenges facing ESL curriculum researchers at the present time. According to Bereiter and Scardamalia (1983), writing a long essay is 'probably the most complex constructive act that most human beings are ever expected to perform'. This comment, originally made in the context of L1 teaching, is all the more striking when we consider the limited resources of students struggling to write in a second language. In L1 and L2 classrooms alike it is difficult to devise situations which call for genuine written communication so that students can express themselves in a natural way. A common technique in mother-tongue primary teaching is to get the students to write about themselves:

This is my description. I am a boy who sits in either group three or

group four. I have brown hair and brown eyes. I play the French horn and the recorder. I like a girl in either group one or two. I have a blue and red Adidas bag. I wear a black Timex digital watch and I have a key around my neck on a leather string. I am a little skinny and I am about as tall as the fire exit sign on the wall. I helped on the Fun Fair poster and I have an orange social studies binder . . .

The personal narrative style that results from this type of practice certainly serves a useful purpose. Clearly, however, it has little in common with the more formal, expository styles of writing which will be required in many subject areas when the students enter secondary school.

Most 'current-traditional' approaches to guided composition for ESL learners are based on the assumption that it is possible to generate a number of parallel texts based on the same underlying grammatical framework. Generally speaking, this technique is successful only when the student's writing is confined to short letters, folk tales, personal histories, or other simple formulas with a fairly predictable conceptual content. However, the parallel text approach tends to break down if the student has to handle complex academic subjects, since in this type of writing the arguments are highly specific and therefore each text must be regarded as unique and non-replicable. At the same time, the majority of ESL students require help in the form of carefully designed and systematically presented exercises if they are to succeed in learning to write effectively in a second language. In this section we will consider a number of guided composition techniques which have been used successfully both in the Focus series and in ESL modules, and which could easily be adapted to the needs of ESL students in grades 7-8 who need to become familiar with the conventions of academic writing.

Two types of exercise which have attracted a great deal of interest in recent years are rhetorical transformation and information transfer (Allen and Widdowson, 1974a,b; Widdowson, 1978). Rhetorical transformation is an exercise in which the student is required to change one type of discourse unit into another (e.g. an informal description of an experiment into various types of written report). Information transfer is an exercise involving the use of written or spoken English to express facts or ideas presented visually in the form of a diagram, or the use of diagrams, charts, tables, etc. to check the student's understanding of spoken or written discourse. Since information transfer is difficult to illustrate within the confines of a short article, I will restrict myself here to a discussion of rhetorical transformation.

Let us take as our starting-point a list of illocutionary acts (directions, statement of results, conclusion) representing a simple experiment

with bar magnets. The students are asked to transform a point-by-point tabulated description in the present tense into various types of report written in the past tense. Comprehension can then be checked visually by getting the students to draw labelled diagrams illustrating the experiment described in the text. One of the resulting paragraphs is as follows:

If two cylindrical bar magnets of equal length are placed close to one another on a flat surface so that the north poles and the south poles are at the same ends, the two magnets will roll further apart. If we turn one of the magnets round so that the north pole of one is at the same end as the south pole of the other, the two magnets will roll together. This shows that unlike poles attract, and like poles repel.

The above paragraph is an example of a text which has been simplified for teaching purposes and which therefore cannot be regarded as a genuine instance of scientific language use. However, following Wid-dowson (1983) I would argue that it is authentic in that it is designed to encourage the development of appropriate conceptual and organiza-tional skills on the part of the students. In order to provide practice in rhetorical transformation, the students are shown how the paragraph about bar magnets is organized in terms of two observations (*If . . . If*) with a concluding generalization (*This shows that*). The students are then shown that the same information can be expressed in a different way, i.e. with a generalization at the beginning followed by two observations (*Hence, if . . . If, however*). The rewriting of paragraphs so that they manifest different types of logical argument provides incidental practice in the use of grammar, together with opportunities for discussing various related points of style. For example, while the paragraphs are being rewritten in different ways the attention of the students can be drawn to the functional equivalence of *each other/one another*, the reasons for using actives and passives, the use of ellipsis in parallel structures, the possibility of introducing contrasting expres-sions such as *first . . . then*, and so on. The example here is intended merely to suggest the possibilities inherent in a controlled discourse approach to academic writing. In a real classroom context extensive practice would be provided, based on the description of other simple experiments and processes.

As we have seen, recent work in L2 curriculum design has emphasized the importance of a variable focus approach in which the aim is to provide a rich learning environment with the widest possible range of activities (Allen, 1983; Yalden, 1983). One type of writing exercise which was used both in the Focus series and in ESL modules aims to present three interrelated activity components: structural practice organized in grammatical terms, functional practice organized in

discourse terms, and experiential practice which is fluency-oriented and not subject to any type of systematic linguistic control. Let us suppose that the guided writing exercise is based on a simple scientific experiment that the students have done in the classroom or at home. The exercise is done in three stages, starting with grammar and working towards discourse. At the first stage the students examine various groups of words and combine each group into a sentence by following the grammatical clues provided. Some sentences are easy to write, some are more difficult; this reflects the situation in actual writing, where simple sentences often alternate with more complex structures according to the nature of the message the writer wishes to convey. At the second stage the student creates a coherent paragraph by rewriting the sentences in a logical order, adding various logical connectors (*now, as a result, in this case, however*). At this point a schematic representation of the logical structure of the paragraph may be provided, the students being asked to fit their sentences into the slots provided in the diagram.

So far there has been a fairly high degree of control, first in grammatical, then in functional-analytic terms. The key to the sequence, however, is the final paragraph reconstruction exercise. At this stage the students are given a set of outline notes, similar to those that they might have written down while doing their own library research. Then, without looking back at their previous work, the students review the subject-matter and write the passage again in their own words, utilizing whatever they have learned about the relevant aspects of sentence and paragraph structure. As part of this final exercise the students may be asked to incorporate a number of diagrams into the text, with appropriate cross-references. Thus the students are led by stages to the point where they should be able to write their own account of a simple process or experiment, in a way which seeks to replicate some of the content-generation and editing processes of real-life composition.

4. Conclusions

In this paper I have argued that a fully developed L2 curriculum should include three interconnected activity components: Type A practice which is systematic and controlled in grammatical terms, Type B practice which is similarly controlled in discourse terms, and Type C practice which is not subject to any kind of systematic linguistic control, since its purpose is to emphasize the spontaneous use of language in natural communicative settings. These instructional approaches are not in opposition to one another, but form complementary aspects of any second-language teaching programme. We cannot dispense with Type A medium-oriented practice, since it is this which provides the necessary foundation for handling communicative tasks.

Nor can we dispense with Type C message-oriented practice, since an ability to put linguistic knowledge to use in real-life social interaction is the ultimate goal for all language learners. The Type B, functional-analytic focus also has a major role to play, since it provides a relatively secure means of activating the students' previously acquired linguistic knowledge, while serving as a preparation for the wholly spontaneous use of language at a later stage. It is necessary to postulate a type of practice which lies in between the two extremes on the formal-functional scale, since experience shows that it is difficult, if not impossible, for students to move directly from Type A micro-language learning to Type C macro-language use.

The type B focus is particularly important in classrooms where the students' English language skills and their ability to handle conceptual content are expected to develop concurrently. This is the case in Ontario high schools, where ESL students who are not yet fluent in the target language are often placed in regular subject-area classes, where they have to work side by side with their native English-speaking peers. To provide for the needs of such students, a research team at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education is currently developing a series of modules designed to teach English as a second language in the context of other school subjects. The materials which have proved to be most useful are those incorporating a Type B, controlled communicative approach, reinforced by remedial grammatical work and oriented towards authentic discourse. Some general characteristics of the Type B approach were illustrated in the third section of the paper, which drew upon experience obtained (a) in the ESL modules project, and (b) while developing the Focus series of textbooks in the mid-seventies. A major advantage of Type B materials is that they provide an introduction to communicative practice without losing the benefits which derive from a systematic and well-designed syllabus.

The question of what constitutes the most effective balance between structural, functional and experiential components in an L2 teaching programme has to a large extent superseded the earlier debate between those who saw language learning as a process of habit formation strengthened by reinforcement, and those who preferred to place the emphasis on rational understanding of the point being learned. The debate between the advocates of 'audiolingual habit theory' and 'cognitive code learning theory' lost its momentum when it became apparent that these two points of view could be reconciled. Thus, according to Carroll (1971), there is essentially no conflict between conceiving of language behaviour as resulting from the operation of 'habits', and conceiving of it as 'rule-governed' activity. The linguist's descriptive statements can be thought of as rules, but they can equally well be thought of as a statement of the conditions under which certain habits manifest themselves in a particular speech community. Carroll's

conclusion was that neither a pure audiolingual habit theory nor a pure cognitive code learning theory can be complete in itself, but that each has something to contribute to our understanding of the language learning process.

In much the same way there is evidence that an increasing number of practitioners are attempting to steer a middle course between an extreme structural view and an extreme experiential view of curriculum design. While there is no doubt that the study of discourse has added a useful new dimension to second-language teaching, at the same time it is clear that the important contribution of structure-based methodology must not be overlooked. The challenge that faces us in the eighties is to develop a more varied and less dogmatic approach to second-language education. Both our methodology and our underlying view of language should incorporate a sufficiently broad perspective to give stability to the curriculum and to prevent it from being undermined by frequent changes in pedagogic fashion. It is hoped that by adopting a variable focus approach such as the one I have suggested in this paper we will be able to bring about a reconciliation between the rival theories that are currently competing for our attention. The resulting synthesis should form the basis for a new generation of teaching materials which will be more flexible, more dynamic, and more relevant to the learner's needs.

Let us, finally, return to the question of how the trifocal view of language learning can be converted into an instructional sequence. One possible arrangement, which can be referred to as the 'structural foundation' model, consists of an elementary stage (Type A focus), an intermediate stage (Type B focus), and an advanced stage (Type C focus). The structural foundation model has the advantage of ensuring that students acquire a sufficient knowledge of basic structures, vocabulary and pronunciation rules before they embark on extensive communicative practice. This type of sequence may be appropriate in 'core' language programmes and in other situations where there is a time limit on the learning process, and where the opportunities for spontaneous language use are limited. It seems likely, however, that a more widely applicable model of second-language education would incorporate the three instructional components, but would present them in the form of a recurring cycle in such a way that structural, functional and experiential activities interact with one another at all stages of the curriculum. In this type of programme an important difference between elementary, intermediate and advanced materials would be the way in which Type A, Type B and Type C activities receive selective emphasis in order to meet the needs of various groups of learners.

The advantage of modules is that they have a built-in flexibility

which enables us to provide maximum scope for individual teacher and student differences. One approach to programme design, at any given proficiency level, is to produce a series of modules, each of which will have a primary emphasis on structural, functional or experiential practice. The modules can then be used in different combinations, thus allowing considerable variation in the organization of classroom activities, without losing sight of the basic principles which are common to all second-language teaching programmes.

Notes

1. Revised version of a paper presented at the Eighteenth Annual TESOL Convention, Houston, March 1984.

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An Interactive Approach to Syllabus Design: the Frameworks project¹

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At the 1983 colloquium syllabus design in general ELT (ELT Documents 118), I stated that I found it difficult to separate completely the issues in general programme design from those which arise in ESP situations; there are more similarities than one might suppose. In both contexts a syllabus is needed and it should be made explicit to the learners. In my view a syllabus should, in order to be most useful, be organized according to principles of how language is to be used (rather than taught or learned). I mean that the 'inter-organism' aspects of second language development in the classroom should be stressed and exploited in the first phase of syllabus design (Yalden 1984a). In this phase – which I refer to as that of the 'protosyllabus' – the settings in which the second language might be used, and topics and themes which are likely to arise (whether because they are job-related or because they reflect learners' interests and inclinations) are used to focus the design process. In the second phase – that of designing and implementing the pedagogical syllabus – 'intra-organism' concerns can be taken into account. At this level psychological factors need to be considered, and activities chosen which will accommodate the learning style of the individuals concerned and facilitate their learning.

The proportional approach

To make this separation of the syllabus design process into several phases clear, I should like to discuss briefly the model of language programme design and a particular type of syllabus design which I have been using in my work (Yalden, 1983a). The phases of language programme design are shown in Figure 1. Preceding the 'protosyllabus' stage, I include a step which had been omitted by others working in this area: the decision on syllabus type. In the Frameworks project we began this stage with a consideration of the balanced or *proportional* approach which allows the syllabus designer great freedom to respond to changing or newly perceived needs in the learners, and at the same time provides a framework for the teacher who may not be able or willing to 'go fully communicative'. A proportional syllabus comprises a large number of possible variations and can be implemented in most second-language teaching situations.

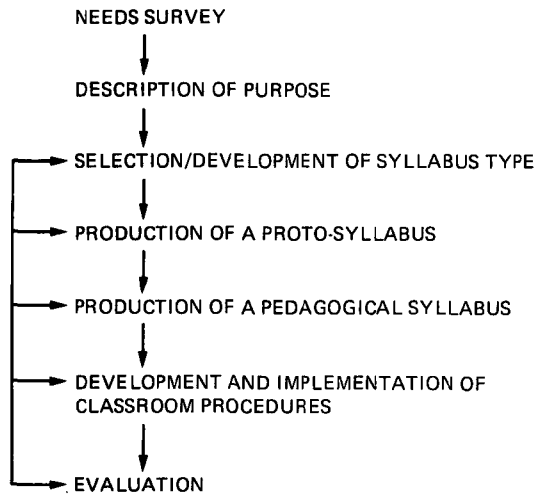


FIGURE 1. *Stages in language programme development.*

Let me illustrate: Figure 2 illustrates the balance which one might seek in designing a general ESL course at an elementary level of communicative competence. One might begin with grammar and pronunciation

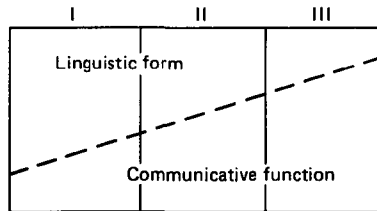


FIGURE 2.

only, but introduce work in the language functions and discourse skills fairly early and in time increase emphasis on this component. The study of grammar would nonetheless remain in sharper focus throughout the first level than would the study of functions and discourse skills. At the next level the teaching of the interpersonal and textual areas gains increasing prominence as the course progresses, but the teaching of grammar also occupies an important place. In the third level of a hypothetical course sequence of this sort the balance might shift again. At this point in the sequence, work on the communicative functions of language and on discourse skills predominates, and one would expect linguistic form to be considered only as the need arises.

In this representation of the relationship between the emphasis given to kinds of meaning in a syllabus, the whole area of notions and topics (the ideational layer of meaning) is not shown as a separate component.

The choice of a given number of topics is inevitable in today's teaching, as very few individuals would advocate a return to teaching grammar and vocabulary items without stressing a situation or context in which they might be used – however these might be determined. Topics, general notions, situations, themes can therefore be seen as frameworks which provide support for the rest of the components which are included.

Topics and situations suitable for a syllabus for adolescents or adults will arise from a needs survey undertaken as part of the process of planning the syllabus; this component is thus the least troublesome to fit into the design of a syllabus.

In using a balanced syllabus there is no strict separation between teaching formal and functional areas. The divisions shown in the figures represent differences of proportion in time allotted to emphasis on each component. They do not indicate that the two must always be kept separate; indeed, it is assumed that it is for the most part impossible to do so.

The fully developed proportional model includes the provision of an initial phase, principally comprising formal and ideational layers of meaning (Figure 3). This phase is for complete beginners, and need not

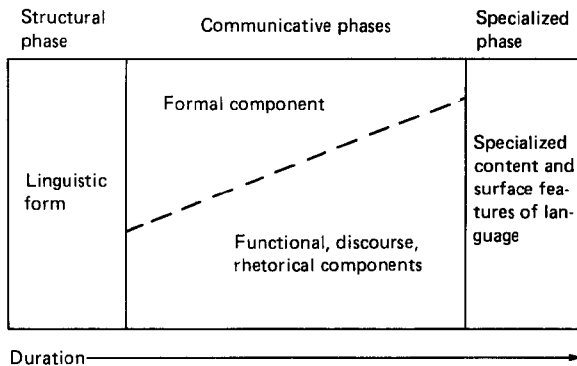


FIGURE 3.

last long; it provides some basic knowledge of the systematic or categorial side of language going on to a more interactive mode of learning. Absolute beginners cannot be expected to solve communication problems (Allwright, 1979: 170).

Allowance is thus made for the difficulty of broaching communicative functions explicitly with learners who have no knowledge at all of the target language. It also accommodates the position that although

communicative competence includes linguistic competence, it is possible to teach grammatical competence *before* teaching sociolinguistic and discourse competence (cf. Canale, 1983). The proportional model permits a change, nevertheless, to emphasis on speech acts and discourse skills in oral language at a relatively early stage. Once communicative work in oral language has been attended to sufficiently, it is possible to shift the emphasis once more: at more advanced levels the syllabus designer can include emphasis on rhetorical functions, especially in written language, as well as on recurrently troublesome features of surface language. A return to some work on form (to the synthetic approach, in other words) is allowed for once communicative performance is under way. Finally, the model can be extended to include more purely instrumental or experiential learning in subject areas (cf. Allen, p. 5 this volume).

Last year at TESOL I attempted to describe this design more precisely, and spoke about segments in a course with a proportional syllabus being *linked* by a theme like beads on a string, where previously I had spoken of the theme as *framing* all other components of a communicative language course. The reason for the change of image is the need we have experienced at CALS to break down the segments of a course into small units – smaller and more varied than the segments shown in Figures 2 and 3. This is the basis for the modifications to the proportional syllabus underlying the development of our Frameworks. I shall return to this question after describing the context of the project.

The context for the frameworks

The Centre for Applied Language Studies at Carleton University has a mandate to carry out a number of functions related to the design and implementation of specific-purpose courses, as well as responsibilities toward the modern language departments of the university and their more general language courses. CALS runs its own ESL programme, offering both credit and non-credit courses, and in addition works with the School of Continuing Education to set up non-credit courses in many other languages (we have offered 27 so far). CALS also gives courses on contract to governmental institutions and to private businesses (usually to small groups, usually job-specific). We took on all of these responsibilities somewhat boldly, only half-realizing just what a large demand there would be for our services and how quickly it would become apparent.

The problems we have faced seemed somewhat overwhelming at times, though they are not unusual in Canada in language teaching for specific purposes: little advance knowledge of what languages might be required, little lead time to prepare courses, little or no information on the learners before they show up for class (often because they find it

unusual or even objectionable to be asked questions about themselves and their purposes), teachers who are often untrained in communicative language teaching or the preparation of courses for specific purposes. On the other hand, we were gratified by the response to the presence of the Centre which had proclaimed its intention to provide LSP courses on demand, and determined to work through our difficulties.

With a view to relieving the pressure on CALS (and testing my own theories) a working group was established under my direction in September 1983. In order to provide a cooperative approach to the problems I have mentioned, the participation of administrators, linguists, teachers of several languages and experienced materials writers was going to be needed. The group now includes Joyce Pagurek and Brigid Fitzgerald, two highly experienced materials developers with teaching experience in ESL; Alister Cumming, responsible for contract teaching and liaison with Continuing Education (and an experienced ESL teacher); George Chouchani, an experienced ESL teacher of Arabic and ESL who is trained in communicative language teaching; and teachers of Mandarin, Portuguese, Swahili, and French. We are going to ask an expert in Inuktituk to join us, since if our approach works in Inuktituk, it ought to work in anything else – and we would enjoy a chance to offer a communicative course in it.

The course in Indonesian

Points of departure for this group were the proportional model (already familiar to most of us), and the *Communication Needs Course in Bahasa Indonesia*, which C. S. Jones and I had already created for the Department of External Affairs of the Government of Canada, in 1980 (see Yalden, 1983b; Yalden and Jones, 1980). The model for this course is proportional, but instead of being teacher-controlled the content is to be controlled by *both* teacher and learner; we dubbed it an interactive approach (Figure 4). The theme which frames it (or links

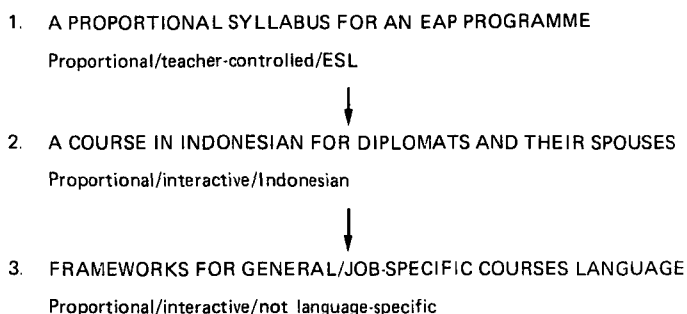


FIGURE 4.

the segments together) is life in Djakarta for members of the Department of External Affairs and their spouses. The principles were:

- (1) That there was to be no 'hidden' material; negotiation between teacher and learner on content and activities was to be carried on from a basis of shared knowledge of what was possible and available.
- (2) That some forms of Indonesian were to be supplied (the teacher would provide as much additional material as was required or possible, given time constraints).
- (3) That there would be little or no treatment of structure; but we would suggest a grammar to supplement our course.

We produced in the end a short course, consisting of a preliminary unit and seven situational ones. The preliminary unit is perhaps the most interesting: it comprises three sections, called 'The sounds of Indonesian', 'Basic notions', and 'Managing a conversation'. The goals of these units are principally to practise minimal pairs which are difficult for speakers of English to distinguish; to begin to build vocabulary; and to learn how to take charge of a conversation. The succeeding units are each dedicated to one or two specific situations. They have been arranged to reflect a sequence of events which will probably occur in the life of the users of the course when they arrive in Djakarta: arriving at the airport, getting to a hotel, getting settled in a house, going about the city, meeting people. These events were selected and ordered on the basis of a series of interviews with recently returned employees of the Department of External Affairs and their spouses. But we do not intend that learners must study all of the units in the course, nor even in the order given. The course has been arranged so that the learner may direct his/her own learning as fully as possible. Working with the teacher, they select the units they want to study, and the order in which to study them; they use the material given to supplement the study of grammar and vocabulary as needed (Yalden and Jones, 1980: 2).

The format of the situational units was four-part:

- (1) appropriate 'communicative needs' for the situation; in other words, behavioural objectives;
- (2) language for managing typical conversations/or transactions;
- (3) a list of vocabulary;
- (4) some learning activities and tasks. This section has two parts, the first labelled 'preparation', and including suggestions for vocabulary and grammar review; the second is called 'communication' and provides role-plays appropriate to the situation and some interactive exercises such as map-reading, information-transfer, and some more experiential activities, such as preparing Indonesian meals with the instructor (in Indonesian), and so on.

This course was very well received, both by the Department of External Affairs and the teachers who work there, and by our own teachers. It has been used as a basis for courses in Arabic and Swahili at Carleton, and at External Affairs for several other languages. Given the need to prepare more courses in a variety of languages, we decided to try to extend the model for this course to the production of others. My interest was in trying for a middle-ground-type syllabus, to satisfy the teachers' and learners' need for some structure to be provided to them in terms of course design, yet not to limit teachers' creativity, not to stifle learners' needs, and to take into account the characteristics of language as communication as much as feasible in a teaching situation.

The frameworks

Our original position was that the teachers of the target languages who are members of our working group were to produce a series of language-specific courses. But this seemed an endless and overwhelming task, and we did not know which languages would be required first by the groups of learners I have described. We therefore asked Joyce Pagurek and Brigid Fitzgerald to take on the job of trying to work up some non-language-specific units which would resemble the units for Indonesian but *without any language forms in them*. The first drafts they produced, when seen now, appear to be realizations in English of the current set of prototypical units which they later produced. The first drafts are thus the outcome of a process implicit in them. They were rejected because they were too much like classroom-ready materials for ESL, and the teachers of other languages found them confining. These teachers told us that they were inhibited by the amount of 'English' cultural content in the draft units, and that they found themselves trying to translate the English exponents provided. Passing from this phase to the current one, we arrived at a sort of distillation of the experience of our two materials writers (who were accustomed to working in English), and moved another step away from the idea of a classroom-ready module or unit – in fact, up to the stage of the protosyllabus, or prototypical unit.

What we have now produced is a non-language-specific system consisting of three preliminary 'prototypes', and a large number of other prototypes to be both situationally and task-based. These are the frameworks for producing language-specific courses to meet the needs of various groups of learners. (I am using the term 'frameworks' in a much more concrete sense now than I have previously.) All the components of communicative language use will be treated by the Frameworks, proportionally as described above. We are developing a teacher training unit on communicative teaching of grammar and vocabulary, but expect teachers will continue to rely on their own materials for teaching grammar in any case. What we hope to do is to provide them with ideas which they can use to refresh their teaching of structure.

It is, however, the other aspects of language which receive most attention in the Frameworks: discoursal, sociolinguistic and strategic strands (to use Canale's terms – Canale, 1983) are to be stressed throughout the courses. We have nevertheless prepared three preliminary units to get things off to a good start: these units are inspired by the Indonesian course, but are modified by the requirements of the present project. These units are to be used in any combination with a unit on the phonology of the target language being learned/taught. They are called 'First steps towards communication', 'Coping', and 'Basic concepts'. All of the subsequent prototypes are organized around either situations or tasks.

Thematic unity (the string) is created through combining a selection of prototypes ('transposed' into the target language) into a course with a specific end in mind.

Let me illustrate: Let us suppose that the prototypical units available are the following:

(a) *Situational-based Frameworks*

Setting off on a trip
At the airport
Local transportation
Shopping (food, other items)
Eating at a restaurant
Finding accommodation
At the bank
At the post office
At a government office
At someone's house
In an emergency
Planning a journey, etc.

(b) *Task-based*

Monitoring
Reading for information
Using the telephone
Gathering information
Making enquiries
Introducing representatives
Answering enquiries
Negotiating sales, agreements

There are many possible combinations of units, assembled according to the needs of the learners, time available, and so on. Some possible strings are shown in Figure 5.

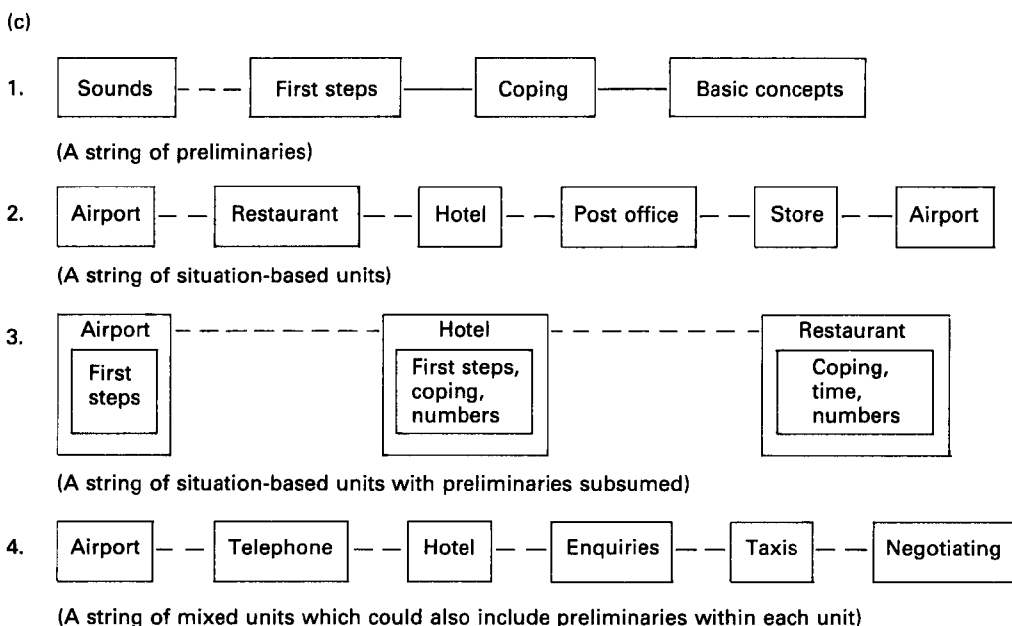


FIGURE 5.

Framework format

Within each situational unit there is a set of three to six objectives expressed in behavioural terms. For example, the prototype entitled 'Eating in a restaurant' contains the following objectives:

In this unit the student will learn how to (a) make a restaurant reservation; (b) order food and drink, ask about availability of foods, and ask for explanations or descriptions of foods; and (c) express satisfaction/dissatisfaction.

