ANNA MICHOŃSKA-STADNIK

GRAMMAR
IN A BEGINNERS' COURSE
OF ENGLISH

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GRAMMAR
IN A BEGINNERS' COURSE
OF ENGLISH

with special reference
to teaching English in Poland

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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

The communicative approach to language teaching has recently become the main focus of attention of language teachers all over the world. The advocates of this approach maintain that it is not only the grammar of the language, but also the ability to use this language in various communicative situations that is essential in language teaching.

This new approach triggered a change of attitude towards language teaching syllabuses. It is now assumed that syllabus constructors should organize language teaching in terms of the communicative content rather than in terms of the form of the language. It is what the learners want to express by language that should become the focus of attention of syllabus designers. Attempts have been made to construct so-called *functional* or *notional* syllabuses. These were often called 'communicative syllabuses'. Consequently, many 'communicative' textbooks appeared on the market. Hence, communicative language teaching has often been identified with the courses based on functional or notional syllabuses.

It is extremely important to realize, however, that communicative teaching cannot be associated only with functional syllabuses. This work intends to demonstrate that *it is the methodology that may (or may not) be called communicative, not the syllabus.* Knowledge of grammar *is* necessary to develop communicative competence, and thus a well-organized grammatical syllabus, if accompanied by communicative teaching techniques, may turn out to constitute the most helpful approach to the teaching of beginners. The beginners' stage is extremely important in language learning, because it is here that all good learning habits are established.

Chapter 1 clarifies the terminology most often used in discussing language learning. The notions *first language, second language* and *foreign language* are explained and their systematic classification is offered. The difference between *acquisition* and *learning* is also clarified.

In Chapter 2 the origins and the development of the communicative approach, together with the syllabus design controversy, are discussed.

In Chapter 3 the latest approach to the teaching of grammar, i.e. *grammatical consciousness-raising* is presented. Here the central idea of this work is given a detailed explanation.

On the basis of what has been said so far on teaching grammar we may conclude that a careful selection and grading of grammatical items in a

language course is needed to facilitate communication. Chapter 4 shows how structural units are presented in some Polish textbooks for English beginners and suggests modifications that could be introduced. The majority of the remarks refer to the selection and grading of verb forms. Selection of other grammatical items, like pronouns, prepositions and determiners is also dealt with. The chapter ends with a list of principles which may be helpful for the selection and grading of grammatical items in a beginners' course.

Chapter 5, which is the final chapter, presents examples of introduction and practice of some chosen structural units with emphasis on grammatical consciousness-raising. It also contains a discussion of basic principles of communicative methodology.

This work includes practical suggestions, based on contemporary research, on how to facilitate the process of learning to communicate in English, in courses for beginners. These suggestions may be helpful for inexperienced teachers, as well as for all those who are not satisfied with their English textbooks and wish to supplement them, with a view to the communicative needs of their learners.

CHAPTER 1

LANGUAGE LEARNING — CLEARING THE GROUND

1.1. FIRST LANGUAGE, SECOND LANGUAGE AND FOREIGN LANGUAGE

It is important to draw a distinction between foreign language (FL) and second language (SL), because in a number of publications these two notions are often understood as one. For better clarity of later explanations the following division is proposed:

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        Learner's
        Language
         /    \
       L1     L2
             /   \
           SL     FL
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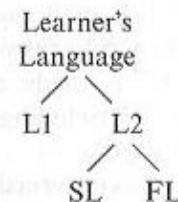
The first language (L1), often referred to as the native language or the mother tongue, is usually acquired in childhood. "First language acquisition occurs when the learner — usually a child — has been without a language so far and now acquires one" (Klein 1986:4). A child may, however, acquire two languages simultaneously, for example if his parents use different languages. In that case two languages are 'first', and we may observe the phenomenon of parallel bilingualism. "A language is 'first' — and so is its acquisition — if no other language was acquired before; otherwise it is second" (op. cit.: 3), and here the notion of L2 appears.

L2 comprises two phenomena: SL (second language) and FL (foreign language). By SL we understand a language learnt or acquired in its natural environment, i.e. in a country or community where it is used for communication. For instance, learning English while staying in an English-speaking country, where we constantly listen to the language, and when we have to learn it in order to function properly in a foreign environment, is a typical second language situation. English is also taught as a second language in countries where it is officially used in state institutions like schools, offices or courts of law, as opposed to the vernacular, which is used informally. In such situations SL is taught in schools. A foreign language (FL) is al-

ways learned in classroom conditions, outside any community that uses it naturally.

Having explained the basic language phenomena, let us concentrate on similarities and differences between the processes of mastering them.

There is one extremely important difference between the processes of mastering L1 and L2: "First language acquisition is intimately bound up with the child's cognitive and social development" (Klein 1986:4). On the other hand, L2 acquisition may occur either when cognitive and social development is still in progress (children from the age 3—4 up to puberty) or when it is already finished (after puberty) — op. cit.: 15. A child acquiring his L1 must master the "cognitive categories which underlie the various expressive means of natural languages — categories such as time, space, modality, causality, etc." (op. cit.: 4). Once acquired, these concepts are then available for the learner throughout his whole life. When learning an L2 he does not always have to create new concepts, he only has to learn particular words referring to them. Sometimes, however, the process is not so simple. For instance, a native speaker of Polish, while learning English as an L2, has to develop the category of aspect in a different way. Still, in the majority of cases the process of mastering an L2 is made easier due to the L1 cognitive knowledge. Here, however, we are excluding the cases of bilingual children, where two languages are first (L1).

As far as social development is concerned, L1 is the medium of acquiring one's social identity. For instance, a native speaker of Polish identifies himself with the Polish community. This does not apply to L2 acquisition to the same extent. A native speaker of Polish, learning English as his L2 (FL), very rarely identifies himself with the English community. Social identity of an L2 learner is already established. A young child has less sense of social identity with the L1 community, and thus learns an L2 more easily. An adult may be afraid to lose his social identity and this becomes a major obstacle in mastering an L2 (Klein 1986:6).

The importance of social context in L1 learning has been discussed by a number of psycholinguists. For instance, Campbell and Wales (1970:249) said that everybody possesses innate predispositions to structure information "but every acquisition depends to some extent on the interaction of these predispositions with the environment". Further, they suggested that since the social factors play such an important role in language acquisition, the psychology of language should make the environmental variables its primary object of study (op. cit.: 249), because "a child learns whether his utterances are well-formed or not [...]. from environmental feedback" (op. cit.: 256—7).

Similarly, Stevick says that in first language acquisition "the person who is doing the acquiring meets words in the full context of genuine hu-

man communication. There is no special presentation of a new item, no organized drilling, and no testing in the academic sense" (1982:22).[1]

The second difference between the process of mastering L1 and L2 refers to the degree of achievement. All first language learners meet with success in acquiring their L1. Not all L2 learners achieve the same degree of success. When we compare the number of hours of contact with the language, the numbers are definitely in favour of L1. No one really knows how long it takes in the case of L1 to achieve fluency, but it can be estimated that children spend from 12,000 to 15,000 hours acquiring their native tongue (Larsen-Freeman 1986:6). Even starting his L2 education at the age of three or four, the learner has much less time at his disposal. When the L2 education starts later, native-like fluency in L2 is practically impossible to be achieved.

As far as the processes of mastering SL and FL are concerned, there are two important similarities between the two. First, both SL and FL belong to L2, which implies that their development is not associated with the learners' cognitive and social development. Second, they both involve classroom instruction. The difference between them here lies in the fact that FL learning always takes place in the classroom, whereas SL learning only occasionally.

The most essential difference between SL and FL consists in the intensity of contacts with the target language and in the degree of motivation (Arabski 1985:6). SL acquisition is normally supported by the environment and often proceeds informally. On the other hand, "a foreign language usually requires more formal instruction and other measures compensating for the lack of environmental support" (Stern 1983:16). The contacts of classroom learners with the foreign language are normally limited to several hours per week, whereas the contacts of SL learners with the target language are much more intense.

In the case of foreign language learning motivation is normally weaker than in the case of SL learning, because the purpose of learning an FL is often vague and distant. While an SL learner wants to function properly in a given target language community (school, university, place of work, social group, etc.), FL learning is often undertaken with a variety of different and distant purposes in mind (travel abroad and communication with native speakers, reading foreign publications, etc.).

In Poland, then, we have a typical foreign language situation, where English is taught in the classroom, and where contacts with the language are limited. All further considerations in this study will take this fact into account.

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[1] We should be rather careful with adopting Stevick's statement (1982:22) as valid also for FL learning, however interesting it may be. L1 and FL acquisition are different processes, though there are some similarities between them.

1.2. ACQUISITION OR LEARNING?

In the previous part of this chapter the terms *acquisition* and *learning* referring to language development were often used. Let us now concentrate on their meaning.

Traditionally, *acquisition* refers to first/native language learning. It is a natural process. Language is acquired without the help of a teacher and without formal instruction. Moreover, it is an unconscious process. Language acquirers are not aware of the fact that they are acquiring language, but they notice that they are using more and more of this language for communication.

The term *learning* traditionally refers to a conscious process of language development. Students learn the rules and principles of language structure and use. Learning usually takes place in the classroom, where there are no contacts with the natural linguistic environment. As far as the age group is concerned, learning traditionally refers either to older children or to adults.

Recently, however, this apparently clear-cut distinction between acquisition and learning has lost its importance. For instance, the author of the acquisition/learning hypothesis, Stephen Krashen, claims that adults also acquire language; they do not lose this ability with their childhood (Krashen 1982:10). The acquisition process in the case of an adult may take place both in natural and in classroom conditions. Krashen says (*op. cit*: 30) that "the classroom may be an excellent place for second language acquisition, at least up to the 'intermediate level'". According to the author of the acquisition/learning hypothesis, these two processes are separate in an adult (*op. cit.*: 15). Acquisition initiates utterances and is responsible for the learner's fluency. Learning functions only as a Monitor (The Monitor Hypothesis). The Monitor starts to be active either during the learner's performance or just after it. It edits the utterances, i.e. makes corrections which, according to the learner's opinion, are necessary (*op. cit.*: 15). Krashen maintains that learning plays a limited role in second language performance. Acquisition is the most essential element in second language development.

Krashen represents the non-interface position in his approach to second language acquisition. He maintains that acquisition and learning are separate and unrelated (Krashen 1982). Stern (1983) and Takala (1984) assume that acquisition and learning are related and that learning may become acquisition. This is the interface position. Finally, we can have a variability position represented by Ellis (1985:241). He maintains that different language tasks require different types of knowledge, either analytic (conscious) or automatic (unconscious).

A variety of factors contribute to success in second language acquisition. These are: *motivation*, *self-confidence* and *anxiety*, which constitute the Affective Filter (Krashen 1982:31). Learners with high motivation, self-confidence and

a good self-image are generally more successful in second language acquisition. Low anxiety (referring to both an individual and the classroom) is also conducive to second language acquisition (Krashen 1982:31). The Affective Filter Hypothesis states that when the Filter of a particular learner is weak, he is sure to be more successful in second language acquisition. It is usually the opposite in the case of learners with strong Affective Filters (*op. cit.*: 31).

Yet another interesting discovery in language acquisition research in recent years has been the finding that the acquisition of grammatical morphemes appears to proceed in a predictable order. English is the most studied language in this respect. This research concerned basically the L1 learners and the experiments resulted in establishing a *natural order* of acquisition of grammatical morphemes. This was followed by similar research concerning second language acquisition carried out by Dulay, Burt and Krashen (1982). They reported that there exists a fixed order of acquisition for both child and adult second language learners. The natural acquisition occurs in four blocks (Krashen 1982:13). Within the first block second language learners acquire three morphemes: -*ing* (progressive), plural -*s*, copula (*be*) e.g. *He is nice*. Within the second block they acquire the auxiliary *be* (as in *He is going*) and the articles *a, the*. Irregular past constitutes the third block. Finally, regular past, third person singular -*s* and possessive *'s* constitute the last block. The majority of morphemes have the same relative order for first and second language acquisition, except the copula and the auxiliary *be*, which tend to be acquired later in L1.

Although the results of research presented above might seem to be extremely useful for our comprehension of language learning, we must be careful in applying them to foreign language teaching, because the experiments described by Krashen refer to second, rather than foreign language learners. Moreover, the research on the order of acquisition is limited only to the acquisition of grammatical morphemes. The apparent similarity of morpheme acquisition order in L1 and L2 is not enough to say that the processes of L1 and FL acquisition are similar. Besides, it seems that the meaning of individual morphemes was neglected in these experiments. Each appearance of *a/an*, for instance, was treated equally.

Generally, Krashen's theory, although very forcibly formulated and right about the possibility of adult acquisition, leaves some doubts. First of all, we cannot be sure in what sense Krashen uses the term second language. He constantly refers to classroom teaching conditions. It is true that second language (SL) can be taught in the classroom, but classroom teaching is, in this case, supported by the environment. Krashen never mentions this important fact. It would seem, then, that he describes foreign language situations, and not second language ones. Moreover, Krashen does not differentiate between SL and FL acquisition process. This distinction is very significant, especially when we

discuss the effects of the Affective Filter. In the case of FL learning the Affective Filter will always be stronger than in the case of SL learning. The FL learners' attitudes are not optimal for language acquisition. Their motivation is weaker, because the aim of foreign language learning is not clear for them (cf. 1.1). Classroom teaching may often cause anxiety and fear, which are not conducive to acquisition. It would seem, then, contrary to Krashen's opinion, that the acquisition process is less likely to occur in the case of FL learning. This does not mean, however, that the teachers should not try to create conditions suitable for the acquisition process; namely, reduce tension and motivate the learners better.

