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USING STUDENT GENERATED MATERIAL
IN A STUDENT CENTERED CLASSROOM

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Abstract:
     This paper deals with a description and analysis of activities
I developed for producing and using student generated material in
a student centered classroom. The activities were developed during
two months of student teaching in Mexico. The paper begins with a
discussion of student centered learning, the role of the teacher
and the role of the student in a student centered class, and how
student generated material fits into this. The following section
is divided according to each of three classes I taught in Mexico,
and these include both children and adult classes, at beginning and
intermediate levels. This section covers descriptions of some of
the activities I developed for student generated material with these
classes and an analysis of these activities based on the discussion
of student centered learning outlined in the first section.

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Introduction

A. Student Centered Learning and Student Generated Material

During the summer of 1982 I spent eight weeks as a student teacher in Mexico. During this time I worked on developing ways of working with student generated material as a means of structuring a student centered learning situation.

In working towards a student centered learning situation, my goal is to create a situation where the students are the actors in their own learning process. The class is focused on who the students are - where they are coming from, where they want to go, and the abilities and ideas they bring to the class. The teacher, rather than imposing certain styles of acting or thinking on the students, guides them towards using their own intellectual and creative resources to do as much as they can for themselves in the learning process, understanding how the language works and using it for communication that is meaningful to them.

Using student generated material in a student centered class means that, rather than having the content of the class prescribed by the teacher or a text, the students use their own intellectual and creative resources to provide the content which is used as a basis for learning the language. The teacher may provide a focus - determining the points or area of language to be covered - but the actual content comes from the students themselves. The teacher facilitates this by providing the students with a stimulus for generating language, that is, something to talk about. This could be, for example, objects to manipulate, a situation to

discuss or act out, or a problem to solve. Along with this, the students must also have a means of indicating what it is they want to express in the target language so that they can be given the correct form of saying it. This could be done through translation, manipulation of objects, pictures or gestures. The language generated is recorded in some way and then analyzed and/or expanded upon for class exercises.

I feel that working with student generated material is a useful means of facilitating student centered learning. It creates a situation where the students are the focal point and where they are asked to take a good deal of responsibility for what goes on in class. The students use their own intelligence and creativity in generating the material and as it is material that comes from within themselves, it has meaning and relevance for them.

In developing and analyzing the work I did with student generated material, I have drawn on the work of Earl Stevick in chapter II of A Way and Ways[1]. In this chapter, Stevick discusses his view of teaching and what he sees to be the role of the teacher and the role of the student in a student centered class. He uses two terms - "control" and "initiative". Control is, particularly at the beginning, the role of the teacher. It consists of two parts. The first part is "structuring of classroom activity", such as setting day-today goals and organizing information and the use of time in class. Thus, the teacher provides the organization for the learning process of the students. The second part of control is providing a model for the correct use of the language, that is, letting the students know how their use of the

language compares with that of a native speaker. Stevick says
that over time some of the control can be shared with the students
in that they can take more of the responsibility themselves for
suggesting and directing classroom activities and, to the degree
that they are able, act for each other as models for the correct
use of the language.

"Initiative" is the responsibility of the students. It con-
sists of "who says what to whom, over a broad or narrow range, de-
pending on who has the control". Student initiative means that,
within the limits of the control exercised by the teacher, the
students have the opportunity to decide what they want to learn
or what they want to practice, when they are ready to speak or ask
about something, and to whom. For example, within the structure of
certain exercises, the students might decide what word to use in
a substitution drill or what question to ask and to whom to di-
rect it. The structure provided by the teacher shpuld give the
students support to encourage them to responsibly take initiative
in class.

While I work with all of this in mind, I have focused on
some specifics of my understanding of Stevick's view that I feel
are most relevant to student generated material. In the area of
"control", I have focused on the first part, that of "structuring"
as the role of the teacher. In working with student generated mate-
rial an important aspect of the structuring role of the teacher is,
as mentioned earlier, to provide the stimulus for the students to
generate language. The teacher also decides, or helps the students
decide, what aspects of the generated material will be focused on

in class. Additionally, structuring involves setting rules for
the students' interaction, or guiding them to do this themselves,
during both the generating and practice of the material. This'
includes deciding what activities will be used and how they will
be carried out. I agree with Stevick that the responsibility for
structure can, and should, be shared with the students, but at
the right time and to the right degree. The teacher should guide
the students to take on, when they are ready for it, some of the
responsibility for directing their interaction and determining
the activities and the focus of the class. The issue here is to
know what amount of this responsibility the students can handle
at a given time.

In the area of "initiative", I have focused on the "what" as-
pect, or, the content. This is obviously a central point in work
with student generated material as the students are asked to take
the initiative to provide most of the content of the class. The
teacher provides the structure through which the students gene-
rate content and one must look at how they respond to the struc-
ture. Are they really stimulated by the "stimulus"? Are they ge-
nerating content that is useful and meaningful to them? The issue
is to provide the right type and amount of structure that en-
courages the students to take the initiative to provide content
that is important to them, but without overwhelming them with
too much responsibility or repressing them with too little.

