MA TESOL Collection   SIT Graduate Institute

1984

Exercises for Student-Generated Social and Political Issues in the ESL Classroom

William Michael Conley
SIT Graduate Institute

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcollections.sit.edu/ipp_collection

Part of the Bilingual, Multilingual, and Multicultural Education Commons, and the Curriculum and Social Inquiry Commons

Exercises for Student-Generated Social and Political Issues

in the ESL Classroom

William Michael Conley

B.A. Wesleyan University 1979

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

January 1984

This project by William M. Conley is accepted in its present form.

Date _March 2, 1984_

Project Adviser _Bonnie Mennell_

Project Reader _SUSAN MAGUIRE_

ABSTRACT

This paper is based on a second internship which took place at the TASIS school in England during the summer of 1983. The paper includes three lessons entitled "Values Geography," "Problem in the City," and "The Changing City." These three exercises were used to create an environment in which students could develop a heightened awareness of social and political issues and their importance on a local and global level. These student-determined issues are also designed to increase cross-cultural awareness and improve students' communicative competence.

ERIC DESCRIPTORS

Social Problems

CIJE: 1,541   RIE: 1,481   GC: 530
VF   Social Issues
BT   Problems
RT   Debate
     Political Issues
     Values
     Social Attitudes
     Social Change

Group Instruction

CIJE: 192   RIE: 329   GC: 310
NT   Small Group Instruction
     Large Group Instruction
RT   Group Dynamics
     Group Guidance

International Education

CIJE: 1,207   RIE: 1,229   GC: 400
BT   Education
RT   International Programs
     Cross-Cultural Studies

Communicative Competence

CIJE: 370   RIE: 536   GC: 450
BT   Communication Skills
     Verbal Communication

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

The idea for this project was conceived at a discussion on the ethics of teaching ESL which took place in the fall of 1982 at the School for International Training. One of the most important questions of that conference was the following: What is the social and political responsibility of the ESL teacher? Many of those who attended the discussion had never considered the question before. For those who had, it gained new significance as a result of the discussion and after reading an article entitled "ESL in a World Community" by Ann Frentzen and Ann Brooks.[1]

As I interpreted the question then, and as I see it even more clearly now, political and social responsibility means that each ESL teacher must ask himself how the teaching of ESL either contributes to or detracts from one of the most important purposes of education, i.e., to foster an ethic of open-mindedness among students whose acquired insight and knowledge will prepare them to make reasoned judgments about problems which they face in their lives.

One of Thomas Jefferson's maxims which profoundly affected American education was that an informed citizenry is essential to a viable and strong democracy. Literacy and public education were at that time (and are today) potent political tools which enable people to participate in their government by making intelligent decisions at the ballot box and in their everyday lives. A slogan from the National Education Association reveals the same philosophy: "If you think education is expensive, try ignorance."

In the same vein, I view English as taught to speakers of other languages as a political tool with as much import and potential for

social action as education of the masses was in Jefferson's view.

Today, the work of Paolo Freire is a radiant example of the power of

literacy and language.[2] Consequently, as a member of a profession

which transmits the knowledge of a truly world language to people of

other cultures, my responsibility is great.

Due to growth and demand, the field of English language teaching

has become increasingly specialized to the extent that new fields have

grown within the broader label of TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers

of Other Languages). Career-minded teachers must be acquainted with

such acronyms as CALL (Computer Assisted Language Learning) and ESP

(English for Specific Purposes) as well as proficient at teaching in

these specialized areas. We are constantly striving to acquire the

latest techniques, the most efficient, state-of-the-art means of

instruction.

The trend towards specialization as evidenced by CALL and ESP

reflects a preoccupation with teaching the technical components of the

language. Are the students engineers from Saudi Arabia? Then they

will need up-to-date lessons in the English vocabulary of engineering.

Are they doctors from South Korea? Then English medical terminology

determines the syllabus. Why are they studying? Because English is

an international language without the knowledge of which their pro-

fession and hence the nation they represent would lag behind the current

world standard.

How will they implement this technical knowledge which our skills

have made it possible for them to acquire? If we are lucky, engineers

will use it to make the hardships of life less formidable for their fellow

countrymen and women in accordance with the local culture. Doctors will incorporate modern medicine with local cultural traditions to ease suffering among the populace. Other students whom we teach may enter a variety of occupations through which they have the capacity to make decisions which directly and indirectly affect many other people's lives. Perhaps their study of English can help them make decisions borne out of compassion for and understanding of everyone those decisions will affect. These may be idealistic dreams, but when we look at how ESL students potentially function in their communities we see that "ESL teachers can have a strong and widespread effect."[3]

The fundamental question is whether or not we have any control over how our students utilize their knowledge of English once they leave our class to reenter their respective communities. Certainly, the time we are actually involved with them in the classroom represents a minuscule portion of their educational experience. I would like to assert, however, my belief that it is our obligation to influence our students' use of the language we teach them and understanding of the culture, in a way which contributes to the ideals of world peace and cooperation. In other words, we cannot be satisfied by the idle chance that our students will use their knowledge wisely and humanely. Instead, we must try to achieve this end by design.

Our zeal for the attainment of technical excellence as language teachers is only one facet of our professional responsibility. The reason for the composition of "ESL in a World Community" was to inspire, on the level of teacher training, the somewhat neglected aspect of the political responsibility of ESL teachers.

> As ESL teachers we have the expertise needed to
> provide skills and insight. (Skills are such
> things as the ability to communicate in English
> and the ability to adapt to and understand other
> cultures. Insight includes raising awareness in
> terms of values, culture, and learning.) And we
> act as links between cultures and groups.[4]

My intention in this project was to experiment with lessons which would create an environment in which students could develop "skills and insight." My idea of a way to provide insight was to design an activity or a series of activities which included the discussion of social and political issues which were important to the students. Since my second internship[5] classes were composed of students from all over the world, I felt that the students could develop an awareness of the global dimensions of the social and political issues which affected them in their own hometowns. In effect, I would be teaching them global awareness.

In addition, I theorized that, in the skills area, their development of this global awareness would help them adapt to and understand other cultures. To further fulfill the demands of my professional responsibility, I tried to create procedures for these lessons which would address the students' needs to improve their ability to communicate in spoken and written English.

Consequently, I started with four assumptions which seemed to capsulize my understanding of how to implement the "skills and insight" philosophy in an international classroom:

1. International students of English have the opportunity to
   see many parts of the world and can benefit from a

heightened awareness of themselves, people from other cultures, and their problems.

2. The teacher of ESL has the potential and obligation to effect a change in student consciousness towards a deeper understanding of social and political issues and their significance on a global level.

3. Students can increase communicative competence by discussing those social and political issues which are most important to them.

4. The more time students spend communicating their ideas about these issues without the pressure of immediate teacher correction, the more they will improve their communicative competence.

My second internship provided the perfect opportunity to experiment with implementing my assumptions. When I accepted the job at the summer language program of TASIS England,[6] one of my first considerations was who the students were that I would be teaching. As international students, they were members of an elite class in their societies and, without doubt, the high cost of a four- or eight-week program in England was insubstantial to their families. I assumed that this factor would strongly affect their perceptions of themselves and the world. Another important factor was age. My students in the two summer sessions were between sixteen and nineteen years old.

Both of these factors, the socio-economic-cultural composition of the class and their age, excited me about the possibility of

incorporating the discussion of social and political issues into my classes. I saw each student as a ready-made source of information to his fellow students. I wanted their experiences and opinions to determine what those issues would be. At the same time, I wanted to explore how well I served as a "link between cultures." Furthermore, I needed to see how effectively I used student-generated issues as a means towards improving their communicative competence.

The TASIS summer program is divided into two four-week sessions. Students attend classes three hours a day and spend the rest of their time in sports or other recreational activities. My class in the first session consisted of seven Italians, a Swede, a Greek, a Portuguese, and five Arabic speakers from different Middle Eastern countries. It was an almost ideal mix of nationalities and genders, although males outnumbered females nine to six. In the second session, there was a similar composition except that German and Arabic speakers were the dominant first-language groups.

A four-week session is certainly a very short time within which to implement a program which attempts to heighten students' awareness of the global dimensions of social and political issues. I had to decide which issues would strike the strongest note in my students, which topics would engage them enough to cause them to question and clarify their beliefs on a given subject.

Because of their backgrounds, I unfairly assumed that they would be unaware of and insensitive to many of the problems that existed in the world among those less fortunate than themselves. To try to force information on them about such issues as world hunger or political

oppression, however, would have been a disastrous approach. Students

cannot be expected to digest information which has little relevance to

their lives and convert it into raised consciousness, no matter what

their backgrounds. When they are dealing with it in a foreign language

it is especially difficult.

For this reason, I felt that the first step towards increasing

awareness had to deal with those issues which had the most relevance and

immediacy in the students' lives. Consequently, prior to my second

internship, I planned a sequence of two lessons which I hoped would

increase awareness and understanding of the diverse cultural values of

students in the class, deal with social and political issues which would

be determined by the students, and improve their communicative competence.

