

TEACHING A LANGUAGE FUNCTION BASED ON COMMUNICATIVE PRINCIPLES

(1) LANGUAGE PRESENTATION: DIALOG FORMAT

- interaction between speakers should be realistic
- setting and role relationship between speakers should be indicated
- target function should occur naturally and represent the one that native speakers would use most frequently in that situation (unmarked form); the dialogS should not be an artificial context for the function
- provide more than one dialog to show how language varies depending on:
 - (a) the relationship between speakers (formality levels),
 - (b) the type of task (e.g. major/minor imposition, major/minor offense)
- if possible, have native speakers perform the dialog and tape-record it (use as listening activity before the students see the transcript)

(2) HIGHLIGHTING OF FUNCTION IN DIALOGS

- exploit the dialogs and have the students discover instances of the target function (linguistic exponents) and underline them
- develop a grid that allows a visual display of language forms related to social parameters of the situation
- transfer the linguistic forms of the target function out of the dialog to see in isolation (on the blackboard or OHP) and arrange them according to formality level, type of task in the grid

(3) CONTROLLED PRACTICE: FOCUS ON ACCURATELY PRODUCING AND SUPPLYING THE APPROPRIATE LINGUISTIC FORM FOR THE FUNCTION

- provide exercises that limit students' attention to the linguistic forms of the target function so that they can be accurately produced (this implies that students appropriately identify formality level and type of task!)
- these exercises should be meaningful and realistic (no isolated, unconnected practice sentences): provide realistic unifying context; a lot of practice can center around dialog activities
- make sure that the exercise is not simply a mechanical transformation where students could supply the correct linguistic form for the function without considering the meaning of the whole exchange
- provide for pair or group practice wherever possible
- provide enough practice exchanges that the students can practice while you walk around the classroom to "eavesdrop" on them (and provide help if needed)

Sample Activities for Controlled Practice:

- a) *recognition* (ss identify role relationship of speakers and type of task)
- b) *identification* (ss identify role relationship of speakers/type of task and produce appropriate linguistic exponent)
- c) *information transfer* (ss transfer linguistic exponents into appropriate cell in grid)
- d) *meaningful language drill* (involving fixed patterns of role relationships and task types; regulated sequence and form of responses, but response choices are meaningful)

(4) SEMI-CONTROLLED PRACTICE: MOVING AWAY FROM FOCUS ON LINGUISTIC FORMS/ACCURACY TO FOCUS ON MEANING/COMMUNICATION

- move toward less controlled exercises and provide stronger focus on meaning component
- make sure that exercises model realistic tasks and realistic language use (i.e. are these the type of exchanges that native speakers would engage in) and provide unifying content
- if possible, provide for exchange of personal information

Sample Activities for Semi-Controlled Practice:

- a) cued narrative/half dialog* (ss produce appropriate linguistic exponents following verbal/written/pictorial cues provided throughout the activity)
- b) unscrambling tasks* (ss assemble a communicative exchange by putting the relevant parts of the exchange in order)
- c) information exchange* (short information gap tasks that help practice the target function)
- d) preparation* (ss plan, prepare, rehearse for a later activity)

(5) COMMUNICATIVE ACTIVITY: FOCUS ON MEANING/COMMUNICATION AND ACCOMPLISHING A COMMUNICATIVE GOAL

- activity should allow for genuine information exchange
- the new function should be an integral part of the speaking activity, but should not be the focus, so that attention is shifted away from the function (and its linguistic exponents) to a genuine exchange of messages among students
- activity needs to be adequately prepared
- explain the purpose of the activity (best at the end; otherwise students **will** focus on the function too much)

Sample Activities for Speaking:

- a) information gap tasks* (longer, extended versions of semi-controlled info gaps; ss should focus on social protocol of the entire situation, e.g. the hellos and good-byes in phone conversations)
- b) opinion gap tasks* (ss engage in cooperatively solving a problem)
- c) role-play / drama / simulation* (ss freely act out roles and situations after initial cues, often simulating real-life actions and experiences)
- d) games* (ss produce and use language in a setting of a language game)
- e) interviews* (ss obtain information from each other)
- f) discussion* (ss discuss specified topic; sides may or may not be assigned)

(6) CLOSURE ACTIVITY

(7) HOMEWORK:

Learning tasks that extend beyond the class hour

(8) EVALUATION

How can you determine whether or not your lesson objectives have been accomplished?