B. Teaching in Tepic

The activities discussed in this paper were carried out during eight weeks of student teaching in Tepic, Nayarit, Mexico. The classes I taught were arranged for me by the local representative of the Experiment in International Living and the students represented the middle class sector of the city. Generally, they saw English as a useful, possibly necessary, language to learn which could help them in their professional lives. Children in the Tepic schools begin studying English in junior high school. This consists of a year focused on oral skills followed by classes throughout high school which are focused on reading, writing and translation. Many people complained that, because their teachers were not native speakers, the oral work, particularly pronunciation, was not very good. My understanding of the schools that my students normally attended was that the classes were strictly regulated, teacher centered classes. Thus, upon entering my courses, they entered on what was an entirely new type of experience for them.

I taught four different groups of students. The classes were specially organized for me and I had no prescribed curriculum or text. The groups I taught were the following:

1) Primary School Students - meeting one hour a day, three times a week.

2) Secondary School Students - meeting one hour a day, four times a week. These were both beginning level classes.

3) Adults - meeting one hour a day, four times a week. This was an intermediate level class.

4) Secondary School Students - again, meeting four times a week. This was an advanced conversation course and as I approached it differently than the other classes, it will not be dealt with further in this paper.

The courses were offered during the school system's summer vacation. Because of this, some of the children had a playful and not very serious attitude towards the classes. However, after the first few weeks, those who preferred to play soccer or be involved in some other activity had weeded themselves out and the ones who remained were those who were truly interested in the classes.

The following section deals with a description and analysis of some of the activities I developed around student generated material for these classes.

II. Description of Classes

A. <u>Primary School Students</u>

The students in this class were between eight and ten years old. The course began with thirty students and ended with fifteen. A few of the students had previously taken summer English courses bu, basically, this was a beginning course. I had not originally intended to use this class as a laboratory, as it were, for experimenting with student generated material. I was not accustomed to working with children of this age and I was afraid of losing control of the class entirely. Howeever, the students at one point demanded to have input into the content of the class, I responded, and from there things developed.

I began the course by doing traditional substitution and repitition drills. I was not particularly satisfied with this approach, partly be cause I saw that while there were a few students who caught on quickly, others seemed to be speaking without really knowing what they were saying and some weren't participating at all. I also saw that while the class seemed initially intrigued by the flashcards I had made and enjoyed using them, they soon became bored with the entire process. So, I decided to change the way we worked and to give the students something new to look at.

I planned to give a lesson on vocabulary for parts of the body and, for this purpose, I brought in a drawing I had made on a large piece of paper of a funny looking man. I hung this on the blackboard and with a magic marker, labeled and pronounced the first item - "head". I then asked for volunteers to come up, one

by one, to continue labeling and pronouncing the parts of the picture. They were able to do this either by writing words they already knew or by asking me for translations. Once a few of the students had set the action going, the rest were eager to participate. Several drew on and labeled things that hadn't occured to me, i.e., "belly button" and "finger nails".

During this process several students in the back of the room kept asking me, "When are we going to put on qualities?". When I felt that the picture was well labeled, I asked these students what they meant by "qualities". One of them came to the front of the room and wrote on the picture, "clean". I asked him if he could combine it with one of the words already on the picture and he wrote, "clean foot". From there, the rest of the class continued adding adjectives to the items in the picture - "dirty fingernails", "long hair", "old teeth", etc. Not only had they generated content within the context I had planned but they had also taken the opportunity to add other content that they thought was appropriate.

During the process of labeling the picture, I saw that I needed to devise a way to keep the class's attention on learning the new vocabulary while they were taking turns adding to the picture. Pointing to parts of the body and using gestures to represent adjectives, I had the class respond to my motions with the corresponding and words and, visa versa, had them respond to words with the appropriate gestures. The gestures gave the students something, in addition to the picture, with which to associate the new words. We repeated this exercise the following day as a review,

with different students taking on the role of "teacher". This was an **instance where** I gave some of the control over to the students.

We used the material generated from this picture to work on making sentences with the verb "to be" ("His foot is long", "His teeth are dirty", etc.), thus also working on the difference between singular and plural. We continued this, using objects in the classroom as nouns and generating new adjectives to describe them. Finally, the students wrote their sentences about the classroom on index cards, which they used to label the room. They were so enthusiastic about this that they not only labeled their pens and notebooks (in addition to the walls, chairs, doors, etc., as I had planned) but they also stuck labels all over me - "My teacher is tall", "My teacher is nice", etc. We hadn't worked on making sentences about pens, notebooks or teachers but they were able to use their knowledge of English to express these ideas which had occured to them.

Because the students responded so well to the "parts of the body" lesson, I decided to continue with that type of activity. We subsequently did a similar exercise, with the subject being "clothing". In this case, instead of drawing the entire picture beforehand, I drew only the head of a person and added and labeled one item of clothing - a shirt. I intended in this way to **make** less suggestion on my part in order to encourage the students to use their own imagination and creativity. They drew on some of the more obvious items of clothing - pants, **shoes**, socks, etc., and also added items that, again, were things that had not occured to

me - a patch, a ribbon, pockets, to name a few. They even added a cigarette, this being an item of particular interest to them since they always saw me smoking.

We worked with this material in a way similar to the previously described lessons, using the material to make singular and plural sentences. In this case, we added the names of colors to the list of adjectives. This material was also used to make questions and answers with "wearing" and in this way the students could talk about their own clothing.