For the first step of this sequence, I decided to use a values

clarification exercise called "Values Geography" from Values Clarifica-

tion: A Handbook of Practical Strategies for Teachers and Students by

S. Simon and L. Howe. I chose this as an introductory activity because

I believed that for students to become more aware and knowledgeable of

social and political issues on the global level, they would have to

start by becoming more aware of their own values on a local level or

where they lived. I also hoped that the activity would serve as an

interesting way for students to become better acquainted by learning

about their classmates' places of origin and how they felt about them.

My idea for the second step of the sequence was what I call the

"Problem in the City" lesson. Initially, this asked students to identify

a problem in their city or town, write about it, and discuss it with

their classmates. Next, as a class, we would make suggestions as to

how the problem might be solved. Finally, each student would choose a problem we discussed and write an essay on the topic "What Can I Do?", or how he might personally deal with the problem. This lesson reflects my belief that the term "global issues" is synonymous with "global problems" and that a problem-solving process using the students as resources is the best way to heighten awareness among individuals and ensure meaningful discussion which improves communicative competence.

In the first session, then, I used "Values Geography" as a preparatory activity and followed it a few days later by teaching the "Problem in the City" lesson. For reasons I will explain in the body of this paper, we did no further work with the issues activities I had planned. The activities which focused on issues per se probably amounted to no more than eight hours of the approximately 50 hours spent in class in this session. However, I discovered while using the picture series "The Changing City" as a grammar exercise, that I could adapt it into an activity which combined grammar practice with issues discussion in a highly communicative way.

In Session II, there was slightly more time spent on issues-related activities. My first step was to substitute "The Changing City" exercise for "Values Geography." A few days later, "Problem in the City" followed. Finally we spent four class hours holding debates on certain issues the students had chosen.

In my discussion of the sequence of lessons used which follows, I will concentrate on the three activities from which I learned the most: "Values Geography," "Problem in the City," and "The Changing City." The discussion of each lesson will include:

1. Rationale

2. Description of procedure

3. Description of what happened

4. Analysis of the most important issues raised

5. Suggestions for future use

The reader will notice that the analysis section of Part II, the "Problem in the City" lesson contains a comparison of its use in the two sessions. This is because my procedures for the second session were entirely different. Since I did not use "Values Geography" in the second session, there is no such comparison in the analysis section of Part I. In Part III, "The Changing City," my procedure in the two sessions was so similar that, again, there is no comparison of sessions in its analysis.

I hope that the section entitled Suggestions for Future Use will be of use to others who may agree with my teaching philosophy and wish to use some of my ideas in their own classes. The lessons I have developed are most applicable to international classes of an intermediate to advanced level. Nevertheless, I hope they are structurally sound enough to form the foundation of a successful lesson in a less advanced or less culturally heterogeneous ESL class.

PART I: "VALUES GEOGRAPHY"

Rationale

When I chose to use "Values Geography" with my multinational class, I did so for several reasons. Even before I knew the actual composition of the class, I thought it was an activity which served as a thought-provoking prelude to the "Problem in the City" lesson and as a means towards stimulating awareness of the many different cultural values in the class. One of its purposes is to bring students closer together by requiring that they examine questions and share information and feelings about where they live. In addition to its function as a preparatory activity for "Problem in the City," it appeared to meet most of my criteria for an activity which would be useful for students to gain skills and insight. I will state these criteria as questions:

1. Is the activity student-invested? Is the students' knowledge and background used as the source of information for a discussion?

2. Is it communicative? Do the students have a chance to talk to each other about meaningful ideas?

3. Does it address the linguistic needs of the students?

4. Does it cause students to examine their values?

5. Does it address social and political issues?

These criteria were not as clear to me then as they are now, but I was aware that they were essentially more specific outgrowths of my assumptions and that they would affect how I would structure "Values Geography" and "Problem in the City." Before I met my class in the first session at TASIS, I had only a vague idea of how I would put these assumptions into practice.

Before the "Values Geography" lesson there were several days of lessons which centered around getting to know each other and establishing a tone of cooperation. I felt that this was necessary as a precursor to "Values Geography." Although I knew it was necessary to promote a feeling of mutual respect, trust, and security in a class where serious issues would be discussed and values examined, I was unclear how this could best be done.

In order to impress upon the students my idea that by sharing information about themselves they could learn as much as possible from me, I relied on the use of small and large groups to get them to spend a lot of time talking to each other. I did this to give them time to practice speaking without worrying about correction and to acquaint them with what I expected would be a new way of learning in a language class--learning in which they would be in constant contact with each other and in which my role as the provider of information would be deemphasized.

Procedure

In my adaptation of the exercise from the values clarification text, students were required to choose partners and discuss a series of questions culled from the book. The questions were as follows:

1. Where were you born?

2. Are you proud to be associated with that part of the country?

3. Where do you live now?

4. Why do you live there?

5. What is the nicest thing about the place where you live?

6. Is that a place where you would like to raise your children?

The students were given from ten to fifteen minutes to compare answers to these questions with their partners. In the next step, I had planned only that we would share these answers with each other as a class. I had hoped that each pair would report the information they had gathered and that we would use the world map to make this information more meaningful to the rest of the class. Moreover, I anticipated that questions 3, 5 and 6 especially would lead to a discussion in which everyone could more carefully consider the values they held about where they lived. I expected that the more students knew about each other's homes and backgrounds, the more they would understand and respect each other's cultural values.

The reason for starting the lesson with dyads was twofold. First, the small group encourages students to communicate with each other naturally without the interference of the teacher and the onus of correction. I felt that the more time spent without the pressure of teacher correction, the more confident and competent students would be in communicating their ideas. Second, my assumption was that if they were going to share opinions with others, it was less threatening to do so with one other person than in a large group. I hoped that the students would be able to loosen up in this more intimate setting and to practice verbally what they would later share with the entire class. Work in the dyads, therefore, was an emotional and linguistic warm-up for the discussion with the whole class.

What Happened

Structuring small group discussion was simple in comparison to doing

so in the whole class. I had hoped that the various contributions from

the dyads would determine the flow of the discussion. I asked people

to contribute what they had discussed in their dyads and discovered, to

my dismay, that some of the students didn't understand some of the

questions. For example, some misinterpreted question 3 by thinking that

"Where do you live now?" meant their dormitory on campus. Consequently,

the succeeding questions confounded them even more, which meant they

had little to contribute to the discussion.

Although I intended the large group discussion to expose values and

to be a forum for the communication of those values, I was unsure of how

directive I should be as the coordinator of the discussion, and I had not

considered in what direction I might try to lead the discussion. As a

result, the students responded very reluctantly. Perhaps they sensed my

uncertainty. After I stumbled with a few leading questions, students

eventually started to make some judgments/statements which I wrote on

the board in an attempt to spark further discussion. For example, in

response to question 6, there were some interesting comments and dis-

agreements which I tried to exploit by making students state their

opinions more clearly. The following passage from my class notes

illustrates this:

> In response to the question "What is a good
> environment for children?", someone said, "A
> good country."
>   "What makes a good country?"
>   "Good people, resources, police."
>   "What makes good people?"

After I asked this last question, some of the students began to

contribute further ideas. A few of the Italians suggested that it was

freedom which made people and a society good. I wrote the word "freedom"
on the board and asked students to define it, expecting a set of differ-
ent ideas which would reflect the values of each culture. The reaction
to this was not as enthusiastic as I had expected, so I decided that a
better discussion would result if I made two groups and established a
different but related discussion topic.

I asked them to consider the question: "Is there enough freedom in
your country?" Having the luxury of a teacher assistant, I was able to
assign her to direct the conversation in one group while I presided over
the other. Each student spoke in turn about this question and, generally,
they seemed engaged by the topic. Many struggled to express ideas, and
I encouraged others to help with certain vocabulary words if they could.
Some of the students spoke at length, which left little time for others
at the end of class. In addition, my presence in the group caused them
to direct all of their speaking towards me. The class ended with
several students in my group rushing through their explanations. My
assistant informed me that the same had happened in her group.

Analysis

My analysis of what happened will look at the criteria for a lesson
which creates an environment for the development of skills and insight,
and how well my procedure met these criteria. I will also look at the
success of the lesson in terms of the group dynamics as well as my role
as a facilitator.

Overall, I felt that the exercise was not entirely successful or
useful to the students. As far as my success as a facilitator is

concerned, my uncertainty about the focus of the whole class discussion made it one which lacked a real purpose and direction. I attribute this to two factors. The first was my lack of experience in organizing such a discussion and my failure to consider strategies beforehand to direct the flow of extemporaneous student comments. Second, the discussion questions themselves could have been more thoughtfully planned, intro- duced, and explained. It seemed to take too much effort to get students excited about the questions. Also, the students who misinterpreted the questions most likely did so because I did not allow enough time for them to individually consider the questions before talking about them with a partner, and because I failed to give clear directions from the beginning.

In the area of group dynamics, my decision to make two groups towards the end of class and ask students to comment on the amount of freedom in their country also indicates my lack of preparation. Although the students' responses to the six discussion questions had essentially determined the new topic of conversation, I had little idea of what my objectives were for this discussion. The students' responses to the freedom question were interesting, but the fact that they seemed to be speaking only to me worked against my hope that all the students in the group would be involved and asking questions of each other. The imposi- tion of a time limit might have prevented some students from dominating the discussion as well.