The criticism of Krashen has been strong as regards his acquisition/learning hypothesis and the Monitor Theory. Stern, for instance, raises some doubts concerning the term 'acquisition'. Psychologists are accustomed to use such terms as 'growth', 'development' or 'learning' in order to describe the natural processes which occur between an individual and his environment. We can talk about 'learning to walk' or 'learning to eat'. In the case of L1 development we may also have 'learning to talk' as a natural process. Stern treats the term 'language acquisition' as a purely "stylistic alternative to 'language learning'" (Stern 1983:19). One weak point of the term 'language acquisition', according to Stern is that it is "associated with the notion of permanent possession. The language development of an individual, however, is subject to continuing modifications..." (Stern 1983: 19—20). Stern points out that there is one serious weakness in Krashen's use of the term 'acquisition' and of the term 'learning'. For Krashen they are two separate notions, whereas in psychology they are treated as different aspects (more or less conscious) of the same process, which is referred to as *learning*. For Krashen learning is a very restricted notion, referring only to "deliberate school-like learning" (Stern 1983:20).

Similar criticism can be observed in some other publications. Ellis, for instance, argues that acquisition and learning are related to each other. During the process of foreign language development learning can become acquisition (Ellis 1985:241). This statement refers to classroom instruction. In this way the process of foreign language development becomes a continuum with some prior stages of conscious knowledge which are gradually automatized and become subconscious. Ellis also argues that different language tasks require different types of knowledge, either analytic or automatic (Ellis 1985:241). Consequently, the language learning process consists of both concious and unconscious aspects, the interaction of which depends on the kind of task the learner has to undertake.

Also Takala (1984:159) assumes that there is no sharp dichotomy between acquisition and learning (subconscious and conscious process). Instead, there is a fluctuation between levels of consciousness, depending on motives and goals of a person.

Taking the whole discussion into consideration, the concept of language learning, as used in this study, will comprise both the subconscious and the conscious aspects of language development, i.e. traditional acquisition and traditional learning.

Let us now characterize the process of language learning.

There is frequently no differentiation between SL and FL processes in professional literature (Stern 1983:398). It would seem, then, that the basic characteristics of the two processes are similar, if not the same. Ellis, for instance, claims (1988) that the order of classroom acquisition of grammatical morphemes is identical with the natural order, regardless of the type of instruction imposed on the learners. The differences concern other factors, like for instance, the rate of language development determined by learning conditions.

Learning a language implies making assumptions about the structure of this language. "On the basis of these assumptions the learner formulates hypotheses about the structure of the target language which he tests out on native speakers" (Bell 1981:180) or on teachers. The progress from zero competence to whatever level the learner wishes to attain in the target language goes through several stages. The intermediate competence levels have been referred to as *interlanguage* (Selinker 1972). Every learner possesses his individual interlanguage system. "Each of the interlanguages represents a competence level composed of correct and incorrect elements relative to the second language norm. It is the learner's best interpretation of the second language" (Stern 1983:399). In the process of language development the learner's interlanguage gradually approximates the norms of the target language set by the native speaker or teacher (*op. cit.*: 399). The degree of approximation varies from learner to learner, and is determined by a variety of factors (cf. 1.1. on differences between SL and FL). The interlanguage studies resulted in a change in the treatment of learners' errors, which came to be recognized as inevitable in the development of the target language proficiency (Stern 1983:354).[2]

So far we have dealt with the *learning* process. We established the differences between SL and FL, and clarified the acquisition/learning problem. It is time now to concentrate on the language *teaching* process.

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[2] Problems of error analysis will be dealt with in Chapter 4.

CHAPTER 2

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS
IN THE THEORY OF LANGUAGE TEACHING

2.1. THE ORIGINS OF THE COMMUNICATIVE APPROACH

In the last twenty years important changes in language teaching have been observed. Let us consider, then, the reasons for and the nature of these changes.

Johnson maintains (1982:10) that "language teachers have always looked to the linguist for guidance on how to teach languages". Thus the audio-lingual and the cognitive code learning theory developed, respectively, on the basis of structuralist and generative linguistics. The most influential linguist of the 1960s, Chomsky, saw language in terms of *competence* and *performance*. Competence (Chomsky 1957) is the underlying knowledge of the language that every native speaker/hearer possesses in all conditions. Performance is the speaker's actual production of utterances in this language. Of these two, performance has a specific sociocultural context. Chomsky maintained that competence only should be the prime concern of linguistic theory, because it did not contain any misleading data or performance errors.

However, in the late 1960s and in the 1970s a disillusionment with Chomsky's theory prompted new research into the nature of language and language learning. The reason for this disillusionment was that in transformational grammar, as well as in the earlier, Bloomfieldian model, importance was given to the study of language structure, and grammar remained central. Moreover, Bloomfield argued (1933) that linguistics cannot define meanings but should leave them to students of other sciences. For Chomsky, on the other hand, semantics constituted only an interpretative element in his conception of grammar.

Structural linguistics contributed to the development of the audio-lingual approach to language teaching. Generative linguistics, on the other hand, had considerably little effect on language teaching as such (Brumfit and Johnson 1979:3) and the cognitive code learning theory was often described as an improved grammar-translation method. Knowledge of a language used to be understood as a knowledge of the syntactic structure of sentences, and "of the transformational relations which hold between them" (Widdowson [1973]

1979:49). It was felt that the ability to communicate in any language is not only a matter of the knowledge of the system. Therefore linguists and teachers turned towards a view "of language as communication, where meaning plays a central part" (Brumfit and Johnson 1979:3).

The earliest changes towards a view of language that comprises both structure and meanings originated from sociolinguistics. Some scholars maintained that "one cannot in fact describe grammar in isolation from meaning" (Coulthard 1977:3), and a theory is needed "to absorb a thereby neglected social component" (Brumfit and Johnson 1979:9). One of the leading sociolinguists, Hymes, criticized Chomsky's notions of competence and performance (1970). He suggested that they should be redefined and a new contrast between the 'actual' (performance) and the 'underlying' be recognized. The underlying, however, is a far more general concept of competence than is found in Chomsky. Hymes calls it *communicative competence*, which is understood as the overall underlying knowledge and ability for language use which the speaker/hearer possesses. Apart from Chomsky's *grammatical possibility* it involves also the factors of *appropriateness* and *feasibility*. For instance, the sentence: *This is all nonsense* may be grammatically possible, feasible, but inappropriate in certain situational contexts. Since then the concept of communicative competence has become well established as generally applicable to language teaching. Several years later Richard Allwright (1979) explained the difference between linguistic and communicative competence with the help of a simple diagram:
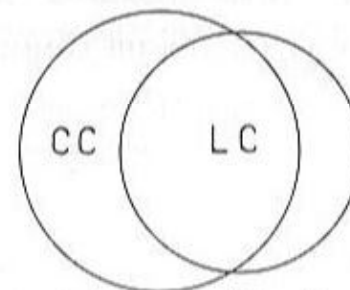
CC — Communicative Competence, LC — Linguistic Competence

The diagram implies the following two statements: first, there are some parts of linguistic competence which are not covered by communicative competence. It could be argued that sentences like Chomsky's *Colourless green ideas sleep furiously* are grammatically possible but never used in actual communication. Secondly, quite a big part of communicative competence is not covered by linguistic competence (feasibility, appropriacy). The above implies that teaching exclusively for linguistic competence will leave a large area of communicative competence untouched, but teaching for communicative competence will leave out only a small portion of linguistic competence (Allwright 1979). Teaching

communicative competence should then be the prime concern of language teachers.

However, no method of teaching communicative competence was proposed. On the contrary, the 1970s observed a distinctive break-away from the method concept. It was felt that in language teaching there cannot be any single 'best' method widely accepted (Stern 1983:112). Finally, in the 1980s, the broad concept of a communicative approach to language teaching emerged. The followers of the approach maintained that the ability to compose sentences is not the only ability we need to communicate. Widdowson says ([1972] 1979:118):

> Communication only takes place when we make use of sentences to perform a variety of different acts of an essentially social nature. Thus we do not communicate by composing sentences, but by using sentences to make statements of different kinds, to describe, to record, to classify and so on, or to ask questions, make requests, give orders. Knowing what is involved in putting sentences together correctly [...] has to be supplemented by a knowledge of what sentences count in their normal use as a means of communicating.

Many disciplines, as well as other factors, contributed directly or indirectly to the development of the communicative approach, for instance: speech act theory, needs analysis, studies on syllabus design, discourse analysis, research on first and second language acquisition, error analysis (Stern 1983:113). In the rest of this chapter I will discuss *what* should be taught within the area of communicative competence and *why* it should be taught.

2.2. THE IMPORTANCE OF CONTEXT IN THE COMMUNICATIVE APPROACH

Speech act theory, started by Austin ([1955] 1962) and developed by Searle (1969), belongs to the field of the philosophy of language. In his other work (1975) Searle distinguished between indirect and direct speech acts. These notions are explained well in Levinson (1983).

In the case of direct speech acts, the three major sentence-types in English, namely, the imperative, interrogative, and declarative, fulfil the functions traditionally associated with them, namely ordering (or requesting), questioning, and stating, respectively (Levinson 1983:263). Pragmatics is, crudely speaking, a study of language usage (*op. cit.*: 5), and it claims that sentences do not always fulfil their traditional functions. For example, the imperative is rarely used to express requests in English: "Instead we tend to employ sentences that only indirectly do requesting" (*op. cit.*: 264). The forms of sentences issuing requests are very varied, e.g.

I want you to close the door.
You ought to close the door.
Can you close the door?

Did you forget to close the door?
Would you mind closing the door?
May I ask you to close the door? etc.

Each of these sentences could amount to a request to close the door. It appears that "what people *do* with sentences seems quite unrestricted by the surface form (i.e. sentence type) of the sentence uttered" (*op. cit.*: 265). In other words, a declarative or an interrogative sentence form may indirectly fulfil the function of a request.

Speech act theory and pragmatics showed that there cannot be a one-to-one relationship between form and meaning; one act of communication (e.g. requesting) can be performed by many different sentence forms. On the other hand, one sentence-type may perform several acts of communication. For instance, each of the sentences below has the imperative form:

a) *Shut the door, please.*
b) *Fly BA.*
c) *Bake the pie in a hot oven.*
d) *Forgive us our trespasses.*
e) *Come to dinner tomorrow.*

Of these five sentences only (a) is a direct request, where the obligation to fulfil the request is involved. Sentences (b) and (c) are pieces of advice, where no obligation is involved. Sentence (d) is an appeal. Here neither the addresser has the right to ask for favours, nor the addressee is obliged to grant them. Sentence (e) is an invitation and here again no obligation is involved.

The findings of speech act theory and pragmatics influenced the development of discourse analysis. Research in these fields helped to understand how some apparently unconnected sentences come together in a conversational discourse to form a coherent sequence (Brown and Yule 1983a:233). In discourse analysis the following problems are often emphasized: the role of context in interpretation, the principle of shared knowledge, and the choice of language in a specific situation (appropriacy).

In language teaching the concept of contextual interpretation became particularly important. When we compare the issue of 'contextualization' taken from any traditional textbook with that explained by discourse analysis, we can observe that 'context' does not any longer mean a single sentence but a longer utterance consisting of a number of sentences which together create a cohesive piece of discourse. Widdowson says: "Normal linguistic behaviour does not consist in the production of separate sentences but in the use of sentences in the creation of discourse" (1978:22).

The learning of a language, according to Widdowson, means acquiring

the ability to handle discourse (*op. cit.*: 53). In connection with the necessity of teaching discourse he proposed a number of terms that became popular in the communicative approach. One of the most essential is the distinction between *usage* and *use*. An utterance is an example of usage when it is created solely to manifest the abstract system of the language, e.g. (a book is on the table):

> Teacher: *What is there on the table?*
> Learner: *There is a book on the table.*
> (Widdowson 1978:3)

The teacher knows what is on the table and there is no communicative purpose in his question — it is asked only to elicit a grammatically correct sentence.[1] On the other hand, the following exchange can be the manifestation of use because it realizes language as meaningful communicative behaviour:

> Teacher (looking at the class): *I can't see Mary. Where is she?*
> Learner: *She's not well.*
> (*op. cit.*: 6)

The second important distinction introduced by Widdowson is the one between two kinds of meaning: *signification* and *value*. Sentences have signification as instances of usage. It results from the combination of words into sentences in accordance with grammatical rules (*op. cit.*: 11). On the other hand, sentences have value when they are put to use for communicative purposes. It can be said that traditional language teaching concentrated solely on usage and signification. An effort should be made to teach the use and value of utterances as well.

Stevick (1976), too, emphasizes the role of contextual presentation for learning languages. He says that also in second or foreign language learning "sentences are easier to learn if learners meet them in meaningful contexts, because contexts permit more complex processing" (Stevick 1976:30). This implies that things are more easily retained in memory when their remembering is connected with some external situation.