The final activity I will discuss here was one that is similar to the previously described ones and also contains some ideas freely adapted from an exercise developed by Caleb Gattegno.[2] Gattegno uses poster-sized pictures to generate language for use in exercises focused on reading and writing. I was interested in working with some of his ideas but, as I had no pictures large enough for the whole class to work with, I decided to have them draw the picture themselves.

I began by drawing the outline of a house and labeling it, "house". The students continued, adding items to the picture and labeling them. In this case, instead of writing the words right on the paper, we wrote them around the edges, on the blackboard. When the picture was fairly well filled up we went over all the words written on the board for pronounciation and retention of the new vocabulary. I then erased the words and had the students take turns rewriting them on the blackboard. This they did quite well, without too many mistakes in either spelling or understanding.

Following this I began a list of verbs and, later, one of adjectives, for the students to continue in order to generate more vocabulary about the house. At first, the students had some difficulty distinguishing between the two different types of words and wanted to put adjectives in the verb list. I think this was due partly to the fact that we had done little work with verbs other than "to be", but, also, as there were no verbs depicted in the drawing, it was an abstract idea for them, difficult to grasp on to. After we had completed the lists, the students practiced the vocbulary by using it to make sentences, orally, about the house. In the final activity related to this, each student drew a picture of his/her own house, labeled all the items in it and wrote three sentences about it. These were then hung on the wall. The students particularly liked drawing the pictures of their own houses and were very meticulous about detail.

The material from this exercise could be expanded on a great deal. For example, talking about the pictures of the students' own houses could be used to generate adjectives and their comparative forms. It could also be used as a way to introduce possessives. Verbs might be generated by having the students draw in members of their families, each one performing a different action around the house, and this material could be used to work on present tense or present progressive questions and answers.

Other activities we worked on in this class, with both teacher and student generated material, involved games and competitions. Next to drawing pictures, competitions were what the students responded to most and they always asked for them. I used material

generated by the students for spelling bees and to test them on various items in the format of a competition. For example, sometimes I divided them into teams and gave them words with which to make sentences, the issue being whether or not to use "is" or "are". This was nothing more than a glorified exercise but, especially with the addition of small prizes I sometimes brought in, the students were very enthusiastic about it.

In the activities for student generated material in this class, I provided the stimulus by giving the students topics for creating drawings. I started with an activity where I gave them a lot of suggestion about the content, by giving them a premade drawing, and moved to activities where I gave only the topic for the content, in the form of a basic outline for the drawing. I structured the students' interaction by having them take turns in adding to the drawing and in making sentences and questions with the new material. As small children, they needed specific instructions about their behavior from me. They needed to be told to raise their hands, whose turn it was to ask a question and whose turn it was to answer, etc. I took the responsibility for structuring their behavior so that they could put their attention on generating and using the material. I also took responsibility for deciding how the material was to be used, i.e., by working on singular and plural sentences, combination of nouns and adjectives, sentences with "wearing", etc. At times I gave some of the control to the students, for example, by having them take the role of "teacher" in certain exercises and by responding to their idea of having competitions.

Most of the content of the classes was provided by the students.

I was the one who gave the topics for the drawings, but the students were the ones who filled in all the specifics. The topics were things that were meaningful to the students - about themselves, their classroom and their homes.

Generating material through the creation of drawings can be developed in many ways. The pictures could be used as a way for the students to talk about a place they have visited or an event they have participated in. A series of pictures could be developed into a story and the students could be given more responsibility for the content by having them suggest topics for the pictures and developing the plots of stories.

In general, I feel that using drawings is an effective means of working with student generated material with children. Children like to draw, the drawings are concrete and provide meaning for the content, and seeing them as a lasting and tangible product of their efforts provides motivation for the children.

B. Secondary School Students

This group consisted of eighth, ninth and tenth graders. The class began with twenty-five students and ended with twelve. The students had all begun to study English in school in the seventh grade but, as has been mentioned, this consisted of more emphasis on written rather than oral work. My goal for the class was to develop their oral skills based on and adding to what they already knew about English.

There was a high level of youthful energy among the students and the challenge was to guide them to direct that energy towards productive use of class time. My relaxed and friendly manner in class and the opportunities I gave the students to have a say in what went on in class was something they weren't used to from a teacher. This caused, at the beginning, bedlam among the students. Over the period of the course we had to develop a way of working together that would provide the structure the students needed to work productively and responsibly and to invest themselves in their work.

I will discuss two types of activities worked on with this group. The first involved students working in small groups to create pictures for use in grammar exercises. The second involved the students using cuisenaire rods to create different "scenes" that were worked on with the class as a whole, which was much smaller by that time.

Realizing that it would be difficult for me to work with the whole class in the way I wanted, considering its size and the

problem of not paying attention on the part of the students, I opted for dividing the class into small groups to work on various activities. This required that the activities involve things that the students could do without a lot of direct supervision from me, i.e., using at least some language that they understood and being provided with the structure they needed to work productively and not deviate into purely social activities.