The conversations which students had in their dyads seemed to satisfy most of the skills and insight criteria. The students were communicating real information about their backgrounds while considering values clarification questions. I realized that to address social and

political issues at this point in the sequence would have been premature. Students needed to do a self-analysis before attempting the analysis and synthesis required in the "Problem in the City" lesson. Unfortunately, the lesson as I had designed it created a linguistic need in each student but never really addressed that need. During the lesson, the students were able to practice their communicative skills in three different groupings, all essentially without my interference. I only helped students when they were absolutely stuck.

I could have attended to their linguistic needs by giving them the discussion questions the night before class and asking them to write about them as a homework assignment. Certain vocabulary and grammatical structures could have been worked out so that they would struggle less when communicating their ideas in class. Another way of serving my students' linguistic needs in the lesson would have been to keep mental notes of collective grammar mistakes for future reference. Although I felt that grammar instruction had no place in this type of exercise, I realized that my role is always to isolate areas of difficulty to help the student improve his ability to communicate an idea. The difficulties can always be worked on in a different class and context.

Finally, the students could have benefited from a properly planned follow-up assignment. This would have given them the time to think more deeply about the issues raised in class and to work on grammatical weaknesses which they became aware of in class.

Suggestions for Future Use

The use of only one preparation lesson was my response to the lack of time in the first session yet also reflected my misunderstanding of

how long it would take to create the proper atmosphere for the "Problem in the City." Students cannot be rushed into expressing themselves freely. They must have time to do the following things before they can adequately and sensitively examine the issues of their lives. A teacher must prepare exercises which a) emphasize cooperation, understanding, and mutual respect; b) help students to get to know each other well; c) work on communication and discussion skills; and d) familiarize them with the dynamics and special demands of group work. The fact that I neglected to do most of the above in the "Values Geography" lesson stands testimony to the difficulty of the task.

Having researched other IPP's which deal with values clarification, I have found that specific activities which deal with the aforementioned objectives have been developed. In their IPP entitled "A Practical Guide for Teaching Cultural Awareness Using the Community as a Resource," Elaine Ford and Steven Cass created a number of activities designed to widen a student's perspective of himself and others by "creating a learning environment where students can learn from each other."[8]

Ford and Cass address the need to develop introspective and inter-personal skills among the students and divide their preparation section into two skill areas: Personal Growth and Group or Social Awareness. Within each skills category there are several subcategories of skills for which the authors have developed lessons. These skills include self-awareness, cultural awareness, and observation/judgment in the Personal Growth area. Under the Group Awareness section are group introduction, generalization/stereotype, discussion skills, communication skills, and interview skills.

This is a very helpful framework because it emphasizes the need

for students and teachers to develop skills before tackling the dis-

cussion of social and political issues. Of particular interest to my

project are the discussion and communication skills activities which

"aim at making the student more aware of the dynamics involved in a

discussion"[9] and "emphasize the need for all students to contribute,

listen, summarize, and stick to the topic at hand."[10] Communication

skills activities are designed to encourage the student to use clear,

precise language and "stresses awareness of language and its usage."[11]

One of the biggest challenges I faced in directing discussion and

placing the initiative for speaking on the student was how to control

and improve upon his ability to listen carefully and respond thought-

fully to what is being said. Like any other skill, these two which are

essential to an interesting, well-paced discussion need practice. I will

not go into detail to describe the lessons Ford and Cass have developed,

but I would not hesitate to use selected ones which I felt could be

adapted to the needs of my class. Their advantage is that they isolate

and give students practice in the exact skills they would need in a

lesson such as "Problem in the City."

"Values Geography" was the only formal preparation for the "Problem

in the City" lesson I used. In the second session, I did not even use

the activity because of my discovery that "The Changing City" was more

effective at meeting the skills and insight criteria. In the future

I would continue to use "The Changing City" in place of "Values Geography"

and would also include other exercises such as those described above

which are designed to enhance an atmosphere of respect and awareness of

cultural differences as a preparation for "Problem in the City."

PART II: THE "PROBLEM IN THE CITY" LESSON

Rationale

The assumption which led me to develop the "Problem in the City" lesson was that in order for students to increase their awareness and understanding of the dimensions of global issues, they first needed to cultivate an awareness of local social and political issues which were most important to them. I reasoned that an activity which asked them to identify and discuss their view of a problem in their city or town would be the most interesting starting point for a further examination of global issues. I hoped to instill the idea that many issues or problems which affect them on the local level have global significance.

If the students are allowed to determine what the problems are, they take the first step towards awareness because they are forced to recognize how the problem affects them personally. They choose to discuss a certain problem because somewhere in their consciousness, based on their experience, it has meaning. The process of recognition is the beginning of awareness. The process of discussing the problem with others is the beginning of clarification.

As I stated in the introduction, the term "global issues" is synonymous with "global problems," and my justification for making problems the focus of the activity stems from my own philosophical orientation. Problems of different magnitude plague people all over the world and confound them to the extent that they feel helpless and ineffectual. "If you're not part of the solution, you're part of the problem" is a slogan which oversimplifies the complex relationship between problems, their causes, and how individuals or groups attempt to solve them and thus effect change. Perhaps a more accurate version of the adage would be, "If you're not aware of the problem, you're part of the problem."

One of the objectives, therefore, of this lesson is to get students to look at their own relationship to a problem and orient them to the idea that there is a personal response to problems. In other words, one can develop a consciousness that there is something one can do to at least take action no matter how overwhelming and complicated the problem may seem.

I hoped the students would develop an understanding that becoming aware that a problem exists is the first step towards taking action. This is one of the most important functions of the "Problem in the City." The next step is to develop a knowledge of the problem and its causes. A subsequent step is to publicly affirm your knowledge and opinion of the problem so that others are influenced, informed and can respond. Initiating a dialogue with someone in class or elsewhere about the problem may be as far as the individual can go in attempting to solve the problem. The importance, however, on the personal level, is as much the action that is taken as it is the result of that action.

Another objective was to promote cross-cultural understanding by helping students to see which problems concern someone from another country and which ones they might have in common. I hoped that the discussion of problems would help them gain a critical perspective about where they lived. Linguistically, the practice they received in writing about the problem and describing it to their classmates would stimulate a further interest in learning the grammatical concepts necessary to communicate their ideas effectively.

In the two sessions at TASIS my procedures were different for this lesson. My idea to expand the lesson to include problems which the

students would identify on the national and world levels met with resistance from students in the first session. For reasons which I will explain, I decided not to try this idea again in the second session.

Session I

Procedure

I began the "Problem in the City" exercise by assigning an essay the night before class. My only instruction was that they write at least one page on a problem in their city or town. The students would need time to get their thoughts down on paper in order to discuss them the next day. My lesson for the next day involved the following four steps:

1. Students find a partner from different country to discuss problem in their city or town.

2. Divide class into two groups. Each person speaks for one minute on his problem. Student timekeeper for each group.

3. With class back together write the following in grid form on the board:

City/Town	Problem	Solution	What Can I Do?

   Ask for volunteers to name their problem and apply it to the grid. Whole class brainstorm solutions.

4. Homework: Choose your own or another problem from the grid and write an essay on what you could do as an individual to solve the problem.

The reasoning behind starting the students in pairs was the same as for the "Values Geography" lesson. If the activity were to meet the criteria for a lesson which provides the opportunity for skills and insight development, I had to plan it so that students had an opportunity to improve their communicative competence. My assumption was that increasing communicative competence rests heavily on the amount of time one spends speaking the second language. Based on observation of my own language acquisition, fluency in a second language is directly proportional to confidence. Confidence comes the more one engages in the practical and successful use of the language, in this case the communication of important information. I wanted the students to feel free to talk about their problems among themselves without the roving eye of the teacher making them self-conscious.

The move to a larger group was to serve a dual purpose. First, the students would be able to restate the problem they had just discussed with their partners. Given a second chance, I hoped the students would express themselves more confidently and therefore improve the communication of their message. By listening to the approach taken by others in describing their problems, a student who may have struggled to express his ideas to his partner could take mental notes, make comparisons, and learn new vocabulary which might help him in his second verbal presentation. I assumed that this was all possible without my help or interference. Second, with two groups of seven students seated in a circle, I wanted to create a more intimate and efficient way of exposing students to each other's ideas than might have been achieved with the whole class together. In order to watch the progress of the two

groups, I moved from group to group and tried to be as unobtrusive as possible.

The time limit of one minute for speaking was intended to prevent certain more advanced students from dominating discussion, thus enabling those students with less confidence or ability to contribute what they most comfortably could. It would also keep interest high by limiting discussion as well as encouraging everyone to pay attention to each student for a predetermined amount of time.

Bringing the class back together and placing the grid on the board was intended to promote further questioning and discussion and to provide an organizing principle for the students' ideas. The aim of the grid was to provide a framework for brainstorming and to prepare students for the follow-up assignment.

