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# Techniques for Teaching ESL to Refugees

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*School for International Training*

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# TECHNIQUES FOR TEACHING ESL TO REFUGEES

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the Master of Arts in Teaching degree at the  
School for International Training, Brattleboro, Vermont

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## ABSTRACT

This project is an attempt to provide the inexperienced tutor of English to refugees with some commonly used techniques. Most of the techniques presented are not difficult to learn to use effectively. Each technique is presented with its rationale, procedure for use and an example. A discussion of techniques and their uses, objectives, and on teaching and learning precedes the presentation of the techniques.

## ERIC DESCRIPTORS

Cross Cultural Studies

Cultural Awareness

English (Second Language)

Language Instruction

Language Teachers

Teacher Workshops

Teaching Techniques

Workshops

## Foreword

This work is intended for use by those who are going to tutor refugee students in English as a Second Language (ESL), and also by public school teachers who have refugee students in their classrooms and will set aside a time specifically for instruction in ESL.

It is not meant to be a complete collection of all the techniques one would ever use, but rather a sampling of them. Each particular technique is not explored to its fullest capacity; this task is left up to the imagination of the teacher. I hope that this project will serve as a guide to the possibilities one can invent, a beginning that will be added to along with the corresponding growth of the teacher's experience.

## TECHNIQUES FOR TEACHING ESL TO REFUGEES

### GENERAL DISCUSSION

A technique can be thought of as a tool that the teacher uses to present some aspect of the language, and to provide a context for the student to practice it in.

There are many considerations regarding the use of a particular technique. One is that the technique should contribute to the objective of the lesson. For instance, if the objective is to present and practice the present progressive, then the technique chosen should be one designed specifically for this purpose. There may be several techniques that could be used, but some may contain elements that distract the student from focusing on the immediate task. A picture or drawing depicting actions should be of common everyday activities (as eating, walking) rather than of complex cultural, social activities that the student may be completely unfamiliar with. Unnecessary words accompanying the materials may distract the student also.

Another important consideration is that of meaning. If the meaning of the student's utterances is to be conveyed through the technique itself, then the technique should be carefully chosen so as to accomplish this. If the technique does not carry the meaning with it, the students will be practicing utterances that they will not know how to use appropriately during conversation.

If the meaning is already known, however, this does not have to be considered and you will only need to be concerned with providing practice. Once a point is introduced along with its meaning, the students will need a lot of practice. This is where a variety of techniques becomes useful. It is important to be aware of whether meaning is needed or only practice is needed when choosing activities and techniques.

Conveying the meaning of the words is an art in itself. Remember, you can't merely "explain" it in plain English. A context has to be created in which the student can deduce the meaning through observation. For some things, such as the meaning of the prepositions of place under, behind, this is relatively easy. However, for more abstract concepts such as "How are you?" or "Sometimes I go there" it is more difficult.

Techniques can be used to present meaning in different ways. It may be as simple as showing a picture, and the meaning will be obvious. Some techniques are more complicated and require following a specific procedure to be effective. This will be discussed at the beginning of each technique presented.

Any particular technique may be adapted to a variety of purposes, especially in the area of grammar. It is important that major distractions are not present in the material used or the student will spend more time on them than on the concept to be practiced. Such distractions can be depicted actions, phrases, social settings, humor, that are part of the American but are absent from that of the student.

A final consideration in using the techniques is that in some

cases you may want the student to deduce the rules governing the usage of the part of language that is being presented and practiced, be it grammar, pronunciation, social functions or reading. The technique itself and not an "explanation" by the teacher should provide the context by which the student will be able to formulate the rules.

With each section, the presentation of each technique will begin with a short discussion of the technique, its objective and how it is achieved, how it can be used to present meaning and/or provide practice. Where applicable and important to the understanding of the teacher, a brief word about assumptions regarding learning will be included. An example will follow, illustrating the technique as well as the procedure for using it effectively.



## SECTION ONE: GESTURES

A simple yet effective and valuable technique the teacher can use all the time is a collection of hand gestures.

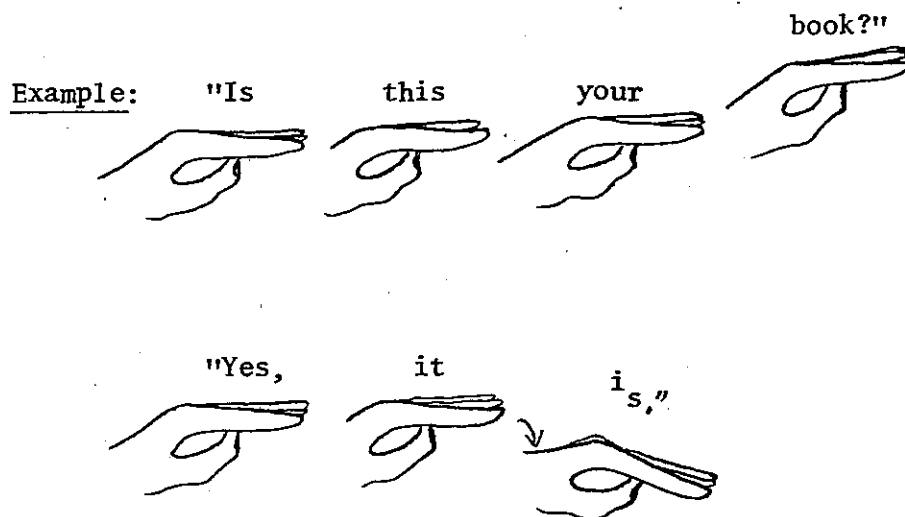
The objective of hand gestures is to communicate important information or directions to the student without getting tangled up in words and meanings. Once the meaning of the gestures is established they will become effective communicators, helping to make the lesson flow smoothly and quickly. Consistency in use of gestures is very important, otherwise the students may be confused or distracted by them.