My main purpose here was to help the class move from a highly teacher centered situation towards a more student centered class. By dividing the class into groups, I removed myself physically from the center of the situation. I hoped that in the small group format, without the constant presence of the teacher, the students would be encouraged to more actively participate in the class. The learning purpose was to practice structures previously studied with the students filling in the specifics, for example, the verbs to be used in an exercise. These could be words already studied or new words they wanted to learn, the purpose being not so much that they generate a-lot of new content as that they contribute something to the content of the class. Additionally, in these small group activities, the students produced pictures which were used for other activities with the class as a whole.

The class I will describe as an example was designed to work on information questions in the present tense. It was based on a character we had invented named Ana. I divided the class into five groups and assigned each one four hours of the day (7:00, 8:00, etc.). Each group was to decide Ana's activities for each assigned hour and to draw pictures to illustrate them. The pictures were to be subsequently used to ask questions about Ana's daily

activities using "what" and "what time".

As the students worked on the pictures, there was a lot of enthusiasm over the planning and drawing of them and they even added such details as the brand name of Ana's running shoes and of her stereo. New verbs were generated during this activity which I later introduced to the class as a whole. When the pictures were completed, I hung each one up in a different part of the room, asked each group to sit around its picture and asked for a volunteer teacher. The "teacher's" role was to direct the students in asking each other questions about the picture using "what" and "what time". This worked out fairly well. Once I got each group going they didn't need much help from me and the teachers seemed to have control of their groups.

During the course of this activity, students from one group were coming to me, asking how to say and write the names of rooms in a house. I discovered that they had written on their picture the names of the rooms where Ana carried out each of her activities and had added the question "where" to the two I had assigned. They had taken the opportunity to generate material which they saw to be of relevance and in response to this, I later worked with the class as a whole on vocabulary for different parts of the house.

The pictures the students made in this activity were later on used for work with the past tense. Another activity we did of this sort was one where the students drew their own box drills (see Appendix) and these were used for both group and class exercises.

One problem I saw with this type of activity was that, although the students greatly enjoyed planning and drawing the pictures,

the production of them involved the students spending a lot of class time speaking Spanish. In a mixed language class this problem would be eliminated although this would have some effect on the group interaction.

Another problem I saw was that when we first worked with this type of activity and I assigned the groups to give me a written product, one or two students in each group did the work for all the rest. However, they soon developed, themselves, the method of assigning different parts of a written task to different members of the group. In this way they each made a contribution to the work of the group and, within this format, I encouraged them to ask each other for help with things they didn't understand before coming to me.

In general, I feel that this small group format was a good way for the students to learn to take responsibility for their work and to work together. It gave the students the structure they needed to work productively and to invest themselves in their work. These activities were a way of introducing the students to the idea that they really could contribute to the content of the class and they always took the opportunity to generate content that was of interest to them. Seeing their pictures hung up in the classroom and used for class activities added motivation for them. In drawing the pictures, they used their imaginations and were able to add to the class content topics that were relevant to themselves. Particularly as I was a stranger to their city, as well as to the students, these activities were a way for the students to teach me about themselves and their world.

During the final two weeks of the course we worked on ac-
tivities using cuisenaire rods. These were based on the "Islamabad"
technique, developed by Earl Stevick,[3] with the addition of my
own variations. Briefly, this technique consists of a student, in
the role of "originator", using the rods to construct a represen-
tation of a place that the rest of the class is not familiar with.
As the originator places the rods, s/he explains what they repre-
sent. This can be done either entirely in the target language,
or the native language can be used as necessary, if the teacher
understands it. The teacher then retells what the originator has
said, entirely in the target language. Finally, the whole class
joins in in retelling the description and asking questions about it.

Our work with this technique began with a class where I
acted as originator in order to give an example, followed by two
students who were spontaneously inspired to recreate the scene of
an important soccer game recently played in the Tepic stadium.
This class was rather haphazard and not very thorough, but I de-
cided it was a technique worth exploring and asked for volun-
teers to be originators for classes the following week. Most of
the students were very timid about volunteering but finally one
offered to make a discoteque (a favorite topic in this class) and
two others, to make a hotel. The assignment was to construct a
place with rods and explain as much of it as they could in Eng-
lish. What they couldn't say in English they could say in Spanish
and I would translate it for them.

On Monday, the originator for the discoteque came to class
with a classmate he had enlisted to help him and a list of vocab-

ulary in English he had gotten from an American student living
with his family. The two students constructed the discoteque and
pointed out the various items in it, naming them both in Spanish
and English. I then went over what they had said, in English, and
added a few details of my own - what the people in the discoteque
were doing and words to describe what it looked like. I did this
because the students hadn't mentioned any such detail and I wanted
them to go beyond merely naming items. Following this, the rest
of the students took turns retelling something about the disco-
teque. They mainly stuck to renaming items mentioned by the ori-
ginators. Then, the originators wrote the new vocabulary on the
blackboard and the students copied it. The next activity involved
writing on the blackboard two new lists of vocabulary related to
the discotque - one of verbs and one of adjectives. I began the
lists and the students continued them, adding both words they al-
ready knew and new words they wanted to learn, which I trans-
lated into English. I intended to follow this by having the students
use the new vocabulary to make sentences, orally, about the disco-
teque but, as there was no time left, I gave it to them as a writ-
ten homework assignment.