Ideally, what I was looking for during the brainstorming was contradiction or disagreement about solutions to stimulate a debate among the students. Stating and defending an opinion, I believed, was one of the best ways for students to practice their communication skills. The brainstorming session was also a chance for students to propose ideas and have them challenged and thus clarified.

The next step was intended to invite ideas as to what might constitute a personal reaction to the problems we had listed on the grid. The essay assignment on "What Can I Do?" was meant to give students more time to reflect on their relationship to the problem and to get more practice in putting their ideas on paper. My plan for the following day was quite vague. I wanted to continue the discussion using the students' essays to talk about individual action, but I neglected to spend the

would ensure that no students heard the same story over again and would therefore maintain student interest.

I noticed also that assigning a student to act as timekeeper was ineffective. The student was too preoccupied with the second-hand on his watch to listen to the person speaking. Delegating such authority to a student has its place, but in this case it was counterproductive to the purpose of the group work. I could have solved the timekeeper problem by signalling to both groups when a minute had expired, with flexibility, and allowing time for questions.

Ostensibly, the time limit prevents interruption and gives students good oral practice but may compromise the natural discourse of a discussion group. A teacher has to judge from the past performance of his class to determine whether or not a time limit is necessary. For the purposes I explained earlier, the time limit worked well to give each student the chance to communicate his ideas for an extended period of time. Establishing the rule that each student must finish speaking before he can be interrupted with a question cut down on the number of questions. However, the third stage of the lesson, where the entire class comes together, allows for a more natural group discourse.

Writing the grid on the board worked well to organize the discussion, although I felt inadequate in exploiting differences of opinion which arose. Because I felt that students should do most if not all of the talking, I often waited for them to take the initiative to challenge someone's opinion about a proposed solution. I felt that I should remain neutral. Unfortunately, students didn't ask the clarifying questions I thought should have been asked. I may have expected too

much from them. Few students or even teachers are trained to ask

critical questions, and I had certainly not prepared my students to do

so. My mistake furthermore was to equate neutrality with silence, and

this was the fundamental reason for feeling inadequate at leading the

discussion. The questions which the teacher asks at this stage are very

important and should not be seen as an intrusion.

Some of the problems which we applied to the grid were societal

ills of great magnitude, and brainstorming solutions to them presented

a formidable intellectual challenge. For example, students spoke of such

problems as air and water pollution in Athens, Red Brigade terrorism in

Milan, and alcoholism and drunken driving in Stockholm. As students

volunteered their problems and solutions, I would paraphrase their

statements and fill in the appropriate columns of the grid on the board.

Although some students did volunteer ideas as to how these problems

might be solved, my attempt to get them to think about the possible con-

sequences of their solutions and to ask for agreement or dissension from

others was generally unsuccessful. To expect students to brainstorm

solutions to these problems at the end of a class and without a lot of

time to think about them was too much. The process itself, however, was

an important beginning. The discussion that occurred in the third stage

of the lesson was perhaps as important as any solution we may have

agreed on as a class.   It may at least have gotten students to think

more carefully about their problems and the idea that there are situations

in need of improvement. In any event, there was a need to spend more

time with the grid so that students could have more time to look at one

or more of the problems raised in detail.

Because of the problems I encountered in guiding the brainstorming of solutions and the lack of time, the "What Can I Do?" column of the grid was not even considered. I ended the class by assigning the question as the essay topic for homework and instructed the students to bring their essays to class the next day. The next day we did not discuss the issue of individual action because I was unprepared and uncertain as to how to organize the discussion. I was worried that my procedure for "Problem in the City" was all wrong. I collected the "What Can I Do?" essays and had the students spend the period rewriting their "Problem in the City" essays based on corrections I had made the night before.

Students completed the "What Can I Do?" essay with varying degrees of success. Many naturally found it difficult to pose solutions on the personal level. The responses of some students, however, were quite satisfying, and I felt that to a certain extent the classroom discussion and the essays had caused them to think seriously about the problem and how they might effect change. For example, one student who wrote about the problem of drug abuse in her city, described how she refrains from any involvement with drugs and how she would try to inform her friends about the danger of drug use and abuse. She also mentioned that she would be willing to do volunteer work to help those who were addicted to dangerous drugs such as heroin. Another wrote that she would use less electricity and take advantage of public transportation to minimize the effects of air and water pollution in Athens. These were the type of responses I hoped to get from all the students, but many apparently needed more time to think about the problems before they could respond to them on a personal level.

Eventually, after giving the students written feedback on the two essays, I asked them to combine them into one complete paper. The feedback dealt mostly with grammatical corrections. I also made comments which were, in effect, counseling responses to the social and political issues raised by the students in their essays.[12] With a few exceptions, I was generally disappointed with the results of the final essays. After reading them, I realized more detailed instruction in writing skills was necessary and that proper guidelines for writing and thinking about the problem would have helped the students.

For instance, my notes on the class suggested that the grid could have been used to organize the final essay. The first part of the essay could include a description of the city or town--its location, population and other features. Second, there could be a description of the problem and its causes. Next could be a list of solutions attempted by the government or other institutions and the resulting effects. Finally would come what the student might do as an individual to deal with the problem. If I had provided the above guidelines, the students might have written more thoughtful, well-organized essays. Moreover, they could have gained deeper insight into the problems and acquired writing skills in a more efficient manner.

My attempt to expand the lesson to identifying problems on the national and world levels met with failure and drew such comments as "We've already done this" and "The problems are the same." The students became quickly bored by the discussion format. I followed the same procedure as before with the exception of the grid, which I dropped when it was obvious that the interest was lost in the second step of the lesson.

At the time, I attributed the failure to conditions beyond my control, such as the heat and its effects on the students' motivation. I suspect now, however, that this lesson followed the "Problem in the City" lesson too closely in time and procedure, and that the repetitiveness of the group work was boring to most of the students. Some students seemed unable to make distinctions between what was a problem in their city and their country. I concluded that it was the format or procedure that was the problem and not necessarily the nature of the challenge for the students, although this assumption eventually changed.

Left with a great number of unresolved questions and doubts about the effectiveness of the lesson, I decided not to try a problem-solving lesson again in the first session. I decided that as a result of the problems I had experienced in the last problem-solving lesson, I would take a different approach when trying it for the first time in the second summer session.

Session II

Instead of using "Values Geography" as a preparation lesson for "Problem in the City" in the second session, I created what I found to be a more successful preparation activity by taking advantage of the picture series "The Changing City." I will describe how I used this in Part III. In the second session I waited more than two weeks to use the "Problem in the City" lesson, taking into consideration the necessity for students to feel comfortable with each other before we could go

ahead with the lesson. We had already done "The Changing City" exercise and had been working on paragraph structure in compositions when I assigned the "Problem in the City" essay topic.

This time when I assigned the topic, I also handed out the sample essay in Appendix I which I had prepared on my hometown. When I wrote about my city, I had several objectives. One was to provide a structure for the students to follow which would help them organize their essays into coherent paragraphs. Another was to get them to write and think about the causes and effects of the problem. Finally, I hoped to intro-duce an element of my life and culture into the activity.

Rationale

The first session had taught me that it was important for the students' essays to include some of the perceived causes of the problem. I tried to write the sample essay so that each paragraph had a definite theme. As we went over the essay in class, I tried to get them to recognize that the first paragraph contained a general description of my city; the second dealt with causes; the third and fourth centered on the problem itself and its consequences; and the last was a concluding paragraph about my reaction to the problem. I recommended that the students follow a similar pattern of developing their essays and ideas with the caveat that it was not necessary for the format to be copied exactly. I was looking for originality within the structure I had given them and felt that by writing background information on the city along with causes and consequences each student would come closer to increasing his awareness and understanding of the problem. Each person would also

have a model for organization which would help in explaining the problem
the next day.

Procedure

In class the next day I decided to experiment with a different kind
of grouping for the discussion. I had the idea that a new way might
focus more of the attention on the speaker and thus promote a better
understanding of his or her problem. As in the first session, we started
with dyads. After this, I asked for volunteers to speak to the entire
class and placed a chair at the front of the classroom. I had decided
on this potentially threatening arrangement on the grounds that the class
had been together long enough to know and trust each other and students
would not be intimidated by speaking in front of the whole group.

In the third step of the lesson, the students were given a copy of
the problem-solving grid we had used in the first session. A copy of
the grid as I used it to take notes is found in Appendix II. The
students were to use the grid to take notes on each student's presenta-
tion. This was a further adaptation of the first session version of
the lesson. I had noted in my journal of the first session that a copy
of the grid for each student would help him keep track of what was going
on during the general discussion. When I had written the grid on the
board in the first session, I had noticed that many students had trouble
following what I had written in the columns.

For example, people would volunteer their problems, others would
suggest solutions, and I would try to paraphrase their statements on the
board for everyone to see. Sometimes I would write words or phrases

that many students didn't know or understand, and they would have trouble copying what I had written in their notebooks. This all tended to slow down the discussion and made me the focus of attention instead of the speaker or the problem.