We have observed so far that for various reasons, one of the most important issues of the communicative approach is its insistence on teaching language in contextualized stretches of discourse. Let us now consider in what way the language material should be organized for teaching purposes.

2.3. THE SYLLABUS DESIGN CONTROVERSY

Before we can start discussing the issues connected with syllabus design and their influence on the content of teaching, let us first establish the meaning of the term 'syllabus'. From among many different definitions it seems best to

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[1] The problems of teaching how to ask questions will be dealt with in Chapter 4.

accept the one proposed by Johnson. He distinguishes between *syllabus inventory* and *syllabus* (1982:32). Syllabus inventory is the list of all the items we wish to teach. Syllabus itself involves making various decisions about the presentation of these items; among others, about the order in which they will appear in the course. Thus *syllabus inventory* deals with the selection, and *syllabus* with the sequencing of the items to be taught.

In the traditional, structure-based syllabuses, most common up till the 1970s, different structures are taught separately and step-by-step "so that acquisition is a processs of gradual accumulation of the parts until the whole structure of the language has been built up" (Wilkins 1976:2). The grammatical content of such syllabuses was supposed to be organized according to the following criteria: *simplicity*, i.e. simple language should be taught before complex, but the concept of simplicity was judged on an intuitive basis; *usefulness*, i.e. the most useful structures should be taught before those of low usefulness; *frequency* and *contrastive difficulty*, i.e. structures which are the most frequent should appear first and special attention should be paid to those structures that do not exist in the learners' mother tongue. Whether the above criteria were usually observed or not will be discussed later in this work (chapter 4) but, anyhow, structural syllabuses over the years came to look remarkably alike (Johnson 1982:9). It is true that they could not differ in the selection of structural material because the grammar of the language does not change over a period of, say, fifty years. But they also become similar in the grading of grammatical items for teaching purposes, regardless of their frequency of occurrence, their usefulness, or their role in communication.[2]

Criticism of structural syllabuses started as early as the communicative approach. Its main point was that structures were taught because they existed and not because they had a special communicative value for the learners.

Many attempts have been made to improve or to replace the existing traditional syllabuses in order to concentrate the teaching on communication rather than on grammatical accuracy. The most significant, however, seems to be the work done by the team connected with the Council of Europe project begun in the early 1970s. A small multinational group of experts with Wilkins and van Ek among others, started their work from the assumption that knowledge of foreign languages is to be considered indispensable both for the individual and for Europe as a whole (van Ek 1977:1). They examined the possibility of preparing a common language teaching syllabus for all languages used by the member nations of the Council of Europe. Initially they prepared a syllabus for adult learners and then for schools. The basic objectives were to teach the ability to *use* the foreign language in everyday real-life situations (van Ek 1977:3), to teach skill rather than knowledge, to enable the learners

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[2] Details in Chapter 4.

to do something by means of language (*op. cit.*: 5). The model the experts suggested was called the Threshold Level, which meant the minimum knowledge of a foreign language the learner should possess to communicate. At the same time a French team, led by Daniel Coste, produced the French equivalent to van Ek's English curriculum: *Un niveau-seuil* (Stern 1983:112).

Van Ek observes that "what people do by means of language can be described as verbally performing certain *functions*" (1977:5,6). By means of language people can question, command, persuade, apologize, etc. In performing such functions people refer to *notions* like: time, possession, quantity, etc. (*op. cit.*: 6). In teaching, then, we should first establish the learners' needs, i.e. what they will have to do with the language in future. Afterwards, on the basis of these needs, we should establish what functions and notions they will have to master and, finally, what exponents (i.e. grammatical structures) should be taught to use these functions.

The difficulties started when it came to creating a universal syllabus inventory which could be accepted and used by different groups of learners from different countries. The traditional inventory lists language structures. What should a communicative syllabus be based on? A solution was suggested by Wilkins (1976). He outlined an inventory for this kind of syllabus. In fact, Wilkins called his list a taxonomy. This is not an adequate term because a taxonomy is an ordered and hierarchical classification. Wilkins' list is just an inventory: he does not suggest any kind of grading for his teaching items. Wilkins based his inventory on the assumption that we should concentrate on what it is the learners want to communicate through language. We should organize language teaching in terms of the content rather than the form of the language (Wilkins 1976:18). He distinguished three basic sets of categories: semantico-grammatical categories, categories of modal meaning, and categories of communicative function. Among *semantico-grammatical* categories we can distinguish, for instance: time, quantity, space, deixis; among categories of *communicative function*: approval, disapproval, prediction, agreement, disagreement, etc. Often semantico-grammatical categories are described as *notions* and categories of communicative function as *functions*. Among modal categories we can distinguish affirmation, certainty, probability, possibility, etc. According to Wilkins, functions and notions should be the basis for a language teaching syllabus.

It is true that foreign language learners need the knowledge of what kind of language is appropriate to various social situations, but they need it additionally, and not alternatively to the knowledge of the grammatical system. It seems that both structural and notional/functional syllabuses in their pure forms do more harm than good for classroom learners. The main disadvantage of an exclusively structural approach is that the learners do not acquire enough social language. The main disadvantage of an exclusively notional syllabus is

that the learners do not acquire a sufficient amount of basic grammar without which no language can be used.

These doubts were also expressed in professional literature. Although Wilkins' work had enormous influence on language teaching, criticism began immediately after it appeared. Wilkins himself pointed out that his lists of functions could be better used in the teaching of languages for special purposes, where the learners' needs and the things they could do with the language are easily predicted. It is not easy to predict the needs of general learners, who learn a foreign language at school for several years.

There is an enormous diversity of opinion among teachers and scholars about the applicability of functional syllabuses for general learners. Some of them attack Wilkins, pointing out that the solution he proposed is nothing else but a list of items to be taught and, in principle, it does not differ from the lists of grammatical items in structural syllabuses (Candlin 1984). Consequently, it could be argued that the idea of a syllabus as a list of discrete items to be taught, imposed by the authorities, should be rejected entirely. Other scholars adopt Wilkins' suggestions and modify them according to their needs (Yalden 1984). The rest, and those are in the majority, argue that for general learners in schools, especially at the beginners' stage, a systematic basis for development should be provided. Since no functional or notional syllabus can be definitely systematized, there is no reason to discard a structural system "as the most fundamental component of the language syllabus" (Brumfit 1984:78). Johnson is also against functional syllabuses at the beginners' level, because they impose structural disorganization. He argues that in some specific circumstances a teacher may encounter an imposed structural syllabus which cannot be changed. He may, then, try to integrate some functional materials into the already existing programmes without rejecting them (Johnson 1982:98).

A beginners' course may be designed structurally and at the same time incorporate many valuable features associated with the approach to language teaching which is nowadays called 'communicative'. (*op. cit.*: 106).

Similarly Widdowson (1984b) argues that systematic syllabus provides security both for teachers and learners. He also maintains that neither a structural nor a functional syllabus gives the recipe for effective teaching, and says:

There is no such thing as a communicative syllabus: there can be a methodology that stimulates communicative learning. (Widdowson 1984b:26).

CHAPTER 3

THE ROLE OF GRAMMAR
IN COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING

The language teaching process can be defined "as the activities which are intended to bring about language learning" (Stern 1983:21). The problem for language teaching is how to help the learner to reach a level of proficiency which he wishes to attain. Language teaching is normally associated with the classroom and refers mostly to foreign language situations. Classroom language teaching is often described as formal or artificial in contrast to learning the target language while staying in a foreign-language speaking community, which is referred to as informal or natural.

There may be some doubts concerning the term 'artificial'. Is the classroom situation really an artificial one? In fact it is just one of the numerous real-life situations. Abbott says: "We have also to bear in mind that artificiality is inherent in the learner's situation. Students are no fools: they are probably more aware of the social constraints of the classroom than we are, and know that artifice is unavoidable" (1981b:122). Both teachers and learners should be conscious of the conventionality of the classroom situation and act out their roles. The most important thing, however, is to enjoy the acting.

To sum up, we interpret language teaching as activities intended to bring about language learning. Having made this clear, it would be pedantic always to speak of 'teaching and learning'. They are closely connected with each other. Therefore, if subsequently we only mention one of them, it is useful to remember that in the right context the other is understood.

3.1. WHAT IS 'COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING'?

Let us attempt a definition of communicative language learning and teaching.

It seems necessary to distinguish between limited and full communicative competence. By limited communicative competence we may mean an ability to use some language routines and patterns in appropriate communicative situations. Routines and patterns are generally acquired very early without their prior linguistic analysis, e.g. *What's your name? How are you?, How old are*

you? What time is it?, etc. Both first and second language learners use routines and patterns, but second language learners use them more often as communicative devices. They "may have a greater need for them because they must function in real-life situations that demand early use of the target language" (Dulay et al. 1982:233). Having acquired a certain number of routines and patterns learners might be able to function in a target language community, though only in a limited number of situations. Grammatical awareness does not seem to be necessary in the case of routines and patterns. We are more interested, however, in full communicative competence, which is an ability to generate totally *new* sentences appropriate to any situation in any circumstances. Communicative competence (full competence) differs from grammatical competence because it includes the ability to perform appropriate speech acts in situations where, for instance, what is grammatically a statement is meant to function as an order, what is grammatically a question is meant to function as a suggestion, etc. Full communicative competence also includes control of different styles or registers of language (cf. 2.1.).

However, all these abilities are impossible without the basic knowledge of the language system. *Grammatical competence remains the fundamental element of communicative competence.* Without the basic knowledge of the code the learner will never be able to form hypotheses about the target language, to draw meaningful generalizations on its structure and, finally, to generate sentences. We cannot neglect grammar while teaching how to communicate.

Consequently, we may assume that although we use acquired formulas and language patterns in our speech, we still monitor our performance, even in our native language. We have to make conscious decisions as to the choice of language register, style or vocabulary. These language factors have to be taught; in other words, the learners have to be taught how to make these conscious decisions, how to manipulate the language. Here the teaching of grammar may be helpful because the knowledge of grammar facilitates the appropriate choice of language structures for communication.

3.2. GRAMMATICAL CONSCIOUSNESS-RAISING

In the history of language teaching we could observe various changes of approach to the teaching of grammar. In the grammar translation method grammar was taught for its own sake. Explanation of grammatical rules constituted the most important element of a language lesson. We could observe obsession with accuracy and correctness in language performance (Alexander 1989).

Later, when so called direct method came into existence, overt grammatical explanation, i.e. rule learning, was rejected in classroom teaching. Moreover, there was not any order of presentation of grammatical items suggested. Still

later, we could observe a return to systematic grammar teaching (the audio-lingual approach) and even to overt grammatical explanation (the cognitive code learning theory). These two last approaches to language teaching were based on structuralism and transformational-generative grammar, respectively, where structural grading (i.e. grammatical items should be taught from less to more difficult) was suggested. Communication in a foreign language was treated as a by-product of the teaching process (Alexander 1989).

In the 1970s there appeared functional and notional teaching syllabuses which promoted again a rejection of grammar teaching, at least in theory. An attempt was made to create syllabuses based on learners' needs, where grammar was secondary to language function (cf. 2.3.).

At the same time important research was carried out in the field of second language acquisition. Here the most significant seems to be the achievement of Stephen Krashen which, though controversial, was very thought-provoking. Krashen's views were already explained in detail in 1.2.

To conclude, we may argue that the interface or the variability positions, as far as *foreign* language learning is concerned, seem to be more reasonable. In the classroom we may use simultaneously some techniques promoting subconscious acquisition and also some means of conscious learning.

At present we may observe another period of grammar revival in foreign language teaching, stimulated by recent findings in second language acquisition theory. However, grammar is approached from a viewpoint totally different from the one imposed by structural linguistics (Rutherford 1987). Why should we teach grammar? Because we cannot avoid it (Alexander 1989). The communicative approach teaches people how to do things through language and we cannot to things through language without the basic knowledge of the language system.

There are at least two important reasons for which knowledge of the linguistic code is considered to be essential in foreign language learning, at least at the beginners' stage. Knowledge of the code enables us to understand abstract relationships between lexical items even if we do not know their meaning (McEldowney 1981). For instance, if we read the following: *Of the slodges, the crulls are very stringy trigs. Like all trigs they have...* , we can be sure that *slodges* is a noun because it is preceded by the definite article and has the plural ending *-s*. Also *crulls* is a noun because of *the* and the ending *-s*, etc. In this way we can, to some extent, predict the content of the message and achieve partial communication, even though the words are unknown to us.

Another reason for the necessity of knowledge of the code can be better understood on the basis of the following example. When we look at this passage: *John arrive Manchester. Took flat town centre. Go see professor,* we can easily observe that the message can be partly understood with structural items omitted. It would seem, then, that communication is possible without grammar

and its rules; so, apparently, there is no immediate need to teach them. But it must be admitted that to understand such a message requires an effort on the part of the listener or reader. We are not sure, first of all, whether the information refers to the present situation, past or future. It is clear that grammatical items play an important role in protecting the message, i.e. its vagueness is eliminated. "Learners need to be aware that the less protection there is for their messages the less tolerance they can expect from people listening to them or reading their written assignments" (McEldowney 1981).