Once the first two originators had broken the ice, the other
members of the class were all eager to take their turn. The ori-
ginators worked in pairs or threes and, as well as the discoteque,
they made a hotel, a zoo and a movie theater. These were all topics
suggested by them. We generally followed the same format for exer-
cises as we had with the discoteque - the teacher, then the students,
retelling the description of the scene, generating lists of nouns,
verbs and adjectives and using these words to make sentences and

to ask the originators questions about their scene, in order to practice the new vocabulary and generate new information.

A problem I saw with the vocabulary was that the students tended to put most of their attention on the nouns rather than on the verbs and adjectives. The information offered by the originators was almost entirely the names of objects and the entire class seemed to be most interested in learning the new nouns even though they were always more numerous than the other two categories. After the first lesson with the discoteque, the student contributions to the verb lists, and even more so to the adjective lists, tended to be mainly words they had already studied and many of the new words were ones I added myself. I didn't find a completely satisfactory way to deal with this at the time although during the question and answer periods they did use more of a variety in their vocabulary than they did during the "originating".

As well as oral practice of the material generated in these activities, I also, from time to time, assigned the students to use the vocabulary to write sentences and questions. Towards the end of the course I had them write a short description of any one of the scenes they chose.

In these activities, the students were provided with the stimulus for generating material by being given a set of rods and asked to use them to create and talk about a representation of a scene. Within this assignment they had the leeway to choose the topic of the scene and, of course, what it would contain. In the structure they were given, two or three students were to start out leading the action through their presentation of the scene and answering questions about it. The rest of the class contributed

through a set of defined steps - asking questions, making vocabulary lists and using the vocabulary to make sentences.

In retrospect, I see that the students could have been given even further guidelines to encourage them to expand their use of vocabulary and structure. For example, they could have been assigned to make up a story that teks place in a scene. This assignment could be given as such or, as would probably be necessary with this particular class, it could be given with tighter guidelines, by the teacher taking them through a set of questions - "Who's sitting here?", "What are they saying?", "What are they going to do next?", etc. This could be a way to guide the students to generate a variety of vocabulary, as well as structures, rather than just naming items, as they tended to do.

In general, I feel that the structure for participation that the students were given was a good one for them. They all understood how they were to participate and, within the given format, they made their contributions well and creatively. This is a very versatile type of activity which can be expanded on in many ways. On the side of generating material, a story could be invented for each scene, as I have mentioned, or an on-going story could be developed over time, with a new scene created for each installment. The content generated can be used for practice of different tenses, for making up dialogues, for writing compositions, for practicing different question words and structures, to name a few examples.

At the beginning of this course, I discovered that the students needed to be led gradually into activities where they provided the bulk of the content and that all along they needed a

well-defined structure for their participation in class. In response to this, I began by setting up situations with a great deal of teacher provided structure and limited opportunity for student contributions to content and moved towards the final activities where the students were given a structure within which to generate most of the content themselves. Given the necessary structure and an inspiring stimulus, the students were able to participate in the class responsibly and enthusiastically.

C. Adult Class

This was a small class, with five students who regularly came. During the first half of the course, there were several other students who attended with a greater or lesser degree of regularity but, by the beginning of the second monthe, the five who had been coming with the most regularity were the ones who remained. The level of the class was intermediate. The students had had a range of experience with English, from those who had only what they had studied in high school to those who had lived for a time in the United States. The atmosphere in this class differed greatly from that of the other two classes. It was a good deal smaller and the students were more mature and very serious about their study of English.

I based my work in this class on a technique adapted from Curran's Community Language Learning[4] - that of using conversations taped by the students as a means of generating content for class work. Aside from generating content, I was interested in using this technique as a means to develop rapport and mutual support among the group and to bolster the students' self-confidence in using English and taking on responsibility for their learning process. The procedure we used for taping was as follows: the students sat in a circle with the tape recorder in the middle. I stood on the outside of the circle, behind whichever student held the microphone at a given moment, ready to assist, when asked, by giving translations, corrections or confirmations of

what the students said. This was the only way I participated during the actual tapings. I did not record anything myself,.nor in any way try to influence what the students recorded. Following the taping, we played the cassette back while I wrote the transcript on a large piece of paper. I gave the students a few minutes to read over and reflect upon the transcript so that they could see what it contained and what they did and did not understand. Following this, we corrected mistakes and explained anything that needed explaining. We also usually worked on pronounciation at this point, of new words and expressions and, finally, the students copied the transcript into their notebooks. (This is generally the procedure as developed by Curran, although it may lack some details he includes in order to work towards objectives that he feels are important in teaching.)

From the transcripts I drew particular points - pronounciation, grammar, vocabulary, expressions - to be worked on in class, basing my selections on my observations of what seemed to be of interest or problematic to the class and what I felt were important things for them to work on in English. I was usually the one who decided what to focus on in the transcripts. I originally began working this way partly because I found at the beginning of the course, when I gave the students a choice of how they could spend their time in class, they seemed to be confused and said, "You tell us what to do."

