

## Awareness Session

### "Developing a Supplementary Handbook for Your Learners"

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#### Abstract:

Language teachers use supplementary materials according to immediate needs, but there is a need to make the use of these materials more systematic and coherent so as to aggregate value to the regular syllabus. The paper attempt to make a contribution to the syllabus of beginner courses for adults and young adults. A small scale research project is reported and the tasks applied are discussed.

The presenters outline the process followed for adapting and supplementing materials for a beginner level with young adult learners at Universidad Javeriana extension course. The steps in the development of a speaking handbook, currently used in a course, will be illustrated and discussed. The paper extends from needs analysis to the actual tasks. Those interested in turning their creative activities into planned tasks that specify goals, communicative purpose, teaching points(s), activities, learners roles, teacher roles, procedures, and materials may find this paper useful.

#### Session Content:

The professors-researchers identified the problem that beginner learners lacked opportunities to converse about the topics covered in the course. They were not sure about the motivations learners may have for the course, and they did not know about the extent learners cared about speaking. As a result a needs analysis survey was conducted.

Richards (1989) states that after considering the parameters, sources and procedures, needs analysis may focus on either the general parameters of a language program or on the specific communicative needs of language learners. The first one may be referred to as situational analysis, meanwhile the second approach refers to communicative needs analysis.

**The process followed for adapting and supplementing materials for a beginner level with young adult learners started with the identification of a problem, and an analysis of the series being used. Then a survey for professors and learners was applied.**

**The survey questionnaire presented in the Appendix was applied to learners of a class of Course I to gather information about their perceived communicative needs, their opinion of the course and of the materials used. After analyzing the data, the researchers tried out several activities with a course 1, conducted observations, and requested the learners' feedback on the activity.**

The topics of the professor survey inquired about what they felt was important in second language learning, their perception of the textbook series and their perception of the course. Four professors of Course I took the survey on aspects of the course and on the use of the components of the series being used "Headway Elementary". Professors were also surveyed on the usefulness of the activities proposed in the series. They were also asked whether they designed or used other activities for diverse aspects of the course.

The results point in the direction that most professors are aware of the existence of some of the supplementary materials that the series Headway brings. The audio-tapes are used frequently. On the other hand, the professors indicate that they use supplementary material whenever they feel their learners need more practice in a skill.

#### Theoretical Framework

The researchers adhere to the idea of communicative competence which entails grammatical accuracy as well as knowledge of discourse norms and strategies for ensuring that communication is understood. (Canale and Swain, 1980 in Celce-Murica, 1991). The tasks included in this handbook concentrate on promoting communicative competence. These tasks rely on the learners' ability to understand and communicate real information about themselves or about the world. The aim of such tasks is to promote a language interaction which is as close as possible to that used by competent performers in normal life (Celce-Murica, 1991).

The tasks described and analyzed below share the characteristics of being informal wherein unrehearsed use of the language is encouraged in a relaxed classroom atmosphere. There is natural negotiation of turns and the exchange of "new information" which occurs in ordinary conversation.

In an instructional setting learners receive at least two types of linguistic input. The one that comes from the instructor or the materials, and the other proceeding from the student to student interaction. The second kind may possibly engage, involve and activate the learners' more since they focus on the immediate task of communicating and cooperate to achieve mutual understanding, tuning their language to the demands of the situation. In addition, the interactive-type of tasks here proposed seem to address the issue of learner's "comfort" an important factor in second language learning (Celce-Murica, 1991).

The paradigm of **presentation practice and production** (ppp) as stages in second language teaching has dominated the profession for decades. The researchers identify themselves more with the paradigm proposed by Harmer (1997) who suggests: to engage, involve, and activate learners as stages in second language teaching. He means that a lot is gained by proposing procedures that commit the learners to experience, to experiment, to use what they know and to feel. The sample tasks included in this paper are meant for beginners and may be used either to introduce a topic, to extend the contents of a particular lesson or they can be adapted to review particular language, and most importantly, they are meant to engage the learners.