Structural items should be taken special care of in learning because they carry comparatively less meaning than lexical items do. Lyons (1981:48) calls structural items *empty word-forms*, and lexical items *full word-forms*. He says that empty word-forms are more easily predictable in the contexts in which they occur. Hence their omission in telegrams, headlines, etc. It can be said, then, that "some, though not all, of the so-called empty word-forms will have a purely grammatical meaning (if they have any meaning at all), whereas all the full word-forms will have both a lexical and a grammatical meaning" (Lyons 1981:49). Empty word-forms are omitted in children's early stages of speech development. It could be argued, then, that also in the early stages of foreign language learning these items will be either omitted by learners or confused, and thus they deserve special attention in teaching (cf. 1.1. on similarities and differences between L1 and L2 acquisition).

Grammar, however, is not an end in itself. In the communicative approach grammar is the by-product of communication. It facilitates communication (Alexander 1989). Thus we should not be afraid to explain grammar to our learners. However, we should avoid special lessons devoted to grammar because, as it was said earlier, communication is our final objective, not the knowledge of grammatical rules. According to Rutherford (1987:153), "target language grammar enters the learner's experience not as an objectified body of alien knowledge to be mastered [...] but rather as a network of systems in which the learner is already enmeshed".

Under these circumstances curriculum planners have to make decisions as to what aspects of the grammatical system are the major sources of data for the learners, on the basis of which they could work out hypotheses about the functioning of target language in different communicative situations. In short, the development of communicative abilities *is not hindered* by a grammar-centred sylabus. On the contrary, grammatical consciousness-raising should *help* in developing communicative abilities.

CHAPTER 4

SELECTION AND GRADING OF GRAMMATICAL ITEMS FOR THE TEACHING OF BEGINNERS

In chapter 3 we have indicated that grammar plays an important role in learning how to communicate in the foreign language. It could be argued, however, that in order to facilitate communication grammatical items should be carefully selected and graded in a language course. It seems that the achievements of error analysis may appear to be helpful in establishing at least some of the principles of selection of grammatical material.

4.1. ERROR ANALYSIS AND THE PROBLEMS OF SELECTION

For a few decades before the 1970s the issues of contrastive analysis dominated in the study of errors. It was believed that contrastive analysis could predict the difficulties of the students (Lado 1957). What was different from the learners' L1 was considered to be difficult. Many language courses were constructed in accordance with the contrastive analysis hypothesis, with special attention to those items that can be contrasted with the mother tongue ones, and "without due attention to the structure of the foreign language as a whole" (Richards 1971:211).

In the early 1970s some interesting studies appeared (e.g. Corder 1967, Dulay and Burt 1974, Richards 1974) which questioned the interference of the mother tongue as the only possible source of errors. It was pointed out that errors such as *did he comed, what you are doing?, he coming from England, make him to do it, I can to speak French* "are frequent regardless of the learners' language background. They may be called *developmental errors*" (Richards 1971:205). It appeared that, in fact, errors may be of three types: *developmental, interference* and *unique* (Ellis 1985:28). Often interference errors are difficult to distinguish from developmental ones (Ellis 1985:29). Some more research contradicted the contrastive analysis hypothesis, proving that 'different' from L1 does not always mean 'difficult' (*op. cit.*: 27). What is more, "interference was more likely to take place when there was some similarity between the first and second language items than when there was total difference" (*op. cit.*: 33). Errors were seen as positive aspects of testing hypotheses about FL structures.

Richards defines developmental errors as those which reflect the general characteristics of rule learning, such as, among others, over-generalization or incomplete application of rules (Richards 1971). Developmental errors result from the learner's attempts to build up hypotheses about the English language only on the basis of his classroom or textbook experience. Both Richards and later George (1972) assume that over-generalization errors are naturally associated with redundancy reduction. For instance, in a sentence like *I talked to him yesterday* there are two things that mark the concept of the past: *-ed* and *yesterday*. Since the former, being a grammatical item, carries little meaning, and the 'pastness' is indicated by a lexical item as well, the learners tend to omit the *-ed* ending and produce sentences like *I talk to him yesterday*, which can, nevertheless, be understood as 'past' by the listener. Such errors occur very often with items which are contrasted in the textbook but which have no equivalent contrastive value in real life. Some textbook drills, e.g. *He is going to school now / He goes to school every day*, provide two tense markers, which results in the omission of the structural ones.

Other errors can well be attributed to cross-association and analogy. Cross-association is the phenomenon of mutual interference between partially learned items (George 1972:153). Teachers often encounter problems while teaching questions and answers, because textbooks provide transformation exercises like the following:

Do	you read	much?
What does	she tell	him?
What does	she have	to do?
What was	she saying?	

The learner is to answer these questions, which may result in the following errors:

Yes, I read	much.
She tell	him to hurry.
She have	to write a letter.
She saying	he would ask him.

(Richards 1971:210)

Errors of this type occur quite often in the classroom. The answer becomes a replica of the second part of the question which starts with the subject of the positive statement, e.g.

What does she tell him?

She tell him to hurry.

It can be argued that this happens because positive statements had not become firmly established before the questions appeared.

As a rule, pronouns *he/she* and determiners *a/the* are also contrasted in teaching. As a result they are pronounced as strongly stressed, whereas in

natural speech they are most commonly unstressed. The contrast itself can also be a reason for errors, especially when both new items are introduced simultaneously. For instance, when learners are taught the sentence *This is Mary* shortly after or together with the sentence *This is a book*, they are likely to produce structures like *This is a Mary* at the end of the lesson.

Not only do grammatical errors result from cross-association but also lexical ones. There is psycholinguistic evidence that it might be dangerous to introduce two lexical items, whose functional characteristics are for the learners inadequately distinguished, too close together.

Quite a number of errors can be attributed to analogy, i.e. when a rule learned is applied to items to which it does not apply (George 1972:148). During my own classroom teaching in a secondary school I could often observe errors resulting from intralingual interference. For example, some learners had a tendency to form general questions with *be* in the Simple Past using the auxiliary verb *did* (*did you be*). They transferred the rule of question formation with *do* support to the verb *be*, and tried to apply this rule. Presumably, my fault as a teacher was that I failed to provide enough practice of inversion questions. Some learners forgot about inversion questions completely when new structures appeared, and used *do* support questions everywhere when a question in the Simple Past was required.

Both Richards and George maintain that "the distortion of ordinary English in the course-book" (George 1972:156) might be another cause of errors. Richards points out that the Present Continuous Tense, for instance, is usually presented in the context of the description of a picture, or of the sequence of events in the present tense (Richards 1971:211), e.g. *This is Harry. He is getting up. Now he is washing his face. Now he is taking breakfast. Now he is going to school* (sentences accompanied by pictures). It schould be said that this is not an example of normal use of English. "The usual tense for a sequence of events taking place 'at the moment' is the present tense, the continuous tense being used only when a single event is extracted from a sequence" (Richards 1971:211).

There are also many other grammatical forms that are introduced without taking into account their functioning in communication. This often happens with the articles, for instance see below (4.4.1). The same refers to an extremely popular beginners' textbook structure *This is a ...* . Widdowson argues that such sentences used in the classroom are examples of correct usage but not of use. The learners know what a pen is as an object and they do not need to have this object identified, only named (1978:6). The structure which is needed, then, should be just the name of the object given in English: *a book, a pen*.

It could be argued, then, that to avoid learners' errors, structures should be presented in realistic functional contexts.

To make the teaching more efficient, there seems to be a need for establishing an elementary grammar for the teaching of beginners. This

grammar would be intended for the learners' use in speech and writing, and it should contain a minimum number of grammatical items for expressing each language function. An elementary grammar of a language is easier to formulate than an elementary vocabulary, because the number of structural items is smaller than the number of lexical items and there is much less material to be selected from.

The concept of minimum adequate grammar was suggested earlier by Wilkins (1979), who argues in his article that it is difficult to apply a notional syllabus to a beginners' course. Instead he proposes for such a course a minimum adequate grammar, which is "a knowledge of the grammatical system of a language sufficient to meet fundamental and urgent communicative needs" (Wilkins 1979:97).

Having established the need for an elementary grammar, we must remember, however, that the crucial problem in the case of a beginners' course is adequate selection and grading of grammatical structures.

4.2. SELECTION AND SEQUENCING OF VERB FORMS FOR AN ELEMENTARY ENGLISH COURSE

Let us first establish the difference between selection and grading. Selection involves decisions on which elements of the language we choose to teach. Grading, according to Halliday et al. (1964:207), can be subdivided into two distinct operations. The first, called *staging*, takes the list of teaching items and arranges them into blocks of the right size for the various years, terms, months, days, etc. The second, called *sequencing*, refers to the problem of deciding the order in which the items should be taught. For practical reasons it seems better to concentrate only on sequencing here, because staging depends largely on objective course conditions.

Unfortunately, there is no agreement among syllabus specialists as to which structural items should be introduced first. Hence such a great variety of textbooks which present different solutions. Even among purely structural syllabuses there is no agreement as far as the sequencing of grammatical items is concerned. Strangely enough, there is only one point where the majority of the traditional textbooks agree: they introduce the Present Continuous Tense as the first of all English tenses (cf. Candlin 1971, Alexander 1976, Zawadzka 1983, Zawadzka/Moszczak 1985).

A solution proposed in this section is, obviously, not an ideal one. Still, it results from the observations of the learners' errors. It is suggested here, too, how to avoid these errors by means of a different presentation of grammatical material. It seems that these suggestions might be useful for those teachers who are not happy with their English textbook and would like to modify it for better teaching effects.

Some interesting conclusions referring to the sequence of grammatical structures may result from the discovery of the natural acquisition order (cf. 1.2.). First, that irregular verbs are acquired before regular ones, because many of the former are more frequent in speech and thus the learners can hear them more often. This phenomenon may appear interesting for English teachers, who normally teach regular verbs first, as textbooks require them to do. Teachers could try to introduce irregular verb forms prior to the regular ones. That could secure adequate practice of those items in the classroom. Second, that third person singular -s is acquired before possessive 's. It would seem, then, that the former morpheme is more frequent in speech. Textbooks normally introduce 's first. Teachers could try to present -s first in appropriate contexts, in order to secure that it is practised adequately. Learners tend to forget about this morpheme while using the language.

It could be argued, then, that within an elementary course teaching should be as efficient as possible, i.e. it should cover maximum material at minimum cost. Since the verb is the pivot of the English sentence and a change in its form marks a change in communicative purpose, the teaching of English should be based on the verb system (McEldowney 1976). Similarly, Dobrowolska (1984:106) writes that English is characterized by a complicated tense system and the grading of the verb forms becomes the most essential factor of the teaching process.

The majority of English courses are, obviously, based on the verb system but, as Dobrowolska says, the most important for teaching is the sequencing of verb forms.

McEldowney argues that for efficient teaching the three statistically most important finite verb forms could be chosen as a starting point: stem, stem + s and stem + ed. These verb forms tend to cluster around certain broad contextual areas. Stem verbs appear mostly in sentence patterns like V (Come), VO (Take a book), VOO (Give me a book). This is language used for Instruction. Stem/stem + s forms used as the Simple Present appear mainly in the following sentence patterns: SVC (Mary is pretty), SVO (She loves cats), SVA (She lives in London), SVOO (She brings her mother flowers). These sentence forms appear in the context of Description. Stem + ed finite verb forms used as the Simple Past occur mostly in sentences like: SV (He came), SVO (He took off his coat). These patterns are commonly used to express a sequence of events in time, which is Narrative (McEldowney 1976). The elementary competence should, then, involve an ability, both in spoken and in written form, to handle the three broad contexts: Instruction, Description, and Narrative. This is, according to McEldowney, one of the basic principles for an elementary English course.

Another suggestion referring to the sequencing of verb forms for an elementary course was made by Marton (1978:45). He proposes the following sequence: Simple Present (with be, have and the most important modal verbs),

Simple Past, and be + going to + stem for expressing future. Instead of this last form we may introduce will + stem in the same function.

A similar suggestion was made by Dobrowolska (1984) and was based on experimental data. She conducted an experiment in the effectiveness of teaching English tenses to elementary learners. She had three groups of them. Each group learned English in approximately the same conditions. One of the groups (control group) followed the selection and sequence of tenses based on Smólska and Zawadzka's textbook (1974), which is no longer used in schools now. Here is the sequence: Present Continuous, Present Perfect, Present Simple. The second, empirical group, learned English tenses in the following sequence: Present Continuous, Future Simple, Past Continuous. Here the tenses were graded according to the principle of 'teachability', i.e. the verb groups which were, according to Dobrowolska, acquired best by learners were taught first.[1] Finally, the third group, called theoretical, favoured the following sequence: Present Simple, Past Simple, Future Simple, which was based on the principle of communicative usefulness. In natural communication, unmarked structures appear more frequently than marked ones do. This results from a very important learning principle: the human brain has a tendency to acquire more general phenomena and notions before more specific ones (Ausubel 1968: 53-54). The above refers not only to tenses but also to other lexical and grammatical items, which are often presented in different textbooks by means of contrast: the unmarked element of an opposition is always acquired prior to the marked one, e.g. long is acquired before short, big before small, a before an etc. It is more natural, then, that Present Simple as unmarked should be acquired prior to marked continuous tenses. Dobrowolska's 'empirical sequence' of tense acquisition (Present Continuous, Future, Past Continuous) contradicts the general principles of linguistic pedagogy.