### 1. Giving Directions to the Student

A student needs to know whether he is supposed to repeat the teacher's words, say the proper phrase or sentence that is called for by the context, or merely to listen. Students of ESL, particularly the Indo-chinese, tend to repeat everything they hear; they want to practice, or maybe they have been trained this way. However, there are times when the student needs to listen carefully first before attempting to speak. A finger to the lips while pointing to the ear is an effective signal for the student to listen.

To direct the student to speak, I hold both hands palm up and curl the fingers toward me. With a little prompting and consistency in use at the beginning, the student will quickly learn what you mean.

Another hand gesture is an up and down motion of the hand to indicate the intonation of the sentence.

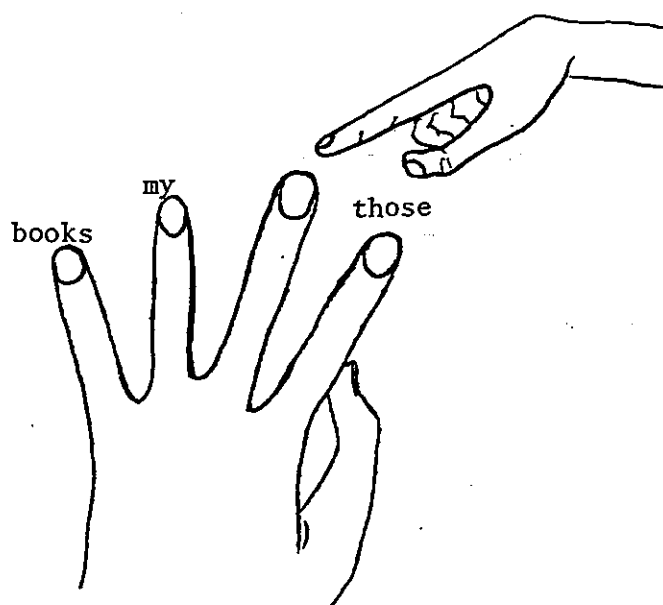


The voice rises on book so your hand should, too. I always use my left hand and move from right to left so the student sees it as left to right, the way we read.

## 2. To Indicate Student Errors

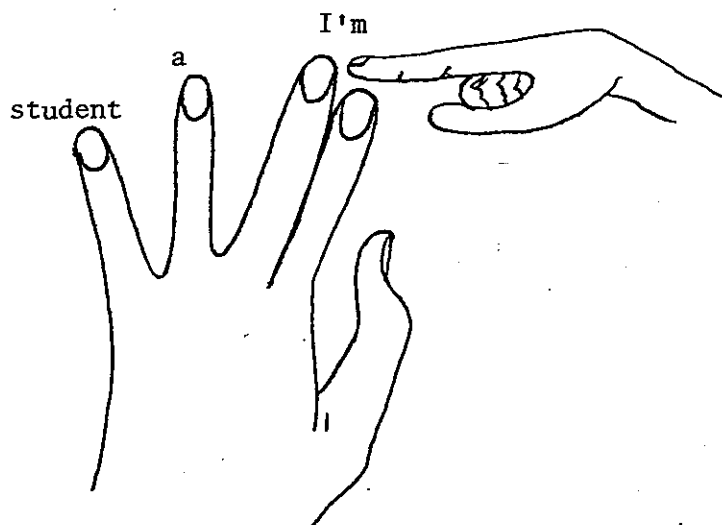
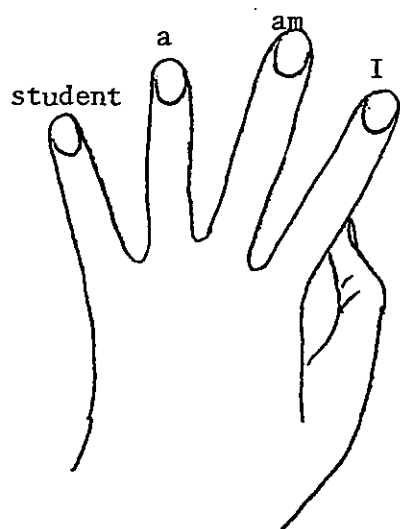
Here the silence of the teacher takes on a special significance. An important assumption about learning from the Silent Way (Caleb Gattegno) approach to teaching languages is that the student learns best by thinking, using his intuition, and by trial and error to produce the right sounds, words and sentences, and not by repeating after the teacher. If a student merely repeats the teacher's correct modelling of the utterance, he is doing very little mental work and is unlikely to remember it later on. However, if the student is only shown where the error is, then he must think about it, draw on his accumulated resources and then come up with the corrected utterance.

Example 1: Student's utterance: "Those is my books."

