Verification of student learning in the foreign language classroom

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Verification of Student Learning in the
Foreign Language Classroom

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Learning verification techniques (L V T's) integral to the teaching-learning process promote a more accurate and efficient presentation of language in the foreign language classroom. Current theories about what constitutes and how we acquire language reveal the need for a different, communicative approach to language teaching. A communicative syllabus attempts to reflect what actually happens when we use language to communicate and, although it contains grammar structure, it emphasizes the place occupied by notions, functions and other non-structural elements of language. The recognition of the semantic nature of language, in a pedagogical sense, helps to determine those techniques and strategies we employ in a communicative classroom. L V T's are illustrated within a context where meaning is central. They are designed to highlight important points in a presentation, to define situational and conceptual elements, to verify that students have understood all elements of the presentation completely, and to reinforce what has already been presented. A foreign language teacher can improve both teaching and learning in the classroom through the use of L V T's.

The development of these new techniques is divided into eight parts. The problem is stated and a general overview of the thesis is given in the first chapter. The first part of chapter two explores the concept of language from a sociolinguistic viewpoint and introduces pertinent theories of language acquisition. A communicative syllabus is defined and communicative techniques and strategies are outlined, with French and English examples, in the second part. Chapter three looks at the usual form and goals of classroom assessment and contrasts them with the potential utilizations for L V T's. The utility of L V T's for both teacher and student is stated in chapter four. The fifth chapter is devoted to what we verify and to basic guidelines for the use and construction of L V T's. Criteria for specific learning checks of context, concept and form are indicated in chapter six, along with French and English examples. Chapter seven shows how L V T's are used in both inductive and deductive lessons. The skill modes through which L V T's are conveyed to students and responded to by them are linked to the communicative syllabus, as is seen in chapter eight. A practical basis for the implementation of L V T's is presented in chart form.
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INTRODUCTION

VERIFYING LEARNING AS WE TEACH

Purpose

Assessment of student progress is a necessary part of the teaching procedure in a foreign language (FL) classroom. Assessment most often takes the form of quizzes or tests in written or oral form. These tests usually assess oral and written performance as well as retention of items taught. This usually happens at the end of the teaching process. Consequently, tests and quizzes are of a "post-facto" nature, evaluating what we "have taught." Although post-facto evaluation plays a valuable role in FL teaching, it is important to have at one's disposal techniques which allow us to verify that students are learning during the learning process: i.e., what we "are teaching." This is the central theme developed here. It is asserted that learning verification techniques (LVT's) integral to the teaching/learning process allow for a more accurate and efficient classroom presentation and a source of contrôle well into learning activities. As with post-facto quizzes and tests, LVT's can have a diagnostic value, but can also be used to clarify, enhance and reinforce. They allow clear, immediate feedback at all times with the implied benefits that incurs.
Overview

Showing the need for and the utility of integrated learning verification techniques within an actual teaching context is of primary importance. Since these techniques are used to verify not only grammar but, also, concepts (meaning) and other non-structural elements of language, they are linked as much to the communicative syllabus (to which they owe their origins) as to a structural one. For purposes of clarity and to illustrate the pedagogical context, after closing this section with a definition of some important terms, the second chapter highlights teaching/learning objectives for the SL classroom in light of possible teaching syllabuses, especially the structural, semantic and communicative syllabuses. Learner "needs" are explored in the formulation of a workable syllabus and in the determination of objectives. Then the needs of an "average" class are discussed. These factors help provide the rationale for the teaching model. The teaching methods and techniques are examined with an overall "communicative" goal in mind.

Having established the framework for the thesis, a constructive look is given to classroom testing and learning verification techniques in the third chapter. General principles of what constitutes an LVT, the reasons and time for using one are also presented. Then, the utility of LVTs for teacher and student is examined in chapter IV.

Chapter V deals with the more specific aspects of what must be tested, including the "four language skills," structure, concept, notions, functions and other elements of a communicative syllabus.
The formulation of learning verification techniques is elaborated in Chapter VI including the varieties possible and specific guidelines for constructing them. There can be difficulties using these techniques and they are mentioned. Examples of good and bad techniques are given and commented.

LVT's can only be properly presented within the context of a lesson. Two models, inductive and deductive, are given schematically and both "model" lesson plans are developed in detail in the seventh chapter.

An eighth chapter is devoted to the integration of the techniques developed into the lesson plans, again with schemas giving a clearcut idea of timing and utility. A chart relating the forms learning checks may take when verifying concepts is intended to facilitate the practical application of the ideas previously explored.

The conclusion includes, of course, a summary of the ideas presented and the conclusions which may be drawn from them.