To remedy this, the grids were printed in advance so that students could individually keep track of each problem discussed in an organized fashion, using their own words at their own pace. Their attention would be focused on the speaker and their own copy of the grid instead of on the teacher and the blackboard. In turn, this would make them listen more carefully.

What Happened

The students, as expected, worked well in their assigned pairs and seemed motivated to discuss the problems. In the second step, they stalled, feeling reluctant to be the first one to present their problem orally in front of the class. I decided to act as a model. I instructed them to take notes using the grid while I was speaking and to wait for questions until I had finished. We would then propose solutions to put in the appropriate column. Despite my feeling that they would have no problem speaking in front of the whole class, their hesitation to volunteer indicated that they were not comfortable with this arrangement and that they at least needed a demonstration to help them feel more secure in how to perform in front of a group.

With the first volunteers, interest was high and some of the students were bombarded with questions. As the center of attention, they could field questions at their own pace and get their message across to

the whole class. At first, this seemed to be an ideal way of exposing students to their classmates' view of a problem and their cultural values. Interest waned, however, after a few people, and brainstorming solutions seemed forced and unnatural. Most students weren't paying much attention to their grids and had stopped contributing to the questioning. In fact, I was doing almost all of the questioning towards the end. We ended the activity for that period when I asked a student from Saudi Arabia if he would care to speak about the problem he had written about. He replied that he hadn't done the assignment because there were no problems in his country. "Everyone is happy," he proclaimed.

Many other students and I found this very unusual and we began to list a number of problems, asking if any of these existed in Saudi Arabia. When asked if there was any crime in his country, Abdullah responded by saying that the crime problem was solved by the punishment of decapitation or in milder cases by cutting off the hand of the criminal. He went on to tell how he had witnessed many public executions, and this caused quite a commotion in the class, especially among the Europeans.

As we resumed the class after a break, I asked Abdullah to continue his story about executions, hoping that it might spark a discussion about capital punishment. His graphic description caused many students to question the value he placed on this particular method of crime prevention, and a heated debate ensued pitting Arabs against most European students in the class. I took the opportunity to arrange the warring factions into debate teams.

Although I reveled in the intensity of the debate, I again felt inadequate as the moderator. By now I had learned that my questions in response to certain statements were important to help students clarify their ideas, but I was still unsure about how and when I should intervene. I also wanted desperately to help those students who seemed to have a very strong opinion but lacked the vocabulary or particular grammatical structure to state it well. I wanted a ready-made system which would provide these students with what they needed without interfering with their thought or slowing down the discussion with corrections. If such a system exists, I did not discover it in either session. However, I believe that the practice my students had in defending their opinions and listening to others did a great deal to improve their communicative competence.

Although I had intended to spend some time discussing the question "What Can I Do?" in class, the debate took up the remainder of the class, so the question was not considered at all. Nevertheless, I assigned the topic for homework that night. Because of the lack of preparation in class, the essays which the students passed in the next day were not very clearly written and lacked conviction. I attribute this to the poor organization of the class time. Again, it was too soon to ask students to propose personal solutions when we hadn't even looked at the problems, their causes and effects in detail.

The activity in Session II was generally successful on two levels. In the area of linguistic competence, I saw a great improvement in most students' writing of the essay. The model essay seemed to have helped them write clearer and more organized paragraphs. Unfortunately,

I was not able to assess how this helped them organize their thoughts for their verbal presentations in the dyads. In the area of cross-cultural awareness, the debate about capital punishment fomented by Abdullah's presentation was interesting and informative for most and caused many at least to rethink and clarify their ideas on this issue.

The new way of structuring the discussion with each student speaking in front of the class had several drawbacks. First, although each pre-sentation was short, there were too many of them. In this presentation format, students can only be expected to listen to a few before losing interest. No matter how important the problem is to the student present-ing it to the whole class, others may not attach the same importance, especially when forced to listen.

Second, the increased physical distance between the student speaking about his problem and his classmates may focus more attention on him but also takes away from the advantage of intimacy in a smaller group. Sitting in front of the class alone, many students simply read directly from their papers. I had put them in a position which required them to use their essays as a security blanket. This made their problems less interesting because there was little personal contact between the speaker and the listener. The speaker's attention was concentrated on what was written and was delivered either in a monotone or too quickly for easy comprehension by the whole class.

While this set-up may have been good practice for speaking in front of a group, it did little to increase communicative competence as I had originally defined it. It forced most students into communicating something important to them in a highly unnatural context. The ability

to speak at length about something real and important in an organized
fashion was the element of communicative competence most important for
this activity. This was why I had structured the small groups in the
first session the way I did. The new arrangement compromised any
feeling of security the students may have felt in their dyads, and the
result was that the problems themselves were trivialized by the stilted
manner of discussing them. The arrangement seemed to take a potentially
fascinating subject and make it dull.

It is imperative for the teacher to find the context which is as
natural as possible, given the constraints of the classroom, for students
to communicate what is important to them. The context has a strong
influence on how well they come to communicate their ideas in the second
language in comparison to their native tongue.

Analysis

Comparing the two sessions, I feel my analysis should consider the
relative success of the two according to the following criteria:

1. How effective was the "Problem in the City" lesson at
   influencing the social and political awareness and
   attitudes of the students?

2. How effective was the lesson at improving linguistic
   and communicative competence?

3. To what extent did the procedure and my class management
   either facilitate or detract from the above?

Dealing with the second question first, the arrangement of small and
large groups in the lesson is designed to increase communicative

competence by simply giving the students an opportunity to speak at length on a subject of importance to them. The emphasis of the lesson is communication of ideas. I felt that the more time I could give the students to practice communicating their ideas without my interference, the more confidence they would develop as speakers and therefore the more proficient they would be in their oral expression in general. With this as a goal, my management of the class in the first session was more successful than in the second.

In the first session, students had much more time to talk to each other in a more natural and intimate setting. The second session, by contrast, put the students on the defensive, stiltifying their speech and trivializing the content of their ideas. My conclusion is that small group discussions create a better atmosphere for sharing ideas and ensuring maximum participation, understanding, and communication. They also allow for more pure speaking time, which can help students to determine the linguistic areas they need to work on.

In the area of linguistic competence, I feel I accomplished very little. Because I feel that the teacher should not correct the students when they are explaining their problems, I never discovered a way to help them improve how they communicated their ideas verbally. With the exception of helping a student with a missing word or phrase and encouraging peer contributions, the only way I addressed the grammatical needs of the students was to correct their essays and ask them to rewrite them. The "Problem in the City" lesson creates the need within students to improve their speaking and writing skills. Can students learn enough from revising their written description of the problem to apply that

knowledge to improve their oral expression? My feeling is that in part,

they can, but speaking competence is still not dealt with directly after

the need has been created.

One way of addressing this problem might be to do some preliminary

work on certain grammatical structures and vocabulary which students

would most likely use in describing their problems. For example, the

students could look at a sample problem the day before and be asked to

describe aspects of it which required the use of common expressions. The

teacher could provide information and make corrections accordingly.

With regard to the effectiveness of "Problem in the City" in stimu-

lating social and political awareness, my procedure in the second session

seemed to get closer to refining the lesson according to this goal. I

realized that awareness is heightened not only by identifying the problem

but by understanding it. In order to understand the problem, one must

analyze it properly. Analysis entails looking at the causes and effects

of the problem. This important element of analysis was missing from the

first session.

One of the objectives of the sample essay on my hometown of Brockton

was to encourage students to think about causes and effects when writing

their essays and thinking about the problem. However, a reorganization

of the problem-solving grid could have made a stronger impact on students'

awareness of their attitudes and relationship to the problem.

In the area of class management, the division of groups in Session I

was more successful on several levels. First, the movement from dyads to

a larger group in the first session was better for the communicative

nature of the lesson. There was no pressure on students to perform as

there was in the second session. Second, Session I was more successful
in terms of exposing as many people as possible to each other's prob-
lems and concerns. More people were able to contribute to the discussion.
Third, Session I left more time for the problem-solving aspect of the
lesson. Although the problem-solving grid as I used it needed much
improvement, the organization of the first session was more conducive to
brainstorming solutions. All in all, I would retain the group structure
I used in the first session with certain modifications and change the
problem-solving grid to accommodate the ideas I will explain in the next
section.

Suggestions for Future Use of "Problem in the City"

The problem-solving grid had originally served the purpose of
organizing discussion and preparing students to think about personal
action in response to the problem. The very structure of the grid and
my attempt to use it at the end of the lesson reveal some very faulty
assumptions about the process of problem solving. One assumption is
that after listening to a non-native speaker describe his problem, other
students will be able to spontaneously think of viable solutions to
these problems. Another faulty assumption is that with these half-formed
ideas, students will be able to devise a personal strategy which will
help "solve" the problem. This is tantamount to asking a newborn baby
to walk in a few weeks. I was fortunate enough to have students who
were intelligent and aware enough to propose solutions, but the arrange-
ment of the lesson in both sessions fell short of the goal of heightening
awareness of oneself and others through the discussion of problems.