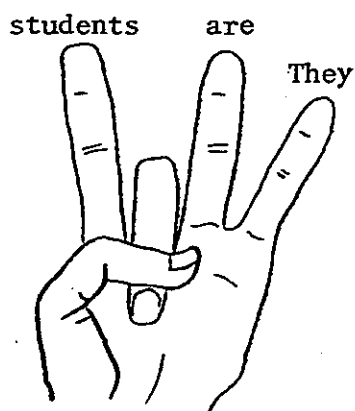


I tap on the top of each finger as the student says each word; when he gets to the incorrect word, I stop, shake my head and tap on that corresponding finger. The student, knowing that this means that particular word is wrong, thinks about it and then tries to say it correctly. I think you will find that once the student thinks about it, he will most often correct his mistakes.

Example 2: Student didn't use contraction.

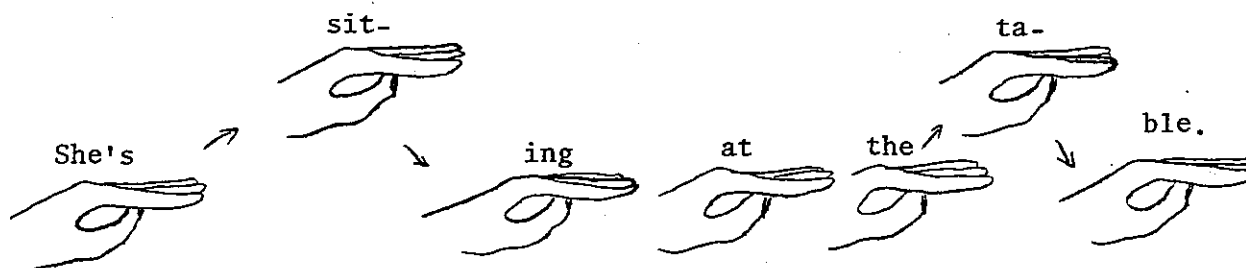


Example 3: Student adds an extra word: "They are a students."



Example 4: Poor stress and intonation of "She's sitting at the table."

Indochinese students in particular tend to stress the second syllable as well as words which should not be stressed, and also don't know when to raise or lower the pitch of the voice. As you model the sentence, use your hand to show the pitch.



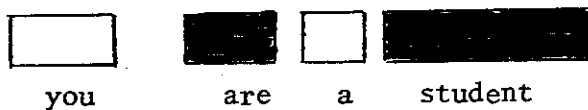
Use your other hand to tap on the table on the stressed syllables "sit-" and "ta-." As before, do these from right to left to simulate reading. However you decide to use this technique, be sure to be consistent and you will get results. After a few times, you will not have to model the correct intonation, the student can say it by your gestures.

## SECTION TWO: CUISENAIRE RODS

These little colored pieces of wood of varying length are a common teaching tool in using the Silent Way approach to teaching languages. As mentioned earlier, this approach stresses the silence of the teacher with the assumption that the student learns by trial and error, not by repeating after the teacher. Every student has already learned one language rather easily as a child. He can learn another as an adult in a similar way. The Silent Way also claims that the student must do the conscious mental work himself; the teacher cannot do it for him. This mental work develops his internal resources which then can be used confidently toward further learning. The student should be aware of this learning process and use it to his advantage.

### 1. To visually Represent a Grammatical Structure.





The rods are placed on the table in good view of the student(s), one rod to a word as the teacher, or the student if he knows, says the sentence.

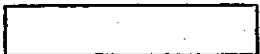









Use a different color for each word. To practice, the teacher taps on each rod as the student says the words. There are no written words to distract the non-English reader, yet the rods can be "read" just the same.

You can repeat the sentence for each personal pronoun changing only the pronoun rod and the verb rod as necessary.

Example 1


     
He is a student

     
I am a student

     
for plurals: they are students

Now make a question out of this by exchanging the first two rods:

     
are they students?

Later you may want to use a paper  at the end of the "sentence".

Always include an appropriate answer to the question; this is the way the language is used in real conversation.

    
yes they are

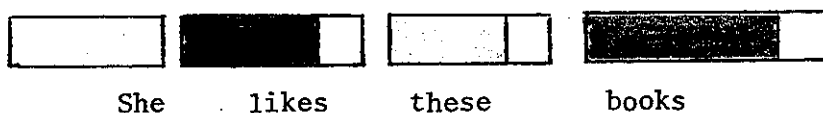
Have one student ask the question and another answer it.

This technique can be adapted to many different grammatical structures. The student is doing the mental work here, not the teacher, in accordance with the principles of the Silent Way. The student makes this information a part of him and he knows he can rely on it.

2. To focus on plural and other /s/ endings:

With Indochinese students, pronunciation of final /s/ is quite a problem; they tend to omit them. The rods can help this considerably.

Example:



The small white rods serve as the /s/. Quickly the student gets the idea and you only have to tap on the /s/ rod to get an instant correction from the student. This also frees the student to concentrate on other parts that may need his attention, instead of on that difficult /s/ ! In keeping with the Silent Way principles, the student always corrects his own errors.

One must realize that the rods themselves do not convey the meaning of the words. This must be done in advance by the teacher through demonstration while giving example.

The rods do provide a visual context for the correct sentence in its various forms and help the student internalize this information.