Without going into details let us analyse the results of Dobrowolska's experiment. It appeared that in the same number of teaching hours, the control variant was the least successfully acquired. The one most successfully acquired was the theoretical variant, i.e. Present Simple, Past Simple, Future Simple. It appeared also that the learners were best motivated while learning the English tenses in that sequence because they were able to communicate

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[1] The order of tense presentation suggested by Dobrowolska for the "empirical group", i.e. Present Continuous, Future Simple, Past Continuous, contradicts the pedagogical principle of acquiring simpler structures first. Dobrowolska's sequence resulted from the morphosyntactic tests she administered to different groups of learners. Both in reception and production tests the above tenses scored the least number of wrong answers. Dobrowolska suggests, then, that they are the easiest to learn and that beginners' courses could be based on the above-mentioned sequence (Dobrowolska 1984:110). The suggestion, however, seems doubtful from the point of view of communicative language teaching. Very few basic language functions, useful for the learners' early communication, can be expressed with the help of the two continuous tenses.

quite well using only these three verb forms. The control variant, based on linguistic principles (all present tenses taught together) contained more complex verb groups and could not offer so many communicative possibilities. The empirical variant came second.

The most effective of the variants presented by Dobrowolska contains the *will* + stem form expressing future events. There are several forms expressing future in English, out of which *will* + stem (often called Future Simple) is by no means the most frequent. There is a formally simpler way to express future. George (1963) argues, on the basis of an analysis of conversations and plays, that future can be expressed by the following verb forms:

	% of future reference
stem/stem + s	39
will + stem	19
'll + stem	13
shall + stem	10
be + stem + ing	10

However, introducing the most frequent form of expressing future, stem/stem + s, in the classroom may cause confusion, because the verb form used here is identical with Present Simple. The learners will have to make an extra effort in order to understand the utterance; they will have to guess from the context whether this utterance expresses a present or a future event.

There are also semantic reasons for avoiding the stem form with future reference at the beginners' level. The Simple Present Tense is used to refer to the future in certain types of subordinate clauses (e.g. *When he arrives, the band will play the National Anthem*) and, though not too often, "to refer to future events which are seen as absolutely certain" (Leech and Svartvik 1975:72), e.g. *Tomorrow is Saturday. He retires next month*. In these sentences the speaker treats the event as a fact, "and puts aside the doubt one normally feels about the future" (*op. cit.*: 72). *Will* + stem with future reference can express the neutral future, or prediction, e.g. *Tomorrow's weather will be cold and cloudy*. With personal subjects *will* + stem can also suggest an element of intention, e.g. *I'll meet you at the station* (*op. cit.*: 71). It appears, then, that the Simple Present tense with future reference is marked in comparison to *will* + stem, which is in this case unmarked.

Let us recapitulate the suggestions for the most appropriate sequence of verb forms for a beginners' course, presented by different authors. McEldowney proposes the following sequence: stem (the Imperative), stem + s (the Simple Present), stem + ed (the Simple Past). Marton suggests the following sequence: Simple Present, Simple Past, *be* + *going to* + stem, (or *will* + stem). Dobrowolska in her most effective variant proposes: Present Simple, Past Simple, Future Simple.

As it has already been said (in 3.2), in planning a syllabus for beginners we should start from basic language structures that help to achieve communication in English as a foreign language. It seems that introducing ourselves, meeting

other people, expressing our likes and dislikes, describing people and things are the most necessary functions. In English all these functions are expressed by means of the Simple Present Tense. We should also know how to instruct people to do things. This function is expressed in the simplest way by imperative sentences, often modified by *please* for the sake of politeness. We also want to tell people what happened to us yesterday, last Sunday or during last year's holidays. We need the Simple Past Tense to express these functions. Finally, if we want to use the 'here-and-now' principle, as in the case of L1 acquisition, we will have to introduce structures with the Present Continuous Tense. Structures using this tense may also express future events that have already been decided (Swan 1980:251), whereas structures with *will* + infinitive express predictions about future events (*ibid.*).

Thus, the proposed sequence of presentation of English verb forms in a beginners' course is as follows:

stem, stem + s (Simple Present)
stem (Imperative)
stem + ed (Simple Past)
be + stem + ing (for 'here-and-now')
be + stem + ing (for decided future)
will + stem (Future Simple)

The above sequence differs from the previous ones and from that based on the frequency count of the occurrence of English verb forms (George 1972). It differs also from the sequence suggested in popular Polish textbooks for English beginners (Zawadzka 1983, Zawadzka/Moszczak 1985, Smólska/Rusiecki 1977). This is what George says about the frequency of verb forms:

The following items account for 575 of every 1,000 verb form occurrences and could be the basis for the first stage of a course:
stem: imperative
 after *don't*
 verb + *to* + stem
stem/stem + s: simple present actual (referring to 'now')
 simple present neutral (without time reference)
stem + ed: simple past narrative
 simple past actual ('at that time')
past participle of occurrence (e.g. *He was gone*)
past participle of state (e.g. *He is tired*).

(George 1972:29)

George maintains that stem, stem + s and stem + ed should constitute the basis of verb form presentation in a beginners' course of English. We can see that the same sequence was adopted by McEldowney. It could be argued, however, that there is no objective sequence of the introduction of verb forms. Everything depends on the learners' needs. On the other hand, if we consider

developing communicative abilities in English as our primary purpose, the three verb forms suggested by George and McEldowney may not be enough to achieve that purpose. Thus, the sequence suggested on page 46 seems to be more appropriate.

When talking about learners' needs, we should also consider a possibility of introducing the Imperative *before* the Simple Present for groups of younger children. They may find great satisfaction in expressing and carrying out commands, whereas older children may profit more from learning the Present Simple first, in the context of description.

Presentation of verb forms in Polish textbooks will be discussed in detail in the next section.

4.3. PRESENTATION OF VERB FORMS IN POPULAR POLISH TEXTBOOKS

Let us see how English verb forms are introduced in three textbooks widely used in Poland. Two of them, namely Zawadzka/Moszczak (1985) and Zawadzka (1983) are used in schools; the former in primary and the latter in secondary schools. The third textbook, Smólska/Rusiecki (1977) is used outside schools, i.e. at universities and in evening courses for adult learners. I have chosen these particular textbooks and not, for instance, Alexander's *First Things First* also used in schools, or any other popular course (e.g. Cook's *People and Places* — 1988, O'Neill's *Kernel One* 1986), because the textbooks chosen are all arranged structurally, i.e. grammar is their organizational basis. Alexander's (1976) arrangement, though structural too, is at the same time cyclical (or spiral). The author only signals each structural item in the first book, because he intends to return to it, in a more detailed way, at later stages of the course. Textbooks by Cook and O'Neill, on the other hand, present an attempt at functional arrangement of language material.

The analysis of the three textbooks chosen concerns only their productive parts, i.e. model patterns by means of which grammatical structures are presented.

Is is the first verb form introduced in the three textbooks. It is followed by *am* and *are*. Early appearance of *is* is the result of its very high frequency of occurrence, both in speech and in writing. Other forms of *be* sometimes appear in artificial contexts like: *Am I Chris or Dick?* (Zawadzka 1981:41). The personal pronouns *I* and *you* appear together and, consequently, *am* and *are* also appear together, because this phenomenon is natural in communicative interactions.

All the forms of *be* are introduced in the initial stage in Zawadzka's course (i.e. in the pre-reading period described in the Teacher's Book). Also the Imperative of other verbs is introduced here, but the form is not given enough prominence in the textbook (*Look at this boy. Put your case on your desk, John*). In the textbook the forms of *be* are followed by *have/has* in descriptive contexts

(*The Wilsons have a house in London. Mrs. Wilson's sister has a house in the country*). In Zawadzka/Moszczak, too, *be* is followed by *has/have*.

A completely different sequence has been suggested by Smólska and Rusiecki. This textbook introduces stem forms in requests like: *Give me a cigarette, please, John* and the Present Simple Actual immediately afterwards (*This is Miss White. She is a teacher. She teaches French*). What is more interesting, the authors start the presentation with stem+*s* (3rd person singular). *Has/have* come next and *has* is taught first. The tendency to introduce stem+*s* forms before stem, observed in the majority of the textbooks discussed, seems to follow a very practical principle. It is always easier to drop the -*s* ending while learning stem forms than to add this -*s* to the stem forms introduced earlier (the above refers to the Simple Present Tense). The same principle may also refer to *has/have*.

The next verb form introduced by Zawadzka is the modal verb *can*, meaning 'know how to do something'. Then comes stem+*ing* as part of the Present Continuous Tense. Thus the Present Continuous becomes the first English tense introduced in this textbook. Similarly, in Zawadzka/Moszczak the Present Continuous is presented first, before the Simple Present. There may be some doubts concerning that sequence of presentation. The Present Continuous requires quite a complex verb group structure (*be*+stem+*ing*), which is one of the least frequent verb forms. According to George, stem+*ing* appears on the eighth position on the frequency list (25 occurrences per 1,000), and not as part of the Present Continuous but as an adjective (1972:24). Introducing this form as an element of the first English tense to be presented may result in misunderstandings. The learners may tend to associate it with the present tense in general (since there is no equivalent of the Present Continuous in Polish). Polish has only one present tense, which in most uses is equivalent to the Present Simple in English. As a result of its early presentation and excessive practice, Polish learners tend to overuse the Present Continuous. It is learned first and mastered best.

It is true that stem+*ing* verb forms are acquired early in natural second language acquisition, but only as prefabricated patterns, without conscious analysis. Language analysis is inherent in foreign language classrooms (cf. 1.2.) and thus there is no obligation on the part of the teacher to introduce the Present Continuous first. It is complicated both formally and semantically.

It has already been said that the textbook by Smólska and Rusiecki introduces the Present Simple tense first. In fact, the order of presentation of tenses in this textbook is the reverse of the one suggested by the other two.

In two books we have the Present Simple Actual introduced as the first and the most important aspect of this tense, referring to something which occurs at the present moment. It includes the present state, e.g. *I live in London, John loves Mary, I'm hungry* and, since the state may stretch indefinitely into the

past and future, it also includes general truths, e.g. *The sun sets in the west* (Leech and Svartvik 1975:64). The emphasis on the actual aspect of this tense is correct here because this aspect occurs more frequently than, for instance, the habitual one (e.g. *I speak English every day*). Out of the three textbooks only one (Zawadzka) introduces the Present Simple Habitual before the Actual. This might be considered an example of what George (1972) calls the distortion of ordinary English in textbooks.

In each textbook discussed the Present Simple and the Present Continuous are followed by different verb forms. For instance, in Smólska/Rusiecki they are followed by 'pure future' (*will* + stem), in Zawadzka/Moszczak by the Imperative, and in Zawadzka by the Present Perfect. It seems that in Zawadzka too much prominence in the beginners' textbook is given to the Present Perfect. It could be assumed that this particular textbook attaches considerable importance to contrastive differences. The Present Perfect does not exist in Polish and thus long practice in using it is thought to be necessary for Polish learners. Hence its presentation in the beginners' course. However, the non-finite stem + *ed* verb form is fairly rare and the tense has a complex verb group structure (*have* + stem + *ed*). According to George's count (1972:24), the non-finite stem + *ed* form occurs most frequently as a past participle or an adjective (*It is done. He is tired*), and not as a constituent element of the Present Perfect Tense. In Zawadzka/Moszczak the Present Perfect is left out of the first volume of the course altogether and the Simple Past is introduced instead.

As we can observe, the sequence of tense form presentation is different in each textbook. My special doubts concern the appearance of the Present Perfect in elementary course, because of the complexity of verb group structure and fairly low frequency of occurrence.

Similar doubts may also be raised with references to the form *be* + *going to* + stem for expressing future intention. Two of the textbooks discussed introduce this expression very early: Zawadzka, immediately after the Present Continuous and before the Present Simple; Zawadzka/Moszczak, after the Present Simple and the Imperative. It could be argued that *be* + *going to* + stem is one of the least frequent verb groups and is far too complex to be presented so early. Besides, as it was said earlier in this chapter, there are simpler ways of introducing reference to the future if the teacher feels the necessity of presenting it at this stage of the course.

It seems, then, *be* + *going to* + stem as well as the Present Perfect Tense could be moved to later stages of the course. The beginners' textbook could follow the sequence of verb forms suggested on page 46.

The Imperative, appearing within the broad context of Instruction, offers good communicative possibilities. What is more, speech may be accompanied here by physical actions. Learners can carry out and give commands or requests, having learned several verbs and a number of nouns and

pronouns. It could be argued that a procedure of associating a set of words with an appropriate action may be more stimulating for the learners than having to describe things and actions verbally. The learners may also get satisfaction from their ability to use the language effectively even at very early stages. I do not deny here the great communicative value of all those sentences which function as introductions or greetings, e.g. *My name is...*, *How are you?*, and the like. It seems to me, however, that commands requiring appropriate physical actions are also good for learning how to communicate in classroom conditions, especially at the elementary stage.