When any of these prototypes are given to teachers the teachers have to accomplish the task of *transposing* (not translating) them linguistically and culturally into the situation for which they are designing their course. To do this they must ask themselves questions about the interaction of the target language and the society which uses it. From these considerations they derive intuitively and/or by consulting authentic samples of the target language the necessary sociolinguistic information to permit them to select language forms and to prepare and arrange classroom materials.

There are a set of communicative activities proposed for each prototype, which will exercise linguistic, discourse, sociolinguistic and strategic skills as the learner acquires them. Further activities can be added ad

lib, and indeed we are setting up banks of activities (exemplified in English) for each prototype for future use.

To sum up: we have passed through a number of stages in the Frameworks project before arriving at a satisfactory solution to our problem. Beginning with the need for a number of communicative language courses, we have produced instead a set of directions addressed to *both* learner and teacher, who, working together, will be able to produce their own language-specific and purpose-specific course, through a wide range of classroom interactions. Thus, in the original descriptions of the project, the creation of a range of *teaching materials* is emphasized. Teacher training is mentioned only briefly, but has become much more important – it is indeed central to the project. At the present time it is evident that what we are preparing is in fact a system for training teachers very rapidly to produce language courses with a highly communicative orientation.

The *units* are not job-specific, but combinations of them can be. They can also be combined into general-interest courses, or courses to develop academic or research-oriented skills for those travelling to other countries. No sequencing is implied, but left to learners and teachers to decide. However, the units can be ‘recycled’ and enriched, and thus used more than once in a given course (for example, before and after arrival in the target language situation).

The ‘Social skills’ unit is the strongest; in George Chouchani’s words it will ‘anchor’ the student in the target language by allowing him/her to express his/her own identity and to learn about others.

It is worth noting that our Frameworks booklets will not be directed to the learners, as with the Indonesian course; since they are intended primarily for teacher-training, they cannot be. However, we are writing an introduction to the system which we would expect interested learners (and/or their employers) to read. Of course, if they wished, they would be able to examine the prototypes (frameworks) and also the *Teacher’s Guide* we are preparing – but most adult learners are not especially interested in such things, nor do they have time for them.

The communicative needs courses

It is expected that, as time goes on, CALS will develop a number of ‘transpositions’ from the prototypes into several languages. However, this goal is much less important to us now, since so much work has to be done afresh for each new course that is offered in the world of LSP. Our interest lies rather in preparing teachers to be as independent as possible, and to prepare pedagogical handbooks (Yalden, 1983a: 149; Stern, 1983: 186–187) on their own. We would also want to stress

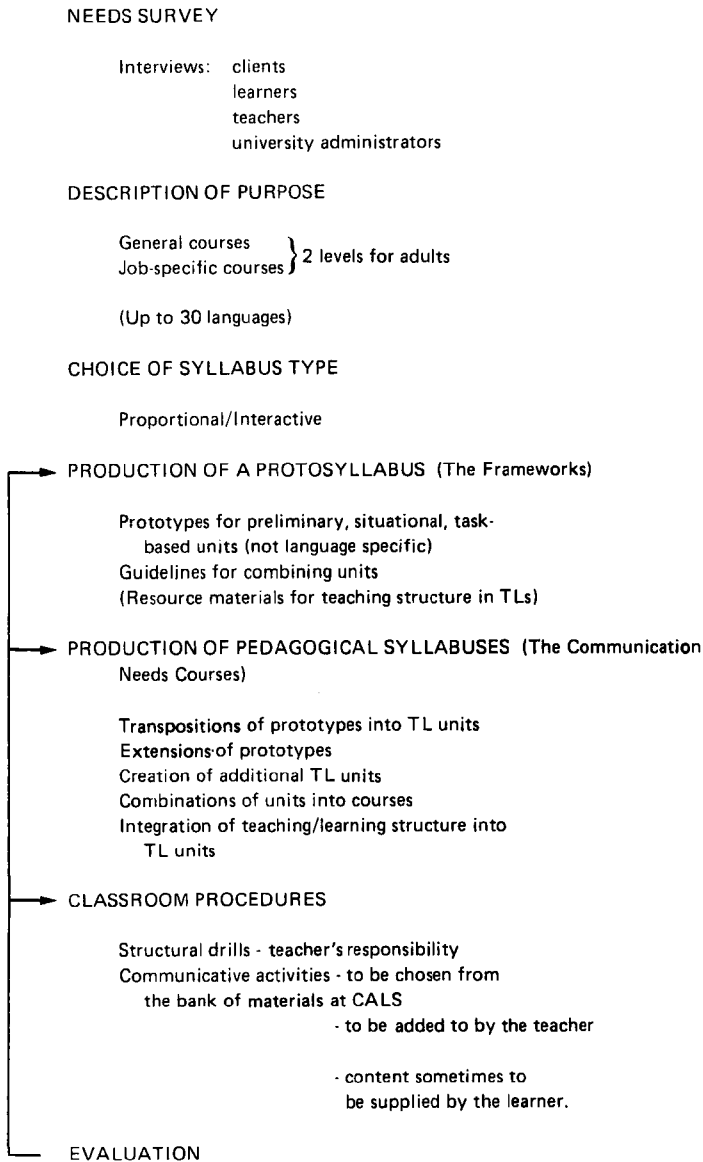


FIGURE 6. *The CALS (Carleton) Frameworks.*

preparation of the learner as much as possible, though this has to be handled with tact, given our present clientele for LSP courses.

Using the Frameworks prototypes, teachers should be able to organize language acquisition opportunities rapidly, and at the same time encourage development of structural control of a target language (with varying degrees of accuracy in sight depending on the learners). Other

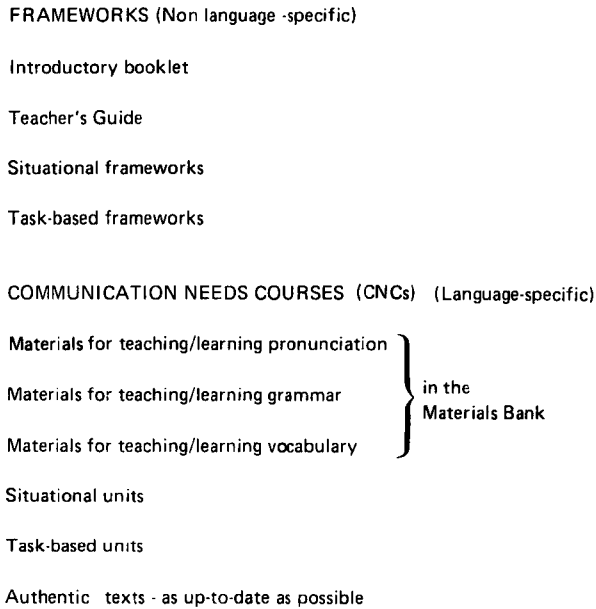


FIGURE 7. *The CALS Frameworks project.*

than the three preliminary prototypes, those which we have completed now are all situationally based; we are also working on a number based on general discourse skills and on tasks to which these skills can be applied. This work is part of a second, linked project which I have undertaken with Maryse Bosquet's assistance for the Department of External Affairs of the Government of Canada. It is at an earlier stage of development, but shares many features with the work on CNCs, and the two will complement and complete each other when they are both fully elaborated.

We have now received attempts at transpositions of a number of both the preliminary and the situational units. We expect shortly to have 'Basic concepts' in French, Portuguese, Arabic and Mandarin; 'Coping' in Portuguese and Mandarin; 'First steps' in French and Arabic; 'Eating in a restaurant' in all four languages, and one or two of the other situational Frameworks in one or two of these languages. We are also going to ask Corinne Gauthier to produce a completely new unit in French, based on the principles she will have learned from working through the other units, and Rogerio Ramalhete will carry out the same task for a new unit in Portuguese. Then we will ask two or more of the students in the Certificate programme in TESL at Carleton to transpose some of the Frameworks into ESL units, and possibly to create some new ones. After all of this, we will have a better idea of any bugs remaining in the system – we have found several and dealt with them so far. The reaction is favourable. Teachers like working with the

Frameworks because they save time – George Chouchani reports up to a 50 per cent saving, other teachers report less – the range is very great, depending on degree of experience, amount of materials the teacher has already developed, and also on how much is commercially available in a given target language. The more inexperienced teachers like the Frameworks because they provide a rich source of ideas for communicative language teaching, as well as a rapid introduction to it. One of the teachers said that it was like following a path through a forest – I find that a reassuring image, and hope that teachers will be able to use the Frameworks to build roads eventually. We expect a preliminary version of the materials to be ready for use in the autumn of this year; however, much testing and monitoring remains to be done and we expect further modifications to take place.

I hope this presentation will have clarified how, in moving through the stages in language programme design which I outlined at the beginning, a mixture of theoretical and pragmatic considerations produces a somewhat different design for each new context that arises. Judging from the ‘transpositions’ we have received so far, the Frameworks too will suggest to each target language teacher a somewhat different realization, even though they are working from the same set of basic instructions or guidelines. In the classroom, one could expect further modifications if as we hope learners will take an active part in the whole process. Thus the shape of the curriculum or syllabus will continue to evolve – which will have justified our choice of the term ‘interactive’ to describe it.

Notes

1. Revised version of a paper presented at the Eighteenth Annual TESOL Convention, Houston, March 1984. © Janice Yalden

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2. Materials and Methodology

Design Principles for a Communicative Grammar¹

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In my presentation at last year's colloquium on syllabus design (ELT Documents 118), I suggested that a syllabus should be seen in *educational* terms as a device for devising an institutionally approved subject, so that it reflected policy decision as to what constituted a particular course of study; and also in *pedagogic* terms as a means for providing a necessary framework within which effective learning could take place. The design of a syllabus therefore needs to take into account both the prevailing educational attitudes of a particular community and current thinking, to the extent that it is deemed to be well informed, about the conditions that promote learning in general. The two aspects, the educational and the pedagogic, are of course related in that what is understood as the purpose of education will have an effect on the attitudes and expectations of learners and so pre-dispose them to a certain learning style.

To design a syllabus, which in my view must be understood as a projection, a prospective plan of work, means to impose some control on learner behaviour. This control is achieved by negotiating a compromise between what is educationally required and what is pedagogically desirable and would thereby seek to change the initial disposition of learners to one more favourable to learning. The essential point is that one cannot devise a pedagogically desirable syllabus, or decide that no syllabus is required at all (as has been sometimes suggested) without regard to particular educational contexts.

The context of the case study I want to present is that of the Arab World. Here, as in many other countries, the established approach to English teaching, until the recent past, was to give prominence to grammar, either explicitly by rule or implicitly by the presentation and practice of sentence patterns. The educationally approved learning style inclined to conformity and submission to authority rather than to discovery and the assertion of individual initiative. Such a context is one which much current thinking would not consider to be conducive to enlightened pedagogic practice.

Some years ago a communicative approach to English-language teaching appeared on this scene in the form of the *Crescent* course. This

course, true to its type, concentrated (in its original form) on creating conditions for meaningful uses of language by defining course content in terms of notions and functions, and counted on the learners assimilating grammar incidentally as a function of communicative activity. Such an approach is of course highly valued by current pedagogic thinking. It has its disadvantages, however. In particular it deprives the learners in this case of the explicit grammatical directions which previously controlled and guided their progress and requires them to find their own way. They were required to shift from a referential to an inferential mode of learning. This has led to some degree of disorientation. It turned out that the learners could not always discover their own grammatical bearings by generalizing from particular instances of behaviour. Grammatical knowledge did not always follow as a corollary, as it were, of communication. In short, the learners needed a map which marked out the grammatical features of their learning terrain.

About two years ago, two colleagues, Ann Brumfit and Scott Windeatt, and I were commissioned to design such a map. We were asked to consider how the *Crescent* course could be supplemented by separate materials which gave explicit emphasis to grammar.

We decided after a thorough review of *Crescent* that the most feasible and effective procedure would be to introduce grammar materials retrospectively as staged reformulations of language dealt with informally and contingently in the preceding *Crescent* books. Thus the first two books of *Communicative Grammar* (CG I, CG II) were designed to bring together elements of language presented in the first three books of *Crescent* and be available to be used as required alongside *Crescent* books four and five. The other *Communicative Grammar* books would function as recapitulation in much the same way. Figure 1, following, then, represents the general plan.

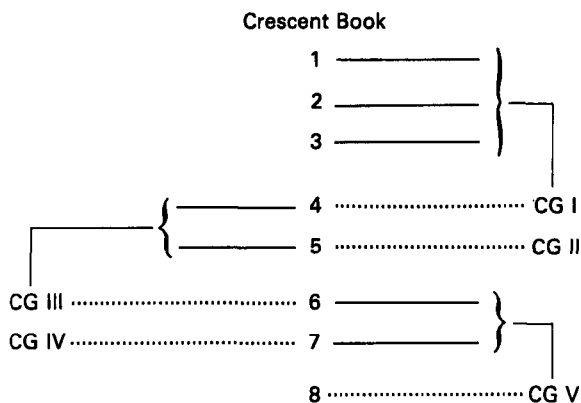


FIGURE 1.

Reformulation implies a shift or orientation from inferential to referential grammar. This involved the selection of what we regarded as grammatical elements which called for focal attention, leaving the rest to be introduced peripherally, and the arrangement of these elements into units which drew attention both to the area of conceptual and communicative meaning they realized (roughly their denotation) and the relationship they contracted with other elements as terms within linguistic systems of English (roughly their sense relations).

But simply to take the language presented as a communicative scatter in *Crescent* and reformulate it explicitly as grammar, even correlated with notional and functional values, would clearly have run the risk of encouraging the learning of grammar as an area of knowledge detached from its realization in communicative activity. We wanted the grammar to be internalized not only as a formal system but as a resource for use. To this end we devised tasks which would lead the learners to realize for themselves the latent capability of grammatical knowledge for the achievement of meaning.

These tasks engage the learners in the solving of problems of various kinds, which are introduced after they have participated in the demonstration of grammar points focused upon in the particular unit. So the learners are first drawn into a demonstration which shows how certain grammatical elements typically correlate with certain areas of meaning. Figure 2, for example, is a Demonstration Section from CG II.

This demonstration first provides a diagrammatic representation of the conceptual (or notional) meaning of the particular grammatical form: what we have called a grammargraph. This is a mnemonic device which indicates by non-verbal symbolism both the standard or core denotation of the form and, by contrast with other grammargraphs, the sense relation it contracts with other forms as terms within the grammatical systems concerned. The particular grammargraph shown in Figure 2, for example, contrasts clearly with that which represents the core meaning of the simple past tense, which immediately precedes, in the same unit, Figure 3.

This Demonstration Section, then, seeks to establish the standard or canonical notional/functional valency of the linguistic forms; their prototypical value if you like. Its purpose is to consolidate the knowledge of grammar as form and as meaning potential. In the problem-solving section which follows, the learners are then required to act upon their knowledge, to realize this potential, in activities which provide an opportunity for repeated but purposeful use of the forms in question.

Past	Now	Future
→		

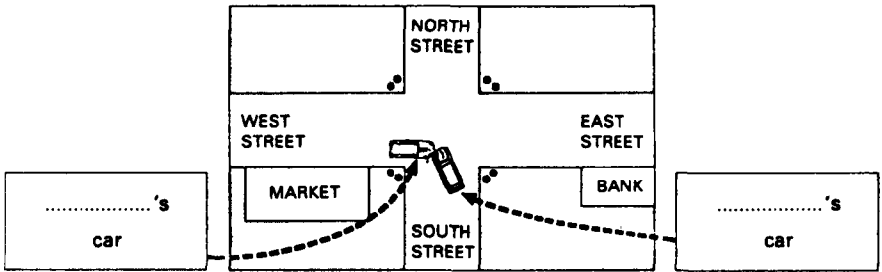


I was turning left at the time of the accident

7 Whose fault was it?

- 7.1 Which car is Fuad's, and which is Ahmed's? Read the sentences and look at the map to find out. Then write the names in the correct boxes.

This morning Fuad was driving along South Street while Ahmed was driving along West Street. At 10.01 they had an accident at the crossroads.



- 7.2 Ahmed and Fuad told the police about the accident. They both told the truth. What were they doing at the time of the accident? Were they turning left or right? Was one of them driving carelessly? Read the passages to find out, and then tick the correct boxes for the sentences below.

Ahmed
 'At 10.00 I was driving along West Street. I was going to the bank. I was watching the traffic lights and while I was driving past the market, they changed to green. The other car was turning left out of South Street when it hit my car. I was not going very fast.'

Fuad
 'At 10.00 I was driving along South Street with my friend, Ali. We were going to the market and we were not going very fast. We were talking when the accident happened.'

- Fuad was turning left.
- Ahmed was turning right.
- Fuad and Ali were talking.
- Ahmed and Fuad were not going very fast.

True	Untrue

7.3 So whose fault was it? Who was driving carelessly when the accident happened? Complete the passage.

Ahmed and Fuad very fast, but was driving carelessly. The accident was 's fault. He left into Street when the traffic lights in Street were red.

7.4 Complete the tables.

At the time of the accident,	he	was	..... the traffic lights.
	she		
At the time of the accident,	it	.....	..... to the market.
	I		
At the time of the accident,	we	.....	.....
	you		
At the time of the accident,	they	.....	.....

At the time of the accident,	he	.....	..... very fast.
	she		
At the time of the accident,	it	.....	.....
	I		
At the time of the accident,	we	.....	.....
	you		
At the time of the accident,	they	.....	.....

At the time of the accident,	.....	he	..... carelessly?
	.....	she	
At the time of the accident,	.....	it	..... left or right?
	.....	I	
At the time of the accident,	.....	we	.....
	.....	you	
At the time of the accident,	.....	they	.....
		

FIGURE 2.

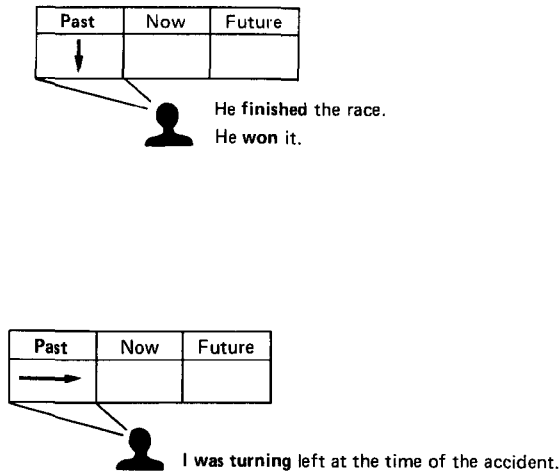


FIGURE 3.

Figure 4 shows the Problem-solving Section which follows immediately after the Demonstration Section on the past continuous tense.

It is important to stress that these problems are not language problems, but problems which require a use of language for their solution. The learners do not just manipulate language as an end in itself, but realize it as a means for achieving outcomes which have independent point. The design of the problems therefore seeks to reconcile two features which are commonly associated with two different approaches to the teaching of language: linguistic repetition and non-linguistic purpose. Linguistic repetition is a feature of a structural orientation to teaching with its emphasis on knowing: learners are required to practise particular structures so as to facilitate unconscious assimilation. Non-linguistic purpose is a feature of a communicative orientation with its emphasis on doing: here learners' knowledge of activities which deflect attention away from the linguistic forms being used. In these communicative grammar materials the problems are so designed that their solution depends on the repeated use of the language items concerned. Repetition, therefore, is a function of purpose. The learner practises language in the process of resolving the problem.

This accommodation of the two cardinal principles of repetition and purpose, which together provide for the internalization of grammar as a resource for use, place constraints on the design of the problems themselves. In particular, we found that we had to work at a remove from verisimilitude or the simulation of reality. The use of scenes and events from everyday life, such as are favoured as typically communicative in teaching materials, would need to have been distorted after the manner of a structural approach to provide for the required

repetition of the grammatical items, and this would inevitably have involved a corresponding reduction in communicative purpose. We decided therefore to devise problems whose very purpose lies in contrivance, which activates covert rather than overt communicative activity and which, therefore, bear a closer resemblance to what learners are required to do in other subjects on the curriculum than to natural uses of language outside the classroom.

There are two important points of principle implicit in this decision. Firstly, the approach to language teaching is thus brought into closer alignment with activities associated with other areas of school work, and relates less to the use of language in real-life situations outside the classroom. In this sense the approach accepts and exploits the communicative possibilities within the curriculum itself, and so brings English-language teaching into closer correspondence with other school subjects. Secondly, there is the implication of what the learners are acquiring through their problem-solving tasks, which is not primarily a repertoire of behaviour ready for direct deployment, but a capacity for actual use based on the internalization of grammar as communicative resource or meaning potential. What this *Communicative Grammar* seeks to achieve is not authentic communicative behaviour in the sense of overt naturalistic response recognized as socially appropriate, but the assimilation of grammar which has been authenticated covertly as meaning potential by being realized in the achievement of purposeful outcomes.

What I have tried to do in this brief presentation is to suggest a set of principles upon which these communicative grammar materials were based, principles drawn from pedagogic theory but modified in the light of the particular educational conditions we were concerned with. The materials themselves exemplify a way of realizing these principles in practice. It may be that the actual tasks that have been devised would need to be altered in the light of actual classroom experience, or even abandoned altogether and replaced by different ones. There are, therefore, two issues here which it is important not to confuse. One is the matter of the validity of the principles of approach exemplified by these materials, and the other is the matter of how practicable and effective this particular exemplification might be in different teaching/learning situations. The first can, and I believe should, be a subject for general debate. The second is something which only individual teachers can determine in the circumstances of their own classrooms.

(Extracts from *Communicative Grammar*, by Ann Brumfit and Scott Wendeatt, are included by kind permission of the publishers; English Language Teaching for the Arab World/Oxford University Press.)

8 What were they doing at 11.00?

At 11.00 yesterday morning, a thief took a box of watches from Salim's watch-shop. A policeman arrived, and stopped seven people near the shop. He asked each of them: 'What were you doing at 11.00?'

The policeman wrote down their answers in shorthand, because he wanted to write quickly.

8.1 Look at the policeman's notebook. What did he write?
Use the key for the shorthand words and the map below to find out.

POLICEMAN'S NOTEBOOK

Majed:	I	|	→	Ⓞ
	Nedal	2	→	Ⓟ
Jassem:	I	Ⓟ	→	Ⓟ
	Ibrahim and Hamad	↗	→	Ⓢ
Ahmed:	I	↘	→	Ⓜ
	Omar	Ⓟ	→	Ⓟ
Nedal:	I	2	→	Ⓟ
	Omar	✓	→	Ⓟ
Ibrahim and Hamad:	We	↗	→	Ⓢ
	Jassem	Ⓟ	→	Ⓟ
Omar:	I	✓	→	Ⓢ
	Majed	|	→	Ⓢ

KEY FOR THE SHORTHAND WORDS

Ⓟ	sit
↘	shop
|	eat
✓	wait
↗	read
2	walk
→	in the

THE MAP

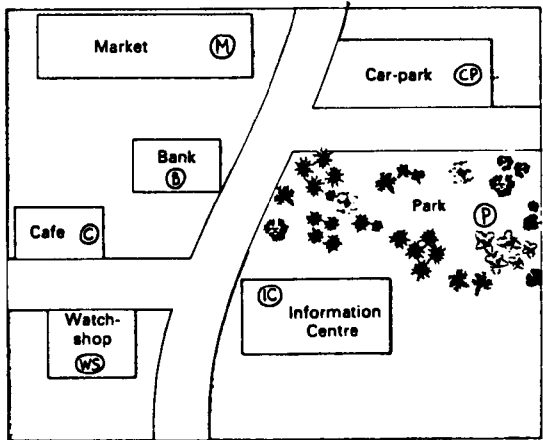


FIGURE 4.

8.2 What were the seven people doing at 11.00? Use the policeman's notebook to complete everybody's answers. The thief told *two lies*, and everybody else told the truth. So if two people said the same thing, it was true.

Majed: I *was eating* in the *cafe*.....
 Nedal in the *park*.....
 Jassem: I in the *bank*.....
 Ibrahim and Hamad in the

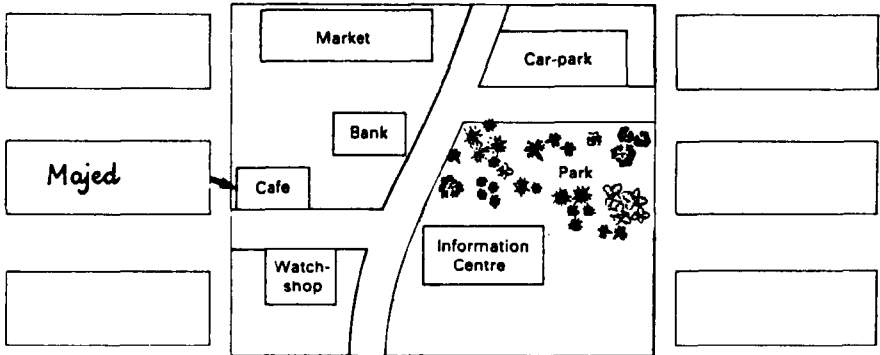
Ahmed: I in the
 Omar in the

Nedal: I in the
 Omar in the

Ibrahim and Hamad: We in the
 Jassem in the

Omar: I in the
 Majed in the

8.3 Who told the lies? Read the sentences in 8.2 again to find out. Then write everybody's names in the boxes round the map, and draw lines to show where everybody was. Who was in the watch-shop?



..... told two lies, so he was the thief.

Notes

1. Revised version of a paper presented at the Eighteenth Annual TESOL Convention, Houston, March 1984.

The Use of Dialogues for Teaching Transactional Competence in Foreign Languages¹

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There is nothing new about the use of dialogues in foreign-language teaching: their employment dates back at least to Erasmus, who used them as what we might nowadays call 'communicative gambit drills'. However, in more recent FLT history, the use of dialogue seems to have been restricted mainly to demonstrating, and inculcating mastery of, formal structure and to 'drilling in' chunks of ritualized language. This paper aims to present a view of dialogue not as a structured flow of words and phrases in the narrowest linguistic sense, but as the outward manifestation and vehicle of the interplay of strategies designed to procure the outcomes desired by those engaged in dialogue. In this light, virtually any dialogue may be seen as a 'transaction', whether its underlying objective is to maintain friendly relations, to obtain directions when one is lost in a strange city, to persuade one's bank manager to grant an overdraft, or to politely but firmly refuse an invitation.

There is actually every indication that native-speakers of a language differ in the degree to which they are 'transactionally competent', but as a generalization the application of strategy in their dialogue-transactions is second nature to them, and probably quite unconscious most of the time. But what of the foreign learner wishing to acquire a high level of transactional competence in order to attain as often as possible any particular desired outcome in a dialogue-transaction? What tools are available from discourse analysis which can help in the designing of effective and efficient teaching directed towards this aim, at least by providing the teacher with a description of the knowledge required to conduct transactions with a chance of being successful? As yet, of course, despite the interest in discourse analysis in recent years, relatively little is known about the strategic, interactional and psychological aspects of discourse, but what will be proposed in this paper is that the basis of a pedagogically utilizable framework of analysis is provided in the work of Robert J. Di Pietro, and the paper will attempt to show how his ideas, applied in the classroom, can considerably enrich the use of dialogue as FLT 'materials' and instructional devices, and why the dialogue is the ideal pedagogical medium for the fostering of transactional competence.

Perhaps a comment should be made at this point on the distinction being observed between 'transactional competence' and 'communicative competence'. Actually, no real theoretical issue is at stake here; it is merely a question of the particular focus of the paper, and this is the ability to conduct *transactions* through the medium of the spoken language – that is, the ability to use spoken language as a tool in order to achieve personal goals whose realization depends upon interaction with and co-operation from other people. 'Communicative competence' is perhaps a broader concept than 'transactional competence', and subsumes it.

The title of the paper alludes to foreign languages. In fact, most of the examples will be drawn from that well-known foreign language, English; but since, in the area to be discussed, there seems to be no principled reason for differentiating between the teaching of English as a foreign language and the teaching of any other tongue as a foreign language, the claim for universal application would not seem inappropriate. There is, however, one restriction to be placed on the scope of this discussion: it is meant to relate primarily to the needs of the *advanced learner* of foreign languages, and the recommendations made may be less pertinent to those learners who still have far to go in the mastery of the more straightforward linguistic aspects of the target language.