Through out the course, I experimented with different ways of initiating taped conversations.and of using the resulting transcripts. During the first two taping sessions, I put no limits or suggestions whatsoever on the students as to what they were to

talk about. In the first session, the students themselves decided that they needed more guidance than what I had given them and before they began taping they discussed among themselves, in Spanish, the fact that they needed a topic and that the topic would be vacations. In the second session there was no such previous discussion but, as there were several new students present, the conversation was directed towards them, asking them questions about their backgrounds and interests.

I initiated other taping sessions by bringing in various sorts of pictures as a stimulus for conversation, each time with a different purpose in mind. For example, in one class I was interested in bringing out adjectives and different ways to describe people. I brought in four pictures of people from which the class was to select one, and I tried to give them a varied selection. The pictures were 1) a rich-looking woman, 2) a rich-looking man, 3) a poor-looking woman and 4) a poor-looking man. After the class had chosen the picture of the rich woman (who was actually Princess Caroline of Monaco, but they didn't realize that), I suggested that they begin the conversation by talking about what she does, how she lives and what she looks like. The conversation followed more or less what I had suggested.

In this session, as compared to the previous ones, I did direct some of the content by indicating that the students were to talk about and describe a particular person. However, within the limits I had given them, I also gave them freedom to use their own initiative. I didn't ask leading questions during the taping, thus, what they recorded was their own creation. I made a point to

myself of giving the class a variety of pictures from which to chose and I found it interesting that whenever I gave them a group of pictures to chose from, they usually picked one entirely different from one which I would have chosen myself.

Aside from pure experimentation, my objective for using pictures in the taping sessions was to give the students guidance that I felt they needed. As previously mentioned, I felt confusion from the students, particularly at the beginning of the course, when I gave them the option of deciding how to use class time. Although the class had made two tapes without any guidance in content from me, I felt that during those sessions they were nervous and unsure and needed more guidance from me to feel security and to move beyond superficial discussions.

At another time, we did a class similar to the one previously described where I brought in pictures of different places - a jungle, a waterfall in the forest, a city, a cemetery, a small town. Again, the class chose a picture (the city) different from the one I would have chosen myself.

For the final taping session I did with this group, I brought in all the pictures I had of people. Each student chose one and I asked them to take on what they imagined the character of the person in their picture to be, in order to participate in a taped conversation.

In the exercises I developed from the transcripts, I provided a good deal of the content and the structure but I also always attempted to allow the students to provides as much of this as they could, themselves. For example, I will describe one of the

lessons that followed the conversation about the princess. We
had been working on adjectives taken from the transcript and
I then decided to give a lesson on comparatives. I took from the
transcript the sentence, "She is taller than he.", which I wrote
on the blackboard. Underneath "taller" I wrote "younger", young
being a word from the previous day's lesson. I asked the students
to give me other words which could be put into that slot and they
continued, giving me comparative forms of the adjectives they had
previously studied, which I wrote in a list on the board. When
it came to a point where someone gave an adjective that required
"more" rather than "-er", I wrote a new sentence and started a new
list with that. From then on, the students had to decide which
was the correct form for the words they gave me. They were gene-
rally able to do this with few mistakes. We then had a discussion
about the difference between the words in the two lists, and I gave
them the specific rules for forming comparative adjectives in
English. In order to practice the material from this lesson, I
showed the class the picture of the princess and one of a poor
Haitian woman and had them make sentences comparing the two pic-
tures.

Analyzing this exercise, according to structure and content,
I see that I provided the structure by deciding what exercises to
do (substitution drill, comparison of two pictures) and guided the
content by deciding what model sentence to take from the trans-
cript. The students gave content by providing the substitutions
and in the comparative sentneces they made about the two pictures.
My purpose for working this way was to encourage the students to
use the English they knew (i.e. the adjectives they had studied)

and to use their own resources to discover for themselves the rules for forming comparatives in English. The students were active participants in the lesson. They enthusiastically added words to the lists (and the lists became quite long) and there was much discussion among them as they tried to understand and explain the comparative structure.

Most of the lessons I derived from the transcripts more or less followed this model.- substitution drills with the students providing the substitutions, use of inductive reasoning to understand the grammar points, use of pictures and of student composed questions and answers to practice the material. I also gave the students dictations which I took from the transcripts and from class exercises. The students were the ones who originally asked for the dictations and kept asking for them throughout the course.

The students developed their own way of working together throughout the course, particularly during the taping sessions. During the first two tapings, the students were nervous and appeared somewhat at a loss as to what to do with the complete freedom I gave them, as evidenced by the fact that they decided they needed a guideline, a topic, in the first session. They also put some structure on their interaction. My idea during both the taping and the exercises was that whoever felt the desire to speak should take her turn accordingly. However, it seemed that the students decided that since I wasn't going to call on them in turn, they would do so themselves. In the first taping session, when a person finished speaking, she would pass the microphone to the person sitting next to her. In the second session, when everyone had

talked except for two, one person said to those two, "You speak now so the rest of us can have a second turn." During the first two weeks, during class exercises when, for example, I would ask the students to ask each other questions, they always decided to take turns in the order they were sitting. I didn't want to put pressure on the students by telling each one when she should speak. However, they apparently felt more secure when each one knew when it was her turn and imposed this structure themselves. This need diminished over time and by the end of the course they all seemed to feel confident in contributing freely to the class.