There exists an experimental teaching method based solely on learning commands. It is called Total Physical Response and was for the first time used in the USA to teach Japanese and Russian (as foreign languages). It was demonstrated by Asher (1965) and his collaborators. The learners listened to simple one-word commands first and were shown how to carry them out. After some time they could give commands themselves. The commands grew more and more complicated as the course progressed. However, the organization of a course based solely on command learning raises doubts. Learning only these sentence forms and nothing else may become tedious and quickly lose its first impact. Nevertheless, the method may be very effective for absolute beginners. Besides, as Stevick puts it (1976:37), language expressions associated with physical actions are much better remembered by learners, even after weeks or months. Interesting support for starting foreign language teaching with the Imperative accompanied by appropriate action was presented by Kalivoda (1987). Examples for practising the Imperative in the context of Instruction will appear in the last chapter.

Lack of stem + *ed* (finite verb) in a beginners' course excludes the possibility of using narration as a communicative device. Fortunately, all the textbooks discussed except one (Zawadzka) do not leave out the Simple Past Tense. They introduce it at the end of the beginners' part.

None of the three textbooks presents the form *be* + stem + *ing* for decided future events. They limit the meaning of this form to "here-and-now". Only one beginners' textbook, Smólska/Rusiecki, introduces *will* + stem for future predictions. The remaining two textbooks present only *be* + *going to* + stem for future intentions. It could be argued that instead of such relatively rare verb forms as the non-finite stem + *ed* (the Present Perfect) or *be* + *going to* + stem, the Simple Past and different forms of future should be presented shortly after the Simple Present and Present Continuous.

4.4. REMARKS CONCERNING THE PRESENTATION OF STRUCTURAL ITEMS OTHER THAN BASIC VERB FORMS

This part will deal, among other issues, with the introduction of certain pronouns and determiners which usually create problems for Polish learners. It should be stressed here that for teaching purposes it seems better to treat

each pronoun or determiner as a separate vocabulary item. Pronouns especially, since they fulfil the same function in the language and some are very similar in form, may be easily confused. Let us consider a very frequent case of confusing *he* and *she* by a great number of Polish learners (including English philology students). There may be at least two reasons for such confusions:

(i) the majority of structure drills use *he* as the third person singular pronoun,

(ii) *he* and *she* have been introduced together in one lesson.

He and *she* are very close in meaning. Both are third person singular pronouns. They are differentiated only by gender. Besides, as far as their form is concerned, they differ only in one letter in spelling and one sound in pronunciation. Thus, when both appear near each other in structure drills, they become easily confused. The only remedy here seems to be to treat them separately. One of them should be mastered very well before the other one is introduced. Let us see how the textbooks discussed here introduce these two items.

Zawadzka introduces *he* and *she* in the initial stage (during the oral period). They appear together, in one lesson, and *he* is introduced before *she*, for instance: *This boy is Mike. He is Peter's friend. That girl is Betty. She is Susan's friend.* Zawadzka and Moszczak adopt a similar procedure: *he* appears first and both *he* and *she* are introduced in the same practice pattern, e.g. *Is he English? No, he isn't. He's American. Is she German? No, she isn't. She's American, too.*

A slightly different presentation is suggested in Smólska/Rusiecki. Here *she* appears first but *he* follows immediately in the same structure pattern: *Mrs Grey is English. She is in Poland now. Mr Brown is American. He is in England now.*

4.4.1. DETERMINERS IN THE NOUN PHRASE

Another pair of structural items that should be separated in teaching are the determiners (and pronouns) *this/that*. They are close in meaning and therefore easily confused. The difference in meaning between *this* and *that* is often represented by means of arrows. A shorter arrow indicates *this* and refers to persons and objects close to the speaker. A longer arrow indicates *that* and refers to persons and objects at a certain distance from the speaker (see: Zawadzka, Zawadzka/Moszczak, and Smólska/Rusiecki). Plural equivalents of these pronouns are introduced in a similar way. In presenting these structural items the teacher's role seems to be especially important. In order to make the difference between them more evident, the teacher may explain *this* as a pronoun or determiner denoting things within an enclosed space, and *that* as denoting things outside an enclosed space. Moreover, they should be introduced at a distance from each other. Finally, it must not be forgotten that

this/that as pronouns (*This is a book*) and *this/that* as determiners (*This book is red*) are two separate structural problems and should not be presented together in one classroom lesson. However, in Zawadzka/Moszczak and Zawadzka they appear in both functions in the same unit, for instance: *Who's this? This man is Barbara's father* (Zawadzka/Moszczak, 21).

The determiners *a* and *the* constitute a special difficulty for Polish learners because determiners do not exist in our language. What is more, leaving them out in speech or in writing does not normally hinder communication. Teachers should therefore be particularly careful if they want their learners to master the determiners. Unfortunately, the way they are introduced in some textbooks does not make the learning process easier. In the majority of cases *a* and *the* are either ignored by the learners or their functions are confused. It could be argued, then, that the two articles should be presented in such a way that when a learner fails to produce one of them, communication becomes more difficult. A clear function for each article should be established. What is more, they should rather not be presented very close together. Contrasting *a* and *the* in one lesson could lead to confusion. A typical confusion-inducing presentation is the following: the teacher has one red book in his hand; turning to the learners he says: *This is a book. The book is red.* The learners can observe the same book all the time. There is no wonder, then, that they cannot see any obvious difference between the meaning of the two articles. There is always the same object spoken about in both sentences. The explanation about first (*a*) or second (*the*) mentioning of this object is not convincing enough for the beginners, who do not understand the whole concept of article. For such learners it would seem best to restrict the meaning of *a* to "any one of many". This meaning could be demonstrated in situations where the learner is faced with a choice of one object from a collection of objects of the same kind (McEldowney 1977). The teacher may ask one of the learners to come to the table where he has put several books and ask him to *Choose a book* (or *Take a book*). In this case *a* means "any" and acquires a precise meaning in utterances. Such a presentation draws the learner's attention to *a* as an inevitable element accompanying the noun.

The could be presented at an appropriate distance from *a*, after the latter concept has become well established. It should not be introduced in contrast with *a* in the same classroom lesson, because in that case the two items are unnaturally juxtaposed and may easily become confused.

The contrast may not be dangerous when one of the items contrasted has already been mastered. In this case confusion of the two elements is not possible. The contrast may even be profitable here, because it situates the newly introduced item in the language system. However, when two grammatical units, similar in their meaning (e.g. two pronouns, two determiners) are introduced in one contact hour, or when one follows the other very closely,

there is a great possibility of confusion, because the learners have to master two similar concepts together and are soon asked to use them in practice exercises. Teachers, then, should avoid introducing contrasting but semantically cognate structural items in one classroom lesson.

It seems that *the* is most commonly used to refer to "the special one" (McEldowney 1977) and should be taught as such at the beginners' stage. The learners should be asked to choose from a collection of items of varied colour, shape or size the one that is somehow special, for instance: *Choose the red pen. Take the pen on the left.*

Let us see how the textbooks discussed here treat the problem of the definite, indefinite and zero article. In Smólska/Rusiecki *a* appears separately from *the*, but it is contrasted with uncountable nouns. *The* is introduced four units later and is contrasted with *a/an*. It would seem, however, that this contrast is not dangerous here because *a* has been mastered already. *A/an* is explained as "any one of many" objects of the same kind, whereas *the* is explained as "the specific one".

In Zawadzka/Moszczak *a* appears in Lesson Two in the reading passage and is afterwards explained as "belonging to a group of all objects having the same name". This determiner is 'officially' introduced in the presentation part of the next lesson, in the following way: *New York is a city in the United States.* There are several points to be discussed here. First, that not only *a* but also *the* appears in this sentence, and *the* is not explained. Second, it could be argued that *a* is better understood when it is introduced on the basis of concrete objects (see explanation above). *The* appears in Lesson Three in the reading passage and is explained as "the one both speaker and hearer know about". Other meanings of *the* are dealt with in Lessons Four and Six. Strangely enough, the learner is not expected to use *the* until Lesson Six, and here it is contrasted with *a/an*. There are at least two remarks to be made here. First, it seems that there is no logic in the presentation of both determiners. *The* is explained in the grammar part of each respective lesson but it appears only in respective passages (reading), so it cannot be properly practised. Secondly, there are too many meanings of *a* and *the* presented in the first six lessons of the textbook, without adequate practice. For beginning learners this may be very confusing, because the concept itself is totally new for them.

Uncountable nouns (zero article) are introduced as late as in Lesson Sixteen (names of substances), and there is no danger of confusing indefinite and zero article.

In Zawadzka we have a similar treatment of *a/the* to the one in Zawadzka/Moszczak. *A* appears in the initial stage in Lesson 6 in the following context: *John Wilson is a doctor. Peter is a schoolboy* (Zawadzka 1981: 50). It could be argued that *a* precedes here an individual having only one referent (John Wilson, Peter). *The* is introduced in Lesson 12 by means of contrast

with *a*: *This is a pen and that's a pencil. The pen is long and the pencil is short.* It seems that the learners would not be able to distinguish between these two determiners on the basis of the context in which they are presented. Both *a* and *the* refer to single objects and the difference between them is indicated only by the fact that *a* refers to an object mentioned for the first time, whereas *the* refers to the same thing but mentioned for the second time. It is true that other meanings of *the* appear later in the textbook, but it seems to me that it is the first explanation that influences most strongly the learners' future production because it becomes a point of reference. R. Berry maintains (1987) that emphasis on the anaphoric use of *the* in textbooks may result in errors like the following: *We didn't know what to buy George for his birthday. It was to be either a bike or a computer. We finally decided on the bike. The bike* in the last sentence is, obviously, wrong here, because we are still talking about any one of many bikes, so *a bike* is the only correct form.

Zero article is introduced much later in Zawadzka's textbook, on the basis of uncountable nous (like in the textbook previously discussed).

4.4.2. SYNTACTIC PATTERNS

Let us now comment on the presentation of syntactic patterns in beginners' textbooks. The choice of syntactic patterns is very similar in all three of them. All introduce the following types of sentences: Subject — Verb — Object, Subject — Verb — Complement, general questions, special questions (with *be* and other verb forms presented during the course), imperative sentences, requests with *I would like to...* , *there is/are* constructions, subordinate sentences of *I think she's very nice* type. There are, however, slight differences. The textbook by Zawadzka/Moszczak does not introduce sentences with two objects (direct and indirect), e.g. *John gave a book to Mary*, whereas the two other textbooks do that. On the other hand, in Zawadzka and Moszczak we can meet requests with *could* and simple reported questions (e.g. *Tell me where you live*). These constructions do not appear in the other two textbooks.

Generally, syntactic patterns introduced in the three textbooks for beginners are not beyond the learners' capacity. There are two contrasting viewpoints as to the introduction of syntax at the beginners' level. McEldowney (1982) maintains that for beginners a core language that operates with simple sentences is needed. Each sentence should describe one concept only (McEldowney 1982:9), e.g. *Magpies are birds. They live in towns. They are big. They are black and white.* Language learning seems to be a development from core to sophistication. At a later stage all concepts can be put into one sophisticated definition, e.g.: *Magpies are big, black and white birds, living in towns.* In this way, starting from core language, the learning task is broken into manageable units and causes less confusion for the learners (*op. cit.*: 9).

Some other research contradicts McEldowney's statement about core

syntax. E. Blau (1982) maintains that although shorter sentences are easier to comprehend for young children learning to read in their own language, this is not true of more mature students, who are already literate in their native language and are learning to read English as a second (or foreign) language (Blau 1982: 517).

In Blau's experiment a number of short passages were developed in three versions (vocabulary and content were left untouched). "Version 1 consisted of short simple sentences, version 2 of complex sentences with clues to underlying relationships left intact, and version 3 of complex sentences without such clues" (op. cit.: 517). Here is a sample of three versions of a passage, with accompanying comprehension questions, which are the same for all three versions:

Version 1: Disease germs may be present in food. Cook food for a long enough time. This will kill any disease germs. Food may not be clean. Cook it thoroughly. In this way you can combat possible uncleanliness of food.

Version 2: If you cook food for a long enough time, you will kill any disease germs that may be present. Therefore, one way that you can combat possible uncleanliness of food is by cooking it thoroughly.

Version 3: Cooking food for a long enough time will kill any disease germs possibly present. Therefore, cooking it thoroughly is one way of combating possible uncleanliness of food.

To be certain that food is safe to eat
    a. wash it,
    b. cook it completely,
    c. cook it immediately,
    d. fry it.

The exercise was administered first to college students and then to younger learners, both groups consisting of native speakers of Spanish. The results for both groups appeared to be similar. Version two in both cases got the highest comprehension grade. Short, simple sentences seem to be an obstacle to comprehension. "Choppy, unnatural sentences are difficult to read and the relationships and meaning revealed by the formation of complex sentences are apparently lost. Readers do indeed seem to benefit from the information regarding relationships that is revealed by complex sentences" (Blau 1982: 525).

While discussing the presentation of grammatical items in coursebooks we should also pay closer attention to the number of grammatical constructions appearing in each unit. This number certainly depends on the number of contact hours suggested to cover the content of the unit. However, in the initial stage of Zawadzka's textbook we do have a division into classroom lessons, not into units. And here, in Lesson Two, for instance, the following constructions are introduced: positive statements with am/are (I'm Jane. You're Betty), general questions with am/are (Are you Helen or Betty?), short positive and negative answers (Yes, you are. No, I'm not). Taking into account the level of the learners, it seems that this lesson (Zawadzka 1981:41) is overloaded with grammatical constructions. That can cause confusion and frustration on the part of the learners.