Advanced learners in fact merit special consideration of their own, because from some viewpoints it is simply not true that they are beginning to leave all their problems behind. They have, of course, overcome many, or most, of the learning problems posed by such aspects as phonology and grammar, but for each problem of this sort that they vanquish, another, of an often more intangible and complex nature, arises. Indeed, where language as a social tool is concerned, advanced learners are in a sense at their most vulnerable. If their phonological and structural mastery of the target language is sufficiently impressive, they run the risk of being assumed to understand everything, including the rules for appropriate use of language in social, interactional and transactional contexts, and of being judged by the standards applied to fellow native-speakers. No doubt most foreign-language teachers, however, have been abruptly reminded at some time or other that learning a language is not quite the same as learning to use a language in its social setting, and can quote anecdotes such as the following, drawn from actual experience:

A dinner is in progress in the pleasant surroundings of a not inexpensive hotel. Members of the Department of X at the University of Y, England, are entertaining a group of academics from an Oriental country who qualify as learners of English sufficiently advanced to be granted professorial chairs in it. While the atmosphere is friendly, the

sort of formalities to which the guests are assumed to be accustomed and which the British also observe in the earlier stages of acquaintanceships are being respected – no first names, over-personal questions, and so on. There are perhaps four simultaneous ‘polite’ conversations going on. Suddenly, one of the professorial guests, who is sitting opposite Professor Z of the Department of Y and his wife, volunteers loudly and earnestly: ‘Professor Z, you are very lucky. Your wife is much prettier than mine’, an observation accompanied by fishing into a wallet for a photograph to prove the point. Four simultaneous ‘polite’ conversations stop dead in their tracks; momentary embarrassed silence; one or two hands over mouths to restrain mirth; resumption of conversations with all possible speed, with Professor and Mrs Z doing their best not to have heard. While all this might be said to have nothing to do with ‘language’ in its narrowest interpretation, it does have everything to do with dialogue and the rules constraining it within given contexts in given cultures. Assuming the strategy underlying the observation, which in the guest’s home culture would conceivably not have been out of place, to have been something in the nature of ‘establishing amicable relationships’, one can only say that in the host culture the way chosen to operate it was scarcely optimal.

As we have already said, there is, of course, nothing new about dialogue work as such in the context of foreign-language teaching. Probably most textbooks ever written contain dialogue at some point, and nothing could be more natural, considering that the dialogue must be the most fundamental and frequent vehicle for language use, the most primordial of language manifestations and, equally, of social acts. No doubt there are many people who never write books, or articles, or stories, or letters, or anything at all; many who have never held a speech or delivered a lecture; but it can only be the complete recluse who never engages in dialogue. That the dialogue is the basic currency of social and transactional interaction was appreciated long ago by Erasmus, who seems to have been familiar with almost everything about communicative competence except its name, and whose communicative ‘gambit drills’ included those aimed at teaching students how to produce the ‘well-turned insult’:

A: Good day, you traveller’s nightmare.

B: And good day to you, you glutton, epitome of greed, gobbler of good cooking.

A: My deepest respects, you enemy of all virtue.

B: Pleased to meet you, you shining example of uprightness.

A: Good morning, you fifteen-year-old hag.

B: Delighted, you eighty-year-old schoolgirl . . .

(Kelly, 1969: 121)

However, as already suggested, in the more recent history of FLT,

where dialogues have been incorporated into teaching materials, they have almost always, at least before the more immediately recent interest in communicative competence, been selected, or concocted, to illustrate narrowly *linguistic* points (sometimes even to demonstrate, in effect, the syntax and morphology of the written language!) and to this extent have been presented as anatomical specimens in the language museum rather than as instances of the live drama of interaction. The 'impoverishment' of the dialogue was in no way reversed by audiolingual methodology in which, though it was a cornerstone, it was treated as little more than a convenient peg on which to hang grammatical paradigms, and so much so that the situational organizing of later AL materials was rendered virtually redundant. In this connection we might look at the following example of 'fossilized dialogue' which appears in an AL French course in the unit labelled 'Les achats':

Le vendeur: Vous désirez, Madame?
 Mme Martin: Je voudrais un tricot pour mon fils.
 Le vendeur: Quelle couleur préfère-t-il?
 Mme Martin: Il aime surtout le bleu ou le vert.
 (Côté *et al.*, 1968: 138)

Even in the context of this most transactional of transactions, there is no suggestion from the authors that dialogues like this might be exploited in terms of such considerations as 'the language of shopping in France', 'how to ensure good service', 'how to get the best bargain', 'how to refuse something the shopkeeper wants you to buy and you don't want', and so on. All the above example serves as is the basis for a pattern drill which rings the changes on *je voudrais/nous voudrions/voir/trouver/choisir/un/une/des/tricot/robe/lunettes/etc.* In sum, to invoke Widdowson's dichotomy (Widdowson, 1973), dialogue, though by its very nature discourse, has almost always been treated in pedagogical materials as text, to exemplify the formal properties of sentences and the linguistically legitimate ways in which they may combine, rather than to show 'the way sentences are put to communicative use in the performing of social actions . . .' (Widdowson, 1973).

It is debatable to what extent the current preoccupation with communicative competence has actually improved the teaching of discourse, and more specifically, the skills of discourse relevant to transactional competence in dialogue. As Stern (1981) puts it, work on communicative competence in the UK has to date largely been 'L' – 'linguistic' and 'formal'. To put this more strongly, it has been *syllabus-centred*, structuralist in effect, focusing in the end on the forms of language the learner must know in order to be communicatively competent. Without doubt this approach has led to a much more precise specification of the linguistic components of target communicative competence than was

possible even a few years ago, but in its essential obsession with language it has done little to help us understand the psychological aspects of communicative competence. On the other hand, the work in the USA, which Stern characterises as 'P' – 'psychological' and 'pedagogic' – and which has in some respects been much more genuinely *learner-centred* than the British approach, and much more interested in the involvement of the psyche in language learning and language use, has tended to shy away from setting up concrete linguistic targets for students. There is reason to think that, while both bear on it, neither approach is sufficient for the effective teaching of discourse. This is indeed governed by linguistic rules, there are 'right' and 'wrong' linguistic usages in given contexts, there is appropriate and inappropriate lexis, and so on. Its efficacy is also, however, governed by psychological factors, such as empathy, the appropriate projection of the personality and the judicious use of strategies which promote the attainment of personal goals. The 'linguistic' and 'psychological' aspects need to be put together; mediation is required.

To some extent the substance of what follows here was anticipated nearly a decade ago by Jakobovits and Gordon (1974), who were interested in 'transactional engineering competence', and who recognized, as is almost self-evident from the coining of such a phrase, that the outcome of a verbal transaction is not a matter of mere chance, nor a matter simply of 'knowing the language', but can be influenced and made more certain by planning and organizing what one is going to say, how and when one is going to say it, anticipating what one's interlocuters will say and how one will respond. The weakness in their position, however, was that they lacked linguistic focus and precision, came across as vague and rather too 'joky', but were also sometimes humourless enough to miss the real humour of their humour – for example, learning 'how to be a comedian in Italian' (Jakobovits and Gordon, 1974: 28) is something which only few English-speakers might have to go out of their way to do. In the end, interesting and stimulating as many of their ideas were, they failed to supply a 'system' or a 'framework' which either the student or the teacher could adopt and follow.

It is, then, more recently from the work of Robert J. Di Pietro that there does appear to have emerged, perhaps for the first time, the outline of a 'system' or 'framework' which is pedagogically utilizable from the viewpoint that it is not too complex, and yet brings linguistic and psychological considerations together. What follows next is a summary of Di Pietro's analysis of the major components of communicative competence and a brief account of some of his major ideas on the structure of dialogue. In the final section, consideration will be given to the question as to how to exploit Di Pietro's ideas in the classroom, and some proposals made for exercise-types which, by virtue of affording

students practice in structuring, and recognizing the structure of, dialogue in terms of the sort of features to be discussed here, are intended to build up their transactional competence.

The components of communicative competence

Di Pietro suggests² that communicative competence may be sub-divided into four major sub-competences, as follows:

Formal competence

This first sub-component of communicative competence is what is perhaps more generally referred to as 'linguistic competence', but Di Pietro further sub-divides it into:

- A: *Grammatical competence*: the ability to make well-formed sentences, the potential to 'generate' all and only the sentences of the language.
- B: *Idiomatic competence*: the ability to recognize the meaning of idioms, being aware of the nuances they convey, and the potential to use them correctly and appropriately. If grammatical competence means possessing a knowledge of the regular, systematic features of the language through which sound and meaning are linked, then idiomatic competence means possessing knowledge of the irregular and unsystematic features of the language.

Traditionally, language teaching has of course concentrated on the cultivation of grammatical competence, whether, to use Wilkins' (1976) terms, it has been based on analytic or synthetic syllabuses. To what extent it has fostered idiomatic competence is a matter of debate. Learning lists of proverbs, even though these belong in the realm of idiomatic competence, and can indeed be used for strategic purposes in discourse, is not sufficient preparation for anyone who wishes to be fully competent in dialogue. Native speakers of English do not typically spice their conversations with sayings such as 'A stitch in time saves nine' – though, as said, they may well draw on proverbs for strategic purposes from time to time – but they do constantly use phrases such as 'Oh, you're off, then?'/ 'the milk's off'/ 'roast beef's off'/ 'that's a bit off', which anyone uninitiated into the culture, however good their grammatical competence, must often find confusing or opaque. The area is a difficult one because idiom is constantly changing and only continuous contact with the target society, at the very least through a medium such as the press, can ensure that one is not teaching and learning the idioms of yesteryear. Teachers may therefore understandably decide that for anyone but the advanced student the time required for the teaching of idiom is better spent on other things; but for the advanced student intending to live or work in the 'target society', it is virtually a question

of mastering idiom or being left right out in the cold. That Di Pietro draws attention to the importance of idiom by recognizing it as an area of competence in its own right is therefore to be welcomed. What we might add to his own ideas, however, is that idiomatic competence involves not only the acquisition of lexis, but knowledge of how to apply lexis in order to speak and write in an appropriate register, and this again involves the learning of such things as the colloquial contractions, 'weak forms' and elliptical expressions characteristic of the speech of the native speaker.

Sociocultural competence

This aspect of communicative competence consists of knowledge of the language enabling one to go through the routines of the day; knowledge of the 'rites de passage' observed in a given society and the linguistic protocols they entail. These will include such things as greeting people, introducing oneself, making excuses and apologies, thanking people, expressing sympathy, asking for information in the street, obtaining service in shops and restaurants, etc. The language use to realize the sort of 'functions' listed is, of course, very largely ritualized and 'predictable', but actually learning it is only one problem: another is learning when to use it, and here there may often exist marked contrasts between different societies. English-speakers, for example, may have to make quite an effort to remember to say 'bitte' or 'bitte schön' on being thanked for something in German, since, although it is friendly to say something like 'you're welcome' to someone who thanks you in English, it is 'culturally permissible' to accept the 'thank you' as the last word. On the other hand, English-speakers, at least in Britain, are generally very sensitive to the use of 'please' and 'thank you' where these are 'culturally expected', and failure to observe the rules in this respect may cause considerable offence. By contrast again, the Germans are probably much more punctilious and ceremonious about greetings. This could then be a particularly tricky area for the advanced learner who is formally competent and who thereby creates the impression of being competent in all areas, especially as the linguistically unsophisticated with whom learners may come into contact often do not realize that the 'rites de passage' to which they are accustomed are not necessarily universal.

Psychological competence

For Di Pietro this competence includes the ability to project one's personality and the ability to use language to achieve personal goals. Both are aspects of 'strategic interaction'.

To some extent the way one projects one's personality is no doubt culturally determined. For instance, as a generalization, Western

societies tend to promote and maintain egocentrism in the essential meaning of the term. There is usually no objection to using the pronoun 'I' (or a corresponding first-person verb-form) in expressing likes and dislikes, desires, opinions or intentions; indeed, though there is still a place for tact, it is normal and expected. On the other hand, anyone who has taught students from a country such as Japan will know how difficult it is to elicit from them a direct opinion, or find out what they really like and dislike. It would appear that the value placed on group harmony in some societies demands comparative self-effacement and avoidance of emphasis on one's own thoughts and desires. Is it a mere accident that in a language like Japanese the verb is not marked for person? Of course, where it comes to intercultural contact, people from 'self-effacing' societies can come across in 'egocentric' societies, if they do not modify the way in which they present themselves, as colourless, dull and evasive; and in the converse case, as loud, overbearing and selfish.

At the same time, of course, within the general constraints imposed by a cultural framework, the way in which one projects one's personality will vary from situation to situation, depending on what is appropriate and what one wishes to achieve, and will co-vary with one's interlocutors in the tone one adopts, the attitudes one conveys and the information one volunteers or gives away about oneself. If one's wife asks: 'Have you paid that bill yet?', one might well reply: 'I'm too tired to think about it now. It can wait till tomorrow'. On the other hand, if one is eager for promotion and the boss asks: 'Have you written that letter yet?', it seems more likely that one would reply: 'It's the very next job on my list' or 'I'm attending to it right now' or 'I've just about completed the draft'. Even better might be the downright lie: 'It went off yesterday', depending on the degree of risk involved. In both cases the application of strategy and the presentation of the self are interconnected. In the case of one's wife, one is inviting sympathy for one's omission ('too tired'), perhaps also indirectly reminding her of how hard one works, but at the same time allowing her to see that one is not a machine, not totally efficient and self-sacrificing, and that there can be circumstances in which moral obligations are not given priority. In the case of the boss, the strategy is to convey the message 'I'm working hard and doing what you ordered', thus projecting oneself as efficient, diligent and cooperative. The idea that all human beings adopt and project various personae, depending upon circumstances, is, of course, not new; what may be more new is consideration of the problem as to how the foreign learner may gain systematic knowledge of the ways in which the personality is typically projected in a given society through the linguistic options available.

As for verbal strategies as such, Di Pietro says (1975): 'I believe there are verbal strategies in language which can be identified and labeled

just as one might identify and label grammatical constructions. They have, as their purpose, the attainment of success in dealings with other human beings'. Among the examples given by Di Pietro (1975) there are:

Dependency posturing. A favourite with little girls trying to ingratiate themselves with Daddy, and involving deliberate regression to an earlier stage of linguistic development – e.g. by dropping articles and using forms of address such as *Da-Da*. As Di Pietro remarks: '. . . the strategic value of "baby talk" stems from [a child's] understanding that a posture of dependency on an adult is likely to result in achieving a desired favor'.

The metonymic cushion. In the instance cited by Di Pietro, his daughter, in attempting to establish whether her father had identified her or her brother as the culprit in an alleged misdemeanour asks: 'Was it December or June?', December being the month of her own birth, and June that of the birth of her brother. The reason for using this device was, in Di Pietro's opinion, that it 'helps to insulate the person referred to from the action of the instance'. Interestingly, there seems to be some correspondence here with Lozanov's practice in Suggestopedia of giving a surrogate identity to his learners so that this surrogate, rather than the learner's real self, can bear the opprobrium for errors (see, for example, the account of the method in Stevick, 1980).

The reverse double bind. This is the label Di Pietro applies to a strategy used on him by his son when the latter was preparing to make a request which he knew was likely to elicit a negative response: 'I bet I know what you'll say if I ask you something'. If the parent replies: 'No you don't' or 'But you haven't asked me yet', then the way is clear for the request to be put, and the parent is now morally committed at least to the pretence of considering the request open-mindedly. Conceding to the request when it then comes means that the child loses the verbal match initiated with the opening challenge, but wins where the request is concerned. If the parent refuses the request, the child still wins a moral victory: 'There! I told you I knew what you'd say!', the underlying structure of which is, no doubt, 'You unreasonable, authoritarian pig!'. If the parent replies to the opener: 'Yes, you do' – with the implication 'So don't bother to ask' – then the child still scores a moral victory: 'I knew it. I won't bother to ask', with the same underlying structure as before. The danger with this sort of strategy, of course, is that one can only maintain the moral victory of the 'I told you so' if one leaves the matter there, and affects no further interest. To try persuasion after that is to back down – in many transactions the one who cares more about the final outcome, and reveals it, is in the weaker position.

Another strategy cited by Di Pietro is what we might call:

Blame deflection, which is operated by passivization, agent-anonymization and 'intransitivization'. Children who break vases, cups, windows, flower-stems, etc. are extremely adept at this strategy: 'Mummy/Daddy . . . the vase/cup/window has been/has got/broken; Someone has broken the vase/cup/window; The rose has been/has got/has broken off . . .' Bigger, nastier children often add a preface such as: 'I came in and found that . . ./I went out of the room for a moment and when I came back, you know what I found? . . .'

To these examples of Di Pietro's we might also add:

Side stepping:

A: We ought to discuss whether we can really afford the holiday in Spain. I know we've booked it, but . . .

B: Oh look! It's gone seven. Quick, turn the television on or we'll miss the tennis!

Bluff calling: This is one of several strategies, including flattery and sarcasm, long since explicitly identified, named and obvious to most people, this particular one being enshrined, of course, in the detective literature. An example recently culled from a TV-thriller:

A: I have to have lunch with a client at the club today.

B: Gin rummy or poker?

Of course, the impact is lost if one does not intuit the truth first time!

Attenuation + BUT. This probably covers a number of strategies yet to be more finely differentiated, but in general terms, the device is applied when something unpleasant has to be said or revealed, the unpleasant part being introduced with 'but'. It may be that the purpose is to attempt attenuation through a prior expression of sympathy, or it may sometimes be a way of saying 'Be prepared for a shock'. Examples of the way it works might be:

I'm terribly sorry, but (your Ming dynasty vase has just got broken)

You won't like this, but (to be frank, I'm a bit fed up with the way you keep going on about that book of yours)

I know you don't like the idea, but (I really do feel we should make the effort to visit my mother at the weekend)

Please don't be angry, but (I'm not coming with you to the party after all)

A variant of this strategy with 'but' seems to be aimed more at expiating the bearer of bad tidings from guilt:

As you know, I'm a reasonable man, but (this time you've gone too far)

I wouldn't hurt you for the world, you must know that, but (I've decided I just can't commit myself to that sort of relationship yet)

Another often-used and well-documented strategy, applied in the context of argument and disagreement, is the

Appeal to reason. At its most obvious, it actually entails use of the

words 'appeal' and 'reason', or variants of them:

I'm appealing to your reason . . .

I'm appealing to you to be reasonable . . .

However, the same sort of strategy may also be operated through realizations such as:

Has it ever occurred to you that . . . ?

Have you ever for one moment considered that . . . ?

Calm down and think for a moment about what you've just said . . .

You've obviously never put yourself in my position . . .

Evidently the purpose of the device is to present oneself as the thinking, reasonable party, and one's adversary as insensitive and unreasonable. It is a strategy beloved of authority figures, such as parents, who in the final analysis can equate their assumed greater reasonableness with the power vested in them. The danger of the strategy, or course, is that where it really is intended to make one's interlocuter see things differently, it has to be handled carefully, or the opposite effect can almost certainly be guaranteed. Indeed, the same form of words can be used, with obvious condescension, to operate the reverse strategy of provoking one's adversary into rage and greater unreasonableness.

A strategy which is a favourite with anyone trying to sell something is:

The hypothesis to fact switch. A strategy operated by changing indefinites into definites and conditionals into presents and futures. As an example we might take extracts from a dialogue such as this:

A: Good evening, madam. Hothouse Heating. You asked us . . .

B: Oh yes, come in.

A: Thank you. Right, madam, so if you don't mind, we'll start by measuring up your rooms so that we can work out the thermal capacity of the boiler you'd need [. . .] And where would you be thinking of putting a radiator in here? [. . .] In here, madam? You'd need a large double radiator . . . best place would be under the window [. . .] Right, madam, so we've been through the house, and we're talking about a 75 BTU gas boiler in the kitchen, and then in the dining-room we're going to have a double radiator on the left-hand wall, and here in the hall the radiator's going on this wall . . .

Transparent as this strategy may be, it is not altogether an easy one to counteract directly, given the constraints against being bluntly rude to a stranger who has come along at one's own behest and has been obliging and courteous throughout. It is to be noted too that the example given has another strategy embedded in it – a type of 'persuasive conspiracy' in which the salesman 'identifies' with the potential customer by using 'we'.

As a final example we will take a strategy which is equally beloved of

personal or psychological counsellors and sadistic employers. Depending on the motive for operating it, it can be aimed at letting one's interlocuter perceive the (ghastly) truth for himself or at enjoying the sight of a fellow human-being grovelling in the dirt. We might call it, for fun:

You're the one in hot-seat. It goes something like this:

Client: So from what I've told you, what do you think the chances for my marriage are?

Counsellor: Well, what do *you* think?

Client: Well, I don't really know . . . I suppose . . . I suppose . . .

Counsellor: [some appropriate noise, signifying encouragement and expectation, like 'eh-he']

Client: Well, things haven't been very good, but . . . but the one thing which gives me is some hope is . . .

Counsellor: Eh-he . . .

Alternatively:

Boss: I expect you know why I've called you in, don't you, Smith?

Employee: Well, ehm . . . yes, I suppose so, sir . . . it's my work, isn't it, sir?

Boss: Well, how do *you* see your work over the last few months, Smith? I mean, look, put yourself in *my* position, Smith, I mean, how would *you* see it?

Employee: Well, sir, I have to admit . . .

In this section we have discussed the projection of the personality and the verbal strategies used by native-speakers, often unconsciously, but by no means randomly, in the course of dialogue-transactions. If we have talked about these matters at greater length than the other components of communicative competence, it is not least because they are seldom specifically treated in foreign-language teaching; yet they lie at the very heart of transactional competence, they are the very essence of dialogue, and they consequently deserve much more thorough consideration than they have been given to date. For the moment, teachers will have to be guided largely by their intuitions in identifying and clarifying strategies for foreign learners, since much more research into their typology and nature remains to be done. One indication of the difficulty of the area is that strategies and their linguistic realizations seem to be related through the same sort of complex mappings as functions and their grammatical and lexical exponents. Just as one may 'ask the way' by saying: 'Could you please tell me the way . . .?' or 'Excuse me, I'm lost. I'm trying to find the station', so one can operate one and the same strategy through a variety of verbal options; and conversely, the same grammatical and lexical realization may, with appropriate variation of stress and intonation, serve to operate different strategies.

Performing competence

Most linguists' systems have a 'dustbin', or, in deference to Di Pietro, a 'trash can'. This final aspect of communicative competence resembles one to some extent, though it contains some important rubbish/garbage. Under the heading of 'performing competence' are to be included all those devices necessary to the initiation, maintenance and termination of a dialogue – openers, maintenance strategies and closures. Without these, there is no dialogue.

Openers

Openers may, of course, in some cases be paralinguistic rather than linguistic – the raising of one's hand in the classroom, the raising of a finger or the 'catching of the waiter's eye' in a restaurant. In some situations they can be most definitely linguistic – e.g. in the context of the British Army: 'Permission to speak, saaaah!'. Between intimates they may include such options as 'You know what I've been thinking?'; 'You'll never guess what I saw/heard today'; 'By the way, did you notice, when we were at the party . . .?'; 'Penny for your thoughts'. Where it comes to acquaintances, rather than intimate friends, in Britain, the old truism is true – the weather *is* a good opener, followed closely by cricket or football scores, or in June, Wimbledon. However, as Di Pietro points out (1976), other societies prefer other openers – the weather, for example, is a non-starter in countries in which it hardly changes. In socially or occupationally unequal relationships, attempts at dialogue by the inferior party will often need to be prefaced with something like 'Excuse me, but do you have a moment?'; 'I was wondering if I could speak to you about . . .?'. In some societies, if one wishes to discuss a specific matter seriously, it is not polite to get straight to the point. This is to some extent true in Britain; it is somewhat crass not to comment on the weather, ask about the family, mention some item of news, etc., before proceeding to business – indeed, people with no 'small talk' are instinctively felt to be unfriendly. Some situations may require an unusually oblique approach – the 'flying a kite' strategy – ostensibly going to talk to someone about subject A, but dropping hints that one really wants to talk about subject B, and hoping that one's interlocutor will 'catch on' and formally raise subject B. In sum, openers are likely to vary from society to society with regard to the linguistic options available, the subjects around which 'opening gambits' may revolve, and the roles and status of the interlocutors. The foreign learner therefore requires both linguistic and cultural knowledge in this area.

Maintenance strategies

These again seem to vary from society to society. Anglo-Saxons, so it would appear, can stand very few complete pauses in conversations. If

they are 'computing', they feel obliged to signal this, either through 'fillers' such as 'eh-eh-eh-eh' or by producing a whole series of anacoluthic false starts: 'Well, you see, I mean, eh-eh-eh-well, let's put it this way . . . suppose . . . eh-eh-eh . . .'. Equally, the listening party is obliged, however bored, to signal at least token attention by producing a continual stream of utterances and noises such as: 'Yes . . . I see . . . Really? . . . Wow! . . . No? . . . Go on! . . . Good heavens! . . . uhu . . . uhu . . . uhu . . . Yes . . . hmmm . . .'. By contrast, are the Finns the one people on earth to have dispensed with all maintenance strategies? Certainly the first experience of an Anglo-Saxon conversing with Finns can be rather unnerving; but in the reverse case, any Finn wishing to engage in dialogue with Anglo-Saxons must learn to fill those long stretches of silence with appropriate noises, or else be assumed to have gone to sleep standing up.

Closures

Closures may again be, at least in part, paralinguistic rather than linguistic – moving away, looking at one's watch, etc. However, only machines suddenly shut down without ceremony. Among human beings, protocol demands some strategy for withdrawal which, if amicable relations are to be preserved, betrays no disinterest or unfriendliness: 'Gosh! Look at the time! I'm sorry, I really must go . . .'; 'Well, I really must be off now, but I hope I'll see you tomorrow . . .'; 'Oh dear! time for bed, or I won't be able to get up for work in the morning . . .'. Admittedly, there are some would-be interlocutors with whom we would ideally wish not to become entangled in the first place, and here it may be appropriate to apply a 'culturally permissible' disengagement strategy simultaneously with engaging: 'Hello! Nice to see you! Sorry, but I'm in a bit of a hurry . . . I've got a dentist's appointment at four'. As Di Pietro indicates (1975), Spanish seems well equipped to deal with this sort of situation through the use of 'adiós', and though in English 'hello' and 'hi' are not in themselves an invitation to converse, they do not signal that one is not going to stop and chat, either.

As said, there can be no dialogue without openers, maintenance strategies and closures. Equally, there can be no transactional competence without knowledge of how to operate them in the context of a particular society.

Roles

Being communicatively competent also involves knowledge of how to play roles, and this knowledge cuts across and combines sociocultural competence and psychological competence, since it requires both familiarity with the behaviours associated with various roles in the target society and the ability to project the personality in a manner consistent with any particular role.

Di Pietro categorizes roles as follows³:

- (a) *maturational*: determined by relative age of the interlocutors and the protocols governing age-relationships;
- (b) *social/transactional*: e.g. student/teacher, salesman/customer, boss/employee;
- (c) *psychological*: e.g. friend/friend, friend/enemy, enemy/enemy, lover/lover;
- (d) *long-term versus short-term*: parent/child, husband/wife, captain/crew versus passenger/stewardess, patient/surgeon.

As Di Pietro points out (1981b), all roles come in pairs. The idea of customers, for example, becomes vacuous if there is no-one playing the role, in some form or other, of salesman; there could be no teachers if there were no students, etc. Playing a role therefore entails both knowledge of how to play it, and also expectations about the way in which the 'opposite' will be played. Refusal to play the 'opposite' can be thwarting and confusing for the initiator of an exchange, as well as good strategy in some circumstances. Di Pietro quotes (1976) the hilarious example of a would-be seducer who is confounded when the object of his attentions says: 'Oh, sorry, your knee got in the way', thereby signalling refusal of the role of seducee. The matter is further complicated by the fact that roles cut across the categories listed above. Thus a shop assistant will always play a social-transactional role, with most customers perhaps also a short-term role, but sometimes a maturational role as well, so that 'What would you like, son?' may well be the opener to a junior customer. Some role-combinations, of course, may be difficult to handle or even potentially explosive – e.g. boss/employee + lover/lover or teacher/student + lover/lover – and institutionalized authority often recognizes this and tries to preclude such combinations.