### SECTION THREE: PICTURES

Pictures have a great many uses in teaching ESL; their use is limited only by the imagination of the teacher. One of the most important functions of pictures is to convey the meaning of the utterances that the student will be asked to make. The picture should be chosen according to its intended purpose, and ideally, only contain that one idea. If you want to teach new nouns such as food names, use a separate picture for each object. For verbs, use a picture that shows just that one action clearly. Pictures cluttered with objects may confuse or distract the student.

You may want to consider the relative merits of pictures versus drawings. By pictures, I mean those taken from magazines, which are made from photographs. One can also use enlarged photographs made especially for the classroom. These pictures or photographs not only show the activity, they illustrate cultural information as well. Facial expressions, clothing, food, houses and contents, things seen in the background, all add to the overall visual information that the student is exposed to. Hand made drawings (yours or a professional's) however, usually don't provide much cultural information; they illustrate a few objects or persons that really can't be tied to any one culture. The teacher can control the cultural message by varying the content of the drawings; the teacher can choose from almost no cultural content (stick people drawings) up to complex (a photograph), according to the objective of the lesson.

Pictures are also very useful in providing the context for practice



of certain grammatical forms, writing, and general conversation. You will find a great many lessons whose objectives can be met through practice provided by pictures. You will also find techniques using pictures particularly effective with refugees, who come from a completely different culture.

The pictures will be easier to use if you mount them on stiff paper of a standard size. Organize your picture file by grouping the pictures according to their intended use and putting each group in a labeled folder.

### 1. Vocabulary Building

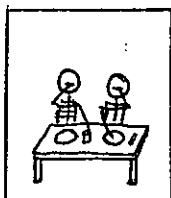
Pictures are a simple, effective way to introduce vocabulary. Food, clothing, contents of rooms of a house, for example, are easily learned from pictures. You can also have students practice simple questions and answers as they use the new words:

S<sub>1</sub>: "What's this?" (pointing to an object)

S<sub>2</sub>: "It's a shirt."

For verbs, make a collection of action pictures. Choose ones that clearly show everyday activities. Have a variety and include male and female, singular and plural. If you have already taught the present progressive, you can have students practice this form while learning new verbs.

Example:



T: "eat"

S: "They're eating"



T: "run"

S: "He's running!"

## 2. To Practice Grammar

Pictures can provide the context for practicing a particular grammar point.

### Example 1:

Once you have introduced common prepositions of place with their meanings (use rods or objects), you can use a picture for more realistic practice.

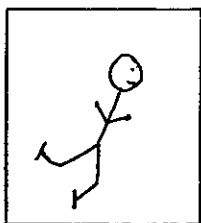
### Example 2:

After both present and past progressive have been introduced and practiced separately with pictures, you can do an exercise to contrast the two. The objective here is to try for a more automatic response from the student in his choosing of the proper tense.

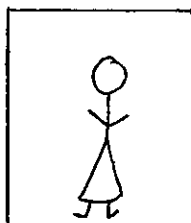
### Procedure:

Place three pictures on the table. Elicit present progressive sentences for each until fluent. Place three more pictures below these. Use the same gender and number as the one above it.

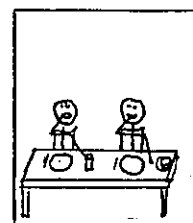
first  
set



"He's running."

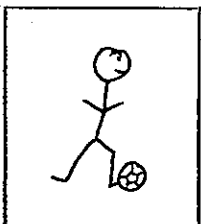


"She's standing."

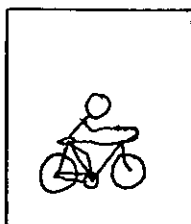


"They're eating."

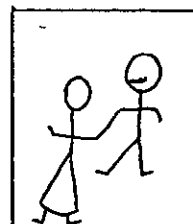
second  
set



"He's playing..."

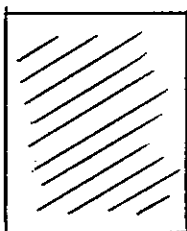


"She's riding..."



"They're dancing."

Elicit present progressive sentences for this set. Review the first set. When all are fluent, that is, no hesitation or mistakes, turn over each picture in the first set as you ask for past progressive sentences:



"He was running"



"He is playing"

You will have to indicate through gestures or some signal that you want the past. Usually the student catches on quickly. Let the students peek at a picture if they forget; it's not a memory quiz. Go back and forth between present and past pictures until the responses are fluent. Repeat with a new set of pictures. You will find that the students will be challenged, not bored by this exercise if you keep the pace up. Remember, don't have two students make a response about the same picture; the second student is likely to repeat the first without thinking about it. This technique is effective with Indochinese refugees, whose language has a very different way of expressing tense.

### 3. Controlled Grammar Exercise: The Picture Story

This technique is best suited for the intermediate level and done in pairs. Choose a picture that has a fair amount of content for this

exercise. One with people doing something, perhaps unusual, or people at some event; something to stimulate the students to talk about the picture. Ask the students to make up a short story (4-7 sentences, depending on the level). If you want the students to practice the past tense, tell them to write the story in the past. You can use a different picture to give examples.

Other things you can have students focus on are: different tenses; frequency words like always, usually; feelings; or tell the story as a mystery, or as an important event or for world leaders, etc.

When ready, the students tell their story. Let them go through it uninterrupted the first time so as not to hinder their enthusiasm and motivation to speak. Then the second time you can indicate grammatical errors.