#### Sample Tasks.

In order to provide reader with an instrument they could try in their classes, some of the tasks carried out for this study are presented below. Every task opens with an introduction that provides a rationale and a statement of purpose meant to engage the learners. The language is then displayed and exemplified so as to activate knowledge. Learners are encouraged to mingle, that is to involve themselves with others and enrich with the interaction. The plenary offers the opportunity to share the linguistic and affective learning there might have been. The elicitation offers the teacher the opportunity to stress some aspects. The evaluation allows learners to reflect on what was learned, and the wrap up brings together the discussion thus engaging, activating and involving the learners.

#### **TASK ONE. The cocktail party**

##### Step 1. Introduction

You may know some about your classmates, but you need to know more those who will spend several months working with you. We will pretend the classroom is a cocktail and you will walk around to chat with people.

### Step 2. Display

You will need half a piece of your notebook paper. In the center write your first name and on each corner the information requested: Top left: occupation; top right; age, bottom right likes, and bottom left, favorite musical band. We will use a TV character as example

Accountant 26 Beatriz (the ugly duckling)

Writing a diary Trio music

### Step 3. Mingling

Walk to someone and start conversing. You may start by saying: nice to meet you, I see you are 26, I am 26 too.

### Step 4. Plenary

In a semicircle, learners state what they think they learned about the others with this activity, and what language they learned.

### Step 5. Elicitation

T invites learners to share, for instance: What was the most unexpected thing you learned about the others. What did you find in common, etc.

### Step 6. Evaluation of activity

Will you be so kind as to tell me how this activity helped you to speak.

### Step 7. Wrap up.

As you may have observed learning about others can be enjoyable. You should try to continue learning more about your classmates.

## **TASK TWO. 1, 2, 3 follow the rhythm**

### Step 1. Introduction

You already know your numbers and you may do many things with them, like playing bingo. Today you will use the numbers you know to interact with others playfully. Each desk you are using has a number starting with mine, which is No. 1. Do this movement, please: palms on your thighs, snap, snap, palms on your thighs.

### Step 2. Display

Please snap your fingers of the left hand, then your right. (The teacher models). As you snap with your left, you say YOUR number. As you snap with your right, you call (loud and clear) someone else's number. Your call and the response must be at the rhythm of palms and snapping. The teacher stresses accurate pronunciation of numbers and requests on and off from some learners to say the number they have.

### Step 3. Mingling

After several tries those who respond out of rhythm or out of turn move to the last desk and take that number. Later, those failing are sent out and number of players become smaller. The purpose of the activity is to become No.1

The faster the activity goes the merrier it is. The teacher should allow learners to take the No. 1 spot.

### Step 4. Plenary

In a semicircle, learners state what they think they learned with this activity. Expected answer: how to make the "V" sound in seven and eleven. Learn to stress the numbers from 13 to 19 as opposed to 30 or 90.

### Step 5. Elicitation

T invites learners to say, for instance: Who was the most rhythmic in this group? Who lost the most times?

### Step 6. Evaluation of activity

Will you be so kind as to tell me how you liked it. Would you play it with friends?

### Step 7. Wrap up.

As you may have observed with a little knowledge we could learn some more, and enjoy ourselves.

## **TASK THREE. Getting to know one another**

### Step 1. Introduction

You may already know your classmates, but there are some things you will learn about them today. This activity will give you the opportunity to practice the language studied so far.

### Step 2. Display

Learners go over the worksheet and are allowed to ask about the meaning of unknown words. Teacher and students model a couple of sentences. First, students pair, then they fix the worksheet on the board.

### Step 3. Mingling

Learners walk around reading everyone's chart.

### Step 4. Plenary

In a semicircle, learners state what they learned about their classmates. They may begin their sentences with "I did not know that".