Though there are no doubt some universals where roles are concerned, this cannot always be assumed. The teacher/student role, for example, is fairly relaxed in Anglo-Saxon societies, but much more strictly circumscribed in others in which the teacher is a real authority figure. The man/woman role is again a potentially difficult one for the foreign learner. Being conversant with role-expectations in the target society is therefore an important aspect of transactional competence, and in some parts of the world ignorance in this area may even be literally dangerous – the policeman/member of the public role is a case in point (cf. Di Pietro, 1981b).

The present preoccupation with communicative language teaching has, of course, led to emphasis on 'role-play' in the classroom, but there has perhaps been a tendency to see all dialogue work as subsumable under this heading, whereas Di Pietro's analysis of communicative competence suggests that finer discriminations can be made, that the

ability to engage successfully in dialogue entails more than simply some notion of how to 'play roles', and that communicative competence can be exercised and built up with regard to a number of criteria of which ability to play roles is only one.

The structure of dialogue

As mentioned earlier, dialogues presented in language texts are typically used to demonstrate grammatical structure. If they are to be used to demonstrate and teach transactional competence, however, rather different aspects of their structural properties also need to be appreciated. These different aspects as identified by Di Pietro may be summarized as follows⁴:

1. Dialogues represent exchanges of information:

- (a) A: Where is the station?
B: Straight ahead.
- (b) A: How's the family?
B: Fine thanks. Yours?
A: Fine.

2. Dialogues are speech acts to the extent that they procure intended results:

- (a) A: Hey, where are you two going?
B: Actually, we're on our way to a party.
A: Oh, sorry, see you tomorrow.

B operates an elegant strategy with that most useful of English words, 'actually'. The underlying structure of B's utterance is something like: 'We're going to a party. You're not invited. Please don't impede us'. Putting it like this would, of course, be offensive, as there would be no attempt to spare A's ego, but A is sensitive to the cue, even to the point of apologizing for coming near to causing social embarrassment, and B thereby procures the intended result.

- (b) A: I'll have a dry vermouth with ice and lemon, please.
B: Coming right up.
- (c) A: I seem to have come without my wallet.
B: Don't worry. I'll pay.

3. Dialogues are, in Di Pietro's words (1978), 'conversational episodes in a continuing life drama'. The parties engaged in a dialogue are their own script-writers, and their contributions to dialogue will be influenced and coloured by their current preoccupations, what they are out to achieve at various times, their personalities and their characteristic ways of speaking. Many writers of fiction recognize this, and are adept at moulding dialogue round the characteristics of the participants.

4. Dialogues have both an external and an internal structure – an ‘inscape’ and an ‘outscape’. The writers of comic strips have always recognized this feature, and sometimes use the device of a circle or oval for a ‘speech bubble’ and a square or rectangle for a ‘thought bubble’. We might invent a dialogue as an example, with the inscape in brackets:

Situation: a student, A, wishes to discuss with his professor, B, the reasons for not submitting an essay on time:

A: (Ah, here he is now, going towards his office. I’ll catch him before he gets there)

Excuse me . . . Do you have two minutes, please?

B: (Look out! It’s that student A. If I get involved with him I won’t be able to finish preparing my next class) Uh . . . It’s a bit difficult right now. (Oh, let’s make some concession to friendliness) . . . Is it urgent?

A: (He’s trying to put me off till later, which will be a nuisance because I want to get away and spend the rest of the day sailing. Better say it is – anyway, that helps to show keenness). Yes, it is rather.

B: (Damn! Shouldn’t have asked that! Better deal with him and get it over with. Make it clear that I’m pressed) OK, come into my office for a moment, but I’ve got a class at eleven.

In this light, dialogue is only the outward manifestation of what goes on in people’s minds, and part of the process of socialization is learning to ‘filter’ what really goes on in our minds and convert it, before we verbalize it, into a form which is socially acceptable and enhances our objectives. ‘Total honesty’ may seem to represent a morally desirable principle for some people, but apart from being chimerical, it is hardly the best policy for achieving desired results, and certainly not the best way to win friends and influence people. Much of the art of dialogue is to convey the inscape through the outscape in the way which does the least social harm – and people good at this are usually thought of as tactful.

5. Dialogues are often of a ‘collapsed nature’ – elliptical – and to the outsider to the culture or the situation they are by this token often potentially opaque:

(a) A: What flavour is ‘rum raisin’?

B: We don’t have any today.

(b) A: What’s the latest score?

B: Eighty-three for four, I think.

(c) A: He says he’s got to take the money for his school trip tomorrow.

B: He might have told us before. I haven’t got much cash.

All these exchanges depend, of course, on shared knowledge and on correctly judging the extent of the knowledge shared. Example (a) is

conceivable as taking place between two strangers, one a potential customer and the other a shopkeeper or ice-cream salesman, in any country in which ice-cream of different flavours is available; (b) could only take place in Britain, Australia or another cricketing country; and (c) seems best interpreted within a family situation in which there is one son of school age. This last example is the most esoteric, and one which even the native speaker might not interpret so easily out of context. The other two, however, are totally interpretable in a general cultural context, by those who know that culture. Because the foreign learner does not usually know the culture so well, the examples are hardly candidates, in this form, for the average language text, and to some extent there is a vicious circle here. Learning to take for granted what the native speaker takes for granted is perhaps one of the hardest and most final of accomplishments; but, of course, it requires constant work.

6. Dialogues exhibit 'framing':

- (a) A: Want to come to a party?
 B: Can I bring a friend?
 A: Male or female?
 B: Female.
 A: Sure.
 B: OK.
- (b) A: Where did you get this wine from?
 B: You like it?
 A: I expect it was expensive.
 B: Not at all!
 A: Yes, it's good.
 B: Well, it was only from the supermarket on the corner.

While examples like this highlight the fact that information is often held in abeyance in dialogue, and that consequently, in complex dialogues, people often forget the reason for talking in the first place, real-life dialogues can be very much 'messier' – perhaps more like this:

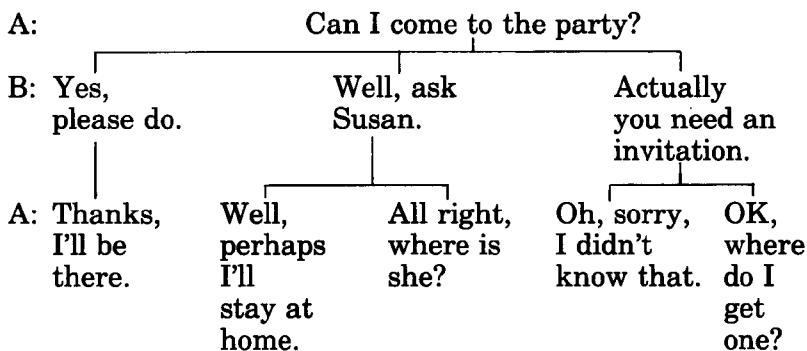
- A: Excuse me. Have you got two minutes, please?
 B: Eh . . . What was it about?
 A: My essay.
 B: Which one?
 A: The one on Bismarck's foreign policy.
 B: The one I set last week?
 A: Yes.
 B: Oh, having trouble with it?
 A: Well, I just wanted to check on the reading.
 B: I thought I suggested some in class yesterday?
 A: Yes, but I was ill yesterday.
 B: Ah, I see. All right, come in for a moment.

At all events, the framings within real-life dialogues are much more complex than those of the stereotypical language-text dialogue. Interestingly enough, a good example of this stereotype occurs in a book on communicative language teaching (Littlewood, 1981: 48):

Edith: [Where's Elizabeth these days? I haven't seen her for ages.
 Molly: [Elizabeth? She's left school.
 Edith: [Not intelligent enough, eh?
 Molly: [Rubbish! She's as intelligent as you and me.
 Edith: [It serves her right. She never did her homework, did she? I always do mine.
 Molly: [You needn't boast. Your mother keeps you at it. And your father helps you with maths.
 Edith: [What's that got to do with it?

7. Each point of interchange in a dialogue is potentially an option or 'branching' point, such that the interlocutor whose turn it is to speak can choose between a number of alternative continuations or strategies:

(a)



In this dialogue we are supposing B has three options when responding to A's request: to be positive and welcoming; to be indecisive; to be offputting. There is no problem where the first option is taken: B is satisfied, and the transaction is complete. In the indecisive case, what happens next will depend largely on B's 'ego strength'. If it is low there may well be withdrawal, covered by a face-saving device – 'Well, perhaps I'll stay at home' = 'I'm not that interested anyway'. This outcome probably suits A, who 'wins' without being overtly hostile or offensive. If B is more 'pushy', however, there is a good strategy, which is a variant of bluff-calling. In the case where A's reply is clearly offputting, it needs quite a strong personality to carry through the counter-strategy, but if even A does clearly intend to put B off, a 'pushy' B can still pretend to ignore this implication and again operate a bluff-calling strategy. A is now in a difficult position if still hoping to put B

off, since further attempts at discouragement may lead to more open hostility, and unless A is prepared to 'go the whole hog', the scales are now tipped against him:

(b)

B: OK. Where do I get one?	
A: I don't know really.	Well, I don't think you will, actually.
B: Where did you get yours?	Oh, why?
A: From Susan.	Well . . .
	B: Is it your party?
	A: Not actually, but . . .
	B: Whose, then?
	A: Susan's.
B:	Susan Brown?
A:	Yes.
B:	Oh, I know her very well. I'll pop over and see her.

For anyone interested in transactional competence this aspect of the structure of dialogue is a most important one, and if we follow it up by looking at dialogues much as we might look at a wiring diagram, then we can begin to see possibilities for examining the 'wiring' of dialogues from the point of view of where the internal 'switching' is successful, and where things have gone wrong and 'fuses' have blown – perhaps not such a bad metaphor, since, if we know we have used a disastrously wrong strategy in a delicate transaction, we tend to say that we have 'blown it'. It is not too difficult to see where Mr Mann 'blows it' in the following example:

(c) **Situation:** Tommy Mann has to go to the dentist's later in the day to have a tooth extracted for the first time. He is extremely nervous, and his mother is hoping she can get him there.

- Tommy: Mummy, I don't want to go to the dentist's today. I don't want to have my tooth out.
- Mrs Mann: Don't worry, dear. It'll be all over before you know it.
- Mr Mann: No, nothing to worry about, old chap. You won't feel anything at all.
- Tommy: But it hurts to have a tooth out. Patrick told me.
- Mrs Mann: I don't know why he should say that. It doesn't hurt at all. You know he's always telling stories. Now why don't you go and play for a while?
- Mr Mann: Of course it doesn't hurt. The dentist'll give you a little injection, and . . .
- Tommy: Injection?
- Mr Mann: Yes, just to stop you feeling anything.
- Tommy: He's not going to stick a needle in me, is he?
- Mrs Mann: (desperately trying to throw murderous glances at Mr Mann) Now I thought you were going to play . . .
- Mr Mann: Oh, come on, old chap, it's nothing at all. I've had injections dozens of times. Just a bit of a jab, and then . . .
- Tommy: No, I'm not going. I'm not going to let him stick a needle in me . . .

In this section we have seen that among the characteristics of dialogues are that they represent exchanges of information, that they are speech acts wherever intentions are realized through them, that they are episodes in a continuing life-drama, that they have an inscape as well as an outscape, that they are often elliptical, that the exchanges within them may stretch over many utterances while information is held in abeyance, and that they allow options for the application of alternative strategies. No doubt they possess other important characteristics which should ideally also be taken into account, but, for the moment, even to take into account those enumerated here would considerably enrich the basis for teaching transactional competence.

Revitalizing the dialogue: some possible exercises

In the light of the foregoing discussion some proposals can now be made for revitalizing the dialogue as a pedagogical device which may be employed in the teaching of transactional competence.

Plainly, any one dialogue will involve more than one parameter of communicative competence at one and the same time, and any one dialogue will exhibit more than one characteristic feature of the structure of dialogue at one and the same time. The ideal to aim at is therefore the stage at which the student possesses and can integrate all the skills necessary to engaging in and maintaining dialogue in a manner appropriate within a given cultural context. However, this does not mean that it is not possible to concentrate on individual variables

during certain phases of teaching, taking a 'discrete point' approach, and during other phases to practise 'getting it all together', taking a more 'integrated approach'. Indeed, a good teaching sequence would seem to be:

- (1) Initial presentation of each point discretely – e.g. aspects of sociocultural competence – followed by exercises focusing on this point.
- (2) Practice in which the 'discrete points' covered to date are integrated.
- (3) Reversion to focusing on 'discrete points' in further practice and for remedial purposes, as weaknesses emerge.

Such a sequence should, however, be regarded as cyclic – as more 'discrete points' are covered, so 'integrated practice' will become more demanding, and the teacher more critical. It should also be noted that advocating a 'discrete point' approach does *not* mean presentation out of context, for example, by giving lists of phrases such as 'Excuse me', 'Could you please tell me . . .', 'I wonder if I might . . .' to be rote-learned. The view taken here is that presentation should always be in, or related to, a context – e.g. 'Let's look at some ways in which we might get people to give us information. In the following exchange, A has asked B for directions to the museum:

A:

B: Yes. Go straight ahead as far as the traffic lights, then turn left. The museum's right in front of you.

A: Thanks.

What did A actually say to B to obtain this information?

Where teaching techniques are concerned it may, of course, be useful to read through sample dialogues with students before they themselves begin to 'produce', but the idea is that they should proceed to production of their own dialogues as quickly as possible and gain the maximum amount of practice in handling the variables involved. When they come to the production stage they might first 'script' their dialogues, working individually, in pairs, or in groups, and obtaining feedback on the script from the teacher; but since dialogue in the sense in which it is discussed here is a feature of the spoken language, the final aspect of production should always be 'live performance' in front of teacher and class, with students taking it in turn to play the parts scripted by themselves and their classmates.

We will first take some examples of a 'discrete point' approach, referring back to areas discussed under 'Communicative competence' and 'The structure of dialogue', and suggest some exercise types which would seem to be appropriate in relation to each of these areas. We will

then consider a more 'integrated approach' in which transactional competence is fully exercised. The examples given relate to the teaching of (British) English, and adjustments would obviously need to be made for the teaching of other languages (and other varieties of English). However, there is no reason to suppose that the general approach advocated should not be universally applicable.

Laying the foundations

Formal competence

Since *grammatical competence* has for long been the central concern of language teaching, and there is no shortage of ideas on how to teach it, we will pass directly to *idiomatic competence*, which has arguably received far less attention, especially where the colloquial spoken language is concerned.

Areas to work on: (1) sensitivity to register; (2) learning and appropriate use of lexis and grammar; (3) distinctive features of the spoken language (e.g. contracted forms).

Some possible exercises:

(a) Focus on register

Write a letter to your bank manager asking for a loan of £100. Phrases you might find useful:

I write to ask whether you would consider advancing me a loan of £100

...

The reason I am making this request is that . . .

I would anticipate no difficulty in repaying the loan within . . . months . . . , etc.

Then construct a dialogue in which you make the same request of a close friend, trying to imagine what your friend would say and ask. Phrases you might find useful:

I'd like to ask you a favour, but please feel you can say 'no' if you have to

...

I've got myself into a bit of a financial mess recently . . .

I need something like £100 . . .

I'd be able to pay you back by . . . etc.

In the early hours of the morning you were walking home from a late party when you saw flames leaping from the roof of a large department store. No-one else was about, so you called the fire brigade. Now the local radio station wants you to give a brief account of the incident to its listeners. Prepare a 'script' of the account you will give. Phrases you might find useful:

I was walking along the High Street at about one o'clock this morning when . . .

Huge flames were leaping from the roof . . .

There was no-one else about . . .

I ran to the nearest phone box, dialled 999 and asked for the fire brigade . . ., etc.

Then construct a dialogue in which you recount the same event to a friend. Phrases you might find useful:

Guess what I saw when I was coming home late last night . . .

I just happened to look up and these huge flames were literally leaping up into the sky . . .

So I thought 'better call the fire brigade', and I rushed over to the phone-box . . .

Anyway, then I heard the fire brigade coming . . ., etc.

(b) Focus on lexis and grammar

Look at the following rather 'dull' dialogue. Maybe we could believe that it takes place between two electioneers or two ageing academics – but can we convert it into a dialogue between two people who know each other well, who are of equal status, and who speak everyday colloquial English with each other? Below the dialogue is a list of phrases which you might use in place of some of those in the 'dull' version.

A: Hello.

B: Hello.

A: I did not see you at the concert last night.

B: No, I have not been feeling altogether well during the last few days. I believe I am suffering from an attack of hay fever.

A: I am sorry to hear that. It is, however, extremely prevalent.

B: Anyway, was it good?

A: Ah, yes, very good, especially the harpsichord – that was the reason for which I went, in effect.

B: By the way, have you heard that Bill obtained the job for which he applied?

A: That one in Brussels?

B: Yes.

A: He will certainly be pleased.

B: Extraordinarily delighted.

A: So when do he and Mary depart?

B: Not till September.

A: And Mary is also pleased?

B: Oh, yes, it has long been her desire to go abroad.

A: Good – well, I must depart now. I have many things to do. I look forward to seeing you again soon.

B: Yes, goodbye for the present.

lots to do
bye for now
and Mary's pleased too?
that's what I went for, really
bet he's pleased
absolutely over the moon
got
when are he and Mary off?
lot of it about, though
must be off
touch of hay fever, I think
see you soon
not feeling up to much
she's been waiting to . . . for a long time

What one would be working towards here, then, would be a replacement version of the stilted exchange above, along the following lines:

- A: Didn't see you at the concert last night.
B: No, haven't been feeling up to much these last few days. Touch of hay fever, I think.
A: Sorry to hear that. Lot of it about, though.
B: Anyway, was it good?
A: Oh, yes, very good, especially the harpsichord – that's what I went for, really.
B: By the way, have you heard that Bill got the job he was going for?
A: That one in Brussels?
B: Yes.
A: Bet he's pleased.
B: Absolutely over the moon.
A: So when're he and Mary off?
B: Not till September.
A: And Mary's pleased too?
B: Oh, yes, she's been wanting to go abroad for a long time.
A: Good – well, must be off now. Lots to do. See you soon.
B: Yes, bye for now.

Of course, there are contexts and registers in which all the phrases in the original version are entirely appropriate, and part of the exercise might be to elicit from students ideas about which contexts and which registers would justify them, and why the present one is unlikely to. It should be said, of course, that in an exercise such as this there will never be *one* right answer or version – what one is aiming at is a *plausible* version, which sounds 'authentic' and not as though it has been lifted out of the nearest traditional English text. Naturally, what is considered 'authentic' will depend on the variety of the language

being taught – the example given just happens to typify British English, but this is not meant to be a prescription!

(c) Focus on contracted forms and ellipsis

Look at the following dialogue. It is ‘unnatural’ because A and B are speaking as they would write to someone they don’t know very well. Can we make them speak as people really do by replacing the full forms with contracted forms and by missing out some items which people normally omit in speech? Be careful, there may be some traps!

A: Hello.

B: Hello.

A: Do you know what I have just heard?

B: No. What have you just heard?

A: Well, I have just heard that I am going to represent the company at the conference in the United States.

B: That is really great news. I congratulate you.

A: Yes, I am very pleased, especially as I have never been to Chicago before. I am really looking forward to it. Have you ever been to Chicago?

B: Yes, I have. I went there two years ago . . . , etc.

Here, what one will be looking for is a re-worked version more like:

A: Hello.

B: Hello.

A: (D’you) know what I’ve just heard?

B: No?

A: Well, I’ve just heard I’m going to represent the company at the conference in the United States.

B: That’s really great news! Congratulations!

A: Yes, I’m very pleased, specially as I’ve never been to Chicago before. (Have) you ever been to Chicago?

B: Yes, I have. (I went there) two years ago . . . , etc.

Sociocultural competence

In essence, the knowledge in question in this area is situation-specific: what do we say on meeting people at various times of the day? How do we take leave of them? How do we introduce ourselves and others? How do we apologise – e.g. for breaking/losing something belonging to someone else; for upsetting someone with an ill-judged remark; for unintentional body-contact? How do we get people to move out of the way? How do we ask for things in a shop? How do we work round to making a date with someone? How do we express condolences, sympathy? How do we make and accept compliments?

This area can sometimes be beset with difficulties even for the native speaker and, though there has been a movement towards greater informality in recent years, at least in the Western world, it is not so long since the native-speaker who wanted to be somebody in society might have consulted a book on etiquette with regard to various points. The general rule nowadays for those not wishing to be noted for egregious social behaviour seems to be: be polite, be considerate, be sincere, and precise formulae do not matter too much. Nevertheless, the foreign learner needs some formulae as a starting point, not usually possessing the native-speaker's ability for 'ad hoc creativity' or for extricating himself from trouble if he does make a 'faux pas'. Nevertheless, there do happen to exist a whole series of clichés which the foreign learner can use in most situations arising in the course of everyday life. Knowing what socially significant situations exist in the context of the target society is, of course, also something which the foreign student may have to learn. What seems to be entirely appropriate here, then, is an unashamedly situational approach:

(a) Focus on eliciting information

You are lost in a strange city. You need to find the railway station, and the only way to do this is to stop people in the street and ask the way. Construct a short dialogue in which you successfully obtain the information you need.

(b) Focus on introductions

You are invited to a party at the house of a business contact. When you arrive, your host says, 'Excuse me while I attend to a few things in the kitchen. You'll find everyone else in the garden.' There are no familiar faces among the other guests, so you decide you'd better introduce yourself to some of them. Construct a dialogue in which you go up to a group of the other guests and introduce yourself.

(c) Focus on disengagement

On your way to an important appointment for which you must arrive on time, you meet someone you know who wants to stop and chat. Construct a dialogue which shows how you deal with this situation.

Psychological competence

In this area we are concerned with the presentation of the self, the playing of roles and the use of strategies to procure the outcomes we desire in verbal exchanges.

(a) Focus on presentation of the self

You have just been introduced to the other guests at a dinner party. They are interested in knowing something about you. Construct a dialogue illustrating some of the questions they ask and how you reply to them.

Imagine you are B in the dialogue which starts off below. In the course of discussion on [topic to be selected with regard to local conditions etc] A has asked you for your opinion. You know that it will not be shared by everyone else present. How do you give it frankly, but without causing unnecessary offence?

A: Maybe you could tell us *your* opinion about this matter?

B: . . .

C: And why do you think that?

B: . . .

D: So what would be your solution?

B: . . .

A: Yes, I see your point of view. It isn't really mine, but I'll have to think about it.

Look at the dialogue below. Mr Smith has recently bought an expensive camera from a local photographic shop. When he gets it home he finds that the internal light meter does not work, so he takes it back to the shop in the hope of having it exchanged for another one:

Salesman: Good afternoon, sir.

Mr Smith: Good afternoon.

Salesman: Yes, sir? How can I help you?

Mr Smith: It's about this camera I bought here this morning. When I got it home, I found that the light meter wasn't working.

Salesman: Not working? May I see? . . . Yes, that's quite right, it's not working any more. Uhm . . . I'll just try changing the batteries . . . No, it still isn't working.

Mr Smith: Well, what can be done?

Salesman: Well, it was perfectly all right when it left the shop, sir.

Mr Smith: Yes, but it's no good to me like that. I was hoping you would exchange it.

Salesman: Exchange it, sir? Oh, I'm afraid I can't do that. I reckon you must have dropped the camera, sir.

Mr Smith: Dropped it? Oh, no, I haven't done anything like that.

Salesman: Yes, but you do see my point of view, don't you? I mean, anyone could come in here after buying a camera, go away and drop it, and come back and ask for a new one. I mean, I'm not saying that you did that, sir, in fact I'm sure you didn't, but, I mean, we have to have a policy. I

mean, there are an awful lot of careless people about who buy cameras, and a lot of people who decide five minutes later that they didn't really want that model or shouldn't really have spent the money, so if we just took goods back, well, we wouldn't be in business, would we, sir?

Mr Smith: No, I see, but . . .

Salesman: Here you are, sir, here's the name and address of the manufacturers. Try them.

Mr Smith: But . . . but . . . they're in Japan!

Salesman: Of course, I can take the camera in for repair. Would be quicker. A couple of weeks.

Mr Smith: Oh, dear . . . that's the only thing you can do?

Salesman: 'Fraid so, sir . . . So if you'd like to leave me a deposit . . .

Mr Smith: I suppose so . . .

Now imagine you are Mr Smith, only you are rather more assertive and aware of your rights than the Mr Smith here. Re-script the dialogue, showing how you would make it clear to the salesman, without raising your voice or being abusive, that he can't trample all over you.

(b) Focus on strategic interaction

For the purpose of practising the recognition and handling of strategic interaction, Di Pietro himself proposes an exercise entitled the 'dialogue with options' (1981c), which is based on the idea discussed under 'The structure of dialogue' that each point of interchange in a dialogue is potentially an option or 'branching' point at which the interlocuter about to speak may choose between different continuations or strategies, so that, in theory, any particular dialogue may have a number of different outcomes, once initiated. The choices made will of course be influenced by what one wishes to achieve through any verbal transaction, and what approach is being taken by one's partner or partners in the transaction. The greater the 'gap' to be bridged, the more crucial the judicious application of strategy will become. The 'winner' will then be the one who blocks further 'moves' by the other partner or partners, or, conversely, the 'loser' will be the one whose capacity to meet strategy with strategy runs out first.

The 'dialogue with options' can be built around any situation in which different opinions, stances or courses of action are likely to emerge. The teacher can provide the class with a 'stem' such as the following:

A student has taken accommodation for a year in campus housing. Unfortunately his neighbour in the next room, whom he does not know very well, has the habit of playing rock music very loudly late at night, and after only a few days he decides he cannot put up

with this any longer. In any case, it is against regulations to play music loudly after 11 p.m. He resolves to go to the neighbour to ask him, as far as possible politely, to keep the music quiet after 11. Let's imagine the neighbour might initially react to the request in any of three different ways, and work out the different lines along which the dialogue might develop from there:

A: Hello, I'm from next door.

B: Hello, yes, I know.

A: Sorry to bother you, but I've to come to ask if you would play your music more quietly after 11 o'clock. I just can't get to sleep when it's so loud.

B: Oh, sorry
I didn't
realize
you went
to bed at
that time.

Oh, do you always
go to bed that
early?

Oh, well, you see,
my friends don't
usually come round
till later in the
evening.

Part of the exercise will, of course, be to deduce from the opening exchange what sort of personalities the interlocutors possess, and how their personalities are likely to influence the way they choose to play things. To make the exercise more realistic, different individuals or groups might represent the different interlocutors in each developing strand of the dialogue, each 'side' considering how to interpret the foregoing response of the other, and the possibilities for replying to it. For example, is B's response: 'Oh, do you always go to bed that early?' meant as a put-down? If it seems to be, is there a counter to it? Again, at what point should one bring in the big guns and say: 'Actually, it's against regulations anyway?', and what must one be prepared for, both within the context of the dialogue and, more generally, in terms of future relations, if one does fire a broadside like this?

Another type of exercise which suggests itself in connection with strategic interaction is a variant of the dialogue-with-gaps which we might call 'How did you survive this one?'. The idea is to present the student with a series of partial dialogues relating to socially embarrassing or otherwise difficult situations, the student being required to supply a few lines of dialogue plausible, in strategic terms, as a link between the initiating utterance and the outcome, e.g.:

You have made an unguarded remark to another guest at a dinner party, not realizing your hostess was within earshot. Now you find you have to placate your hostess:

Hostess: I heard you saying to Mr Brown that you can't stand

curry. You should have said – I'd have found you something else.

You:

Hostess: Oh, I see, I misunderstood. I'm glad you did enjoy it.

Someone renowned for borrowing money and hardly ever repaying it approaches you for a loan. Without being too brusque, you make it plain that your refusal is a firm one:

A: I was wondering if there was any chance that you could lend me about £10 till next week? I'd be very grateful – somehow or other I've managed to overspend a little this month.

You:

A: I see. OK. I'll just have to try someone else, then.

Someone you like, but whose enthusiasm for opera you do not share, has a spare ticket for a performance, and tries to press you into going:

A: I know you think you don't like opera, but I'm sure this one would make you change your mind. You simply must come with me tonight. You'll really enjoy it.

You:

A: Oh, too bad! Well, it'll just have to be another time, then.