In this course there was a clear progression in terms of the students learning to use the recording sessions as a tool for learning English, that was under their control. I feel that the way we worked with the tape recorder in this class enabled the students to get as little or as much support from the teacher as they needed, thus encouraging them to contribute more and more of themselves to the class. Time and support, but without pressure, helped the students to take on more and more responsibility for the content of the class.

At the beginning, the students needed a lot of guidance in content from me. I provided it by giving them pictures to discuss and suggestions for how to direct their discussions. By the end of the course, they were talking quite freely about the stimulus provided with little suggestion from me and were perhaps moving towards the point where they could confidently provide the stimulus - the topics, the pictures - themselves.

At the beginning of the course, the students relied a lot on the guidance I gave them through translating for them what they

wanted to record. During the last taping session we did, it was obvious to me that the students were asking for very little help in translation from me, relying on each other to clear up doubts and insecurities. They had taken over this aspect of control themselves, at the point that they were ready for it.

The tape recorder is a very versatile and useful tool for working with student generated material, and the potentials of its use I explored only in part with this class. Means of stimulating taped conversations are limited only by one's imagination - thought-up topics or use of pictures, as done in this class, use of rods, discussion of shared experiences, role plays, are just some of the possibilities to be explored. The way that we worked in this class encompassed some important aspects of working with student generated material - versatility in language generated, real communication and self-expression, and a means for the students to grow into student centered learning.

III. Conclusion

This paper has dealt with various activities designed for producing and using student generated material. With all three of the groups I worked with, I discovered that it was necessary to start with activities with more teacher responsibility for both structure and content and, over time, allow the students to take on more and more of this responsibility themselves. Students need to learn how to work in a student centered class situation or they can easily lose control of self-discipline, as in the case of the younger students, and will have difficulty freeing their minds to generate meaningful content, as was the case, at the outset, with all the groups. It is important to begin with activities where the teacher clearly defines the steps for the action the students will take. Over time, the students may be able to take on some responsibility for structuring their interaction themselves. I gave the adult students a great deal of opportunity to do this during the taping sessions and they gradually made more and more use of this opportunity. On the other hand, I felt that the younger students needed the structure to be clearly defined by me all along.

It is also important, particularly at the beginning, that the teacher clearly defines goals for the content the students will generate. I did this, for example, by giving the adult students specific suggestions as to how to direct their discussions of the pictures, also, by giving the children specific topics for their drawings. The teacher can move toward giving more general goals for the content to be generated so that the students can take on the degree of responsibility for content that they are ready for.

The teacher must be flexible enough throughout to incorporate into the class unplanned content and variation in activity that the students come up with. Thus, the teacher must in a sense restrict the freedom of the students so that the situation doesn't become anarchy but, at the same time, allow them the freedom and encouragement to contribute their ideas to the class.

In providing the stimulus for the students to generate content, I have experimented with several things - student-created drawings, rods and magazine pictures - and I have suggested further ways these things might be used. The possibilities for providing stimulus are endless. Rods, for example, have been used in many ways by teachers.[5] Each different teacher and each different group of students s/he works with will vary the stimulus and the content in their own way.

In general, the teacher must remain open-minded, be imaginative, and have clear goals but be able to vary them according to the situation. The teacher has to find the stimulus that inspires the students to generate meaningful content and be able to provide the students with the type and amount of structure that gives them the support they need to productively participate in and contribute to class activities. As the students grow into student centered learning, through the support and guidance of the teacher, they learn more and more to use their own intellectual and creative resources and to take the initiative in directing their own learning process.

NOTES

1. Earl Stevick, Teaching Languages: A Way and Ways (Rowley, Mass.: Newbury House, 1980).

2. Caleb Gattegno, The Common Sense of Teaching Foreign Languages (New York, N.Y.: Educational Solutions, Inc., 1976) ch. 9.

3. Earl Stevick, op. cit., pp. 139-143.

4. See Earl Stevick, op. cit., chapters 12 and 13, for descriptions of the use of the tape recording technique in Community Language Learning.

5. See, for examples, Sue Rogers and Marion MacDonald, "A File of Student-Invested Activities for the Language Classroom" (unpublished paper, School for International Training, Brattleboro, Vt., 1979) and Larry Cisar, "Hot Rods" (TESOL Newsletter, Vol. XII no. 5, 11/79) p. 19.

By A. Lipson

~ a copy of the original
Handout by the late
Alexander Lipson. SM

APPENDIX
THE BOX DRILL

WRITING IT

1. Make a list of verbs you want to introduce, pair them, and pick one pair for the drill (e.g., work/sleep, drink/eat, warm up/cool down). If the verb is transitive, include and object (e.g., wears pants/wears dresses, wears pants/fixes pants).

2. Make a list of possible subjects, and try to match them with the verbs you've picked, or choose new verbs to match subjects you want to include. To make subjects more interesting and more grammatically useful, you can qualify them, e.g., working girls/bar girls, crazy cats/establishment cats, men who enjoy smoking/ men who hate smoking).

3. Pick a pair of adverbial modifiers (time, place, manner, cause), e.g., during the day/at night, outside/inside, with enthusiasm/with contempt, because he likes to/ because he has to.