Students cannot and should not be asked to brainstorm solutions to different problems as we had done in class. This situation puts pressure on the students to come up with solutions to problems they may not fully understand and may create a feeling of helplessness at the overwhelming task of solving major problems. This is the antithesis of the attitudes this problem-solving activity attempted to develop. My goal of heightening awareness of the individual's social or political role was diminished by the lack of attention we paid to the analysis stage and by the fact that I asked them to think about solutions to more than one problem at a time. Too many problems to consider only cause confusion. Students need time to reflect on a problem so they can clarify their conception of it.

It is now obvious that the students would probably have benefited more by choosing one problem to explore and attempting to solve it as a class. This would have given them a chance to share the activity with each other and to work towards a common goal. To achieve this, the "Problem in the City" lesson would be adapted as follows:

Before Class

Assignment: Write an essay about a problem in your city or town. The essay should include: a) a description of your city--size, population, location, attractions, etc., b) a description of the problem and its consequences, c) a description of what you think causes the problem, d) a concluding paragraph on how this problem affects you personally.

Optional: Pass out sample essay.

In Class

1. Have S find a partner or assign a partner to discuss the problems they have written about. Assign each S either the number 1 or 2. When they move to the larger group this will eliminate redundancy.

   Optional: Pass out a list of discussion questions.

2. Form a group of 1's and another group of 2's and have S restate, without the use of their papers, within a flexible one-minute time limit. Allow time for questions and discussion within this group. T moves from group to group to help and listen in.

3. Bring class back together and S list problems on the board according to grid: Name of S   City/Town   Problem

   If time is limited, T can prepare grid while S are discussing in dyads by writing all the names and cities if already known. S also have a copy of the grid.

4. Ask S which of these problems is the most serious and important. Their answer could be based on the following criteria:

   a) Does it affect everyone in the class strongly?

   b) Is it a situation in need of improvement?

   c) Is it a problem you can do something about?

   Allow time for discussion and work towards a consensus.

5. The issue which S agree on as the most important and serious will be the one which they explore, clarify, discuss, research, and debate in other classes.

6. After several classes devoted to analyzing all sides of the problem or issue, students will then list possible solutions, look at their

consequences and finally, write an essay answering the question "What Can I Do?"

If the problem which the class decides to discuss is one which is difficult to research formally, the teacher could use any number of values clarification exercises which use the students and the teacher as resources, help clarify opinions, and help them see the multiplicity of perspectives on a given issue. A useful sequence of these activities which was applied to the problem of drug abuse (a problem commonly cited in my classes) can be found in "Values Clarification in the Language Classroom"[13] (IPP, 1974).

Another way of helping students to analyze and clarify their ideas in a highly communicative way would be the use of formal debates. The teacher could take any question which arose out of the classroom dis-cussion and pose it to the students as a debate topic. The students could decide which side of the issue they favor and the teacher could form debate teams or experiment with different combinations. I have found that the security of a team helps many shy students to speak up. The students could be asked to comment on how the debate affected or changed their ideas. One debate topic which would prepare students for the final stage of taking a personal stand would be to pose the ques-tion, "Can an individual do anything about this problem?"

An additional way of analyzing a specific problem would be to take a field trip and provide guideline questions for observation. For example, if the problem were air pollution, the students could observe or report on its affects on the city or town nearest to where they are studying. They could also interview other students to get their

viewpoints on the problem. All this would happen before the class could posit solutions, and their proposals would be based on a greater understanding of the issue and their own perspectives.

All of the above suggestions are designed to create a series of lessons which are communicative in every sense. The issues are real and are determined by the students. The use of language is real, part of a larger context, and is worth talking about, because the students are ultimately invested in and responsible for it. As far as awareness and social consciousness are concerned, the students are encouraged to understand an issue by looking at it deeply, not to rely on prejudices as the basis for their opinions. They are also encouraged to cooperate with those from another country with whom they may have previously felt they had little in common.

Ideally, the process of concentrating on one student-determined issue demonstrates a commonality of interest among different cultures and emphasizes the importance of dialogue and negotiation in resolving problems which affect us on a global level.

PART III: "THE CHANGING CITY"

In this part I will describe my use of "The Changing City" by Jorg Müller. "The Changing City" is a series of eight detailed color drawings which portray a changing scene in an urban neighborhood. "One sees the same section of a city, pictured at intervals of approximately three years from 1953 to 1976, as--through neglect and lack of planning-- it slowly loses its character and purpose."[14] I found the materials to be of enormous use in stimulating the discussion of important social and political issues, thereby heightening awareness as well as providing practice with grammatical structures to improve linguistic and communicative competence.

Rationale

I had originally thought of "The Changing City" only as an interesting way to demonstrate the application of the passive voice. I devised a lesson plan which would take advantage of the evocative nature of the pictures as a means towards teaching the construction of the passive voice inductively.

Procedure

In the preliminary steps of the lesson I laid out two pictures of the series in front of the whole class. I used the first two, which show change in the neighborhood between 1953 and 1956. I then asked the students what changes they saw and wrote their comments on the board. Invariably, someone produced a sentence which might be well suited for conversion into the passive voice.

A typical student's response might be, "They have made a new house," or, "There are new lines on the road." After writing these responses on the board, I chose one or two sentences which best lent themselves to expression in the passive voice and tried to get students to make the change. For instance, I might ask how the sentence would change if we made "house" the subject of the sentence "They have built a new house." After more questioning and explanation of the passive construction, the new sentence might be, "A new house has been built." I then asked for words which could substitute for the subject noun and the verb. This produced a number of new sentences which were more accurate for the pictures we were observing. For example, "An enormous new building (store) has been (was) built (constructed) here (in place of the restaurant, café, etc.)." After this demonstration, we practiced with other sentences the students produced until I felt the majority understood the passive with these examples. The lesson then proceeded as follows:

1. Divide students into groups of three or four.

2. Give each group two consecutive picture sets, e.g., Group 1 has picture sets #1 and #2 (1953 and 1956).

3. Have students work together to note as many changes as possible and write a list of sentences which convey these changes in the passive voice.

4. At the end of a specified time, students move from group to group to compare sentences and along with teacher make grammatical corrections. This could also be a time for vocabulary work or pronunciation.

What Happened: Session I

    As a grammar lesson, the above procedure worked fairly well. The strong visual element of the pictures created interest in the task and made the passive voice more approachable and less abstract. Requiring the students to use the passive voice exclusively, however, resulted in some unusually stilted sentences. Some were grammatically correct but sounded strange to the ear of a native speaker.

    I wasn't well prepared to explain why a native speaker would not phrase the sentence the way the students phrased it. This caused me to question the applicability of the passive voice in spoken English. "Raw frequency data...indicate that the English passive is by far most frequent in scientific writing and...least frequent in conversation."[15] Nevertheless, there are clearly instances in which the passive more concisely expresses a situation which has changed, as was evident from some of the sentences students produced in the small groups. For example, "The subway is being constructed," as opposed to, "Someone (They) is (are) building the subway." For the purpose which I was about to use the pictures--as the basis for a discussion about the value of change in the city--it seems that work on comparatives would have been more useful to the students, mainly because of their greater applicability in conversation and debate.

    With regard to the group dynamic, students seemed to benefit from the procedure. The arrangement encouraged peer correction and a high level of interaction and communication. Moreover, students could participate within each group as much as their linguistic abilities allowed them and still feel involved in the activity. Some students were distracted and uninterested when moved from group to group to look

at each other's sentences. I think that in the future I might not
include this as a step in the lesson.

It was during the first few steps of the activity that the idea of
using the pictures for a discussion occurred to me. After we had
finished comparing and correcting sentences as a class, I spread the
eight pictures in sequential order on the floor and huddled the class
around them. I gave them a minute or two to look them over and make
comments, and then asked, "Why do you think the artist painted these
pictures?" The obvious answer was, "To show change." "How do you think
he felt about the change?" I replied. To this question there was sparse
response. After stumbling with a few other questions which I thought
would create a difference of opinion, I finally asked one which set them
all off: "In which city would you prefer to live, the old one in the
first picture or the modern one in the last picture?"

This stimulated precisely the type of value-laden discussion that I
was looking for. Some of the more vociferous students began arguing
about the differences in the two cities. Soon, everyone was talking at
once and I had trouble keeping them from interrupting each other. I
tried to keep track of certain themes which came up and to channel the
discussion accordingly. Some of the issues which were raised included
the value of progress, which city environment offered better living
conditions, and materialism. The conflict in values was so striking and
the discussion so heated that the application as a values clarification
exercise became immediately apparent. The class ended with all of the
issues left unresolved and unexplored, although the dialogue was very
exciting. Since I had originally not thought about "The Changing City"

in terms of being an impetus for the discussion of social and political issues, I had prepared no follow-up activity.

At this point I began to think that "The Changing City" used in this way had great potential as a companion activity for the "Problem in the City" lesson. Since it was eminently more successful than "Values Geography" as a preparatory exercise, I decided to substitute it in the second session. I also vowed to organize the discussion part of the lesson more efficiently to try to prevent certain students from dominating the discussion.