The foregoing represent only a few examples of the possibilities for dialogue work aimed at exercising various aspects of transactional competence, but hopefully they will have conveyed some of the potential offered by the dialogue as a means of cultivating aspects of the fluent, appropriate and effective use of spoken language which will help the foreign learner to 'survive' in everyday life in the target society, and also potentially to integrate into the target society to whatever extent is desired. As said earlier, any one dialogue will involve more than one parameter of communicative competence at one and the same time, so that it is never really possible to exercise 'just' idiomatic or 'just' sociocultural or 'just' psychological competence within the context of dialogue; however, the examples given should suggest how it may be possible at least to *focus* on different and discrete aspects of competence and of dialogue structure whenever appropriate, once one is assisted by a theoretical framework such as Di Pietro's which permits identification of these different and discrete aspects.

Getting it together

Once students are aware of, and have had some practice in handling, the major variables which influence the development of dialogue in given situations within a particular cultural context, then they should be ready for the pedagogical device called by Di Pietro the 'open-ended scenario', an exercise which requires the integration and application

of all the skills of discourse relevant to verbal transactions. This exercise may be described as a form of role-play, but it is not constrained, like the more traditional types of role-play, by the learning of pre-scripted 'parts' and by a more or less predetermined outcome. Nor is its major objective simply the practice of grammar and idiom, or the development of listening and speaking skills in some mechanistic sense; rather, among its objectives, to paraphrase Di Pietro (1981a), are: (1) to allow the participants to play 'themselves' (even if they are also assuming, for the purposes of a particular scenario, roles they do not normally play) in accordance with the idea, alluded to under 'The structure of dialogue', that dialogues are 'conversational episodes in a continuing life drama' and that the way in which people speak and what they say will be influenced by their own personalities, interests and pre-occupations; (2) to afford practice in recognition and use of verbal strategies; (3) to allow learners opportunities to develop, and gauge the extent of, shared information within the context of a particular scenario, and to bear in mind the consequences for discourse – a point which comes close to Brumfit's notion (1981) about learning how to 'negotiate meaning'. Most importantly, perhaps, learners '... must make their utterances express speaker-intentions, just as they do in real conversations' and, where the 'plot' of the scenario is concerned, must 'make their own judgments, come to their own decisions, and take the consequences of those decisions'.

Di Pietro recommends that 'the scenario should unfold in diverse stages' with 'The information known by the participants [being] metered out in segments rather than given all at once . . . to emulate those occasions which often occur in real life whereby people are called upon to respond at different intervals to newly introduced facts and events' (Di Pietro, 1981a). Each phase in the scenario – marked by the introduction of new information or events – is preceded by a rehearsal during which learners must consider their answers to a number of *thematic questions* raised by the scenario – 'What are the desired outcomes of each communicational problem? What strategies should be enacted in order to work towards these outcomes?' (Di Pietro, 1981a). Of course, the teacher is available for consultation on all relevant points, including grammar, idiom, sociocultural protocols and the ways in which verbal strategies are typically encoded. It should also be noted that Di Pietro recommends that learners be divided into groups, each group developing one role before electing one of its members to perform it. If this recommendation is followed, then undoubtedly the discussion within each group, and the discussion between the group and the teacher, will be one of the most enriching and stimulating aspects of the exercise.

Compared with the more traditional type of role-play, the open-ended scenario tends to be based on situations of somewhat greater com-

plexity. One of the more straightforward examples given by Di Pietro is the following:

Phase 1: A male invites a female to dinner at a restaurant. The female may either accept the invitation or reject it. The interactions are to develop a conversation in either case.

Phase 2: If the female accepts, the two go to the restaurant, where they encounter another male who appears to be the boyfriend of the female. Develop a conversation among the three individuals.

If the female rejects the invitation, the male asks another female, who accepts. Then they go to the restaurant, where they encounter the first female seated at a table having dinner with another male. Develop a conversation with the four persons.

(Di Pietro 1981a, abbreviated)

By the time the scenario reaches the enactment stage, many errors and other difficulties arising during rehearsal should have been ironed out. Nevertheless, it would seem sensible that the teacher and the learners not involved in the final enactment should all listen critically to the performance and be prepared to give feedback on it. Some of the headings under which Di Pietro discusses communicative competence and the structure of dialogue even suggest a convenient checklist which the teacher might keep at hand in respect of each scenario, or even each participant:

Grammar

Idiom

Sociocultural points

Presentation of the self

Strategic aspects

Roles

Shared knowledge

Notes could be made against each of these major categories as a performance proceeded, with the idea not only of giving feedback from a strict linguistic viewpoint, but also of trying to analyse which of each party's 'moves' were good and which less good, bearing in mind what the participants were setting out to achieve.

The open-ended scenario has some similarities with problem-solving simulation games, since it does indeed possess a problem-solving dimension, but whereas the outcome in the simulation game is often directly affected by 'external events' and the participants' ability to deal with them, an activity in which the use of language can sometimes be almost peripheral, the outcome of the open-ended scenario can be directly affected by the verbal strategies used by those engaged in it.

Obviously, if it is to be successful, it requires of the participants very much more than a rudimentary knowledge of the target language and of the culture in which it is embedded. It is, then, a taxing exercise for the advanced student, but one which is eminently suitable for the final stages of the acquisition of transactional competence in which the learner is beginning to 'get it together'.

Summary

In this final section of the paper we have looked at a number of ways in which the dialogue might be used as a pedagogic device aimed at improving communicative competence and transactional effectiveness. As said at the beginning of the paper, there is nothing new about the dialogue in itself as a language-teaching tool. What will perhaps be new, however, is the attempt to reveal the 'mechanics' of dialogue and the constituents of the competence necessary to those engaging in it for a purpose. The attempt presented here is of course largely a summary of the work of Robert Di Pietro, which should ideally be read in detail, not least because it sets out to achieve the difficult task of combining theory with practice in a directly applicable manner. It advances the theory of communicative competence, but at the same time enriches the practice of communicative teaching. Most of all, perhaps, it argues the case for revitalizing the dialogue as a pedagogic tool, using this, as Erasmus did, to teach the art of discourse rather than simply to display the properties of text.

A last word: The reaction of some who read this paper may be that language teachers are not in the business of behaviour therapy; that it is up to the learner to decide how he wishes to behave in the target society, which protocols he wishes to observe and which he does not, etc. Nothing said here is in fact meant to suggest that the learner should not at all times be himself, and, indeed, Di Pietro's view of dialogues as episodes in a continuing life drama would encourage the learner's attempts to project himself through the language he uses and what he talks about. To this extent it is agreed that language teachers are not in the business of behaviour therapy; but it is one thing to encourage the learner to say anything he wishes whenever he wishes without making him aware of the likely transactional consequences of his utterances, and another to make him perfectly aware of the probable consequences of various aspects of his verbal behaviour but, in the final analysis, to leave it to him to decide how he wishes to present himself and how he wishes to attempt to achieve the outcomes he desires from dialogue transactions.

Acknowledgement

I am grateful to Bob Di Pietro for furnishing me with a complete set of

his papers relating to the matters discussed here. I hope my own attempt to explore his ideas does not do him any injustice.

Notes

1. This is an expanded version of a paper first presented at the Annual Meeting of the British Association for Applied Linguistics, University of Sussex, September 1981.
2. The account of Di Pietro's analytical framework as described in this section and under 'The structure of dialogue' is mainly based on notes made during lectures given by Di Pietro at Škofia Loka, Slovenia, Yugoslavia, in January 1980. The framework has not yet been published by Di Pietro in this form.
3. In recent publications (1981b & c) Di Pietro has somewhat modified the description of roles given here, e.g. he now characterises short-term and long-term roles as '+ episodic' and '- episodic', and has introduced further discriminations in role-types. Nevertheless the description quoted here encapsulates the essentials of the system.
4. In this section, the examples labelled 'a' are either quoted directly or adapted from Di Pietro.

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'A Rose is a Rose', or is it?: can communicative competence be taught?

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Communicative

In recent years there has been much discussion and debate about communicative approaches to syllabus design, materials writing and classroom activity. Such approaches are aimed at developing the 'communicative' as opposed to the purely 'linguistic' competence of learners. In this first section I shall try to explain the terms 'communicative competence' and 'communicative teaching', to explore what communicative teaching implies in terms of classroom activities, methods and materials, to compare it with approaches currently in widespread use, and to examine the possible advantages and disadvantages of adopting such an approach.

What is communicative competence? There is now fairly broad agreement that communicative competence is made up of four major strands: grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence and strategic competence. (Canale and Swain, 1980).

- (1) It is clear that what is meant by grammatical competence is the mastery of the language code. 'Such competence focuses directly on the knowledge and skill required to understand and express accurately the literal meaning of utterances,' (Canale, 1983). It is this type of competence which much classroom teaching seeks to promote.
- (2) Sociolinguistic competence involves the ability to produce and understand utterances which are appropriate in terms of the context in which they are uttered. This necessarily involves a sensitivity to factors such as status, role, attitude, purpose, degree of formality, social convention and so on. Here are three instances of inappropriate though perfectly well-formed utterances:
 - 'Sit *down* please!' (Spoken to a distinguished guest – but with the intonation pattern reserved for commands.)
 - 'How old are you?' (Asked of a middle-aged foreign professor one is meeting for the first time.)
 - 'Why has your face gone red?' (Asked of someone who has just been embarrassed by an insensitive personal question.)

Many of the communication failures experienced by learners of a foreign language have their origin in a lack of sociolinguistic competence.

- (3) Discourse competence concerns the ability to combine meanings with unified and acceptable spoken or written texts in different genres. (Genre covers the type of text involved: narrative, argumentative, scientific report, newspaper articles, news broadcast, casual conversation, etc.)

At first sight this might seem to be included under grammatical or sociolinguistic competence; but Widdowson's example (Widdowson, 1978) should illustrate the difference:

Speaker A: What did the rain do?

Speaker B: The crops were destroyed by the rain.

The reply is grammatically and sociolinguistically acceptable, but in discourse terms it simply 'doesn't fit'. ('It destroyed the crops' obviously would fit).

Failures in discourse competence have recently been interestingly and pertinently analysed in the compositions of Chinese undergraduate students. (Guo Jian Sheng, 1983).

- (4) Strategic competence relates to the verbal and non-verbal strategies which learners may need to use either to compensate for breakdowns in communication or to enhance the effectiveness of communication. Under the former, one thinks of the use of hesitation fillers such as 'um', 'you know', etc. Paraphrase also plays a major role (e.g. if one does not know the word for 'book mark', it can be referred to as 'the thing you put in a book to keep your place'). So also do catch-all words such as 'thingummy', 'whatsitsname', etc. (Such features are extensively discussed in Faerch and Kasper, 1983).

Given that few if any learners of a foreign language ever learn it perfectly, the importance of these 'repair strategies' should be self-evident.

Strategic competence also refers to the intuitive feel by participants for the kind of communicative event they are engaged in and the direction it is moving in. This allows them to predict moves in advance and to nudge the discourse in the desired direction.

What are the characteristics of communicative approaches? Minimally they will have the following characteristics:

- (1) concentration on use and appropriacy rather than simply on language form. (ie meaning as well as grammar);
- (2) a tendency to favour fluency-focused rather than simply accuracy-focused activities (Maley, 1982):
- (3) an attention to communication tasks to be achieved *through* the language rather than simply exercises *on* the language;
- (4) an emphasis on student initiative and interaction, rather than simply on teacher-centred direction;

- (5) a sensitivity to learners' differences rather than a 'lockstep' approach (in which all students proceed through the same materials at the same pace);
- (6) an awareness of variation in language use rather than simply attention to *the* language (i.e. recognition that there is not *one* English but many Englishes) (Trudgill and Hannah, 1983).

What are the implications for teaching? If the factors in the previous section above are to be implemented, there are certain inevitable consequences for the organization and management of the teaching/learning process.

- (1) Teachers' roles will change. They can no longer be regarded as possessing sacrosanct knowledge, which they dispense in daily doses to their docile flock. Instead they will need to set up tasks and activities in which the learners play the major overt role. It is then their job to monitor these activities and to modify and adjust them as time goes by. This implies a much less spectacular, and at the same time much less secure, position.
- (2) The learners' roles will change correspondingly. They will no longer find it is enough to follow the lesson passively, but will need to involve themselves as real people in the activities they are asked to undertake both inside and outside the classroom. This gives them at one and the same time more freedom – and more responsibility.
- (3) The teaching materials will need to reflect the wide range of uses of the language. Almost inevitably there will be a preponderance of authentic over simplified materials.
- (4) The techniques applied to these materials will be *task-oriented* rather than exercise-centred. It will be common to find students listening to or reading for information which they then discuss before formulating decisions or solutions in spoken or written form. In other words, the skills will be integrated rather than isolated. It will be rare to find students given a listening or reading text in isolation and asked to answer questions on it for no apparent reason.
- (5) The classroom procedures adopted will favour *interaction* among students. This will have implications for the layout of the classroom (straight rows of chairs and desks are good for order but bad for communication). There will be an emphasis on work in pairs and small groups. Much work may be founded on the exchange of information between groups. (For a full discussion of these implications see Candlin, 1982.)

How does this model compare with current practice in many parts of the world? In most cases this could be labelled 'grammar-translation', 'direct method' or 'structuro-audio-lingual'. For practical purposes it makes little difference what we call it. What characterises all the above labels is that they:

- (1) focus very strongly on the language as language (not as use); 'explication de texte' is a prime example of this, where the text is removed from its total context of meaning and examined as an object for analysis;
- (2) as a corollary, emphasize the memorization of vocabulary and the internalization of rules (many of which do not bear scrutiny!), at the expense of appropriacy and use;
- (3) restrict the quantity and variety of language to which students are exposed;
- (4) offer very few opportunities for real communication among students;
- (5) rely very heavily on strong teacher control, and apportion a major part of the total talking time to the teacher.

Advantages and disadvantages of the communicative approaches

The main advantages of such approaches would seem to be that:

- (1) they are more likely to produce the four kinds of competence outlined in my second paragraph than more purely language-centred approaches;
- (2) they are more immediately relevant since they offer the learner the opportunity of *using* the language for his own purposes earlier than do other approaches;
- (3) to this extent they are more motivating, and students are likely to put more effort into them;
- (4) they are less wasteful of time and effort than approaches which attempt to teach the *whole* language system, since they teach only what is relevant and necessary;
- (5) in the long term they equip the learners with the appropriate skills for tackling the language in the real world, since the approach is based on a close approximation to such uses.

They do however have a number of potential disadvantages, namely that:

- (1) They make greater demands upon the professional training and competence of the teachers. Teacher withdrawal is not the same thing as inactivity. In terms of preparation and sheer professional skill in knowing when and how to intervene productively, they demand very much more energy and adaptability from the teacher. The teacher also needs to be more confidently competent in the foreign language.
- (2) They do not offer the teacher the security of *the* textbook. Whereas, with more traditional approaches, it is sufficient for the teacher to follow the prescription offered by the textbook, here it is necessary for him to select, adapt and invent the materials he uses.

- (3) They may perplex students used to other approaches, at least in the initial stages.
- (4) They are more difficult to evaluate than the other approaches referred to. Whereas it is relatively easy to test whether a student has 'mastered' the present perfect tense, it is less easy to evaluate his competence in solving a problem, issuing an invitation, negotiating a successful agreement.
- (5) Because they appear to go against traditional practice, they tend to meet with opposition, especially from older teachers and learners.

Problems

Whereas it is true that we now know quite a lot about how communicative competence is achieved, and can describe what communicative teaching ought to be like, there remains a nagging doubt about whether we can actually teach communicative competence. This doubt is reinforced when we confront a number of persistent problems which beset our profession (the list is not intended to be exhaustive).

- (1) We know very little about how languages are actually learnt. So we cannot with certainty say 'If you do X, the result will be Y'; nor even 'If you are a person with Z characteristics and you do X, the result will be Y'.

The result is that our profession is thronged with mutually inconsistent theories and approaches. In the kingdom of the blind he who promises sight is king.

- (2) One reason for this ignorance is the difficulty of carrying out reliable research into learners in the process of learning. This is largely due to the large number of variables involved and to the multi-dynamic nature of the process. This partially accounts for the apparently conflicting results of research and its often inconsequential nature. Research is further bugged by the Heisenberg principle, by which any phenomenon is necessarily altered by the very fact of its being observed.
- (3) The theories which periodically grip our profession cannot therefore be regarded as 'true'. They partake more of the nature of myths, which require an act of faith than an intellectual proof. We have, in other words, to behave 'as if' they were true while realizing that they cannot be.
- (4) Linguistic description, of whatever kind, cannot be taken as a prescription for learning/teaching. The Quixotic syllabus and its earthy Sancho Panza, the textbook, do not reflect what learners actually learn. Input does not equal intake. All students are different and will knead the linguistic dough to their own, often fantastic, shapes.
- (5) This fact of individual difference is now widely recognized. Individuals may differ in a bewildering number of ways: in learning

style, in level of motivation, in stage of cognitive development, in intelligence, in stage and rate of learning, in level of energy, in psychological disposition, etc. And yet the overwhelming majority of language learning is done in classes where individuals are put together to be taught the same things, at the same pace and in the same way.

- (6) Finally, even when we as professionals feel reasonably sure of our ground and wish to implement a change in established procedures, we find this difficult to achieve. Professional considerations are usually perverted by political, bureaucratic and purely practical considerations (Maley, 1984)

The leap into the abyss

Yet teachers, syllabus developers, and textbook writers, along with the rest of humankind, are driven to make decisions of some kind, even if the grounds for making them are less than certain. It is an existential fact that while we live we needs must decide. Even the decision to do nothing is a decision; we cannot not decide. This being the case, we had best make our choices consciously, and ensure that they are congruent with what evidence there is, and what we ourselves believe, about the nature of learning.

The following set of principled decisions is personal to myself and my co-authors in a textbook designed to promote (if not to teach) communicative competence. (Maley *et al*, 1982).

- (1) We held that learners learn both consciously and with effort, and unconsciously without effort. (Krashen's terms 'learning' and 'acquisition' will do as convenient shorthand but the peripheral learning principle of Lozanov is equally relevant.) The textbook would need to offer scope for both kinds of learning.
- (2) Teaching can be accuracy- or fluency-focused. We held that fluency (in which the emphasis is on open-ended communication activities taking place in real time) was more likely to promote learning than accuracy (where the emphasis is on the inculcation of the correct linguistic form). We accepted the need of all students in varying degrees for some accuracy work. This was therefore made an optional part of the course.
- (3) We held error to be a normal part of language learning. Much correction is wasteful of time, and unproductive to boot. We decided to be resolutely non-judgmental. This would not preclude the provision of acceptable models nor the indication to learners of the existence or location of errors on request.
- (4) We held that language processing proceeds from top down, not from bottom up. Meanings are first apprehended as 'wholes' and only later analysed into parts – if necessary. The tasks in the book

- would thus need to develop holistic processing. Atomistic processing would only rarely be used (and especially where it could have some generative effect, e.g. in derivational endings, prefixes, etc.).
- (5) We held that structures and functions could be equally constraining. The tasks were not therefore to be designed with a particular structural or functional category in mind. Rather they would be chosen for their communicational relevance in the framework of the whole activity (see '*a priori* syllabus' below).
 - (6) We held that learners are more likely to acquire the language if they are exposed to authentic samples of it. We recognized the danger, however, of making a god of 'authenticity'. Inputs would therefore usually be truly authentic (but accessible) or 'modified-authentic' (that is preserving linguistic properties of authentic texts).
 - (7) We held that communicative tasks were superior to linguistic exercises in promoting learning. The task has a pay-off (solving a problem, coming to acceptable decision, constructing a model, etc.) which is non-linguistic, yet language is needed to reach the pay-off point. Our book would be task-based and would relegate any exercise material to the optional accuracy section.
 - (8) We held that, to mirror real communication, we would need to integrate the major language skills. Listening, speaking, etc, would not therefore be taught in watertight compartments. Instead they would be integral to any given task. The proportion of each would vary with the nature of the task.
 - (9) We held that the greater the responsibility given to learners, the more effective their learning would be. We therefore left much scope for independent work, in a framework of a supporting peer-group.
 - (10) We held that motivation would be increased through problem-solving activities, which would engage both the cognitive and the affective resources of the learners.
 - (11) We likewise held that both analytical and creative thinking should be given scope in the activities and task. (Right and Left hemisphere dominance would thus be catered for.)
 - (12) We held that language used in the classroom should be immediately relevant and inherent in the task, rather than learnt for some eventual and hypothetical later use (often referred to as 'transfer').
 - (13) We held that, given the mismatch between input and intake, there was little point in setting up an '*a priori*' list of items to be taught. If linguistic items are truly frequent or useful, they can be presumed to occur naturally in representative samples of communication. We decided therefore to opt for interesting activities. Such activities could be graded, as an alternative to linguistic grading. The materials would thus dictate the content, which

- could be summarized in checklists (arrived at '*a posteriori*').
- (14) Finally we wished our materials to be elegant, economical and aesthetically pleasing.

Input and process

All this sounds very grand, but there is still a need for a set of principles which translate it into actual materials. First of all, what will the input be like? What principles might it be based upon?

1. The information gap/problem-solving principle

This can be applied in a minor or a major key, e.g. (a) two students each have a picture which is similar but not identical to the other – by verbal interaction they are to discover the difference; (b) some jewels have been stolen on a train – students are presented with information of various kinds (recorded conversations, plans, pictures etc.) which have to be interpreted to arrive at the discovery of a solution.

2. The game principle

In this the task is internally self-sufficient, and the activity rather than the language is primary; e.g. students might have been asked to derive a story from a set of pictures. They might then be asked to mime the story for another group to interpret. The activity is wholly 'artificial', yet within the confines of its own 'rules' it is real.

3. The bi-sociative principle

Students' creative faculties are stimulated by exposure to unusual combinations, random data or apparently unconnected material, e.g. each group of three is given five words; for each word they must find three others which rhyme with it. They then compare with another group and make a composite list of rhyming words. The group of six then chooses two words from each of the five groups of rhyming words (e.g. food/mood, gave/save, top/stop, came/fame, song/long). These words must then be used as the end-rhymes in a 10-line poem.

And what will the process be like? On the principle that both individual effort and group interaction are of value, the process will be one which orchestrates them in varying patterns.

Most tasks or activities would begin with individuals working alone either to comprehend or to prepare an input to subsequent group work. This information would then be shared and worked on in groups varying in size according to the type of activity. Working in groups allows for the combined competences and skills of individuals to be

brought to bear on the task and provides a social context for the exchange of information, organization of the discourse, etc. The interaction among group members is now widely believed to promote language learning (as well as the undoubted benefits it brings for teacher-student and inter-student relationships) (Long and Porter, 1985).

Conclusion

I hope to have shown that in spite of theoretical and practical difficulties it is possible to promote, if not teach, communicative competence to a degree. In order to implement the kinds of ideas I have outlined above, however, there have to be two kinds of changes.

The first is institutional change. Unless syllabi, examinations, inspectors, textbooks, etc., reflect the declared desire to change in the direction of a more communicatively oriented curriculum, little can result. Unless words are translated into deeds they are rapidly silted in the dust of inaction.

The second is teacher education. Change which is imposed from above is all too often accepted but not embraced. Change needs also to come from below, from the teachers who will have to implement it. This can only happen if they themselves both understand it and accept the need for it. Organized teacher training is one way of achieving this; but the self-help voluntary group of teachers who gather informally can be as great an agent of change.

We do not understand the essential nature of a rose any the better for pulling off its petals and analysing them. We may get closer to this understanding by growing roses. So with communicative competence. Perhaps we can after all help it to grow.

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3. Criticism and Research

Optimal Language Learning based on the Comprehension–Production Distinction

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In this paper I shall, on the basis of distinguishing between comprehension and production, point out some problems in the current theory and practice of foreign language teaching, and discuss some basic issues such as fossilization, the priority of comprehension activity, and the necessary features of an optimal approach to language teaching.

1. Problems arising from lack of distinction between comprehension and production

Our comprehension ability is always greater than our production ability. We can always understand what we ourselves have said, but can not always produce what we have comprehended. If we can read Dickens, that does not mean we can write like him. In fact, many advanced foreign-language learners can read Dickens, but very very few of them can ever produce flawless writings comparable to the simplified materials written by native speakers. Obviously the gap between learners' comprehension ability and production ability is very great. If we further consider learners' needs – they need to understand authentic input, difficult as it may sometimes be, but they do not have to produce authentic output and can deliberately choose simple vocabulary and structures to express various ideas – the gap can be further widened in language teaching.

If learners' comprehension ability needs be much much greater than their production ability, it is then inefficient to aim at both simultaneously. Any single approach, any single syllabus, any single set of course materials aiming at both cannot be optimally efficient. If the materials are easy they are conducive to the growth of production ability. But easy input cannot secure good comprehension of difficult materials. On the other hand, difficult materials contribute to the growth of comprehension ability, but are often too difficult for the cultivation of production ability, and therefore wasted in terms of production.

So far the wide gap between comprehension and production has not been adequately considered by the communicative approach and the

comprehension approach (Krashen's natural comprehensible input method, the listening-based method, etc.).

A semantic syllabus of the communicative approach puts meanings first and forms second. This is consistent with the process of production: from meanings to forms, but not with the process of comprehension: from forms to meanings. After learning a function 'leave-taking', the learners will be equipped with a few ready-made forms like 'good-bye' and can perform this function appropriately on many occasions. But in comprehension activity forms are unpredictable. The learners who have learned how to perform the function of leave-taking may not be able to understand the same function performed by others who use more difficult forms such as 'bon voyage'. After drawing up his notional syllabuses, Wilkins (1976: 78) admitted that he had only 'concentrated on the learner as a potential *producer* of language'.

Communicative methodology includes both production activity (filling information gaps, role-playing, etc.) and comprehension activity, which involves interpretive skills and strategies (prediction, guessing, listening for the gist, listening for specific information, etc.) and rules of use (so as to guarantee a smooth transition from sentential propositional meanings to contextual pragmatic meanings). I have no objection if research on interpretive strategies and rules of use is kept on a theoretical level. However, when people make a big mountain out of these strategies and rules, and are eager to tell practical teachers what to teach, they have implicitly assumed that they know these strategies and rules are more important and difficult for students to learn than vocabulary, phrases and grammar, and therefore should be placed at the centre of teaching. Unfortunately, such assumption has never been proved, neither theoretically nor empirically. It runs counter to our common sense about translation. We can understand most translations where words, phrases and structures are translated but interpretive strategies and rules of use are not. In fact, translators seldom need translate what is between the lines. My own case history of learning has convinced me that by reading a good dictionary and a grammar book, one can solve most, if not all, comprehension problems (see pp. 108–9).

To my mind the chief contributions of the communicative approach lie in syllabus design and production practice, both of which aim at production ability. If this is so, we cannot reasonably expect this approach to be optimally effective in enhancing the learner's comprehension ability.

Krashen's comprehension approach is also production-oriented. Although its starting point is comprehensible input and comprehension activities, its aim is chiefly production ability, which emerges on its

own (Krashen, 1982: 60). Here, listening and reading activities are considered to be more effective than production activities in cultivating production ability, but how to raise listening and reading abilities has not been seriously discussed. In other words, Krashen seems to be more interested in how to turn comprehensible input into output (production) than how to turn input into comprehension. His Monitor Model obviously applies to output only, not comprehension. The acquisition–learning distinction and the natural order studies are also based on production. Only when you can produce something automatically under Monitor-free conditions can you be considered to have acquired it in your competence.

This one-sided emphasis on production has created some theoretical difficulties. If acquisition means only automatic production, logically speaking, comprehension ability is not true competence. If acquisition of morphological and syntactic rules means only automatic production of them, why can vocabulary ‘be acquired . . . on a recognition level’ (Krashen, 1983: 91)? Is there a natural order for acquiring vocabulary on a production level? For instance, do people acquire the word ‘sister’ before ‘brother’ or vice-versa? It seems most unlikely that there should be such a natural order. If recognition of grammar rules, and both recognition and production of vocabulary have been excluded, the current findings about the natural order of producing grammar rules, even if perfectly correct, tell very little about language learning as a whole. Finally, if we accept comprehension ability as part of acquired competence, the acquisition–learning distinction surely does not apply to the area of comprehension. It may not be uncommon for us to find that conscious learning of grammar rules at the beginning stage does not prevent later fluent reading with subconscious focus on meaning. Then this subconscious reading will, according to Krashen, lead to acquired competence in production. In other words, though conscious focus on grammar in production activity may not bring about acquired competence in production, conscious focus on grammar in comprehension activity will eventually lead to full competence in both comprehension and production.