Another version of this is to find a set of pictures that are related in some manner. Put the pictures in a certain logical order and ask the students to tell a story based on the order of the pictures.

#### 4. To Practice Asking Questions: The Picture Interview

This technique is more applicable to intermediate students, two or more in a group. It gives them practice in asking questions in a realistic manner, i.e., to gain information.

With a picture of a person ready, pick a student to take on the identity of that person. It could be a president, a general, worker, spy, almost anything. The other students interview this student, asking questions to learn of his identity. You can limit it to yes/no questions or use all types. This does take imagination on the part of the student being interviewed as he has to create an identity.

This activity should be done with students that you are familiar with as it demands a comfortable, relaxed setting.

#### 5. Pronunciation Practice: Drills for Practicing Difficult Sounds

There are several sounds in English that the Indochinese, for example, do not have in their language and find quite difficult. In most cases these sounds are necessary for effective communication and should not be avoided because they are difficult.

##### Example: Practicing a New Sound

The sh sound (as in she) is not known by Indochinese speakers and they will substitute an /s/ in place of it. A good technique to take care of this problem is the minimal-pair exercise with pictures. The first thing you must do is to show the student the difference between what he says and what he should be saying. A minimal pair is a pair of words that differ only in one sound, for example, see and she. With pairs of pictures representing the words the student quickly understands that the meaning changes with the sound. This, of course, depends on the ability of the student to hear the difference.

Make up a list of minimal pairs and find pictures that show the meaning of the words. Five or six should do.

##### Procedure

#### A. Listening Comprehension (use gestures for student to listen only)

- \* Hold up a picture, say the word
- \* Hold up the other in the pair, say the word. Repeat.
- \* Repeat this for the other pairs.
- \* Hold up a pair of pictures, say one word only; the student points to the corresponding picture.

- \* Repeat for all pairs as often as necessary (no mistakes)
- \* Now ask the student to tell if a spoken pair is the same or different without pictures:

T: she - she S: "same"

T: sheet - seat S: "different"

If possible, make up pairs of short sentences and do the same.

Example:

"Take a sheet."

"Take a seat."

B. Speaking

- \* Teacher says the words in a pair, student tries to repeat.  
Point to your mouth, tongue, lips teeth, to show where the sound is made.
- \* Go through all the pairs, practice!
- \* Pick individual pictures, student says the word. Mix them up continually, practice until learned or the student gets tired.
- \* Try spoken pairs of short sentences .

This technique is particularly effective in teaching Indochinese students.

6. To Practice Writing and Reading

You can use the same procedure as for the Picture Story oral work for this. Have the student write out his story (single or picture sequence), expanding it if he can. You can collect these writings and study them later to see where the student needs to work, be it spelling, word order, verb tense, etc. These students writings can be saved and used later on for reading practice; they will be more meaningful to the student than something taken out of a book.

#### SECTION FOUR: SEQUENCE DRAWINGS



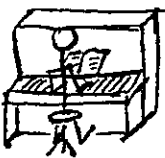
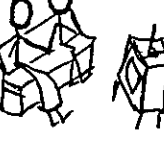
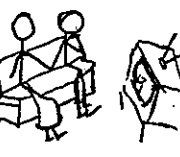









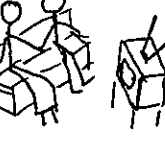

These hand made drawings have the purpose of providing a context for student practice of desired grammatical forms, and also to focus on pronunciation difficulties. These drawings can also be used to present social and cultural information, an important aspect of the language.

Meaning is normally clear from the drawings, so that the student can focus his attention on creating the language that describes the drawing. This technique can be adapted to any level of proficiency through manipulation of the content of the drawings and the teacher's directions. A great many different aspects of English grammar can be covered with these drills. The drawings give the student something to talk about while allowing him to create the language himself. They also help the student to practice thinking in English, something a grammar text cannot do.

##### 1. To Practice Tenses: A Typical Box Drill

These drills provide a controlled context for practicing various tenses. The student makes sentences according to the visual information in a particular box within the set. As all the necessary information is either depicted or written above or beside the boxes, the student need only focus his attention on choosing the correct verb forms. The student does have to think and apply what he knows in order to choose the correct tense form for any particular box; something he doesn't have to do in single tense drills. Before starting the exercise the teacher goes over anything on the box drill chart that may

distract the student or hinder the overall meaning.

	yesterday	now	usually	tomorrow
Jane				
Kathy & Richard				
Bill				
Steve				

### Procedure

- \* Hang up the box drill, add the names of the people on the left hand side, on a separate strip of paper.
- \* Help students with the names the first time, check to see if the students know the necessary vocabulary.
- \* Point to any box, have student give appropriate sentence.

### Examples:

"Yesterday Jane read a book."

"Jane usually practices the piano."



You may want to read the words at the top of the drill once, if your students do not read much yet.

\* Practice by pointing to boxes at random until the students respond fluently.

To practice questions:

\* Ask questions about a box to elicit the short answer form.

T: "Did Jane read a book yesterday?"

S: "Yes, she did."

T: "Does Steve usually ride a bicycle?"