What Happened: Session II

Into the second week of Session II, I introduced "The Changing City" following the same basic procedure as I had in Session I, with a few minor changes. Instead of conducting the grammar work and the discussion in the same lesson, I divided them into two periods to allow more time for the latter. In addition, when the students were generating sentences, I told them to concentrate on the passive construction but allowed other sentences (such as those with comparisons) as long as they were grammatically correct.

In the second period I laid out all the pictures as I had in the first session and asked some of the same beginning questions. They met with a similarly slow response, but I wanted to wait before springing the big question on them. I think this time was important for them to peruse all the pictures and begin to think in terms of the emotional impact of "The Changing City." The question "Where would you prefer to live?" at first met with minimal response, but soon a full-fledged

argument was raging. It became so unruly that I decided to make two debate teams. The teams were surprisingly evenly divided between those who favored the city of 1953 and those who found the modern city more appealing. I had learned from the first session that it was necessary to establish rules for debate in order to ensure maximum participation. Students had to raise their hands and be acknowledged before they could contribute.

The debate went so well that I was astonished at how little I had to do. Although there was a preponderance of German and Arabic speakers in the class, I barely heard a word of these two languages except when a student needed a word or phrase to complete a sentence and asked a friend for help. The pictures provided the two teams with a constant reference point to bring up new issues and to creatively counter accusations from the other team. The students seemed to revel in the opportunity to express their opinions jokingly or seriously, and participation was greatly increased in comparison to the first session.

Again, I tried to keep track of the central issues and this time wrote them on the board in order to focus the debate. The students talked about the following: unemployment in the new city because machines would replace people; air pollution in the new city with the increase of traffic; lack of comfort, entertainment, and advanced medical care to prevent diseases and dying in the old city; and increased crime in the new city. As time began to run out, I told each team to prepare a final oral statement which expressed their opinion of the most important reasons for living in the new or old city. The students had trouble working together and never completed this task as the period

ended. I could have helped them organize themselves better by empha-
sizing that they concentrate their final statements on the issues I had
written on the board. Under the pressure of time, however, I neglected
to think about this.

As a follow-up activity, I asked the students to write a story from
the perspective of a grandmother or grandfather who lived his or her whole
life in the neighborhood of "The Changing City" and was describing this
to a grandson or granddaughter. I encouraged them to use as much of the
vocabulary and passive voice as they wanted in their stories. I hoped
that this assignment would cause them to gain a new perspective both on
the values they held and the form of writing about them. Ideally they
would have to consider how they valued change and write about it in a
less prescriptive manner than in a formal essay.

The essays were somewhat disappointing in that many students didn't
understand the idea of the assignment and were unclear about what to
write. I hadn't left enough time at the end of the debate to properly
explain the assignment. I suspect also that it may have been culturally
inappropriate to expect students from less-Westernized countries to keep
the image of "The Changing City" pictures in mind when they wrote their
stories. The series depicts change in a setting to which most Westerners
can relate but may not represent the same view of city life to those from
non-Western cultural backgrounds. On the whole, however, I think the
topic is valuable as a creative way to combine values clarification with
grammar practice.

Analysis

My goal to develop an activity which questions values, is highly
communicative and student-invested, and addresses the linguistic needs
of the class seemed to be addressed perfectly in using "The Changing
City" as I did. The following is a summary of the reasons why the lesson
worked to satisfy my intentions:

1. The strong visual impact of "The Changing City" pictures
   provides a focus for discussion, making the issues more
   lifelike and close-at-hand.

2. Students had time to examine the pictures separately and
   in detail. The pictures combine practice in a specific
   grammar point (passive or comparatives) with discussion
   of important environmental issues.

3. Students can either learn new grammar, such as comparatives,
   and vocabulary from the pictures, or reinforce what they
   already know. In the debate they have an immediate oppor-
   tunity to apply what they have learned in a communicative
   context.

4. The topic itself--transition in an urban setting--is one
   which most students can relate to and is therefore very
   engaging.

5. The question "Where would you prefer to live?" forces an
   examination of values and is bound to create a situation
   ripe for disagreement. I believe that this disagreement
   is important for the development of awareness and critical
   thinking among the students and makes for the most
   interesting use of class time.

6. The topic is stimulating enough to make class management relatively simple for the teacher. It is rare in a language classroom that the teacher has to think about keeping the discussion from getting out of hand.

7. The pictures place a natural limit on the language used in the debate. For the most part, students have to rely on the pictures for the content of what they communicate.

Adaptations and Suggestions for Future Use

"The Changing City" seems to be the ideal set of materials to serve as a catalyst to the type of thinking which is required of students in the "Problem in the City" lesson. Another advantage is that it can be used with virtually any class level. Since it was so much more effective than "Values Geography" and relates more directly to the "Problem in the City," I would continue to use it as a warm-up or preparation activity. There are a number of ways to expand the lesson which allow for vocabulary or grammar practice while challenging students to question and clarify their values:

1. For example, one of the pictures depicts a 1972 scene in the imaginary city in which banner-toting street demonstrators protesting the construction of an elevated highway through the city are confronted by riot police armed with billy clubs and water canons. Meanwhile, the construction of the highway goes on amidst traffic jams caused by the demonstration. There are several questions

which the teacher could pose as debate topics:

    a) If you lived in this city, would you support

       the police or the demonstrators? (<u>if</u> clauses)

    b) Do the citizens of a city have the right to

       stop traffic or construction if they think that

       it will do them harm?

    c) Is this type of action an effective way to

       influence people who make decisions?

    d) Do the police have the right to use violence

       against the demonstrators if they are obstructing

       traffic or the progress of construction?

2. At the end of a debate, a teacher could give each debate team a large banner-size piece of paper or many small placard-size pieces and ask them to prepare demonstration slogans which reflect their positions on the issue. They might even be encouraged to chant their slogans as a group. The teacher could help each team with vocabulary and grammatical correctness of the slogans before the teams make their banners.

3. Students could participate in a role playing exercise, as a variation of the Cocktail Party Game in <u>Index Card Games for ESL</u>.[16] The teacher could set the scene as a City Hall meeting between the citizen's group which opposes development and the City Council and business community who are trying to make changes they feel will help the city. Each student would receive a card with a description of a certain

character from "The Changing City" pictures, e.g., a café/
restaurant owner, a farmer who brings vegetables to sell
in the city streets, a construction worker, etc. Depend-
ing on the level of the class and the grammatical work
which needs practice, the teacher could tailor the cards
accordingly. For example, the cards might only include
information about the person and the students could take
extra time to write in their own notes about their charac-
ter's opinion of the city development.

4. The teacher could explore a vision of the future with the
   students to practice future models, etc. What are the
   consequences of the changes occurring in this city?
   What will the city look like 25 years from now? What
   will your city or town look like? Will you have any say
   about the quality of life in that city?

5. The students could choose one issue generated by the debate
   to explore in detail.

The number of options for expansion of "The Changing City" seems
endless and testifies to the flexibility of the material as a means
towards improving linguistic and communicative competence while dealing
with important issues. The central question which it addresses--what
are the advantages and disadvantages of change--could constitute an
entire curriculum. On the other hand, the material is flexible enough
to be as limited as an individual teacher desires.

CONCLUSION

At this stage in my thinking about the social and political respon-

sibility of the ESL teacher, I feel that what I have learned in my

second internship constitutes a quantum leap in my understanding of what

this responsibility entails on the classroom level. Although my original

set of assumptions remains more or less intact, they have become more

detailed due to the fact that my ideas of how to implement those assump-

tions have obviously changed significantly. One of the most patent

examples of this change is what I learned about my role as the leader of

a discussion. The most prevalent characteristic which the three activi-

ties I have written about share is that they all include a discussion of

what are essentially student-determined issues.

When the students are given the initiative to choose which issues

to discuss, as they do especially with the "Problem in the City" lesson,

the results of the discussion are often unpredictable unless the teacher

has a clear idea of where and how the students' ideas are to be channeled.

As evidenced by my problems with the "Values Geography" lesson, "to have

a discussion" does not in itself constitute a lesson, and no configura-

tions of small or large groups can disguise an ambiguous objective. My

original objective-less organization of the discussion of social and

political issues was tantamount to saying, "Bring in your ideas about the

issues and we'll talk about them."

There are a number of specific responsibilities I learned which

determine the teacher's role as a discussion leader. In addition to the

responsibilities of a teacher to provide skills and insight, there are

more specific responsibilities which became evident to me after planning

lessons with this objective in mind. In order to implement my assumptions

and make these lessons work for the students, I found I had to do the following:

1. Organize discussion so that everyone who wants to speak can be heard. For example, establish rules/guidelines for discussion.

2. During discussion, refrain from unsolicited correction of students but keep track of grammatical areas which need work.

3. Ask leading questions and provide information when it is needed to clarify a point or keep discussion on track.

4. Challenge students to explain and clarify their opinions and create an atmosphere in which students do this in a positive way.

5. Help students to look at the issue from a personal view-point. For example, how does this affect you? What can you do about it?

The problem-solving grid I used in Step 3 of the original "Problem in the City" lesson was a crude and untested effort to give discussion an organizing principle yet was also the nucleus of a clear objective. This objective is summarized above in the last aspect of the teacher's role. As ESL teachers and educators, we can raise awareness and help students develop objective attitudes about social and political issues if we bring these issues down to a personal level. Only then can students begin to see these issues as situations in need of improvement. Only then will they accept the idea that improvement of the situation involves not only personal understanding but personal action.