Krashen’s bold prediction that ‘production ability emerges’ seems quite valid to me, as my own learning in the past was almost altogether comprehension-based (see section 3). However, his input hypothesis (1982: 21–22) is not without practical difficulties. According to the hypothesis, ‘we acquire by understanding language that contains structure a bit beyond our current level of competence $i+1$ ’, and then ‘production ability emerges . . . on its own’. Here he links competence with production ability only. Strangely, while the comprehension approach aims, theoretically, at production ability, its striking pedagogical successes are reported mostly in the area of comprehension. To my mind an approach aiming at production ability cannot secure good

comprehension ability; if adequate comprehension ability has been achieved, a great deal of difficult input must have been wasted on the growth of production ability.

Although there is much difference between the comprehension approach and the communicative approach, with the former emphasizing input and belittling production practice, and the latter facilitating, consciously or unconsciously, production practice and production ability's growth, neither has seriously considered how to raise the comprehension ability effectively. However, for most foreign-language learners their primary need is not production, but good comprehension. Though native applied linguists may unconsciously give more thought to those non-native learners around them – for example, the immigrants and foreign students in the U.S. and the European adults who travel to Britain frequently – and hence to their urgent need for production, most students do not stay abroad and have little direct contact with native speakers of the target language. Instead, most of them only need to read literature in their own fields. Even in the matter of production ability's growth, neither approach is very effective for those students. I shall suggest an optimal approach for them later on, but let us first look at a basic problem, 'fossilization', in the perspective of the comprehension-production distinction.

2. Fossilization

Adult learners fossilize, or stop short of native proficiency, to different degrees in different aspects of learning.

They fossilize less in comprehension than in production. Many advanced learners can understand difficult authentic materials in listening and reading. They can even do better than some native speakers: some native speakers do not know difficult words like 'salutary' and 'lugubrious'. So it may not be surprising if advanced learners can understand a piece of writing containing many more such difficult words than some native speakers. However, very few adult learners can produce flawless, appropriate writings comparable to simplified materials written by native speakers, or speak appropriately at the levels of 'foreign talk' and 'caretaker speech' (simplified spoken language).

Within the area of production, learners fossilize most seriously in pronunciation, less so in grammar, and least so in vocabulary and larger units of form such as phrases and sentences. Almost no adult learners can ever achieve native pronunciation. However hard they may try to imitate native speakers' accents, it is usually quite easy to identify them as foreigners by their accents. So their fossilization in pronunciation can be regarded as an incurable competence problem.

Their fossilization in morphology and syntax is less serious, though quite serious. Even advanced learners make occasional performance errors in morphology and syntax, especially under Monitor-free conditions. Those errors are somewhat different from slips of the tongue, but more different from competence errors because learners usually know what the correct forms are and often do say the correct forms.

When I claim that learners fossilize less in appropriate use of vocabulary and larger units of form than in grammar, I expect some communicative proponents may object that learners have more problems in appropriacy than in grammar. I agree. Judging from the compositions of some fairly advanced students, I think they are not guilty of wrong structures and morphemes so much as of inappropriacies. However, I should also like to point out that learners' troubles with morphology are often performance problems that cannot be easily eradicated. But the inappropriacies they are guilty of are often curable competence problems, and can hardly be called fossilizations. If a student does not know the proper expression 'Can I be excused, please' when he wants to tell the teacher that he needs go to the toilet, I simply tell him this expression. Then he will be able to use it appropriately. A plausible explanation for 'more inappropriacies than grammar errors' may be that there are many more items to be learned in vocabulary and larger units of form than in grammar rules. To further prove less fossilization in the former, I should like to point out that vocabulary and larger units of form is perhaps the only area of production in which learners can, though very rarely, do better than some native speakers. For example, I found some native speakers did not know the appropriate expression for performing the function of describing the negative of a photograph, and tried to correct the correct version 'the lights and shades on the negative' written by a foreign-language learner.

In view of the above phenomena of fossilization, I hypothesize that fossilization is, roughly, in inverse proportion to meaning. Learners fossilize more in meaning-scarce areas (production of pronunciation, morphology, etc.), and less in meaning-copious areas (comprehension, production of vocabulary and larger units of form).

Comprehension is a from-form-to-meaning activity, in which form is given, and one tends to give more attention to meaning than to form (or have subconscious focus on meaning). We can see this from the fact that, after hearing a story, the hearers usually can retell the story, but in their own words rather than the original words. Within the area of form, learners seem to pay more attention to meaning-copious words than to meaning-scarce morphemes. According to Krashen (1983: 91), 'It is doubtful if morphology is noticed . . . and indeed acquirers in early

stages usually ignore it completely.' However, since the aim of comprehension is understanding of meaning, learners' natural tendency is to focus, perhaps subconsciously, on meaning, and their inadequate processing of form does not impede understanding and is not readily observable. Thus they do not appear to fossilize seriously in comprehension.

On the other hand, production is a from-meaning-to-form activity, in which meaning is first given, and then one has to create the form. Creating form is more laborious than decoding form. Sometimes even native speakers have to consciously search for the right forms, and often are at a loss for words for the moment or simply find something beyond description. Foreign learners have even more difficulty in creating forms. While it is relatively easy for learners to have subconscious focus on meaning in comprehension activity, it is less easy for them to have focus on meaning alone in production activity. Hence there is more fossilization in production than in comprehension.

Within the area of production, accuracy of pronunciation is the least meaningful, morphology a little more meaningful, and vocabulary and larger units of form most meaningful.

When learners say 'very good', 'how are you', etc., with a pronunciation slightly, or sometimes even greatly, different from that of native speakers, they express exactly the same meanings. If they can get their meanings across they no longer feel an urgent need for further improvement of their pronunciation. Hence they fossilize very seriously in pronunciation, and almost no adult learners can ever achieve native pronunciation.

While it is possible for learners to alter the native pronunciation to a certain degree without changing the intended meaning at all, they cannot misuse morphemes like '-ed' and '-s' without changing the meanings (past time, third person singular, etc.). However, those little meanings are not essential and can often be obtained from the context. Even if learners have misused some morphemes, the chance for them to be correctly understood is great. Hence there is quite serious fossilization in meaning-scarce morphology, though it is less serious than in pronunciation.

Syntax seems more meaningful than morphology. For example, it is almost impossible for a learner not to process such meanings as 'interrogation' and 'special emphasis' contained in an inverted word-order. If syntactic rules are more deeply processed in comprehension, they are more likely to be correctly produced; hence, less fossilization. According to my observation of my students' compositions, they are

more likely to unduly drop an 's' than to forget the proper word order in a question.

Vocabulary and larger units of form seems to carry more meaning than grammar (syntax and morphology). If I produce a sentence by combining English syntax and Chinese vocabulary, this sentence will be totally unintelligible to native English speakers who do not know Chinese. However, if I make sentences by combining Chinese grammar and English words, for example, 'You are who?', 'He yesterday already finish job', etc., very often English speakers can still manage to construct sentential meaning by relying on the lexical meanings instead of grammar. Since vocabulary is more meaningful than grammar, fossilization in the former is less than that in the latter. This explains why learners can occasionally do better than some native speakers in appropriate use of vocabulary and larger units of form.

Now that we have interpreted why fossilizations occur, we may wish to know how to reduce, if not completely cure, fossilizations. In the past decade or so some people on both sides of the Atlantic have rejected 'focus on form', and swung to the opposite extreme of the pendulum: 'subconscious focus on meaning', 'focus on communication', 'forgetting the form', etc.

In my view, 'focus on meaning only' may be somewhat helpful in comprehension activity. The less you can notice each morpheme, each syntactic structure, and the meaning of each individual word, and the more you can concentrate on the meaning of a whole phrase, clause or sentence, the faster you can comprehend. So, 'focus on meaning' may be a useful slogan for practice in fast reading and listening.

However, 'focus on meaning' is not an effective means for fostering production ability. Focus on meaning in production activity is the result of automatic control of form, and therefore the aim of learning, but is not the means to achieve this aim. There is nothing mysterious about focus on meaning and forgetting the form. If we do not process forms in the first place, we shall not be able to produce them. Before young children can understand any meaning they are bombarded with forms all day long. It is hardly imaginable that they do not process the forms at all and have focus on meaning alone before they can produce any meaningful forms. Another example I should like to cite is those Chinese scientists and engineers who can read fluently. It is difficult to imagine that they do not have focus on meaning while searching for relevant information. But their fluent reading with focus on meaning seldom leads to good writing. The following is a yet more radical example of forgetting the form. While reading, I usually do not use English to process any number written in the form of Arabic numerals, for instance, 1664. I often understand its meaning at a quick glance

without thinking of its English form. The result of my focus on meaning alone is that I am now quite slow in using English to talk about numbers (and also very slow in understanding numbers mentioned by others in English). It is obvious to me that the mysterious subconscious focus on meaning in comprehension does not lead to automatic mastery of the form in production.

I have suggested that learners' natural tendency is to have subconscious focus on meaning (pp. 102–3). Now I argue that this focus on meaning does not help to produce forms. It is especially illogical to expect that focus on meaning can reduce fossilization in meaning-scarce areas. It seems that conscious attention to forms is desirable. Perhaps, the less meaningful an area (pronunciation, for example) is, the more conscious effort is required.

To reduce fossilization in pronunciation, I think conscious training at an early stage of learning is essential. Conscious effort is required because subconscious focus on meaning does not direct our attention to a meaning-scarce area like the accuracy of pronunciation. In normal listening (for meaning), learners seldom notice the differences between the native pronunciation and their own. Early training is necessary because at more advanced stages input will become increasingly meaningful, and it will be more and more difficult to drag adults' attention away from meaning-copious communication back to meaning-scarce pronunciation. (If adults could intensely process the pronunciation in a meaning-scarce environment over a long period, say, one year, as young children do, they might be able to produce near-native pronunciation.) In China, first-year English majors usually undergo several weeks' or even months' conscious, intensive pronunciation training, whereas science students cannot afford enough time for rigorous pronunciation training at the early stage. The pronunciation of first-year English majors is, generally speaking, much better than that of fourth-year science students, and even better than that of those science students who have lived and studied in English-speaking countries for years.

My own learning experience has also convinced me that attention to meaning does not effectively reduce fossilizations in morphology and syntax. When I taught myself English during the 1970s I read a little grammar, but did almost no conscious grammar exercises. I devoted most of my learning time to reading short stories, magazines, and especially the example sentences in Hornby's *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English*. I paid more attention to the meanings of vocabulary and phrases than to morphology. I followed this comprehension approach for many years before I became an undergraduate student in English in 1978. Then I was found to be much superior to other students in using appropriate words. For example,

while others said 'Put the first word several spaces from the beginning', I used 'Indent the first line'. However, I scored lower marks than them in a grammar test involving a lot of morphemes. But, after only a few months' university training which required conscious grammar exercises, I began to make many fewer grammar mistakes. It seems to me that some months of conscious grammar exercises is much more efficient than years of reading with much attention to the meanings of words, phrases, sentences and texts, in reducing fossilization in meaning-scarce morphology.

Vocabulary and larger units of form are more meaningful than grammar and pronunciation. Theoretically, the level of conscious effort required for learning them should be somewhere between the great conscious attention to pronunciation and grammar rules and the so-called subconscious focus on meaning only. Anyway, a certain level of conscious effort is needed. Since focus on meanings and forgetting the forms does not effectively bring about production of the forms, and focus on forms to the neglect of the meanings results in inappropriate utterances, it may seem more sensible to emphasize the relationships between forms and meanings. When learners exclaim: 'Ah, this is the right expression (for that meaning)!', they are being conscious of the form-meaning link. Then it is especially likely for them to remember the link, and to use it appropriately. If this kind of attitude is encouraged in reading, the learners are likely to become aware of a lot of useful form-meaning links, and their ability to use the target language appropriately will greatly increase. My own case history of learning has suggested that slow reading in conscious search of useful form-meaning links is quite helpful for promoting production ability.

Native speakers usually pick up their mother-tongue subconsciously. But excellent writers and orators, who are more proficient than uneducated, illiterate people in using the language, often make some sort of conscious effort. It may not be uncommon for us to find that many good writers consciously accumulate useful, beautiful expressions, or consciously study writing styles, etc. Although foreign-language learners learning with conscious effort are generally not as proficient as native speakers who pick up the language subconsciously, this is no evidence to prove that learners using conscious effort must be inferior to learners acquiring subconsciously. Since native speakers using conscious effort in reading (students, for example) are usually more proficient than native speakers who have had a lot of subconscious listening activity (illiterate people, for instance), learners had better be encouraged to use conscious effort.

To summarize thus far, reduction of fossilization in production requires conscious effort: conscious pronunciation training, conscious grammar exercises, and conscious establishment of form-meaning links. Per-

haps, the more meaning-scarce an area is, the higher level of conscious effort is necessary. However, we should not be misled to conclude that most of our learning effort should be directed at studies of meaning-scarce elements. Our objective is communication. Since meaning-copious vocabulary and larger units of form contribute more to communication, most of our learning time had better be spent on form-meaning links.

Both comprehension activity and production activity can help to establish form-meaning links, or reduce fossilization, or enhance production ability. In the next section I shall discuss which of the two is more essential.

3. Comprehension activity and production activity

It goes without saying that, to promote comprehension ability, we need comprehension activity. But to acquire production ability, should we rely chiefly on production activity or comprehension activity? Generally, we develop our language proficiency through both comprehension and production activities, and then cease to think which of the two is more fundamental. Similarly, we often eat a whole apple, its flesh and skin together, and then do not stop to think which of the two is better. If we separate the skin from the flesh, the answer will be clearer. We may happily munch away at half a pound of apple flesh, but frown at half a pound of apple skin. When the same principle of separation is applied to comprehension and production activities, we may see their relative importance more clearly.

So far there is already some evidence to suggest that comprehension activity alone, without production practice, is sufficient for developing production ability. The silent period of L1 and L2 children, an abnormal child who can understand language without the ability to speak (Lenneberg, 1962), some short-term listening-based teaching experiments, etc. are all evidence in support of Krashen's hypothesis 'production ability emerges'. Now, as an adult learner with long-term comprehension-based learning, I should like to supply more evidence of the priority of comprehension activity.

In 1969 I settled down on a remote farm where nobody around me knew English. By that time I had learned about 1000 English words and some basic grammar rules contained in two elementary textbooks, mainly through self-study and with almost no written grammar exercises and oral production practice. On this basis I continued my self-study by reading some short stories, magazines and especially the example sentences in Hornby's *ALD*. As the situation was not suitable for production practice, I followed this comprehension approach of my own during my spare time for many years. Then in 1978 I became a first-

year undergraduate student of English, and suddenly production became required. I found I had achieved a fairly high proficiency in writing and speaking with almost no previous production practice. I could converse with native English speakers with almost no difficulty, and my writing ability was even better, not inferior to that of those who had learned English for four or five years in universities (with a lot of production practice, of course). In my first year I had some intensive speaking practice which, I think, did not help me to produce more appropriate utterances, but did increase my oral fluency, or speaking speed, quite a lot.

On the other hand there is no evidence to prove that people who have had only production practice without receiving $i+1$ input can reach a high level of language proficiency. Let us imagine a group of 10-year-olds living on an isolated island, talking among themselves all day long with focus on communication, but receiving no $i+1$ input from adults. Who could believe they would eventually develop adult-like language proficiency?

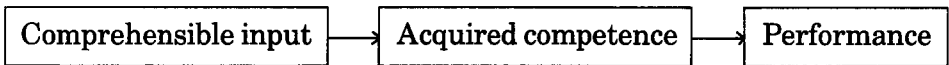
While I give priority to comprehension activity, I should not wish to condemn production practice out of hand, because it helps learners to process the forms intensely, strengthen the form-meaning links obtained through comprehension activity, and hence make the retrieval of those links from the memory faster, or, in other words, increase the speed (fluency) of production. However, this little advantage of production practice may be outweighed by its disadvantages. Production activity in classrooms is usually much more time-consuming than comprehension activity. Furthermore, early production can be somewhat harmful. When beginning students are forced to produce something they have not acquired through comprehension, they fall back on their mother-tongues and natural communicative abilities and strategies, and produce inappropriate or even wrong utterances. The more production practice, the deeper processing of those inappropriacies and errors. Though some of them may be corrected by teachers, or by learners themselves through later comprehension activity, many errors may cling to the learners all their lives.

If comprehension activity alone can be responsible for the growth of production ability, and early production can cause some harm, I should like to suggest that most of the learning time be devoted to comprehension activity, the silent period be extended long enough, perhaps one year or several years, depending on the learning speed and objective of each individual, until s/he has acquired enough and makes few mistakes, and then intensive production practice be introduced to increase fluency.

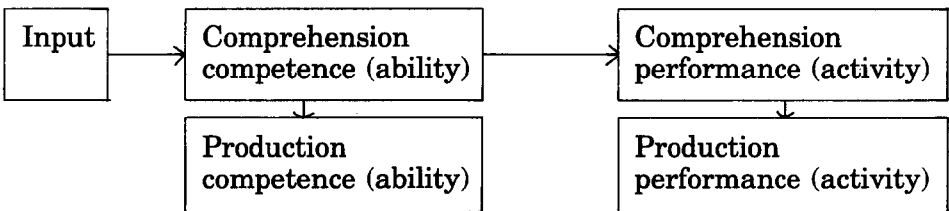
In this section I have emphasized the importance of comprehension activity, and in the previous section the role of conscious effort. Later on I shall point out the significance of conscious comprehension activity in cultivating production ability.

4. The optimal learning processes

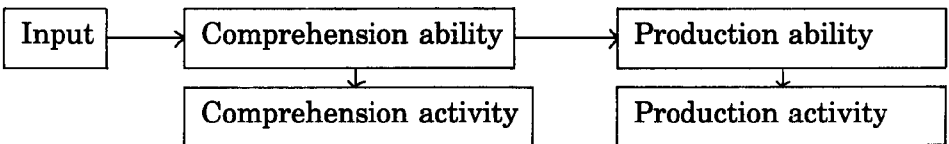
I shall not recommend the following acquisition process:



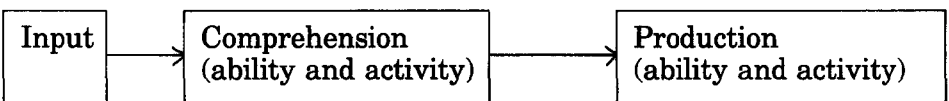
because two very different things – comprehension and production – have been unduly covered up here. A more accurate description of the process might be:



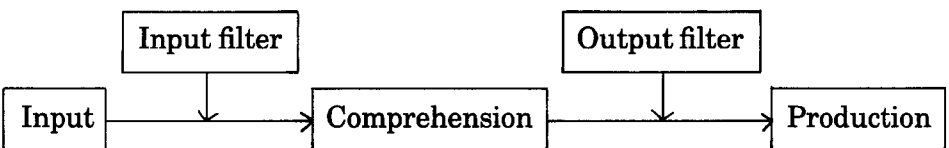
because comprehension comes before production, and only part of what we have comprehended can turn into production. Now, to clarify my discussion, I should like to rearrange the above diagram without changing its nature at all:



Further simplification can be:

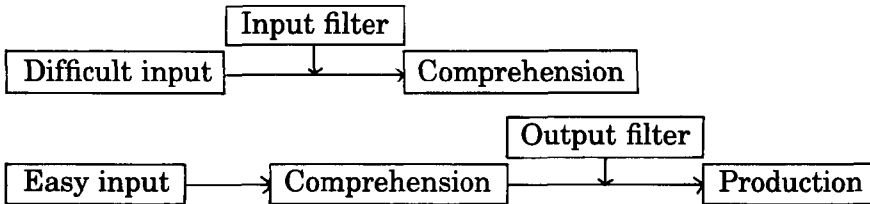


The above learning process seems to fit our common sense. But it is still too simple to explain why sometimes input is not comprehended, and comprehended input does not turn into production. Obviously there must be an input filter between input and comprehension, and an output filter between comprehension and production:



The higher the filter strength, the smaller proportion of transfer (from input to comprehension and from comprehension to production respectively).

The above learning process is of course not optimal since the two very different aims, comprehension ability and production ability, have not been separated. Let us suppose a learner can eventually reach the level n (native proficiency) in comprehension and the level of f (fossilization) in production ($n-f>0$). If the difficulty level of input increases fast, this helps to raise the learner's comprehension ability fast. But the input ranging from f to n is a waste in terms of production ability's growth. The greater $(n-f)$, the more waste. In view of the learners' wide gap between comprehension and production, the waste can be so enormous as to outweigh any advantages gained in a single learning process aiming at both comprehension and production simultaneously. On the other hand, if the difficulty level of input increases too slowly, or we select basic, high-frequency items as input, this is especially congenial to the growth of production ability. However, if learners always receive input easier than f , they cannot be expected to reach n in comprehension. In view of those problems, I suggest the following two separate processes:



From the above two diagrams we can see that comprehension ability is determined by two variables: input and the input filter, while production ability chiefly involves input and the output filter (here the input filter is not important because easy input presents little difficulty in comprehension). In the following two sections I shall discuss the two different processes in more detail.

5. How to acquire comprehension ability quickly

Comprehension is a from-form-to-meaning activity, in which form, normally appropriate form, is given. If the listeners and readers know the meanings of the words and phrases, and grammar rules, they can usually come to definite sentential meanings (most sentences are not ambiguous). In comprehension there is usually no inappropriacy problem because the appropriate form is already given. If learners know one grammar structure, it is possible for them to correctly interpret numerous appropriate utterances of that structure. Hence we

may very well say that grammar has a truly generative power in comprehension. On the other hand, production is a from-meaning-to-form activity, in which no appropriate form is given and learners have to create form. For a given meaning, they can use grammar and lexis to create numerous corresponding forms. Some of the forms thus created happen to conform to the arbitrary habits of the target language and therefore are appropriate; some others are somewhat inappropriate but yet make sense to native speakers; still others are so inappropriate as to be totally unintelligible to native speakers. So, grammar cannot be considered to have a full generative power in the sense of producing appropriate forms. Perhaps for this reason it has now become a fashion to ridicule the grammar approach to language teaching. I should like to point out, however, that such criticisms, when extended from the area of production to the whole field of language learning, comprehension as well as production, are not justified. There is no evidence that conscious learning of grammar (and memorization of vocabulary too) will cause fossilization in comprehension. Indeed, my own learning experience has convinced me that conscious learning of grammar, idiomatic phrases and vocabulary can quickly raise one's comprehension ability.

At my early stage of learning I learned some basic vocabulary and grammar rules contained in two elementary textbooks. Seeing that I could not even read simplified English materials with ease, perhaps largely due to lack of vocabulary and set phrases, I spend a few months in memorizing about 7000 words and about 700 idiomatic phrases from a pocket bilingual dictionary and a phrase book respectively, in the hope that the bitter pills (my monotonous memorization work) might have some wholesome effects. After that, I did feel I had improved suddenly and I could manage to read many unsimplified, original stories and essays, though still with many difficulties. Although I had spent more time on vocabulary and phrases than on grammar, I felt most of my troubles in comprehension still stemmed from lack of the former, because, after consulting a good dictionary, most of my problems could be solved. (I also had some difficulties which could not be overcome by referring to an ordinary dictionary when some different cultures and unfamiliar subjects were introduced. But I did not often find lack of English interpretive strategies to be my problem, and transitions from propositional meanings to the pragmatic meanings were usually subconscious and automatic.) If in one sentence there are more than one, say three, new words, each with several different senses in the dictionary, then I had a really hard time interpreting the exact sense of each word. When I thought I knew every word in one sentence without realizing that some words were being used in senses I did not know, the case was even worse. I would not bother to consult a dictionary, and simply cursed the authors' 'bizarre' writing styles. After realizing that I needed to learn more vocabulary and phrases, not only their spellings and Chinese equivalents, but also their exact senses as

defined in English, and also the various senses of each word, I read about half of the entries in Hornby's *ALD* (perhaps more than 20,000 entries, or more than 10,000 words). After that, I had very little difficulty in reading comprehension. Some essays and stories I had thought to be difficult and awkward were now easy and smooth to me.

My own learning history has led me to believe that a good command of vocabulary, phrases, and grammar rules helps learners solve most, if not all, problems in comprehension, and enables them to quickly jump over the intermediate stage and start advanced comprehension activity which involves authentic materials. I am further convinced of the above by the learning experience of a friend of mine. He started learning Japanese by reading a grammar book. Immediately after that he managed to read, by consulting a dictionary frequently, of course, a little literature in his field (physics).

However, I would not suggest that a good dictionary and a grammar book should be the complete prescription. While they had helped me overcome the greater part of my difficulties in comprehension, some problems remained unsolved: my comprehension speed was very slow, and some difficult cultures and subjects could not be understood by referring to a dictionary and a grammar book. I think text-reading is absolutely necessary for increasing comprehension speed and expanding one's knowledge.

Now that we have examined some features of input, let us turn to the input filter. Some people may believe that the input filter is an affective filter consisting only of affective, subconscious factors. The advantage of cognitive, conscious learning is considered to be temporary, and even harmful to acquisition in the long run. However, the above assertion can, at most, be applied to production only. In comprehension activity its advantage is not temporary. So we have no reason to exclude conscious, cognitive factors from the input filter. In comprehension, reading a grammar book not only causes no fossilization, but reduces overlapping in learning grammar rules, and therefore is much more efficient than slow acquisition of rules through extensive pleasure reading. Vocabulary can also be learned through conscious, cognitive memorization of a dictionary. So long as the dictionary is good enough – for example, is not a bilingual dictionary – and gives the exact senses of each word through definition and illustrative sentences in the target language, there will be little possibility of misunderstanding the meaning of the word, or, in other words, there is no fossilization. Memorizing a good dictionary not only causes no fossilization, but is more efficient than picking up a large vocabulary through painfully extensive pleasure reading.

Conscious learning of grammar and vocabulary may be too monotonous

to be accepted by some learners. However, if in future many learners can demonstrate that they learn faster by conscious learning of vocabulary and grammar, many more learners will probably become interested in this type of learning, or, in other words, develop a lower affective filter for the seemingly monotonous conscious learning and a higher affective filter for extensive pleasure reading.

While conscious, cognitive factors can quicken the growth of comprehension ability (or quicken the transfer from input to comprehension, or lower the input filter) at early stages, at later stages subconscious factors should become dominant. Since the aim of comprehension activity is to comprehend meaning, it is reasonable to encourage subconscious focus on meaning. If people can notice the linguistic details less and concentrate on meaning more, they can comprehend faster.

To summarize thus far, I think learners should be encouraged to consciously learn enough words, phrases, and grammar rules in the early stages so as to quicken the growth of their comprehension ability. This will enable the learners to skip over the intermediate phase and quickly reach the advanced stage in which they can comprehend difficult, authentic materials. When they have acquired this ability to comprehend unsimplified, natural materials, they are encouraged to read, with subconscious focus on meaning, a wide variety of texts so as to increase their comprehension speed and expand their knowledge.

So far I have been mainly concerned with reading, which is the chief objective of most learners, but I should not like to avoid mentioning listening altogether. The point I should like to make is that transition from reading to listening may not be very difficult, especially when the learners have acquired a good pronunciation at the early stage.

For most people it is a natural procedure that listening comes before reading. In the case of young children, listening surely precedes reading. But we should not fail to notice that, while young children receive, over a long period of time, a lot of simplified aural input (often single words and phrases in here-and-now situations) which is delivered at a slow speed, most adult learners, always pressed for time, cannot realistically afford so much time for a large amount of simplified input only. In the case of foreign-language learners it is sometimes believed that the transition from listening ability to reading ability is quite smooth. However, I find it necessary to notice that only a certain level of reading ability can be transferred from the same level of listening ability, and no more. But, since the normal aural input is usually simpler, often much simpler, than the normal graphic input, a competent listener may not be able to understand difficult, authentic written materials very well. (Think about illiterate native speakers!)