Definition of Terms

The focal point of all developed here is the "learning process" taking place in the Foreign Language classroom. Learning, used here in its broadest sense, applies to the sum of the interactions leading to the whole or partial completion of the learning/teaching objectives. These interactions may take place between students, between students and teacher or involve other people and materials, inside or, sometimes, outside the classroom. This general definition includes both "formal learning" and "acquisition" (to be developed in the next chapter) unless otherwise specified.
The foreign language classroom is "one in which the target language is not the mother tongue of any group within the country where it is being learned and has no internal communication function either." The word "country" is best replaced by "community" to take into account the existence of minority languages. Many ideas developed here do have an application in a second language classroom (e.g., English to Spanish speakers in California) although it is not the primary concern of this paper.

The title indicates an accent on "verification" and not "testing." The post-facto nature of testing has already been suggested. It can be added that verification, as seen here, is immediate. It focuses on one or not more than a few language elements at a time. Verification is integral to a communicative presentation and teaching/learning approach. By communicative, as explored more fully in the next chapter, it is meant to be the use of the language for the purpose of communication, which is seen to have sociolinguistic implications beyond those in what can be considered the structural view of language.

The concept of a syllabus, used in conjunction with that of objectives has the dual English sense: "It usually refers to the curriculum content of a language course of study. But it also indicates the guiding principal for selecting and arranging the content of a language course." All of these terms take on fuller meaning in the course of this work. Some new terms are introduced in an appropriate context.


CHAPTER II

OBJECTIVES, SYLLABUSES AND LEARNER NEEDS:

ESTABLISHING THE PEDAGOGICAL CONTEXT

Objectives

If there is one principal of modern language teaching which seems to be universally accepted, it is that of teaching by objectives. "The basis of a sound approach to language teaching is to know what the objectives are."¹ We must know what we want to teach, implying the use of a syllabus. As already seen, it is "a list of items we wish to teach"² and, moreover, "a syllabus represents a development sequence of elements which is transferred into progressive learning over time."³ We know that French, German, Spanish or some other language are the "target," but what constitutes that target language? Can we assume the elements to be verbs, nouns, adjectives, vocabulary and the like or are they functional, such as greetings and refusal? Do they include nods, grimaces and gestures? The linguistic and non-linguistic elements which comprise language need to be determined, as fully as possible, to constitute our syllabus. The syllabus is extremely important in determining objectives.

There are two predominant ideas concerning what should constitute the syllabus; they are structural and semantic (which has inspired the communicative syllabus).
The Structural Syllabus

The structural approach to language teaching is largely a Chomskyan notion, to whom our language competence consists of "rule-governed creativity." When we master the rules regarding the structure of language, we can then create language. This is a mechanical view of the acquisition of language, which continues to dominate language teaching, although through modern methods. Thus, the linguistic description of language is the base of the syllabus.

Language teaching is usually the teaching of language... We organise the process of teaching by taking the description and ordering the elements in it according to criteria of simplicity, frequency, difficulty, methodological convenience and pedagogic effectiveness. From this ordered syllabus, the objectives are established.

The main objective (for both course designer and learner) in such a course is to cover a grammatical syllabus and build up a command of high frequency vocabulary... Communication skills are often regarded as the by-product of this undertaking.

A look in most high-school and university FL textbooks is usually enough to validate their structural nature.

Criticism of the Structural Syllabus: Communicative Competence

The structural syllabus has come to be highly criticised as a base for language teaching. Much of the criticism centres around the fact that it is a "static view of the dynamic process of language learning and use." The language used in conjunction with such a syllabus, for instance, is very often carefully controlled. It has been concluded by some that

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... if the learner's exposure to language is only exposure to carefully-controlled language, it is only this kind of language that he will learn to comprehend.¹⁰

Thus, such a syllabus can actually distort any attempt at real communication¹¹ and students are very often unprepared to enter into a situation where they must actually communicate in the language.¹² This can lead, at the extreme, to a "structurally competent" student who can produce grammatically correct sentences but is unable to complete a communicative task.¹³ By its very nature, it is clear that a structural syllabus is an artificial device which scarcely resembles the target language. This device is entirely justified if Chomsky's notion of linguistic competence leads to competence in the language. However, for many, language competence is more than mere linguistic competence; it must include the idea of communicative competence.

In 1970, Campbell and Wales¹⁴ proposed that the Chomskyan notion of competence should be extended beyond purely grammatical competence to include a more general communicative ability. Language does not occur in isolation, as Chomsky seems to suggest; it occurs in a social context and reflects social rather than linguistic purposes.¹⁵

Language must not only have structural form, it must be "appropriate" to the moment, the situation, the mood and to other factors which enable us "to know the right thing to say at the right time"¹⁶ and in the right manner. The idea of communicative competence resides in the fact that meaning is expressed each time we communicate, not only form.