   This might give you an inventory like: working girls (w.g.)/bar girls (b.g.), work/sleep, during the day/at night.
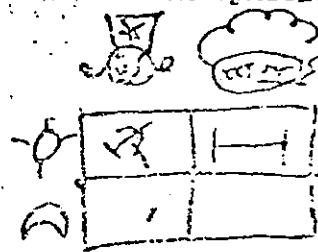
4. Arrange inventory as follows:

	subject 1	subject 2
modifier 1	verb 1	verb 2
modifier 2		

for example

|	w.g.	b.g.
during the day	work	sleep
at night		

in symbols

5. "cross" the verbs in the two lower boxes, e.g. and see if it makes sense. If it doesn't, and it probably will not, change around verbs and subjects so it does, or (as with the byezdelniki in the workshop example), provide background to justify what you have. Sometimes there's simply no way of crossing them and still make sense. Crossing isn't that important, and is the hardest thing about making a box drill. So instead, use two other verbs for the bottom boxes, e.g. at night w.g. go to sleep and b.g. go to bars.
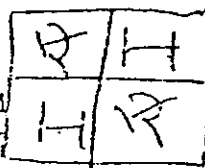
Notes: Making this fun depends more on your choice of items than on having a funny or ingenious plot. Surprising combinations are a good device, e.g., Naive cats write tiresome novels, singing waiters prefer Scarlatti with the salad.

TEACHING IT

I. Predrill. Its purpose is to elicit the individual items as answers to progressively longer questions, but not yet in the context of a plot. The 6 items are displayed in groups on the board.

 w.g.   work   during the day

 b.g.   sleep   at night
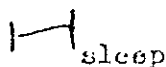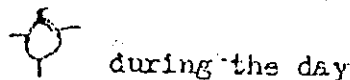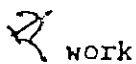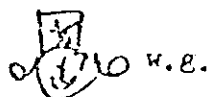
Write the words next to the symbols if you want them to learn to read, or if you think that words written in the target language provide useful help. This is probably more necessary for languages whose vocabulary and/or alphabets are difficult, e.g., Russian, Arabic, and less important for French, Spanian, etc.

1. Elicit subjects by pointing to one of them and asking "who?". When they can say each of the subjects easily as an answer to the question "who", go to step 2.
2. Elicit verbs in the same way, i.e., point to symbol and ask "What do they do?"
3. Combine subject and verb in one question, e.g., "What do w.g. do?" But since context now suggests an answer, point to a symbol only if they don't get it themselves. The other 3 subject + verb questions are: What do b.g. do? Who works? Who sleeps? Only when they can answer all 4 of them easily, go to step 4.
4. Elicit adverbial phrases in the same way, i.e., by asking "when?" and pointing to an answer.
5. Now combine subject, verb and adverbial phrase in complex questions, eliciting in turn each of the two subjects, verbs and phrases, e.g., Who works during the day? When do w.g. work? What do w.g. do during the day?, etc. They are probably assuming at this point that w.g. work during the day and b.g. sleep at night. Although this is so, the box drill will show that this is only part of the story.

What you've done is work step by step up to the point where students can understand a complex question using all 3 kinds of words. Be sure they do each step well before going on to the next one, or the drill will get too hard, and you'll have to pull teeth to get answers. It is important to the box drill proper that they can say the words easily and know what they are saying, since once the box drill starts, you want them to focus on <u>what</u> they are saying, not on <u>how</u> to say it.

II. <u>Box Drill Proper</u>. The box drill is displayed separately from the predrill, i.e., there are two separate displays, the predrill (with words written out if necessary) and the boxdrill (with symbols only).

1. Fill in one square of the box and ask all 3 possible questions of that box, e.g.,

    (1) Who works during the day?
    (2) When do w.g. work?
    (3) What do w.g. do during the day?
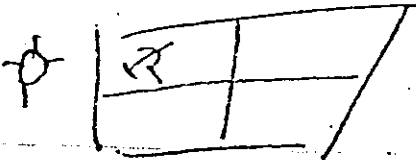
2. Fill in the other 3 boxes one at a time, asking "linked" questions as you do, e.g., What do w.g. do during the day?/And what do <u>b.g.</u> do during the day (underlining shows emphasis in the question); When do b.g. work?/And when do b.g. <u>sleep</u>? Who works at night?/ And who <u>sleeps</u> at night? Negative questions double the possibility e.g., Who doesn't work at night? Alternative procedure: If you think the class sees the plot--or even if it doesn't--let them fill in the boxes for themselves, i.e., ask them the question <u>before</u> filling in the box and write in <u>their</u> answer. This might even change your plot, but so what? Their plot might be better.
3. Ask lots of questions, eliciting what needs practice. Note that every item can be answered by 2 different questions, e.g., <u>during the day</u> is both the answer to "When do w.g. work?" and "When do b.g. sleep?" This means that you can elicit any item twice in a row without repeating the question.
4. Let your students ask each other questions. Hope that some will answer wrong, so they can argue among themselves.
5. Ask questions without reference to the box--in fact, you might even want to erase it entirely. This means that the plot has to make sense or students won't remember the right answers....which is just the point of the drill--to focus attention onto the meaning of the sentences.
6. Expand the plot to other more complex drills (e.g., "grids", "maps", & other devices