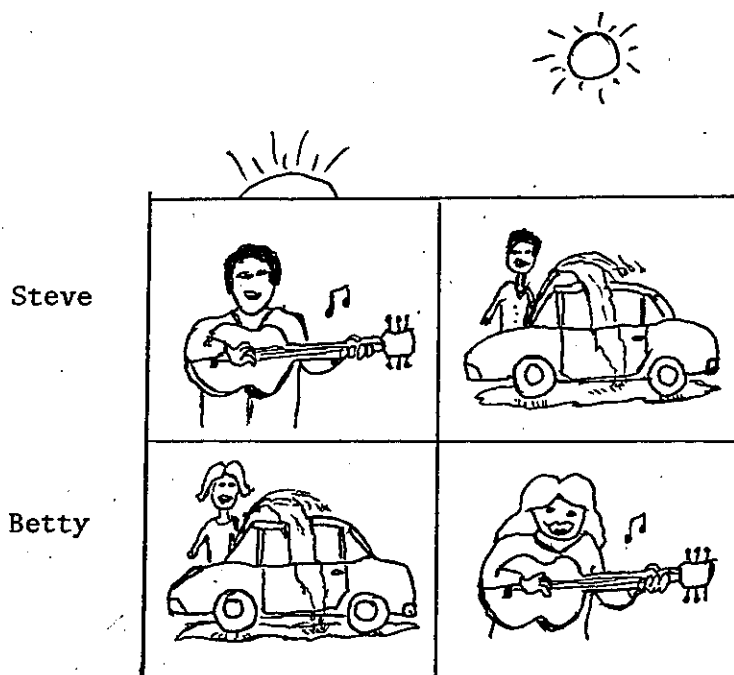
S: "No, he doesn't."

Have students ask each other questions about the boxes. You may want to specify the first word. (What..? Did..?)

As a variation you can replace the names with names of relatives, such as cousin, nephew, aunt, to give the students practice with these.

## 2. To Practice a Particular Grammatical Form: Using Simple Box Drills

A simpler version of the box drill (invented by Alexander Lipson) can be used to focus the practice on a single form. The basic information is provided for the student; the meaning is usually conveyed through the drawings themselves, and with the help of the teacher. The student makes sentences to describe the action in each box, taking into account the information provided outside the boxes. Pronunciation is also practiced by choosing names or verbs that contain trouble sounds, but being careful not to include too many unknowns in any one drill. The students do most of the work in this exercise, the teacher acting as a guide to direct the student in making his responses.



Example: Practicing WH Questions

Procedure:

- \* Hang up the box drill chart. Depending on the level, you may need to give the vocabulary (verbs, nouns) to the students to get them started, maybe even the grammatical form itself.
- \* Elicit sentences from students for each box

Examples: "Steve practices the guitar in the morning."

"Betty washes the car in the morning."

- \* Now ask students for WH questions for each box. You may want to give the first word. Always have a student answer the question.

Examples: T: "What..?" (pointing to a box)

S<sub>1</sub>: "What does Steve do in the morning?"

S<sub>2</sub>: "He practices the guitar."

and T : "When..?"

S<sub>1</sub>: "When does Betty practice the guitar?"

S<sub>2</sub>: "In the afternoon."

and T : "Who..?"

S<sub>1</sub>: "Who washes the car in the afternoon?"

S<sub>2</sub>: "Steve does."

You can also write the WH words on the board beside the chart; WHO? WHEN? WHAT? and point to one to get a question from the student.

You can follow this up with written exercises along the same lines for writing and spelling practice, and as a reinforcement to the oral work.

You do not have to limit this exercise to WH questions; practice can be done with YES/NO questions, too.

Examples: S<sub>1</sub>: "Does Steves practice the guitar in the morning?"  
S<sub>2</sub>: "Yes, he does."

With negative answers:

S<sub>1</sub>: "Does Betty wash her car in the afternoon?"  
S<sub>2</sub>: "No, she doesn't."

There are endless possibilities for using these box drills; almost anything you want the students to practice can be incorporated into the drawings or into the written information. Some ideas are:

- \* Pronunciation: choose names that contain trouble sounds; choose actions that use verbs containing these sounds
- \* Negative forms: put a (+) or a yes above the boxes for a positive sentence, a (-) or no for a negative one.

Example:

+

-

"Alice likes rice."

"Alice doesn't like potatoes."

- \* Numbers: Put numbers instead of drawings inside the boxes; draw the food items above the boxes.

Example:

"Jackie eats (ate) three apples a day (yesterday)."

- \* Modals: can, used to

- \* Tag questions: "Jim went to the beach yesterday, didn't he?"

These box drills are a great help in teaching refugees; they are quite versatile, providing easy practice of grammatical forms.

Another way to use drawings is to make them in an actual sequence as is done in cartoons. You can vary the length and complexity of these sequences to match the level of the students. You can also cut cartoons out of the newspapers and remove the words. The idea is to give the students practice in describing events, using appropriate grammatical forms; yet another step towards overall fluency.

## SECTION FIVE: WORD CARDS

This technique, that employs uniformly sized cards with a word or words written on them, can provide practice with the function of words, such as opposites, with vocabulary, with pronunciation, while at the same time providing practice in word recognition.

Techniques using word cards are not meant to convey meaning, and they are not generally used to introduce a topic. This should be done in advance. Obviously, if reading is not being stressed, activities using word cards would not be appropriate.