On the other hand, the transition from reading to listening may not be very difficult for adult learners, especially when they have acquired a fairly accurate pronunciation in the beginning stage. First, graphic form is less transient than aural form, and allows learners more time to process the input and build up their competence. Second, the difficulty level in reading is usually higher than that in listening, so transfer from reading to listening should be smooth if we do not consider the special difficulties involved in listening comprehension (the decoding of aural input, the fast comprehension speed required, etc.). Third, even if I take those special difficulties into consideration, I shall give a little evidence to prove that the transition is not very difficult. Even though a learner's pronunciation may be very bad, he can still develop, if his reading ability is good enough, a certain level of listening activity, because he is likely to listen with accurate expectancy which is based on his familiarity with graphic forms.

Before becoming an undergraduate student, my pronunciation was considered terrible. I relied mainly on the International Phonetic Transcription which I had not learned well for my pronunciation of individual words, I did not have access to tapes of native speakers' pronunciation, and I had little idea and practice in English rhythm, elision, assimilation, etc. When I started to listen to the English programmes on Radio Peking, my reading ability was quite advanced, but I could hear nothing but noise. Even the announcer's greeting at the beginning 'Comrades and friends' which she read with liaison was not picked up by me. I listened to the noise for more than one month (a total of about 30 hours) and felt almost no progress. But I persisted, and then felt gradual improvement. At first the announcer's pronunciation of 'comrades and friends' was totally unintelligible to me. Later I thought it might be 'comrades and friends'. Finally I thought I had actually heard every syllable clearly. By the end of the third month I could understand a great deal from Radio Peking. Later on, I managed to understand a lot of news on the Voice of America.

For me, who had not learned English pronunciation well in the first place, it was possible to develop a certain level of listening ability. For people who had learned the pronunciation better, the transition from reading to listening can be much easier. A friend of mine, who had learned a few English words at the secondary school and had actually heard a Chinese teacher's pronunciation of English words, and then had built up a fairly good reading ability through self-study, reported himself to have experienced much smoother transition from reading to listening. It took him less than two months to reach my level of listening comprehension.

From the above discussion one may see the procedure I should like to recommend: pronunciation → vocabulary, phrases, and grammar →

reading → listening. This procedure may suit many foreign-language learners whose chief aim is reading, though immigrants and foreign students in the US, and European adults who travel to Britain frequently, may find a natural learning approach or the Council of Europe's project for adults more interesting and realistic.

6. How to acquire production ability quickly

From the previous discussion it can be seen that production ability's growth is chiefly determined by input and the output filter. Furthermore, input involves two important variables: input quantity and input quality. So I might as well say that production ability is determined by three variables: (production ability) = (input quantity) · (input quality) · (the output filter).

(Note: If any one of the three variables is zero, production ability is zero. So, production ability is the product, not the sum, of the three.)

Let us first look at input quantity. Since grammar does not have a full generative power in production, the quantity of input required should be very great. In order to greatly increase input quantity it is necessary to greatly reduce the amount of production activity, which is usually time-consuming.

In the matter of input quality, I should like to emphasize two aspects. First, input containing basic, high-frequency vocabulary and larger units of form which can express various important notions, functions, etc. are especially conducive to production ability's growth. Second, when the meanings to be taught are tidy, as in textbooks based on communicative syllabuses, learners can avoid much unnecessary overlapping, quickly cover many important meanings they want to express, and therefore increase their learning efficiency.

There are different methods which can all secure certain proportions of transfer from comprehended input to production, or reduce the output filter to certain degrees. Students engaged in subconscious comprehension activity, or conscious learning of grammar rules, or conscious learning of sociolinguistic rules, or production activity with focus on communication, can all achieve certain levels of production. What we are interested in here is, however, efficiency.

I have suggested that subconscious comprehension activity (usually fast reading and listening) cannot secure a big proportion of transfer, and is especially ineffective in reducing fossilization in meaning-scarce areas. Production activity is often too time-consuming, and even somewhat harmful in the beginning and intermediate stages of learning. The grammar approach has become notorious for creating

inappropriate utterances. Sociolinguistic rules and studies of registers can surely help learners produce more appropriate language. However, we need to realize that appropriacy is not so much determined by special social, situational conventions as by arbitrary collocations. When beginning students are given a long list of words (containing ‘water’, ‘knee’, ‘grass’, ‘deep’, ‘high’, ‘blow’, ‘pick’, ‘one’s’, ‘nose’, etc.) and enough grammatical and sociolinguistic rules, it is still most unlikely for them to combine proper words so as to produce such arbitrarily formed English expressions as ‘blow one’s nose’, ‘pick one’s nose’, ‘The water is knee-deep’, ‘The grass is knee-high’, etc. Perhaps even 100,000 grammatical and sociolinguistic rules are still inadequate to cover many simple collocations. Later on, I shall show that, by reading 10,000 collocations, mostly from a dictionary where no social context is given, one will be able to communicate with native speakers. In order to produce arbitrary forms, it may be more sensible to rely not so much on rules as on *direct relationships* between forms and meanings.

If learners see ‘to blow one’s nose’ and think about its meaning carefully, and become conscious of the link between the expression and its meaning, then it will be very likely for them to remember the link and to use the expression appropriately in future. To notice useful expressions, dwell on their meanings, and be aware of the links, learners need time. Thus slow reading in conscious search of form-meaning links seems to be a good candidate for increasing the proportion of transfer from comprehension to production, or reducing the output filter.

Semantic syllabuses and textbooks based on them are useful for establishing meaning–form links because they put meaning first and form second. For example, under each particular function there should be some corresponding utterances. However, this effort is not enough. Semantic syllabus designers and textbook writers cannot possibly include all the useful meanings for different learners. Even ESP experts cannot be very sure what meanings, what form–meaning links are especially needed by a particular learner. Therefore the role of the learner should be brought into full play. In their extensive comprehension activity, learners notice forms first, and then become aware of their meanings, thus establishing form–meaning links. This procedure of form first, meaning second seems to be opposite to communicative syllabus designers’ way of organizing, but may be just as effective in forging links between meanings and forms. To render this procedure workable, learners should meet two requirements. First, they need be aware that they are not reading for comprehension only, but for cultivation of their production ability; therefore they should develop a positive attitude of actively searching for useful expressions. Second, they need to read slowly so that they have time for searching for, and becoming aware of, useful form–meaning links.

In my own reading I look for simple expressions mainly according to two criteria: simplicity and usefulness. I look for simple expressions which I am unlikely to produce by merely referring to grammar, for example, 'blow one's nose'; 'I can speak only a few words of English' (before becoming aware of this expression, I had been saying 'I can speak only a few sentences of English' like many other Chinese students.); 'I hope you can write to me as often as possible' (otherwise I might continue to say '. . . write letters to me . . .').

After I noticed those expressions useful to me, I underlined them. Underlining helped to slow down my reading speed, focus my attention on the form-meaning links, and also facilitate my future revision.

I tend to ignore what is too rare and difficult, and what is oversimple. For example, in a sentence like 'My grandmother's eartrumpet has been struck by lightning', I may neglect 'eartrumpet' because it is too rare. I may also ignore 'my grandmother' and 'has been' because they are too simple. I may, however, notice and underline 'struck by lightning' as it is a useful description.

Simplicity is, however, not a rigid standard. The difficulty level of the expressions I want to command increases with the growth of my competence. At an early stage of learning I may ignore 'the serial number of a cheque or banknote', but at a more advanced stage I may notice and underline 'serial number'.

The criterion of simplicity is sometimes outweighed by that of usefulness. For instance, when I find it inconvenient to substitute simple expressions for the useful but difficult word 'indent', I have to commit it to my memory. For ESP students they need not only common core English, but also what is particularly relevant to their own fields, difficult as it may be. When I was a farm worker I was especially interested in expressions concerning agriculture, and was attracted by such expressions as 'to purify and regenerate those frost-resistant varieties', 'timely application of green manure', etc. I think that occasionally ESP students know better than ESP experts in determining what is most relevant to their own needs, and therefore ESP learners' independent searching for useful expressions is a necessary complement to ESP experts' effort.

In order to search for simple, useful expressions, learners' need time and conscious effort. There is yet another reason for the use of conscious effort. I find that, when compared with native speakers who have spent much time on simple language during childhood, adult learners, who are already competent in dealing with unsimplified language in their mother-tongues, tend to aim at what is difficult and beautiful and overlook what is simple and commonplace. They may very well notice

'the gurgling of the brook', 'the twittering of the birds', 'If all the world deserts him, she will be all the world to him'. But very few of my students noticed 'I can speak only a few words of English' after they had read it in the text. (Textbook writers have further enhanced this bad tendency by increasing the difficulty levels of textbooks at such fast speeds that many basic things all children have learned have been unduly left out.) Consequently, adult learners' language proficiency is often not well-balanced. They can sometimes produce more flowery, elegant expressions, perhaps not inappropriately, than some illiterate and under-educated native speakers do, but they are much much weaker than ordinary native speakers in using simple, everyday English. If learners' natural tendency is to notice what is difficult and flowery, perhaps only conscious, deliberate effort can bring them down to what is basic and commonplace.

Having discussed the necessity of slow reading in conscious search of simple, useful expressions, I should now like to discuss the possible effectiveness of this method.

Before becoming an undergraduate I read over 1000 pages of textbooks, short stories, essays, magazines and novels, and the 1000-page *ALD* a few times. In my reading I noticed and underlined tens of thousands of useful expressions, most of which were from the *ALD*. It is of course much easier to remember a meaningful expression like 'blow one's nose', which consists of simple words one has already learned than to memorize a new word like 'scleriosis'. Naturally, the number of useful expressions I became familiar with was much greater than that of the words I had learned. After I had accumulated a lot of useful expressions, I found writing an easy job. Soon after I became an undergraduate, my writing ability was considered to be just as good or even better than that of many people who had received four or five years' full-time language training, had had much more production practice than I, and had read many more pages than I in extensive pleasure reading. On the basis of my own learning experience I think that 10,000 or 20,000 useful expressions can give learners a nonnative production ability to express themselves quite freely in their communication with native speakers (10,000 and 20,000 are very rough numbers because the quality of the expressions and learners' individual factors have not been brought under consideration). A full-time student might not need one year to notice, underline, or even memorize 10,000-20,000 expressions, whereas one year's classroom production activity allows much less to be practised (often perhaps less than 1000). Production practice can of course increase speaking fluency. But when practice stops, fluency will decrease. When I was a first-year student I lived on campus and talked with my classmates and teachers in English all day long, so I could speak fairly fluently. Years later, I became a teacher of English and spoke English only in the classroom, for a few hours per

week, and for most of my time I used Chinese to talk to my wife, parents, shop assistants, etc. So I became less fluent in speaking English. But I found another way of increasing fluency. I spent a few weeks rereading the useful expressions which I had underlined (and were beginning to be forgotten), and my speaking fluency increased slightly again. This phenomenon may not be difficult to explain. After I became more familiar with many ready expressions they came to my mind more easily. So, while constructing a sentence, I did not always have to think of and combine all individual words. When whole expressions came to my mind I needed to organize fewer units to make a sentence; hence, greater fluency. This method, strange as it may seem, may be quite sound to some people who find it unrealistic to interact with native speakers and inconvenient to use a foreign language to talk with their fellow country people.

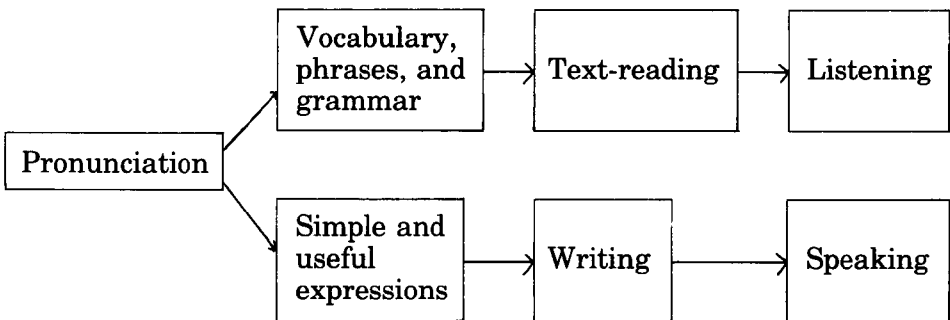
While I emphasize accumulation of useful expressions through slow, conscious reading, and even suggest the rough numbers of 10,000 and 20,000, people may doubt how a limited number of expressions can lead to limitless creative production ability. My answer is as follows. The grammar learned for comprehension is also somewhat useful for production. For example, after underlining 'struck by lightning' in 'My grandmother's eartrumpet has been struck by lightning', it may be quite easy for me to generate, by using grammar and simple words, many appropriate utterances such as 'The tall tree has been (was, had been) struck by lightning.' There is yet another kind of generative power which is different from that of grammar. After accumulating a sufficiently large number of expressions, the learners can sometimes, though not always, create new expressions which they have never heard or read but which are quite appropriate in the eyes of native speakers. Once I saw my students not sitting in their usual seats and wanted them to let me know their new seating arrangement (so that I could link the names with the faces I was not yet familiar with), but I did not know how to say it in English. I was puzzled for a while and then decided to create two expressions 'seating arrangement' and 'seating plan': 'I'd like to know your new seating arrangement. Could you write down your seating plan for me, please?'. Only after I came to Britain this time did I realize that at least 'seating plan' was appropriate as I actually heard it on TV. This kind of creative power is obviously different from that of grammar, and is difficult to explain, but it does exist. Perhaps the problem of creative power in production is something we do not have to worry about too much. When learners have accumulated a certain number of expressions this power will be triggered off and become their competence. The more expressions one can command, the greater this power will be.

I have suggested the rough numbers of expressions necessary for successful communication. Now I should like to discuss the quality of

expressions a little more. I think I have rightly paid attention to simplicity and usefulness of the expressions, but their quality can be further improved if meanings become tidy. By reading a dictionary I have covered the forms fairly completely, but this cannot guarantee a complete coverage of meanings. For example, some important expressions about making telephone calls, sending a parcel by post, etc. have been unduly left out. What is more, when meanings are tidy we may not need so many expressions. If learners know only ‘Thank you (very much)’, they can perform the function of expressing gratitude quite successfully on most occasions. It does not matter very much if they do not know ‘Thanks a lot’, ‘Many thanks’, ‘Ta’, ‘I can hardly express my heartfelt gratitude for your help’, etc. (though it does if they do not know them in comprehension activity). If learners can start learning by following textbooks based on a semantic syllabus, they not only save the time for searching for useful expressions, but quickly cover all important, basic meanings. After all, our purpose in production is to cover various meanings, not various forms. However, at more advanced stages, individuals’ independent searching for useful expressions is indispensable because individual learners will have different difficult points and different needs.

7. Conclusion

On the basis of the above discussion I suggest the following two sets of learning procedures, both based on early pronunciation training:



Here I have a few additional points to make about the above diagram.

First, there is some interaction between the two separated processes. For example, the grammar rules used for comprehension are useful in production to a certain extent. The simple expressions accumulated for production are also helpful to comprehension, especially listening. When armed with many ready expressions, learners can process fewer units in comprehension, comprehend with more accurate expectancy, and therefore increase comprehension speed and accuracy.

Second, if some learners aim at very high production ability, it may not

be necessary for them to have two separated processes, because if the gap between comprehension processes is very narrow the advantage gained through the separation may be outweighed by the interaction between the two processes. However, for most learners who are and need to be much much better in comprehension than in production, the separation is desirable.

Third, this learning approach I have proposed, which involves two separated processes, is meant for some learners in a non-English-speaking environment, and does not reject any existing teaching approach. Instead it attempts to incorporate whatever is useful and valuable in each approach; for instance the role of conscious learning of grammar in comprehension, the tidy meanings aimed at by communicative syllabus designers, the priority of comprehension activity and great quantity of input as advocated by proponents of the comprehension approach, the role of subconscious focus on meaning in fast reading and listening, etc.

To make an optimal approach applicable to practical learning and teaching there is still much concrete work to be done. For instance, we need a good dictionary of the proper size for learners to study, memorize and review. In the matter of methodology, if we no longer emphasize production practice, we need to know more about the features of conscious comprehension activity that can speed the growth of production ability. The compiling of textbooks based on semantic syllabuses should not lose momentum. And so on and so forth.

One individual's learning experience is often negligible; but in view of the extremely complex nature of language and language learning, one person's long-term experience about the whole learning process may tell us more truth than numerous short-term experiments on some fragmentary aspects of learning do. Especially when one person's case history has suggested something potentially useful, it may be unwise to ignore it completely. Large-scale, long-term experiments of teaching and learning are required to prove what is not yet conclusively convincing, and improve what is not yet perfect.

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The Routinization of 'Communicative' Methodology¹

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Introduction

From 1980 to 1983 the authors jointly ran a research project, the Communicative Interaction (CI) Project, studying the attempts of classroom teachers to implement a 'communicative' approach to FL teaching with the 12–14 age group in Scottish secondary schools (Mitchell 1982, 1983a,b, and 1985). The overall aim of the project was to assess the feasibility of providing the learner with extensive experience of 'communicative' FL use, within the formal context of the secondary school classroom. Through the means of an interview survey conducted with teachers involved in a range of FL curriculum development projects, a group of FL teachers committed to a 'communicative' approach was identified. During 1981–82 these teachers were each observed for two periods of a fortnight's duration, teaching French to classes at Secondary 1 (S1) and Secondary 2 (S2) level. During the first round of visits each teacher's personal interpretation of 'communicative' methodology was observed and analysed; on the second occasion they were involved in a series of small-scale action research studies, investigating the feasibility and effectiveness of a variety of pedagogic activities thought likely to promote communicative FL use in the classroom.

These two-week visits provided much valuable data regarding the provision of communicative FL experience in classroom settings, which is being reported in full elsewhere (Mitchell, 1985). However, it was clear that they constituted 'special occasions' for the teachers concerned, who were fully aware of the focus of the research study, and were clearly making special efforts to promote communicative FL use at the time of the research visits. The longer-term sustainability of the patterns of 'communicative' teaching observed during these visits thus remained in question. It was therefore decided to complement these relatively brief visits with a longitudinal study, to investigate the pattern of 'communicative' teaching as it evolved over a longer period of time. Resources dictated that this should take the form of a case study, conducted with a single teacher and her class. One of the teachers who had been involved from the beginning with the research project agreed to become the subject of this study, and her work with a

single beginners' French class was monitored for 30 weeks during the 1982–83 school session:

The teacher was, like all her pupils, a native speaker of English. However she was known from earlier contacts to be a fluent speaker of French, and an effective promoter of its use for a variety of communicative purpose in the classroom. By the summer of 1982 her interest in 'communicative' FL teaching was of relatively long standing. She had been involved in various curriculum development projects with a 'communicative' orientation at S1/S2 level for several years, and regularly attended in-service meetings etc. connected with communicative FL teaching. Like other teachers involved with the CI Project, she described herself in interview as having been engaged during this time in a radical ongoing process of rethinking and adaptation in teaching methods at S1/S2 level, as a result of the impact of 'communicative' ideas. However, by the start of the 1982–83 session there were some grounds for supposing that this process of development might be levelling off. The teacher was by now fairly familiar with the S1/S2 materials of the communicatively oriented French course in use in her school (which she had helped to pilot). Perhaps more importantly, it was evident from interviews and informal discussions that her attention was turning increasingly at this time to the problems and possibilities of extending a communicative approach to FL teaching at higher levels in the school, and strategies for reconciling this with the existing public examinations in S4 and S5. There was thus reason to expect some 'routinization' of teaching at S1 level during this particular school session, with, for example, somewhat less preparation time being given to S1 lessons than previously. If this were to happen, what would the implications be for the extent and nature of communicative FL experience provided for the new S1 class? Of the many communicative uses to which French had been put with her previous S1 class, which would survive once 'special' attention was removed? It was hoped the longitudinal study would provide answers to questions of this type, which are clearly relevant to the dissemination and generalized adoption of a communicative approach to FL teaching.

Conduct of the study

Beginning in the first full week of teaching of the 1982–83 session, the researcher followed this teacher's work with her new S1 class for 30 consecutive weeks. During this period the class (a mixed-sex, mixed-ability group of 29 pupils) completed work on the first four units of the *Tour de France* French course, Scottish-produced and currently widely used in Scotland (SCCML, 1982). The class had three hour-long French lessons per week. The researcher aimed to observe and audiorecord one lesson per week; on the few occasions when the researcher was unavailable, the teacher herself recorded a lesson, so that a complete sequence of audiorecordings was obtained.

In addition to the series of 30 lesson recordings, plus supporting notes on matters such as pupil attendance and materials in use, various other kinds of data were collected. The teacher was interviewed at intervals, to collect her views on the progress of the class and her commentary on the evolution of her instructional strategy. A small number of additional visits were also made to the school, in order to collect attitudinal and attainment data from the pupils; these data are fully reported elsewhere (Mitchell, 1985) and will not be referred to further here.

This paper reports on pedagogic and linguistic aspects of the lessons observed, relevant to the provision of communicative FL experience for the pupils. The first part of the paper describes the overall pattern of teaching, and the general nature of the language experience provided by it. The second part gives an account of selected aspects of the teacher's classroom talk; linguistic features of her FL speech are described, and her use of both French and English for classroom management purposes is accounted for in functional terms.

The pattern of teaching

From audiorecordings and transcripts, the 30 lessons were analysed into their component teaching/learning activities or 'lesson segments', according to principles developed in an earlier study (Mitchell *et al.*, 1981). The complete corpus was judged to contain a total of 358 such pedagogic activities, or an average of 11.9 activities per lesson. Of this total, 45 activities (or 12.5 per cent) were conducted monolingually in English, and the rest were conducted wholly or partly in French.

English-medium activities

The 45 English-medium activities almost all belonged to a distinctive subset of activity types, which rarely or never took place through French. English was always used for class discussion of objectives and of syllabus issues. It was also used consistently on the rare occasions when grammatical or sociolinguistic conventions were explicitly discussed (even though this teacher had previously experimented, in the action research phase of the project, with conducting such discussions through French). English was almost always used in giving and discussing 'background' information about French culture and society. English-medium activities also occasionally took place during preparations for communicative FL work; thus for example, the pen-pal correspondence, initiated with a class at an exchange school in France, which was itself an important source of 'authentic' reading material for the pupils, was discussed in English on several occasions.

The total of English-medium activities was completed by a small number in which English was used for purposes usually accomplished

at least partly through French: the setting of homework (five occurrences in English, as compared with eight through French), and checking whether set homework had been done (four in English, and eleven in French). This small total of non-distinctive English-medium activities indicates considerable success on the teacher's part in sustaining a generalized expectation of FL use at a strategic level throughout the 30 weeks, except for a small group of distinctive purposes. (These distinctive purposes are those consistently identified as English-related in earlier phases of the CI Project.)

French-medium activities

(a) Communicative

The remaining 313 activities were all French-medium, at least in the teacher's intention. A total of 141 activities (39.4 per cent of the overall total, or an average of 4.7 activities per lesson) were judged to involve some form of communicative FL experience for pupils. (That is to say, they were judged to have some substantive purpose for participants, real or simulated, other than the rehearsal of formal aspects of French. The full definition of 'communicative FL activities' used for the CI Project, together with the operational criteria used for their recognition, is presented in the project's Final Report: Mitchell, 1985.)

Table 1 categorizes the communicative FL activities occurring in these lessons by type and frequency. Much the commonest were activities in which some form of 'personal' information was exchanged (such as details about families or pets, or likes and dislikes concerning sport, school subjects, or things to eat). These activities typically consisted of

TABLE 1. *Communicative FL activities*

<i>Activity type</i>	<i>No. of occurrences</i>
1. Personalization (CFL)	44
2. Role-play (CFL)	24
3. Roll-call	18
4. Non-contextualized (CFL)	14
5. Checking work	11
6. Setting homework	8
7. Games	8
8. Reading pen pal letters	7
9. Interviewing visitors	5
10. Singing	1
11. Background discussion	1
Total	141

strings of short exchanges in which the teacher asked a series of individual pupils about, e.g., what pets they had, and reacted briefly to their response (or alternatively, the pupils asked the teacher). What lent such activities their 'communicative' character was the consistent attention paid by the teacher to the message rather than the form of the children's utterances, and her positive response to any divergence or originality in their contributions. Occasionally 'personal' discussions with a more complex structure took place in French (e.g. a discussion of possible class participation in the next school trip to France), but these were usually much briefer, lasting only a minute or so.

The second commonest communicative FL activity was the role-play. Excluding totally pre-scripted role-play activities, which were not judged to have any 'communicative' aspect, there were 24 such activities; these ranged from the impromptu enactment of conversations three or four utterances long, to the much longer and more elaborate group tasks proposed at the end of each coursebook unit, which involved use of props such as family photos and/or the prior invention of elaborate 'personalities' by participants.

The third most frequent communicative FL activity was the roll-call routine (this occupied much time in early lessons, but was progressively de-emphasized as time passed). 'Non-contextualized' communication, the fourth most frequent category, covered activities in which individual exchanges were judged to have a communicative character, but no overall context other than a generalized challenge to get the message right was provided: for example, the giving and following of strings of 'silly' commands (to sit on the floor, draw a cartoon, etc.). (Activities of this type must be considered only marginally communicative; they were christened 'functional drills' by Parkinson *et al.*, 1982.)

Next-commonest were semi-organizational activities: the setting of homework, and checking up on whether such work had been done. (As we have seen, these activities also occurred in English, though less often. When initiated in French they often took on a bilingual character, with the teacher giving instructions, criticisms, etc. consistently in French while pupils responded in English. In this way they often provided receptive rather than productive communicative FL experience for pupils.)

The least common types of communicative FL activity included some with a greater perceived importance for participants than their frequency would suggest. Thus competitive games were frequently requested by the pupils, though they were observed only eight times. FL-medium interviews with French visitors (members of a group from the French exchange school, and an ex-teacher) occurred in only three

lessons, but were apparently high points for the teacher as well as the pupils.

The reading aloud of pen-pal letters from the exchange school constituted the only FL reading activity seen which was judged communicative; no communicative writing in French was observed. Thus the character of the communicative FL activities seen was overwhelmingly oral, and mostly interactive, with an expectation that pupils speak French as well as listen to it.

(b) Practice

The remaining French-medium activities identified in the recorded lessons were judged to have a purely 'practice FL' character – that is, they had no apparent purpose for participants other than familiarization with the French linguistic system. The commonest types were oral structure and repetition drills, with verbal and/or visual cues, and structurally controlled question-and-answer exercises. There was a pronounced 'oral-interactive' bias in these practice FL activities also. Listening comprehension activities and reading aloud were not uncommon, but silent reading never occurred in class time. Some form of writing (or the correction of written homework) took place in 24 of the 30 lessons: however only nine classwork activities in the whole corpus (plus 12 homework tasks) involved any form of practice in FL writing, while 21 involved writing in English or in some symbolic form (e.g. numerals).

While oral pattern drilling was thus still relatively common in these lessons, the teacher's introduction of such drills, and her choice of lexical items for manipulation in them, reflected consistent concern that all class activities be as 'relevant' and involving as possible for her pupils. She typically preceded even the most strictly controlled practice language activity with some statement of functional purpose, and used the 'personal' vocabulary familiar from more open-ended activities.

Class organization

This concern on the teacher's part to maximize immediate pupil motivation and involvement was also apparent in the forms of class organization she used. As Table 2 shows, the predominant form of organization was 'whole class', with everyone present involved, whether as speakers or merely as auditors, in a single interaction. A striking feature of these lessons was the relatively high proportion of 'whole class' activities in which the directing role was delegated to a pupil or group of pupils (15.9 per cent of the entire corpus of activities). For example, in such pupil-centred whole class activities, a single pupil might be manipulating visual material (e.g. flashcards, or a clock face)

and questioning others, or a pair of pupils might be conducting a role-play conversation, with the rest of the class as audience.