A different situation can be observed in Smólska/Rusiecki. In Unit One we have the following grammatical constructions introduced: statements with is, questions with is, short positive and negative answers with is. It depends on the teacher, however, how many lessons he decides to devote to cover the productive parts of the unit. It would seem that in order not to make the learners confused, it is best to divide the structural material into three separate classroom lessons. For the learners' sake it seems the most convenient to introduce not more than one or two structural items in one lesson at the beginners' stage.

4.5. CONCLUSIONS

On the basis of textbook analysis a few suggestions could be made for the modification of the selection and sequencing of structures in a beginners' textbook. These suggestions can be formulated as follows:

(i) The elementary competence should involve an ability to handle in speech and in writing the four broad contexts: Instruction, Description, Narrative, and reference to the Future.

(ii) Appropriate structural items should be chosen to express these contexts in the most adequate way. Priority should be given to structures that are useful for immediate communication between learners.

(iii) Items that are very close in meaning and in form should not be introduced together in one lesson. Otherwise confusion may result.

(iv) All structural items should be presented in real-life contexts, which should not be ambiguous.

(v) Textbook units and real lessons (contact hours) should not be overloaded with grammatical structures.

To conclude, I would like to quote a few remarks by R. Berry (1987) on how formal aspects of the language should not be taught. Faults of "pedagogical grammars" hinder foreign language acquisition. These are, among others:

(i) Presentation of a grammatical structure in toto regardless of the learners' needs. That may refer to the article system as well as to, for instance, the Present Perfect, the usages of which are often explained in detail but adequate practice does not follow (cf. Zawadzka).

(ii) Concentration on rare aspects of structures. That may refer to frequent introduction of the Present Simple Habitual as the first instance of the usage of this tense, instead of the Present Simple Actual, which is much more frequent in natural speech.

If these organizational faults were eliminated from beginners' courses, a better kind of elementary grammar for the learners could be developed.

The above-mentioned remarks, together with the results of error analysis and syllabus design research may contribute to a better selection and sequencing of structural items in textbooks, and thus may make the generating of sentences easier.

So far we have been concerned with the presentation of grammatical structures suggested in three textbooks of English for Polish learners. Let us now concentrate on the examples of how these structures can be practised in the classroom in order to raise the learners' grammatical consciousness, and to demonstrate how the structures practised may be used in natural communication.

TEACHING GRAMMATICAL STRUCTURES

We have already said (ch. 2) that communication cannot be taught without basic knowledge of grammar and that the term "communicative" refers to methodology and not to syllabus. Let us discuss the principles of communicative methodology, so that later we could use them in suggesting techniques for teaching grammar.

5.1. PRINCIPLES OF COMMUNICATIVE METHODOLOGY

Followers of the communicative language teaching methodology have formulated several principles characteristic for this way of teaching, but before presenting them we will have to refer to some psycholinguistic research which contributed to their development. In this respect Stevick argues that teachers should not expect their students to "remember a new item for very long unless they have done more with it than simply heard it" (1976:13). Students benefit more from actively searching out, discovering and depicting (op. cit.: 26). The important statement here is that teaching is not mere repetition of words or structures but repetition of effort.

Both in L1 and FL no communication takes place when the student knows in advance what his partner is going to say. There must be an element of doubt, an information gap. The information gap may not be present in the presentation stage of the lesson, because textbooks prefer to show how a structure works from the point of view of both the sender and the receiver of the message. For instance, we may have a conversational exchange similar to the one below:

How many windows are there in the Wilsons' living room?
There are two.

Here (Zawadzka 1983:90) a picture with two windows is provided, in order that the learners should know clearly what the question and the answer look like. There is a great deal of conventionality in classroom presentation of elements of language, but the learners are aware of it and it need not seem unnatural to them (cf. ch. 3). In the practice stage, however, in order to make teaching more effective, the doubt as to what the other participant is going

to say must always be present. Practice must try to mimic the conditions of authentic communication. Communication is not stimulated when everything that is to be said is known to the participants. The learners are not motivated enough to take an active part in their language task. Thus, communicative methodology always tries to secure the information gap.

Some scholars have tried to establish principles of communicative methodology. Morrow (1981: 59) suggested five such principles, which may guide us in our search for a good method of teaching.

Principle one: *Know what you are doing* (*op. cit.*: 60). It implies that performing operations in the foreign language should be the focus of every lesson. The learner should be able to see clearly at the end of the lesson that he can do something which he could not do at the beginning (e.g. asking the way), and that it is communicatively useful.

Principle two: *The whole is more than the sum of its parts* (*op. cit.*: 61). This means that a communicative method should operate with stretches of language above the sentence level and that discourse is more than the sum of its sentences. Some knowledge of people's intentions and of social context of the discourse is necessary.

Principle three: *The processes are as important as the forms*. The teaching process in itself is as important as the language material introduced.

There are three basic processes that can be incorporated individually or jointly into teaching. There are: *information gap*, *choice* and *feedback*. Information gap works on the assumption that the student must ask another student for the necessary information to complete his task (cf. explanation above). Choice involves the possibility of using the language that the student needs most in a given situation. Feedback involves the feeling of certainty that the message has been properly received and understood (Morrow 1981: 63). The learner must be aware of the result of his communicative efforts, either in the form of a verbal answer or of a physical activity of his interlocutor. Otherwise, he may conclude that his own message was wrongly verbalized or that his colleague failed to catch its meaning.

Principle four: *To learn it, do it*. What happens in the classroom must involve the learner and it must be associated with his activity, either mental or physical (*op. cit.*: 64).

Principle five: *Mistakes are not always a mistake* (cf. ch. 1 on interlanguage studies). Too much criticism on the part of the teacher may destroy the learner's confidence and make communication impossible (*op. cit.*: 64).

Research on error analysis and especially on interlanguage contributed much to a change in the treatment of students' errors (see 4.1). It was argued that errors are inevitable at early stages of language learning, and that they are gradually eliminated as learning progresses. Only errors that may hinder communication should be corrected and discussed by the teacher, but only

after the exercise has been completed. Teachers should avoid interrupting the learner's performance.

Johnson (1982) enumerated two communicative principles referring to practical exercises, which may be added to those formulated by Morrow:

1) *The task dependency principle*. It says that a task cannot be done well if a previous one, completed by the same or by a different student, has not been done correctly. The learners' success depends on each other's work and not just on individual effort.

2) *The correction of content principle*. It says that the learner's work will not be assessed first by the teacher for its grammatical accuracy, but by the learner's partner for adequacy in achieving communication. For instance, if a diagram based on a text was not completed properly, the other student cannot write an adequate report on the basis of it.

Communicative teaching practice should, then, be facilitated by the learners' meaningful activities. The learners should be made aware of what they are doing and why. Every activity must have its purpose corresponding to one in real life. Structures should be taught in longer stretches of discourse to exemplify their authentic occurrence. Finally, the student must work on the assumption that to make communication possible, there must be an element of doubt, and that success of the whole task depends on whether he completed one part successfully.

5.2. ACTIVITIES FOR PRACTISING GRAMMATICAL STRUCTURES

In this part some activities concentrating on practising grammatical structures will be presented. The structures chosen are, mostly, those which were established in the previous chapter as basic for a beginners' course of English. Techniques proposed for practising these structures follow the principles of communicative methodology. Exercises, all of them suitable for beginners, are graded from simple to more complex.

5.2.1. THE IMPERATIVE

In teaching the Imperative it must be remembered, however, that it sounds impolite when somebody uses imperative sentences as requests in natural communication. In communication (and also in communicative teaching) imperatives function mostly in instructions and in giving advice (cf. 4.3). Here is an example of a very simple substitution drill which, however, is placed in a realistic situational context. The teacher says: *Saturday is my sister's birthday. I must give her a present.* Then he asks the learners for advice what kind of present he could give. He may help the learners by either showing them pictures of different objects or by writing the names of objects on the blackboard. The learners' "pieces of advice" should have the following form: *Give her a...*, e.g.

Give her a book.
Give her a radio.
Give her a dog, etc.

The exercise demonstrates how grammatically correct sentences may be used for natural communication. The learners practise here imperative sentences in their appropriate function (giving advice). The source of the exercise is Rusiecki (1964:118).

The next exercise practises the Imperative in the context of instruction by means of an information transfer exercise. The passage used here is a simple instruction taken from a box of Tetley teabags (authentic teaching material!):

How to make tea for two people
Put one bag per person into a warm tea-pot. Pour on freshly boiled water, stir and wait for 3 or 4 minutes. Then enjoy a really good cup of Tetley tea.

Information transfer exercises are based on the idea that in order to understand a passage better the learners are asked to transfer the information from the text to graphic form, which is most often a diagram or a table. In this exercise the learners focus on stem forms of verbs.

The learners have the stem forms of verbs listed on the blackboard, but not in the appropriate sequence:

pour, wait, stir, enjoy, put, (boil).

After they have read the passage, they are told to write the verbs in the correct sequence in the left-hand column of their tables. The tables are distributed before the exercise. The verb *boil* does not appear in the passage, but its appropriate position can be easily inferred from the context (freshly boiled water). Afterwards the learners have to complete the remaining two columns of the table. The completed table should look like the one below:

Verb	What	Where/How long
(boil) put pour stir wait enjoy	(some water) two bags the water the tea	into a tea-pot on the teabags for 3 or 4 minutes

Here the task was made easier for the learners because the verbs appearing in the instruction had already been listed for them. In some other situation the learners may be asked to find the verbs without any help, and write them down in the first column.

Grammar practice does not have to constitute a separate part of the lesson. We can practise grammatical structures while focusing our attention on the development of all the four language skills. Thus we may incorporate grammar exercises into speaking practice, reading or writing practice, and even into listening practice activities. It is, however, essential to provide an appropriate situational context for the use of structures.

The Present Simple tense is best presented in the context of description. Here we may use several types of exercises.

Structured exercises are more suitable for early beginners. They leave the learners little freedom in creating their own language; almost all the information they are supposed to produce has been provided for them, e.g.: *Describe yourself. Tell us your name, age, height, colour of your hair and eyes.*

Graded exercises give learners more freedom. There is no detailed pattern provided, only a general outline which, however, still limits the learner's performance in some way, e.g.: *Tell us four things about your body.*

Open-ended exercises give a lot of freedom to the learners, providing only the topic of their performance, e.g. *Tell us four things about yourself.*

Exercises described above practise the present tense in the context of static description (verbs *be* and *have* are mostly used here).

Here is one more example of an open-ended exercise. This time it practises the use of negative sentences in Present Simple:

A male chauvinist doesn't wash up. What else doesn't he do?
Possible answers: *He doesn't help in the house.*
He doesn't like working women.
He doesn't cook at all. Etc. (Ur 1989)

Another simple exercise practising the present tense, this time in its habitual aspect, is reordering. Reordering may be used for both spoken and written practice. For instance, the learners are asked to rewrite a description of Peter's day, paying attention to the appropriate sequence of events. In the description below the sequence is wrong.

Peter has lunch at school at 1.30 p.m. He has dinner at 7 p.m. Peter gets up at 7.30 a.m. He comes back home from school at 4.30 p.m. Peter starts his lessons at 9 a.m. He goes to bed at 10 p.m.

This is a simple copying exercise, but copying is meaningful here. The learners have to understand the content of each sentence in order to put it in its appropriate place in the description.

Finally, let us give two examples of description-based information transfer exercises. In the first one the learners are to complete the table asking their classmates questions connected with their school and family life:

Name	Address	Favourite colour	Brothers and sisters	Best school subject	Favourite hobby/sport

Afterwards they have to tell or write a short report about each person interviewed, e.g.:

> Ann lives in Grove Road and has no brothers and sisters. Her best school subject is Physical Education. Her favourite sport is tennis and her favourite colour is pink. (Abbott and Wingard 1981:156-157)

The second exercise is the most difficult of all. Here the learners must be familiar with quite advanced vocabulary, although the grammatical structure practised is just the present tense in the context of a dynamic description. The exercise described below was designed by the author of this work during the Core Grammar workshop with Dr. McEldowney, University of Manchester.

The learners are given two diagrams representing the normal water cycle and the Caspian Sea water cycle.

(a)

(b)
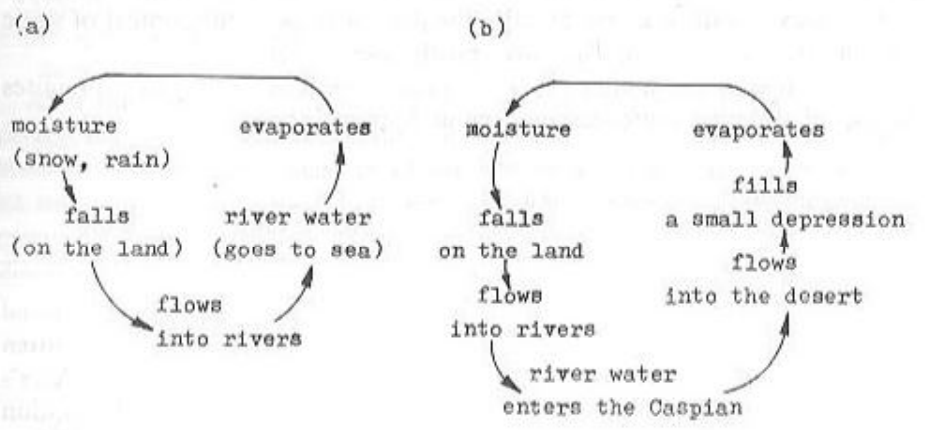
Then the learners are asked to tell the teacher about the difference between the two water cycles. The learners' output may look as follows:

> Normally the water cycle consists of four main steps. First moisture (rain or snow) falls on the land, then it flows into rivers. Water from rivers goes to sea and evaporates from there creating moisture.
> The Caspian Sea shows an unusual variation of this pattern. Three first steps are the same as in the normal water cycle, but then the Caspian Sea overflows and some water flows into the desert and fills a small depression there. Then water evaporates quickly from the depression to create moisture again.