### A. Matched-Pairs Exercises

The object of these exercises is for the student to choose two cards that form a pair in some way according to the theme of the exercise. It requires the student to think, draw on his internal resources and to remember.

Example: To Practice Vowel Sounds, Word Recognition, Pronouncing Written Words.

Make a list of categories of like vowel sounds of varying spellings, eg: green, reach, grief, police. You can use all the vowel sounds in English (about 15) or focus on just a few. Make pairs of cards for each vowel sound using various spellings. Underline the vowel(s) of the sound.

### Procedure

- \* Place all the cards face down on the table in rows.
- \* Explain the object of the exercise to the students as you do one or two yourself.

- \* Students turn over any two cards
- if it is not a match, the cards are turned back over
- \* Matched pairs are put together

Your Name Printed:  
SUSAN COHEN

IPP Author:  
M. J. BERLINE

IPP Title:  
Integrating Culture Lesson  
Plans into Fnd-ENG. Programs

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## Example 2. To Practice Vocabulary, Word Recognition, Pronunciation

In this exercise the object is to match a picture card with its corresponding word card. The student has to sound out the written word and recall its meaning to determine whether or not it matches the picture. The student should be familiar with the spoken words, as this is not a guessing game. Getting the meaning directly from the written word, i.e. reading, is a valuable skill to develop and is certainly worth the time it takes.

An easier version of this exercise is to have all the cards face up on the table so the student does not have to remember words and positions.

Other ideas for matched-pairs exercises:

- \* initial or final sounds that sound the same
- \* silent letters
- \* proverbs, idioms
- \* opposites
- \* two-word verbs, eg: put out, pack up, turn off

## B. Other Uses of Word Cards

### Example 1. To Practice Word Order: The Scrambled Sentence

Word order is always an area of difficulty since it varies so much from one language to another. In addition, languages like the various Indochinese do not contain some function word groups that English does, such as the prepositions to, at, of, and the articles a, and the.

This simple technique gives the students a chance to focus their attention on word order. It does involve reading, however, so the sentences should match the level of the students. Sentences can be made up from class reading material or from grammatical structures that you want the students to practice.

Make up sentences using the vocabulary and grammatical complexity your students can handle. Write one word or punctuation mark on each card. For longer sentences, you may want to capitalize the first word of the sentence. Make up several different ones, coding the cards in each sentence in case they all get scrambled.

#### Procedure

- \* Spread a sample sentence out on the table. Indicate to the students that they are to try to arrange the word cards in the correct order. Help them through this one.
- \* Pass out the other sentences, one to a student or in pairs.
- \* Give students ample time to arrange the words. If a student is having a lot of trouble, you can help a little by removing misplaced words, but don't indicate where they belong.

Scrambled:

afternoon goes to She . in usually park the

Arranged:

She usually goes to the park in the afternoon .

Example 2. For General Conversational Practice: The Role Play

This technique is designed for intermediate to advanced students in a group setting. It requires an informal, relaxed atmosphere where the students can attempt to converse freely without pressure to perform. Students get to practice asking questions and putting together the information they obtain to solve the unknown. It can also deal with social functions of language as used in humor, argument or surprise.

First, decide the theme or setting. It could be people on a flight to another country, people at an important conference (political or otherwise), or a television show. Using the airplane setting, for example, decide on the individual personalities and their purpose for taking the trip, the country of destination, and the interrelationships of the people. Each person should be in some relationship with another (social, business). For each person, write all the information necessary for the student to take on the identity that is on his card.

Arrange the room accordingly (in rows for the "airplane") and hand out the cards. Instruct the students to try to remember the information on their cards and not to show the card to anyone else.



Tell them that their task is to discover who these others are and their reason for being where they are, but speaking only in English! Students then mingle about trying to learn as much as they can.

This takes a good bit of time, thirty minutes or so, depending on the level, to do it justice. At the end, let the students get together and share what they have discovered. You can then have the students give all the information to describe each personality.

## SECTION SIX: TOTAL PHYSICAL RESPONSE

Total Physical Response, developed by James J. Asher, is an actual method of teaching language, complete in itself. It is built on several assumptions regarding language learning, some of which are related to theories about the way a child learns his native language. One, a child who is learning his native language can understand a lot more than he can speak. The child will experiment with speech (oral production) when he is ready, not when an adult thinks he is. Two, some of the earliest utterances understood by a child are commands, the imperative form. This form is shorter, simpler and easier to understand than are the other grammatical forms. Three, given time, the child will learn adequate pronunciation; oral production cannot be "taught" anyway, as it is one of the developmental concepts. Four, a physical connection to the meaning and utterances creates better understanding and retention. In other words, using the kinesthetic memory is very effective in learning.

Out of these assumptions come the basic elements that the teacher uses with this method. At first, only the teacher speaks, using commands. The teacher actually does the action while speaking; the students only mimick the movement. The teacher always speaks in English; no translating is done. This quickly progresses to the teacher giving commands without moving and the students doing the movement. Later the students say the commands while moving, and eventually command each other with only the listener doing the movement.

This technique of giving simple commands is gradually expanded to a command plus other forms. Whole phrases can accompany the command as well as continually adding vocabulary.

What makes this technique unique is that the meaning is automatically present with the commands. The student understands what he hears so he can concentrate on careful listening to the sound of the new language. Also unique is the process of actually doing the actions called for in the commands. This really does help the student remember the new words and their meaning. Initial progress is surprisingly rapid; the student can understand and use quite a few phrases in a short time. This technique is very useful in working with refugees because the meaning is so clear and progress is fast.