### Step 5. Elicitation

T invites learners to report on what classmates usually do.

T invites learners to state which actions were the most common.

### Step 6. Evaluation of activity

Now, I will ask you to evaluate this activity. Will you be so kind as to respond this questionnaire.

### Step 7. Wrap up.

As you may have observed those words that indicate frequency allows us to figure out peoples' likes and routines. You may have learnt what you have in common with others.

## **TASK FOUR. A dear picture**

### Step 1. Introduction

Family is important in our lives. They give us love, support. Family represents many things cherished to us. We all have pictures we carry around or we have on our bedside table. Today you will share a dear picture of your family with your classmates.

### Step 2. Display

Students stick on the board and the walls the picture and a brief description of those in it.

### Step 3. Mingling

Ss walk around reading the descriptions. They find at least four classmates to talk or ask them about their picture.

### Step 4. Plenary

In a semicircle learners share the following what they learned about their classmates. For example: I did not know that X had a baby, or I learned that Y is an only child.

### Step 5. Elicitation

T invites learners to carry on by asking questions like:

Which picture caught your attention? What was the most original picture?

### Step 6. Evaluation of activity

Now, I will ask you to evaluate this activity. Will you be so kind as to respond this questionnaire.

Step 7. Wrap up. We care about family; we know how important they are. I hope this exercise helped you value those around you.

## DISCUSSION

The paradigm of **presentation, practice and production** (ppp) appears to prevail in courses and in materials. Learners react positively to tasks that propose the learners to engage themselves in learning, to involve them in the topic and to activate their background knowledge and their knowledge of the world, and of the language. The tasks proposed support Harmer's (1997) contention that learners make more gains from experiencing gained by proposing procedures that commit the learners to experience, to experiment, to share the little or much they know and share how they feel.

One task that facilitates the engagement of learners, their involvement and the activation of their potential are simulations. As Crookall and Oxford (1990: 19-20) argue:

“Simulations is much more than a Friday afternoon respite from more tedious exercises and is being used more and more as a standard feature in language situations.... Simulation allows language learners to create their own communication realities, rather than being entirely dependent upon the teacher

for providing a model; it allows learners to learn by doing-by doing it by themselves.”

The tasks, The Cocktail Party, My Dear picture and Getting to know one another, described in this paper, illustrate simulations. They entail cooperation; learners cooperate to speak about a topic they know well i.e., themselves. When the teacher researchers apply them they have observed that:

- The language used is more authentic and richer than that found in classes under the PPP paradigm.
- Involvement from the learners has proved to be high
- Learners perform in smaller and more intimate groups; thus peer correction comes naturally, and anxiety is reduced.
- The social significance of language can be brought into focus for language is not used for display purposes or transactional purposes but rather for interactional purposes. In other words, learners communicate to share feelings, expectations, wishes and other personal emotions.
- Learners can give interesting suggestions to carry out the tasks thus these can be improved application after application.
- Learners also manifest that textbooks do not necessarily provide what they need to know or provide enough practice. They argue that the rigidity of the syllabus is broken and the course is enriched.
- For some learners, these tasks bridge between topics thus clarifying the path learners need to undertake next. Learners found the tasks as logical steps to build on what has been covered in the course.
  
- Learners feel these tasks allow them to become active participants in learning. Poor learners expressed they felt involved and eagerness to participate thanks to these tasks.
  
- Teachers discover by using supplementary material that their lessons turn out to be more rewarding, that the learning of a foreign language has significant importance when the affective aspects are taken into account. A foreign language program in which humanist strategies and techniques are provided brings out the best of our students: show the positive side, increase their self-esteem, help learners to be themselves, and to be proud of themselves. Moskowitz, 1978.

The above description takes second language away from drill and practice. Since learners consider a typical class as very structured, too controlled, with too much parroting, the tasks discussed in this paper may offer learners a richer approach to teaching. We encourage you to try them and enrich them.