Obviously, the language used by the learners may be much simpler than in the example.

5.2.3. THE SIMPLE PAST TENSE

This grammatical form is best practised in the context of narrative and description of past events or states.

The simplest is a copying exercise where the past forms of the verb *be* are used. The act of copying has, however, been made purposeful.

Let the learners imagine that the police had descriptions of two suspects. Each element of the description came from a different source and that is why each sentence was on a separate sheet of paper. The sentences got mixed up by a secretary. The learners' task is to sort them out and write them under the appropriate picture. The pictures are either distributed by the teacher or copied from the blackboard. Here are the sentences to be sorted out:

> He was about 40.
> He was about 60.
> He was thin.
> He was fat.
> He had a beard.
> He had long hair.
> He was wearing glasses.
> He was wearing a hat.

> (Wingard 1981:147)

This type of selective copying may be useful at an elementary stage for several reasons: the learners must make sense of each sentence, relate it to a context and then copy it under the appropriate picture. The finished product is a very simple, but cohesive text.

A still different exercise focusing on the past tense is a narrative-based information transfer, where the sequence of events is quite important. Let us imagine that the learners get the table like the one below and are told to prepare a narrative on the basis of the table:

the young man	both	the boy
heard a cry turned round		
		ran up to the man pointed towards the river
	ran along the bank saw a girl in the water	
took off his coat jumped into the water saved the girl's life		

We can imagine that the learners are able to prepare the following narrative:

> The young man heard a cry and turned round. At the same time the boy ran up to him and pointed towards the river. Then they both ran along the river bank and soon saw a girl in the water. The man took off his coat, jumped into the water and saved the girl's life.

Another exercise (Ur 1989) presents and practises questions in the Simple Past. It is a game which may be called "Detective". First the teacher gives the pattern on the blackboard: *Did you take the money? No, I didn't.* Then the teacher, who takes the role of the detective, goes out of the classroom. Next a learner leaves his purse or wallet on the desk and also goes out. One of the learners who remained inside takes the wallet and hides it. Then both the teacher and the owner of the wallet return, the latter announcing that somebody stole his money. The teacher starts asking questions *Did you take the money?* All the learners give negative answers, obviously, but the "thief" has to betray himself (herself) somehow, either by some gesture or by the tone of his voice. The game may be repeated with learners taking the role of the detective this time.

The game provides a real-life context for practising Simple Past questions. The teacher really does not know who took the money and in this way the principle of information gap is observed. Besides, it gives a lot of enjoyment for the learners.

5.2.4. THE FUTURE

The simplest way of presenting and practising *will*+stem verb form is to make the learners tell the teacher about their plans for the future. First the teacher says what he will do next month, next year, in ten years' time, etc. For example:

Teacher: It's the 25th of May today. Next month I will have my holidays. I'll spend them at the seaside. Next year I'll go to Greece with my family. And what about you?
Learner: Next year I will stay at home.

<div align="right">(cf. Smólska/Rusiecki 1977:195)</div>

The learners may ask each other in pairs about their plans and intentions in the same way. Questions with *will* are to be introduced later.

Some other interesting exercises for practising *will*+stem were suggested by Penny Ur in her book *Grammar Practice Activities* (CUP, 1988). One of the exercises is called "Future of a picture". The teacher shows a picture of some kind of interesting or dramatic action. Then he asks the class: "*What do you think will happen next?*" The learners contribute suggestions, using the specified future form. They may be also asked to give evidence for their ideas. A written follow-up is possible here (Ur 1988:106).

Another exercise uses a collection of small recognizable objects in a bag (or a set of picture cards depicting similar objects). One of the learners goes out of the room and the teacher shows one of the objects to the rest of the group. When the learner returns, he has to guess what object the teacher has shown. He has to ask: *What will you do with it?* The learners may answer: *I will break/water plants with/paint with it*, etc. The less obvious the answer, the more difficult the task is for the guesser (Ur 1988:94).

All exercises of the type *Our planet/country/city in 50 years' time* are also quite useful here and the learners enjoy them a lot. They are open-ended activities and the learners are encouraged to use their imagination and create their own visions of the future.

5.2.5. TEACHING QUESTIONS

A few remarks concerning the presentation and practice of questions seem to be necessary as well. Generally, in the classroom most of the questions are asked by the teacher. If the learners have any drills based on questions, they are mostly concerned with *forming* rather than with *asking* questions (Morrow 1978:97). There would be nothing harmful in it if the procedures of teaching question formation were restricted to the presentation stage of the lesson period. In the case of teaching how to form questions in English the learners are told what structures to use, what type of question to ask, and what the supposed answer should look like. The practice stage, however, should try to show how the language works in real life. And in real life we are told very rarely, if at all, what the answer to a given question should be. Thus, when we want to establish real-life conditions for practising questions and answers, we must make sure that there is a person A who does not have the information and wants to obtain it, and a person B who has the information. In other words, the information gap must be provided. Here is one of the possible techniques of introducing and practising the simplest verbal (general) questions with *is*. The exercise is taken from a workshop in Core Grammar of English with Dr. McEldowney.

There are different objects on the table. The teacher stands with his back to the class. One of the learners picks up an object and shows it to the rest of the class. The teacher, obviously, cannot see the object and his task is to guess what the learner has chosen. He may ask the following questions:

<div align="right">

Is it red?
Is it long?
Is it blue?
Is it big?
Is it square?
Is it a book?
Is it a pencil?

</div>

It must be remembered, however, that the lexical items used by the teacher should be familiar to the learners. The technique described is similar to the Twenty Questions game. It may be used for both presentation and practice of questions.

The teacher continues to ask questions until he guesses correctly. The learners answer only *yes* or *no*. After the question form has been introduced and practised in this way, the learners can start to participate more actively in the game. The teacher repeated the same question form many times so that the learners were able to master it receptively. Now productive practice follows. One of the learners turns his back to the class while the teacher chooses an object. The learner has to ask the kind of questions the teacher asked before until he guesses correctly. The exercise can be repeated several times with different learners, and it has several advantages. It provides a reason for asking questions, it involves the learners in active thinking and it is pedagogically attractive because of an element of game.

Let us consider now how one of the textbook drills, also introducing questions, can be modified to make it more purposeful.

Mrs. Wilson: *Where does Betty have lunch, Mrs. Groom?*
Mrs. Groom: *At school.*
Mrs. Wilson: *What does she do after dinner?*
Mrs. Groom: *She watches television.*
Mrs. Wilson: *What time does she go to bed?*
Mrs. Groom: *At eleven.*
Mrs. Wilson: *Why does she go to bed so late?*
Mrs. Groom: *She sits up and reads.*

(Zawadzka 1983:155)

First, the teacher must introduce the question pattern. Each student is asked to prepare a short description of his friend's day (positive statements have already been practised). Then the teacher asks questions, e.g.

What time does your friend get up?
Where does he have lunch?
What time does he go to bed?

The learners answer according to what they have written in their descriptions. Now the learners will have to practise the same question form. They will work in pairs. The textbooks are closed. Student B has cards with pictures of Betty having lunch at school, watching television, going to bed, reading. Each picture is accompanied by a clock showing the respective hours: 1 p.m., 8 p.m., 10.30 p.m., 11 p.m. The teacher says to student A: *Ask your neighbour about Betty's lunch, about what she does after dinner, when she goes to bed and why so late.* Learner A does not know what is in B's pictures and he has to ask about the necessary information. When he gets all the answers, he is asked to write a description of Betty's day, for instance:

Betty has lunch at school at 1 p.m. She watches television after dinner. She goes to bed at eleven because she reads books until late.

A similar exercise about a different person may follow, but student B will ask questions this time.

If the teacher finds it difficult to provide pictures, separate sheets of paper with one sentence on each piece could be prepared for B instead, e.g.

Betty has lunch at school at 1 p.m.
She watches television in the evening.
She goes to bed at 11 p.m. because she sits up and reads.

In the previous section an example of introducing and practising questions in Simple Past was given ("Detective" game).

Another, quite simple and enjoyable exercise for practising WH-questions was suggested by P. Ur. The teacher should prepare as many questions and answers as there are learners in the group. Questions and answers are on separate slips of paper. Each learner gets one question slip and one answer slip. He must go to his colleagues and ask them his question until he gets the correct answer, i.e. finds somebody who has "his" answer slip. Then the teacher checks if the question and the answer match. The activity goes on until all question and answer slips have been paired off (Ur 1988:149-150). Here are some examples of questions and answers:

Where is Teheran? In Iran.
How many legs does a horse have? Four.
What is bread made from? Flour.

(Ur 1988:151-152)

A more advanced exercise in practising questions has been suggested by M. Rinvolucri (1989). It is also a game and is called "Don't let him/her finish the story". One of the learners, chosen by the teacher, starts telling a simple story, e.g. "Once upon a time there lived an old king..." Other learners interrupt the story-teller asking all possible questions connected with what he has just said. For instance, after the first sentence we may expect questions like:

Where did the king live?
How old was he?
Did he have a queen?, etc.

The story-teller has to answer all the questions before he is allowed to continue with the story. He gets a reward if he manages to finish the story in 10 minutes having answered all the questions. However, if even one of the questions is grammatically wrong, the question-asking session is interrupted, no matter how many more questions have been prepared, and the story-teller is allowed to continue his story.

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All the exercises presented so far focus on practising specific grammatical structures. Their aim is to show that grammar can be closely connected with teaching communication, i.e. how a given grammatical item may function in a real-life context. In grammatical consciousness-raising approach there exists, however, one more group of exercises. They aim at developing the learners' grammatical awareness.

5.2.6. PRACTICE IN GRAMMATICAL AWARENESS

While doing these exercises the learners have to concentrate directly on how specific grammatical structures function in real communication. All exercises presented below were demonstrated by J. Hill (1989).

(i) **Interpretation**. Here the learners are supposed to match the meaning to sentences, e.g.

She hasn't visited me.

She hasn't been visiting me.

(a) *never*, (b) *for a certain time now.*

The learners have to find out here that (a) refers to the first sentence and (b) — to the second sentence.

Another interpretation exercise:

Which do you say when: you touch somebody accidentally; somebody says his mother is in hospital.

(a) *I am sorry.*

(b) *I'm sorry.*

This time (a) refers to the second sentence and (b) — to the first sentence.

(ii) **Possibility of structures**. Here the learners have to decide whether a structure is grammatically possible and when it can be used, e.g.:

Is it possible to say:

We look for a new house.

We are looking for a new house.

When is it possible?

(iii) **Thinking about grammar**. Here the learners are supposed to find and choose three correct interpretations of a grammatical phenomenon:

Present Continuous may refer to activities:

(a) at the moment of speaking,

(b) for thinks which are true at the moment, but not always (*You're interrupting me*),

(c) present plans for the future,

(d) habitual actions,

(e) somebody's likes or dislikes.

CONCLUSION

There are a few concluding comments to be made.

One. There is no unique answer to the question which of the methods and techniques developed so far are universally suitable. Teaching conditions determine the choice of methods and techniques. Still, the communicative approach, combined with grammatical consciousness-raising seem to offer the most promising possibilities for both learners and teachers, because they are based on what seems sound psycholinguistic and sociolinguistic principles.

Two. In the history of foreign language teaching we can observe a cyclical development of approaches. Certain features of each approach arise in reaction to perceived inadequacies of an earlier approach. Some approaches have focused on using the language to speak and understand (direct method, audiolingualism, the communicative approach). Others have focused on analysing the language to learn grammatical rules (the grammar-translation method, the reading approach, the cognitive code learning theory). In fact, techniques and procedures come and go, and very often what appears new and revolutionary for us may in reality be neither one nor the other. The teacher must choose what is best for his learners. "Many teaching techniques are not transferable. They work well only for a single type of teacher with a particular type of personality, or they work well with only a particular type or category of student" (Mullins 1980:2).

Three. "Second language research cannot at present contribute to the development of syllabus content or specific teaching methods [...] Certain aspects of L2 will develop on exposure to the language without any need for intervention, whereas others will require or benefit from special focus introduced by the teacher or textbook" (Sorace 1988). Hence the author of this work has been careful enough not to offer a ready-made beginners' syllabus. It is the teacher who, on the basis of different assumptions, creates a syllabus during the process of teaching. Only then would such a syllabus satisfy both him and his learners.

Four. The present work does not claim to propose any definite answers, because there are none in foreign language teaching. It only presents several points of view expressed by different scholars and offers a few proposals of how to make practical use of some of the achievements in second language acquisition research. As everything else in foreign language teaching, these proposals may be either accepted or rejected.

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