Example: To Practice Commands and Vocabulary

#### Procedure

If you have only one or two students, you can work directly with them without using a demonstration group first.

\* Write out a list of commands suitable for use in your room.

#### Examples:

Stand up/Sit down

Turn right/left/around

Look at the (window, ceiling, light, etc.)

Touch the (chair, table, etc.)

Walk to the (wall, door, etc.)

Point to the (window, floor, etc.)

\* Arrange the commands in some logical order for movement.

Example: 1. Stand up. Sit down.

2. Stand up. Turn right/left/around. Sit down.

3. Stand up. Point to the (object)

- \* Say command #1 and signal students to mimick your movement, but not to speak. Repeat this twice more.
- \* Say command #2 and signal; the students will probably mimick by themselves now. Repeat twice.
- \* Say command #3. Repeat for two or three objects or parts of the room.
- \* Now test the students' memory with these three commands by saying them and not moving. Go back a step if necessary.
- \* Go on to another set of commands, following the same procedure.

Later, you can use the process called "recombination" Here, parts of two commands are put together to produce an entirely new one.

Example:

Stand up.  
Touch the chair. > Stand on the chair.

Give me the book.  
Walk to the window. > Walk with me to the door.

You can also simply join two or three short commands to produce a longer sentence:

"Go to the desk, open the drawer and get out a pen."

How you know when the students are ready to speak is a matter of developing the feel for it. If the students already speak some English, they will be eager to practice speaking and you will probably not want to stall them very long. The Indochinese speakers are excellent at mimicking your utterances, but they do need practice in listening, particularly for those trouble sound and words that their language

does not contain. When the students are ready have them practice saying a set of commands by mimicking your voice. Now reverse roles and have one student at a time give commands to you or another student. However, this time signal to the students that only the listener should do the movements. One student commanding and the other doing the movement is realistic; it is what the students will hear and see outside of the classroom. You can always use "please" and "thank you" to the commands to show politeness.

Here are some other grammatical forms that can be practiced:

- \* Prepositions: "Put the pen in the box." "Put the box on the table."
- \* Two-word verbs: "Pick up the book." "Take out a pencil."
- \* Object pronouns: "Give him the book." "Give the to her."
- \* Comparatives: "Give me the longer pencil."

Let your imagination take over and watch what this technique can do!

ANNOTATED RESOURCE LIST

Asher, James J., Learning Another Language Through Commands: The Complete Teacher's Guidebook, Los Gatos, Calif.: Sky Oak Productions 1977. Contains lots of theory as well as chapters on how to teach with this method; very useful.

Beal, Kathleen Kelly, Speaking of Pictures: ESL, Austin: Stech-Vaughn Co. 1981. I found this series (3 vols.) to be useful with refugees; has clear drawings of American activities with lessons developed around them; useful topics for students to learn about.

Clark, Raymond, Language Teaching Techniques: Resource Handbook No. 1, Brattleboro, Vermont: Pro Lingua Associates 1981. Excellent; contains grammar drills, conversation exercises useful for teaching refugees.

Clark, Raymond, Pat Moran, Arthur Burrows, The ESL Miscellany: Resource Handbook No. 2, Brattleboro, Vermont: Pro Lingua Associates 1981. Has great section on American gestures, can be used with refugees; lots of ideas, information useful in planning grammar, social and cultural lessons.

Molinsky, Steven, Bill Bliss, Side By Side: English Grammar Through Guided Conversations, 2 vols., Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc. 1980. I've used these successfully with refugees; uses drawings, written words for lessons in grammar with social functions included; needs to be supplemented at beginning level as it requires ability to read.

Parnwell, E.C. Oxford Picture Dictionary of American English, New York: Oxford University Press 1978. Although the pictures are rather small, I've found this book to be very useful in working with refugees

Stevick, Earl, Teaching and Learning Languages, Cambridge University Press 1982. A brand new book I haven't read through yet; looks very useful for the ESL teacher; this author has much experience and a lot to offer.

\_\_\_\_\_, Teaching English to Cambodian (Vietnam, Laotian, Hmong, Chinese) Students: Refugee Education Guide, Washington, D.C.: Language and Orientation Resource Ctr., Center for Applied Linguistics, repr. Sept. 1981. I've found this booklet very useful in teaching pronunciation to refugees; has lessons to practice difficult sounds.

\_\_\_\_\_, Bibliography of Materials for Indochinese Refugee Educators, Kansas City: Indochinese Materials Ctr., U.S. Department of Education, June 1981. Lists a great many publications (many free) dealing with ESL, American culture, Indochinese cultures; I've used the following with refugees:

- 100.078 A Teacher's Guide: ESL K-12
- 100.249 Basic Functional English
- 100.556 LAU Curriculum (Public School for refugees)
- 100.597 English for Your First Job (Vocational ESL)
- 100.598 Pre-Vocational ESL

\_\_\_\_\_, Index Card Games for ESL, Brattleboro, Vermont: Pro Lingua Associates & The Experiment Press 1982. This brand new book contains many ideas, each complete with word lists, sentence lists, and clear instructions for their use; should be very useful for the teacher of refugees.