> The starting point for organizing the program
> content of educational or political action must
> be the present, existential, concrete situation
> reflecting the aspirations of the people.... We
> must pose this existential, concrete, present
> problem as a problem which challenges them and
> requires a response--not just at the intellectual
> level but at the level of action.[17]

With "Problem in the City" I may have come close to affecting students' consciousness about personal action in regard to social and political problems, but my biggest mistake was to rush them into thinking about issues in these terms. Although I understood before the internship that I would need preliminary exercises to develop self-awareness before developing the consciousness of personal action, I learned there is much more involved in the process than I had originally thought.

At the end, I also realized that the issues which we dealt with were primarily local issues, and the only way the students may have developed an understanding of the global significance of these issues was that they heard about problems which affected people in other countries. Unfortunately, I think that the three lessons in their original form did little more than expose students to the global significance of social and political issues and the idea of personal action. Given the fact that I was experimenting with procedure and that time was limited, to provide exposure to these ideas was perhaps all that I could do. On the other hand, if I had thought of a way to evaluate my students' understanding of the issues we discussed, I may have been able to do more.

Although, as I stated in the Introduction, we have an obligation to influence our students' use of the language and culture we teach, the question remains how much we can influence them and how we know that we have influenced them. In other words, how much can I increase awareness of the global significance of social and political issues and the need for a personal response, and how well can I evaluate this change in awareness?

As it happened, I made only one attempt to evaluate my students' beliefs about certain issues discussed in a debate at the end of Session II. Among the topics we debated were such issues as abortion, nuclear weapons, and euthanasia. I handed out a self-evaluation sheet[18] (see Appendix III) the night before our last class and asked the students to fill it out and bring it in the next day for discussion.

Because of a hectic last day, a schedule change, and the fact that few students completed the self-evaluation, the discussion never happened. Had I planned more carefully, the self-evaluation could have at least given me some indication of how the debates had affected the students' original opinions on the issues. Moreover, I could have used a similar format to evaluate my students' progress in "Values Geography," "The Changing City" and "Problem in the City." At the very least, with each lesson I could have had students respond to the following question: Have your ideas changed as a result of this lesson? If not, why? If so, how and why?

With the three activities I used in my second internship, I feel that my students' progress in gaining both skills and insight was fairly limited. Primarily, I learned some of the functions of my role as a

facilitator in the process of providing skills and insight. I also learned that there is more to developing communicative skills in the students than simply providing a forum for them to express their ideas. Preliminary and follow-up instruction in the grammar and vocabulary students need to carry on an interesting dialogue is essential to any of the activities I have adapted and developed in this paper. Finally, I understand that providing insight into social and political issues involves more than "Values Geography," "Problem in the City," the "The Changing City" in their original form could hope to accomplish.

I feel confident, however, that the lessons I have proposed for future use will do more than simply expose students to the issues. In fact, it is my hope that the reader will be able to use these suggested activities individually or as a sequence to help students develop an awareness of their own cultural values and those of their classmates, to improve communicative competence, and to develop a consciousness to "think globally and act locally."

NOTES

[1] Ann Frentzen and Ann Brooks, "ESL in a World Community," Cross-currents, Autumn 1976.

[2] Paolo Freire is a Brazilian educator, social activist, and author whose pioneering work with illiterates has empowered thousands of Brazilian peasants and others to deal critically with a socially and politically oppressive society.

[3] Frentzen and Brooks, p. 69.

[4] Frentzen and Brooks, p. 69.

[5] A second internship is an option for students of the Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) Program at the School for International Training (SIT) in Brattleboro, Vermont. It is a second opportunity to use professional or volunteer teaching experience to explore a certain pedagogical issue which may be used as the basis for a thesis.

[6] TASIS is an acronym for The American School in Switzerland, which operates several schools in Europe. The English and Swiss branches of TASIS offer summer English language programs for international students.

[7] IPP stands for Independent Professional Project. This master's thesis is the final requirement of the academic year for students of the MAT Program at SIT.

[8] Elaine Ford and Steven Cass, "A Practical Guide to Teaching Cultural Awareness Using the Community as a Resource," IPP 1980, School for International Training.

[9] Ford and Cass, p. 12.

[10] Ford and Cass, p. 16

[11] Ford and Cass, p. 16

[12] By _counseling response_ I mean that my comments responded to the _content_ of students' essays about the problems they had described rather than the _form_.

[13] John Croes et al., "Values Clarification in the Language Classroom," IPP 1974, SIT.

[14] From the Preface, _The Changing City_, by Jorg Müller (New York: Atheneum Publishers, 1976).

[15] Marianne Celce-Murcia and Diane Larsen-Freeman, _The Grammar Book_ (Rowley, Massachusetts: Newbury House Publishers, Inc., 1983), p. 228.

[16] _Index Card Games for ESL_, ed. Raymond Clark (Brattleboro, Vermont: The Experiment Press/Pro Lingua Associates, 1982).

[17] Paolo Freire, _Pedagogy of the Oppressed_ (New York: Continuum Publishing Corp., 1982), p. 85.

[18] Adapted from _Values Clarification: A Handbook of Practical Strategies for Teachers and Students_, by Sidney Simon et al. (New York: Hart Publishing Co., 1972), p. 120.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Celce-Murcia, Marianne and Diane Larsen-Freeman. _The Grammar Book_. Rowley, Massachusetts: Newbury House Publishers, Inc., 1983.

Clark, Raymond, ed. _Index Card Games for ESL_. Brattleboro, Vermont: The Experiment Press/Pro Lingua Associates, 1982.

Croes, John et al. "Values Clarification in the Language Classroom." IPP, School for International Training, Brattleboro, Vermont, 1974.

Ford, Elaine and Steven Cass. "A Practical Guide to Teaching Cultural Awareness Using the Community as a Resource." IPP, School for International Training, Brattleboro, Vermont, 1980.

Freire, Paolo. _Pedagogy of the Oppressed_. New York: Continuum Publishing Corp., 1982.

Frentzen, Ann and Ann Brooks. "ESL in a World Community," _Cross-currents_, Autumn 1976.

Koberg, Don and Jim Bagnall. _Universal Traveler: A Soft-Systems Guide to Creativity, Problem Solving and the Process of Reaching Goals_. Los Altos, California: Wm. Kaufmann, Inc., 1974.

Müller, Jorg. _The Changing City_. New York: Atheneum Publishers, 1976.

Simon, Sidney et al. _Values Clarification: A Handbook of Practical Strategies for Teachers and Students_. New York: Hart Publishing Co., 1972.

APPENDIX I: Sample "Problem in the City" Essay

My hometown is Brockton, Massachusetts. It is located about 20km south of Boston. At one time, the city was famous for its shoe production which was greater than any other manufacturing center in the world. Although there are still many factories, the city has always been a nice place to live.

When I was young there were many places to swim, to explore the woods, or to play in fields or farms on the outskirts of the city. As the population in the city increased, however, most of these places were eliminated. Houses were built on the fields, shopping malls were built next to the parks, and the woods were cut down to make way for more housing developments.

The biggest problem, therefore, is badly planned development. By allowing construction companies to develop former recreational areas, the city government has cheapened the quality of life in the city. The shopping malls and housing developments caused pollution of the ponds and rivers, and the swimming areas were forced to close. Although new swimming pools were eventually built, they are very crowded and not as appealing as swimming in a pond.

Another problem created by development has been increased traffic in the city. With more houses, there are more people and with more people there are more cars. The roads were not built to handle the amount of traffic which all this new development created. As a result, it takes twice as long to drive across the city, and the taxes have been raised to pay for road repairs and expansion.

Whenever I return to Brockton to visit my family and friends, I am saddened by the declining quality of life which seems worse with each visit. I feel sorry for the children of the city because they will never know how enjoyable life once was in Brockton.

APPENDIX II: Problem-Solving Grid

Problems in the city

City/Town	Problem	Solution	What can I do?
Erdenu. Mas	unplanned development		
Dasmascus	Bardless police-men fights		
Kuweit	Carcless car drivers. reckless drives	police cars faster	
Essen	south-rich north-poor		
Pittsburgh	policemen are prejudiced	proof	
Meerbusch	industry/noise pollution heat pollution		

APPENDIX III: Self-Evaluation Sheet - Session II

72

Why Do You Believe What You Believe?

Purpose: Sometimes we make decisions or have beliefs because we have
thought carefully about what we believe and why. Other
times our values are not so clear. In the grid below answer
YES or NO for the seven questions for each issue we discussed
in the debates in class.

Issue	Pro	Con	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

1. Are you proud of your position?

2. Have you publicly affirmed your position?

3. Have you chosen your position from alternatives?

4. Have you chosen your position after thoughtful consideration of
    pros and cons, advantages and disadvantages?

5. Have you chosen your position freely?

6. Have you acted on or done anything about your beliefs?

7. Have you acted with repetition or consistency about your beliefs?