TABLE 2. *Class organization*

Lesson no.	Whole class		Pairs	Groups	Individual work	Differentiated work	Total no. of segments
	T directs	P directs					
1	13	3	3	—	—	—	19
2	15	1	3	—	—	—	19
3	9	3	1	—	—	—	13
4	11	3	1	—	—	—	15
5	15	5	1	—	—	—	21
6	10	4	1	—	—	—	15
7	6	—	—	—	—	—	6
8	8	1	—	—	—	—	9
9	4	—	—	—	—	—	4
10	5	1	—	—	—	1	7
11	4	—	—	—	1	—	5
12	9	2	—	1	—	1	13
13	3	3	1	3	—	—	10
14	4	—	—	—	—	—	4
15	10	4	—	—	—	—	14
16	11	2	1	—	—	—	14
17	13	4	—	—	—	—	17
18	12	2	2	—	—	—	16
19	10	3	—	—	—	—	13
20	10	2	2	—	—	—	14
21	6	3	2	—	1	—	12
22	8	—	—	—	—	—	8
23	6	—	—	1	—	—	7
24	9	2	—	1	—	—	12
25	8	2	2	—	—	—	12
26	8	4	1	—	—	—	13
27	8	1	—	—	—	2	11
28	12	—	1	1	—	—	14
29	9	1	1	—	—	—	11
30	6	1	—	2	1	—	10
Total	262	57	23	9	3	4	358
Percentage	73.2	15.9	6.4	2.5	0.8	1.1	100%

On the other hand, pair and group work was less usual than might have been expected from observation in other 'communicative' classrooms, or indeed from the recommendations of the *Tour de France Teacher's Book*. Pair work happened in only half the observed lessons; group work in only six. In interview, the teacher accounted for this low frequency of non-whole-class activities, by comparison with her work with her previous S1 class, in terms of the somewhat different management problems presented by the new class. She perceived this group as having concentration difficulties, precluding extensive non-whole-class

work. However, her solution to this 'problem' (to sustain pupil involvement by increasing the incidence of pupil-directed whole-class activities) might have been expected, if this was somehow a 'difficult' class, itself to bring management problems. In practice these did not occur; the technique remained extremely popular, with pupils always volunteering enthusiastically for the 'teacher' role.

Lastly, there was an almost complete absence of any form of differentiated instruction in these lessons. The only occasions on which differentiation occurred were during the actual administration of individual speaking tests (when pupils not currently being tested were expected to revise, etc., without close supervision). Again, the teacher accounted for this partly in terms of possible managerial difficulties, partly in terms of a perceived lack of suitable materials.

Materials

Table 3 shows the frequency of use of various materials, both belonging to the *Tour de France* package, and derived from other sources. The most popular materials were some highly traditional favourites: jotter, workbook, blackboard, pupil's books, flashcards. The only audiotapes used were those of *Tour de France* (except for a song tape, seen in use on one occasion only); similarly the only reading material used, apart from pen-pal letters, was that available in the *Tour de France* Pupil's Book and Workbook. (At the start of the year the teacher had envisaged making one major adaptation of her teaching strategy: paying increased attention to the skill of reading, through the adoption of a newly published reading series. However this material arrived late, and in its absence, plans for extra reading fell through.) The limited use of the course filmstrip was striking, as was the relatively infrequent use of even the *Tour de France* audiotapes. Overall, it is clear that the

TABLE 3. *Materials in use*

<i>Materials item</i>	<i>Frequency of use (no. of lessons)</i>
1. Jotters	19
2. Workbook	16
3. Blackboard	14
4. Flashcards	13
5. Pupil's Book	12
6. Tape	10
7. Pen-pal letters	8
8. Clock	2
9. Worksheets	2
10. Filmstrips	2
11. Diagnostic checksheets	1

teacher's own classroom talk was the central source of French language data for her pupils.

Overview of the pattern of teaching

During 1982–83 the pattern of teaching undertaken by this teacher represented a consolidation of that seen during 1981–82. Using simple forms of class organization, and a small set of robust, multipurpose materials, she organized a kaleidoscope of oral, interactive activities, apparently planned to maximize pupil motivation and involvement while limiting organizational/managerial demands on the teacher herself. The teacher's own speech was the predominant language resource, in a mixture of practice FL, communicative FL and English-medium activities. While the former predominated in the corpus, very few lessons passed without any communicative FL experience at segmental level. The range of topics addressed in the communicative FL episodes was limited, however, with the teacher sticking largely to the here-and-now, the instrumental and the attitudinal, and switching to L1 for those relatively rare segments with a dense informational content.

At this segmental level, therefore, the longitudinal study produced few surprises, but largely confirmed the viability at least in the medium term of the sort of teaching strategy already glimpsed in many of the CI Project classrooms. While by no means including everything logically possible under the banner of the 'communicative approach', the strategy described seemed to provide a substantial element of communicative FL experience while sustaining pupil interest, without placing unsustainably heavy organizational or managerial demands on the teacher.

The teacher's FL talk

As the first section of this paper has shown, the teacher's speech was the dominant source of French heard by the pupils. An analysis was therefore carried out of selected linguistic and functional aspects of her classroom talk, to investigate its quality as 'input' for the classroom learner.

This more detailed analysis was carried out for a sample of seven lessons only (amounting to approximately seven hours of teaching). The lessons recorded in weeks 1, 5, 10, 15, 20, 25 and 29 were fully transcribed, and the following account is based on an analysis of these transcripts.

TABLE 4. *Occurrences of individual verbs, per lesson*

Verb	Lesson no.							Total occurrences	No. of lessons	No. of V forms
	1	5	10	15	20	25	29			
adorer†	—	—	—	—	—	45	2	47	2	1
aider*	—	—	—	1	1	—	—	2	2	2
aimer	—	—	—	—	5	145	7	157	3	4
aller	88	60	41	74	45	35	32	375	7	8
allumer	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	1	1	1
s'amuser*	—	—	—	—	2	—	—	2	1	1
s'appeler	56	3	—	—	14	—	4	77	4	3
apporter*	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	1	1	1
(s')arrêter	—	2	—	1	—	—	1	4	3	1
arriver*	—	1	—	—	—	3	—	4	2	2
s'asseoir	7	12	6	8	8	6	6	53	7	2
attendre*	4	4	9	7	1	1	11	37	7	4
avoir	1	5	20	13	263	23	22	347	7	8
avoir besoin*	—	—	—	4	—	2	—	6	2	2
avoir raison*	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	1	1	1
baisser†*	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	1	1	1
se balancer†*	—	—	—	3	—	—	—	3	1	1
brancher†*	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	1	1	1
bouger†*	—	—	1	1	—	—	—	2	2	2
se calmer†*	2	—	—	—	—	1	—	3	2	2
changer*	—	2	—	4	2	—	—	8	3	4
chercher	—	—	—	—	4	—	2	6	2	2
choisir*	—	11	1	16	3	—	—	31	4	8
coiffer†*	—	—	—	—	5	—	—	5	1	1
commencer*	—	—	2	8	2	5	2	19	5	6
comprendre	1	—	1	—	5	2	—	9	4	4
compter*	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	1	1	1
connaître*	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	1	1	1
continuer*	—	—	5	3	—	—	3	11	3	4
contrôler†*	—	1	—	—	—	—	1	2	2	1
copier†*	—	5	—	4	—	—	—	9	2	2
corriger†*	—	—	9	—	6	1	—	16	3	4
couvrir*	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	1	1	1
crier*	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	1	1	1
croire*	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	1	1	1
décider*	—	—	—	4	—	—	—	4	1	2
demander*	2	—	—	6	1	—	2	11	4	5
se dépêcher	3	4	4	4	2	11	5	33	7	2
dépendre†*	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	1	1	1
dessiner	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	1	1	1
détester†	—	—	—	1	—	25	1	27	3	2
devoir*	—	—	—	2	—	—	—	2	1	1
dire*	—	—	1	8	3	7	7	26	5	6
distribuer†	—	—	2	—	1	1	—	4	3	2
donner*	—	7	3	7	—	1	—	18	4	3
dormir*	—	—	—	2	—	—	—	2	1	1

Verb	Lesson no.							Total occurrences	No. of lessons	No. of V forms
	1	5	10	15	20	25	29			
écouter	13	9	—	3	4	—	5	34	5	3
écrire	—	—	5	25	1	—	5	36	4	7
effacer*	—	—	6	—	2	—	2	10	3	2
enlever*	—	—	—	5	—	1	—	6	2	2
enregistrer†*	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	1	1	1
entendre	—	—	—	3	—	1	2	6	3	3
entrer*	—	3	1	—	—	—	—	4	2	2
espérer*	—	—	1	—	3	—	1	5	3	1
essayer*	—	—	—	2	—	—	—	2	1	1
être	20	148	112	287	78	91	60	796	7	13
exagérer†*	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	1	1	1
s'excuser*	1	1	1	11	5	—	3	22	6	1
expliquer*	—	—	6	—	2	3	2	13	4	2
se fâcher*	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	1	1	1
faire	2	17	14	17	11	25	123	209	7	12
faire chaud*	—	—	—	2	—	—	—	2	1	1
faire mal*	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	1	1	1
falloir*	1	—	—	2	—	—	1	4	3	1
fermer	—	5	2	5	2	6	1	21	6	2
finir*	2	8	2	6	1	5	2	26	7	5
gagner*	—	—	—	1	4	—	—	5	2	2
garder*	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	1	1	1
goûter†*	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	1	1	1
griffer†*	—	—	—	—	2	—	—	2	1	1
grossir*	—	—	—	—	—	5	—	5	1	1
habiter	49	—	—	3	5	—	5	62	4	3
indiquer†*	—	—	—	2	—	—	—	2	1	1
se lever	2	3	7	—	—	3	—	15	4	2
lire	—	2	—	—	2	—	14	18	3	2
manger	—	—	—	9	—	5	2	16	3	4
manquer*	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	1	1	1
(se) mettre*	—	4	1	10	14	—	1	30	5	6
mimer†*	—	—	—	2	—	—	—	2	1	1
mourir*	—	—	—	—	6	—	—	6	1	1
naître*	—	—	—	—	—	—	4	4	1	1
oublier	—	3	5	6	6	2	2	24	6	7
ouvrir	3	8	—	2	—	2	2	17	5	3
parler	2	3	—	2	2	1	3	13	6	5
partager*	—	—	—	—	—	4	3	7	2	2
passer	—	8	6	—	2	2	6	24	5	3
penser*	—	—	2	—	1	—	—	3	2	2
plaire	1	23	54	11	4	10	14	117	7	2
poser*	2	12	10	30	13	15	2	84	7	5
pouvoir*	—	—	4	7	4	1	—	16	4	3
préférer	—	—	—	—	—	17	2	19	2	1
prendre	1	5	1	1	4	4	7	23	7	4

Verb	Lesson no.							Total occurrences	No. of lessons	No. of V forms
	1	5	10	15	20	25	29			
préparer*	—	—	7	—	—	—	—	7	1	3
présenter*	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	2	1	1
ranger*	—	3	—	1	—	—	—	4	2	1
recevoir*	—	—	—	—	3	—	—	3	1	2
recommencer*	2	—	—	—	1	—	—	3	2	2
refaire†*	—	—	—	—	2	—	—	2	1	1
regarder	—	1	3	4	3	—	—	11	4	4
répéter	8	13	2	33	6	18	4	84	7	3
répondre	3	—	2	3	1	—	—	9	4	4
ressembler*	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	1	1	1
rester*	—	1	—	—	—	1	—	2	2	2
se retourner*	—	—	—	3	—	2	—	5	2	1
revenir*	—	—	—	—	3	—	—	3	1	2
se réveiller*	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	1	1	1
réviser†*	—	—	—	2	—	1	—	3	1	1
savoir	—	—	10	13	4	5	4	36	5	4
sortir*	—	3	7	—	1	1	3	15	5	2
souhaiter†*	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	1	1	1
suffir†*	10	4	3	11	5	1	1	35	7	1
se taire*	—	2	—	—	—	1	—	3	2	1
tenir	—	23	7	1	2	—	—	33	4	3
tirer	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	1	1	1
se tourner	2	1	1	—	—	—	—	4	3	1
travailler	2	8	3	3	6	5	4	31	7	5
tricher†*	—	—	3	1	—	—	—	4	2	1
trouver*	—	1	—	—	11	—	2	14	3	5
venir	10	6	—	3	10	—	1	30	5	5
voir	4	1	3	11	9	4	5	37	7	4
vouloir*	—	—	2	3	3	—	1	9	4	3
Total occurrences	304	446	401	736	627	558	412	3484		
Total verbs	30	43	49	70	65	49	55	121		
Average occurrences per verb	10.1	10.4	8.2	10.5	9.6	11.4	7.5	28.8		

†Verbs not found in *Le française fondamentale (premier degré)**Verbs not found in *Tour de France, Stage 1*

(a) Linguistic features of teacher talk

In order to gain some insight into the range and complexity of the French spoken by the teacher, particular attention was paid to the verb system in her FL classroom talk. Firstly, as an indicator of lexical range, the verbs of which any part was used in the seven-lesson sample were listed. The resulting list is presented in Table 4, with each verb's frequency of occurrence in each lesson, and the number of different forms found. The table also shows which verbs are listed in the 'active' syllabus of *Tour de France* Stage 1 (i.e. that intended for internalization by pupils), which is *Le français fondamental (premier degre)*.

It is clear from Table 4 that the teacher consistently went well beyond the coursebook syllabus in her own speech. Out of the overall total of 121 verbs used by her, no less than 80 were 'extra' in this sense, including many in regular and varied use. Thus, for example, the verb 'poser', not in the syllabus, occurred on 84 occasions, spread over all seven lessons. Five different forms of this verb were found: 'poser', 'pose', 'posez', 'tu poses', 'il pose'. Similarly, eight different forms of the verb 'choisir' were found, in four lessons: 'choisir', 'choisis', 'choisissez', 'je choisis', 'tu choisis', 'vous choisissez', 'j'ai choisi', 'tu as choisi'. Others on the list occurred only occasionally however, and/or in only a limited number of forms (e.g. the relative frequency of 'suffir' is entirely accounted for by one phrase: 'Ça suffit!').

As the table shows, the teacher's speech also contained a proportion of verbs not found in *Le français fondamental*. While a few of these occur in the coursebook syllabus (e.g. 'adorer', 'détester'), most appeared as a result of the teacher's commitment to the use of French for ongoing classroom management. Thus items such as 'baisser' or 'brancher' were used in the course of physical rearrangement of the classroom; 'copier', 'corriger', etc. in the course of giving activity instructions, and 'se balancer', 'se calmer', etc. during disciplinary incidents.

After an initial phase of rapid expansion, the table shows that by Lesson 15 (i.e. by the end of the first term of the school year) a fairly stable pattern was established, in terms of the absolute number of verbs found in a given lesson, their relative frequencies, and the range of forms. The exceptions were distortions induced by syllabus requirements (such as the 263 occurrences of 'avoir' in Lesson 20!). Generally speaking, verbs of early high frequency remained so (e.g. 'poser', 'répéter', 's'asseoir'), while verbs of low initial frequency remained marginal (e.g. the modal verbs 'devoir', 'falloir', 'pouvoir' and 'vouloir').

Table 5 provides a more detailed breakdown of the morphology of the FL verb system used by the teacher. Personal and impersonal forms are

TABLE 5. Morphology of verbs in teacher's speech

Verb forms	Total occurrences, Lesson No.							Total occurrences	No. of lessons	
	1	5	10	15	20	25	29			
<i>Personal forms</i>										
Imperative	2ps	26	99	57	85	46	58	54	425	7
	1pp	1	1	1	1	1	2	4	11	7
	2pp	67	68	31	56	38	46	30	336	7
Subtotal		94	168	89	142	85	106	88	772	
Percentage		30.9	37.6	22.2	19.3	13.6	19.0	21.4	22.2	
Present (personal forms) (on)	1ps	36	4	33	36	164	178	96	547	7
	2ps	71	35	33	88	119	61	89	496	7
	3ps	2	49	40	46	71	22	29	259	7
	1pp	3	11	18	22	15	3	7	79	7
	2pp	-	2	6	25	5	28	1	67	6
	3pp	-	1	-	1	1	-	-	3	3
	Subtotal		112	102	130	218	375	292	222	1451
Percentage		36.8	22.8	32.4	29.6	59.8	52.3	53.9	41.6	
Perfect (personal forms) (on)	1ps	-	2	8	2	14	20	7	53	6
	2ps	1	4	1	3	5	6	5	25	7
	3ps	-	4	2	9	15	1	4	35	6
	1pp	-	-	-	-	3	2	-	5	2
	2pp	3	5	3	-	2	3	-	16	5
	Subtotal		4	15	14	14	39	32	16	134
Percentage		1.3	3.4	3.5	1.9	6.2	5.7	3.9	3.8	
Imperfect (personal forms) (on)	1ps	-	-	-	-	1	6	-	7	2
	2ps	-	2	6	-	-	1	-	9	3
	3ps	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	1
	1pp	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	2	1
	Subtotal		-	2	6	-	3	8	-	19
Percentage		-	0.4	1.5	-	0.5	1.4	-	0.5	
Pluperfect	1ps	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	2	1
Subtotal		-	-	-	1	-	-	1	2	
Percentage		-	-	-	0.1	-	-	0.2	0.1	
Future	1ps	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	2	1
Subtotal		-	-	-	-	2	-	-	2	
Percentage		-	-	-	-	0.3	-	-	0.1	

Verb forms	Total occurrences, Lesson No.							Total occurrences	No. of lessons
	1	5	10	15	20	25	29		
Past participle	1	2	—	6	—	3	—	12	4
Subtotal	1	2	—	6	—	3	—	12	
Percentage	0.3	0.4	—	0.8	—	0.5	—	0.3	
Infinitives	4	35	41	65	42	28	26	241	7
Subtotal	4	35	41	65	42	28	26	241	
Percentage	1.3	7.8	10.2	8.8	6.7	5.0	6.3	6.9	
<i>Impersonal forms</i>									
ça (ne) va (pas)	59	10	2	8	2	—	1	32	6
ça dépend	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	1	1
ça suffit	10	4	3	11	5	1	1	35	7
ça fait . . .	—	—	—	1	—	5	—	5	2
ça y est	5	2	4	8	3	7	9	38	7
c'est (pas)	13	83	56	156	57	59	31	455	7
c'était	—	—	—	1	2	1	—	4	3
il est TIME	—	—	—	84	—	1	—	85	2
il fait ADJ	—	—	—	2	—	—	—	2	1
il (ne) faut (pas)	1	—	—	2	—	—	1	4	3
il (n')y a (pas)	—	1	2	5	8	2	2	20	6
s'il te plaît	1	18	42	7	3	5	11	87	7
s'il vous plaît	—	5	12	4	1	5	3	30	6
n'est-ce pas	—	—	—	—	—	3	—	3	1
Subtotal	89	123	121	290	81	89	59	852	
Percentage	29.2	27.5	30.2	39.4	12.9	15.9	14.3	24.4	
Total	304	447	401	736	627	558	412	3485	

shown separately. This table shows that the 'personal' section was dominated by imperative and present tense forms. The incidence of both was at times boosted by syllabus considerations (each is a 'teaching point' at some stage during Units 1–4 of *Tour de France*), but they remained common in the teacher's speech even when not actively being taught.

The only other verb forms occurring with any frequency were some perfect tense forms, and infinitives. Apart from a few items taught as holophrases (e.g. 'j'ai oublié NP'), none of these occurred in the

coursebook units observed. Imperfect, pluperfect and future tense forms hardly appeared at all however; the teacher consistently expressed future time by means of the 'aller + infinitive' construction. Past participles occurring alone were almost totally confined to her frequent use of a single one-word question: 'Fini?'.

As well as being the most frequently used tense, the present tense appeared in the widest range of forms. First, second and third person singular present tense forms occurred in the 'active' coursebook syllabus, as did 'vous' forms, and this fact boosted their respective frequencies in the teacher's speech. But her regular use of 'on' and marginal introduction of the third person plural anticipated *Tour de France* Stage 2, as did the introduction of perfect tense forms other than the first person singular.

Apart from some shifting in relative frequency between the three most common categories (imperative, present tense and impersonal forms), no significant development can be detected after Lesson 5 on this table, either with respect to the introduction of new moods or tenses, or the extension of the range of forms used within each. This tends to confirm the picture of highly interactive, here-and-now FL talk suggested in the previous section in relation to the pattern of pedagogic activities. In other ways the pattern of morphological frequencies seemed adapted not only to the classroom setting but also, perhaps, to the teacher's perceptions of 'difficulty'. Teacher self-censorship seemed the most plausible explanation for the complete absence of 'nous' forms, for example, and of all subjunctive forms.

(b) Functional differentiation in language choice

It was clear from inspection of the lesson transcripts that although the teacher spoke a great deal of French with her pupils, her use of English was not confined to that subset of pedagogic activities which were 'officially' English-medium. This 'survival' of English in her classroom talk required explanation, in view of her clear commitment to the goal of making the target language the classroom communicative norm. Could specific discourse functions be identified, whose realization in French caused particular difficulties for the teacher? Or was English being used randomly from time to time, to perform functions realized at other times in French? (This latter possibility appeared to represent the greater potential threat to the stability of French usage for classroom communication.)

In order to answer these questions the teacher's use of English was examined more closely. Table 6 shows the number of teacher speech turns in the seven-lesson subsample discussed in the previous section. The number and percentage of speech turns containing at least some

TABLE 6. Analysis of teacher speech turns

Lesson no.	Teacher speech turns		
	All-FL	Including L1	Total
1 no.	216	125	341
percentage	63.3	36.7	100.0
5 no.	222	144	366
percentage	60.7	39.3	100.0
10 no.	154	144	298
percentage	51.7	48.3	100.0
15 no.	420	63	483
percentage	87.0	13.0	100.0
20 no.	291	108	399
percentage	72.9	27.1	100.0
25 no.	301	96	397
percentage	75.8	24.2	100.0
29 no.	261	97	358
percentage	72.9	27.1	100.0
Total	1865	777	2624
Percentage	70.6	29.4	100.0

TABLE 7. Distribution of T turns including L1 within lessons

Lesson no.	L1 turns in FL activities			Total L1 turns
	L1 turns in L1 activities	PFL 'mixed' activities	CFL and other PFL activities	
1	42 (3 activities)	—	83 (16 activities)	125 (19 activities)
5	—	22 (1 activity)	122 (20 activities)	144 (21 activities)
10	—	49 (2 activities)	95 (4 activities)	144 (7 activities)
15	—	—	63 (14 activities)	63 (14 activities)
20	—	55 (4 activities)	53 (10 activities)	108 (14 activities)
25	11 (1 activity)	—	85 (11 activities)	96 (12 activities)
29	12 (2 activities)	44 (2 activities)	41 (7 activities)	97 (11 activities)
Total	65 (6 activities)	170 (9 activities)	542 (83 activities)	777 (98 activities)
Percentage	8.4	21.9	69.8	100.0

English is shown. While these all – or part-English speech turns approached 50 per cent in only one lesson (one including a major test), and settled below 30 per cent from Lesson 15 onwards, the amount of English spoken by the teacher was clearly never reduced to negligible proportions.

Table 7 shows the distribution of the 777 all/part-English teacher speech turns in this seven-lesson subsample according to the type of activity in which they occurred. Out of the 98 teaching/learning activities in these lessons, six were completely English-medium; however, these accounted for only 8.4 per cent of the teacher's English speech turns. The rest occurred in the course of activities which were predominantly FL-medium (whether 'practice' or 'communicative').

These English speech turns were far from occurring randomly in the 92 officially FL-medium activities, however. Firstly, a group of practice FL activities was identified, in which the teacher used English systematically for some discourse function integral to the accomplishment of the task. Shown in the table as practice FL 'mixed-language' activities, these consisted largely of listening and reading comprehension activities, in which the teacher used English consistently to give or to confirm meanings of FL texts; vocabulary checks; and spelling activities (in which English was regularly used to evaluate performance). These 'mixed-language' activities accounted for a further 21.9 per cent of the teacher's English speech turns.

The remaining all/part-English speech turns did occur more irregularly, scattered through activities for which French was the intended spoken norm. On inspection, it turned out that these remaining English utterances had also mostly been used for a distinctive (though non-task-specific) set of discourse functions.

Firstly, English was frequently used by the teacher at times of perceived comprehension difficulty (along with other, FL-medium communication strategies). Overall, the commonest type of English communication/repair strategy was the *language switch* – where a French phrase was immediately 'echoed' in English, as in the following example:

Attends un moment, attends un moment. Wait a minute, hold on.
(Lesson 29)

Use of this language switching strategy, however, decreased with time, from a peak of 44 instances in Lesson 10 to seven in Lesson 29.

Other, more elaborate part or all-English communication strategies were almost equally common:

- T: Tu n'en as pas besoin. What do you think I'm saying, "Tu n'en as pas besoin"?
- P: It doesn't matter
- P: You don't need it
- T: Oui, c'est ça, you don't need it (Lesson 15)

Secondly, in activities of all kinds, a strong tendency was apparent for 'activity instructions' (teacher utterances which tell the pupils what is going to happen next) to be given in English. This emerges clearly from Table 8, which shows the language used for this discourse function throughout the seven-lesson subsample, regardless of activity type. Activity instructions were given in French alone on only 17 occasions, a figure hardly greater than that for activities launched without any explicit instructions at all.

TABLE 8. *Language of activity instructions*

Lesson no.	Language of activity instructions by activity				Total no. of activities
	FL	FL/L1	L1	Ø	
1	1	3	11	4	19
5	3	2	13	3	21
10	—	4	1	2	7
15	5	7	1	1	14
20	4	4	5	1	14
25	2	4	4	2	12
29	2	2	6	1	11
Total	17	26	41	14	98

Between them, activity instructions and communication strategies accounted for considerably more than half the teacher's English utterances during FL-dominant activities. Half a dozen other discourse management functions accounted for almost all the remainder. These were discourse moves intended to modify an ongoing activity, to elicit responses from pupils, to respond to an unsolicited pupil question or comment, and to discipline deviant behaviour. With the exception of comments on points of grammar, which were consistently given in English, all these move types were regularly expressed in French also (some, such as 'eliciting' moves, more commonly so). Some other move types (notably the very common 'organizational instructions', to do with materials, seating, etc.) were hardly ever expressed in English, having apparently become decisively identified with French.

Overview of teacher talk

This teacher sustained a consistent pattern of extensive but not exclusive FL use in her own classroom talk throughout the 30 weeks of

the study. Her French was linguistically more complex than the coursebook syllabus, though it was clearly a simplified register, on whose structure the coursebook syllabus had some influence. There was some indication that the elaboration of this register was a stepped rather than a continuous process; after a rapid initial phase of 'complexification' the structural development of the teacher's FL talk slowed down, and the range of FL forms in use was much the same from about Lesson 15 until the end of the study.

English retained a regular, though minor, place in the teacher's classroom talk throughout. Most notably, it was her first choice for two essential discourse functions: ensuring that participants in teaching/learning activities knew what was happening next (activity instructions), and ensuring that comprehension was sustained (communication strategies). These functions were only exceptionally performed in French; even when they were, there was no directional pattern suggesting that any general shift to French for such purposes was imminent.

While a few teachers observed during an earlier phase of the project had been seen to use French more extensively than this, the quantity of 'comprehensible input' provided by this teacher for her pupils in her own classroom talk was still substantial. Functional differentiation between the use of L1 and FL, with English in regular use for certain purposes but hardly encroaching at all into many others, seems on this evidence a viable pattern for sustaining extensive classroom FL use in the longer term, without imposing intolerable stresses on the teacher or her pupils.

Conclusion

The evidence gathered during this longitudinal case study suggests that this teacher had found a robust, practical pattern of instruction, well adapted to the particular 'personality' of her 1982–83 S1 class, and sustainable without massive inroads into her out-of-class preparation time. In overall lesson planning the changes were rung on a fairly small set of proven activities; ease of organization was assured through the almost exclusive use of off-the-shelf materials and straightforward seating plans. Nonetheless this 'routinized' pattern conserved many features first seen in more consciously 'innovative' lessons, and offered the pupils substantial experience of communicative FL use. While English played a regular role in the running of these lessons, the scale of English use was controlled through stable functional differentiation between the two languages, and even in the latest lessons in the series there was no sign of English encroachment on FL discourse 'territory'.

Could this teacher have used French even more extensively over this

period of time, excluding English altogether from her own classroom talk? Could the planned 'communicative reading' strand have been successfully integrated into the overall pattern? Could the pupils have taken more responsibility for their own learning, in more complex group or individual organizational patterns? Such questions point to the desirability of further case studies, investigating a range of solutions to the problem of providing classroom experience of communicative FL use. But even this single study provides considerable encouragement as to the viability of a 'communicative approach' under something approaching normal, everyday classroom conditions.

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Notes

1. Paper presented to the Seventh World Congress of Applied Linguistics, Brussels, August 1984.

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