The Semantic Syllabus

One of the most notable attempts to conceive a non-structural syllabus, taking into account the fact that we do communicate meaning,
was the "notional/functional syllabus" of D. A. Wilkins. 17 He proposed two categories of meaning: the "semantico-grammatical" category and a category of "communicative function." The former includes concepts such as quantity, duration and frequency. The latter deals with what we do when we communicate, with the uses of communication. This includes asking for directions, making requests and inviting.18 Such a syllabus was an initial attempt to organise language along communicative lines, thus filling the breeches left in language teaching by a structural syllabus. A course based on functional/notional specifications

... sets out to teach communication skills. Structure and vocabulary, though carefully selected and graded, are the by-product of this objective.19

This particular semantic syllabus, while an innovative guideline, does have certain weaknesses and restrictions. 20 It has been used to form the basis for communicative syllabus.

The Communicative Syllabus

It is important to elaborate the content of the communicative syllabus, as it comprises the base from which we will teach and the elements constitute the material which will demand learning verification techniques, if they are to be used most efficiently. We must keep in mind, therefore, that

... a course setting out to teach communication skills

must take into account at least the following, to encompass the principal factors involved when we communicate:

1. Functions: These are "language acts": i.e., what we want to use the language to do: . . .

2. General Notions: These are abstract time-and-space relations which connect with functions; e.g., existence/non-existence: presence: absence: mobility/im mobility, etc.

3. Specific notions: These are items which are directly determined by the topic. The three factors can be exem-
plified as follows: Inquiring about (function) the existence (general notion) of a bank (specific notion): e.g., "Is there a bank near here?"

4. Settings: That is where people are . . . and how (if at all) the setting influences what is said.

5. Social, Sexual and Psychological Roles: That is, who is talking to whom, what their relationship is and how they feel; how these factors influence the language the speakers use.

6. Style/Register: That is, the way we express ourselves to reflect our attitudes which can range between extremes: e.g., formal/informal; serious-jocular; courteous-rude; positive-tentative, etc.

7. Stress and Intonation: . . .


10. Paralinguistic features: Such a gesture, facial expression, etc., none of which has, as yet, been satisfactorily coded for language learning purposes.

These elements all play a role in the communicative approach in order to prepare the students for communication in the target language. This is the first advantage of such an approach: we are teaching the students communicative skills. These skills find their root in meaning which leads to a second advantage, namely that "research suggests that learning proceeds more rapidly and what is learned is better retained when the language involved is fully meaningful." Having set communication as the ultimate goal, it can be noted, third, that the desire to communicate can be very motivated if it can be instilled in students.

Wilkins' notional/functional syllabus goes a long way in the development of a semantic syllabus with a communicative goal. However, unlike the structural syllabus which, as has been seen, is well defined, owing to its foundation in the linguist's description of the language, it is not easy to determine criteria for sequencing notions and functions. It is difficult to conclude that, for instance, making requests should come before making invitations in order of importance.
One key factor in determining such an order of importance is an analysis of student needs, a discussion of which follows. Compromises have been suggested, however, that can make a semantic syllabus more workable. Four possible models might include: a purely functional model which would be suitable for "Berlitz-type" survival courses; a structural/functional organization using the progression of the structural syllabus but with a functional connotation; a functional/structural model where functions predominate and the structures are then dissected and explained (which doesn't resolve the problem formulated above of determining which function comes first.); and, lastly, a thematic organization centered around "basic aspects of everyday life and social communication."25 Certainly, pedagogues have much work to do to facilitate the use of a semantic syllabus. While in real language form is integral, it seems desirable that we look at both, but focus on one at a time.26

Student Needs

As asserted, one way of overcoming, at least in part, the semantic sequencing dilemma is by looking at the needs of the students.

One of the most interesting spin-offs from the ideas behind notional syllabuses has been the way they have encouraged us to look carefully at the reasons why learners are in fact learning a foreign language. In part this is due to the inherent characteristics of an approach which sets out to teach people how to express meanings; you have to choose what meanings you are going to teach.27

It is, thus, part of the teacher's role to take into account the students' perceptions of their own needs, rather than determining their needs for them.28 Perceiving student needs and motivations can
clarify the order of the semantic components of a language course.

meeting student needs, in itself, can be important source of motivation. In adapting the syllabus to a group of students, keeping in mind their eventual communicative needs, it is important to consider such questions as:

1. What situations might the learner encounter?...
2. What language activities is the language learner most likely to take part in?...
3. What functions of language are likely to be most useful?...
4. What topics are likely to be important?...
5. What general notions are likely to be important?...
6. What language forms should the student learn, in order to satisfy the communicative needs that have been described?...

Having considered these questions based on student wants and expectations we can "tailor" the class to the students. The communicative approach, since it is a social approach (we transfer social meaning) extends consideration of the learner to such factors as the role of personality in learning and overcoming the "affective filters" which hamper access to our Learning Acquisition Device. These factors are mentioned as they seem to merit attention when using a communicative approach, but they do not occupy a central position in this paper. They serve to indicate that the communicative syllabus is much more complex and multileveled than a structural one, which in communicative terms "becomes inadequate."

It should be noted that sensitive teachers have probably always taught communicatively and have even, though using a structural syllabus, exposed students to notions and functions. A communicative syllabus does, however, make this the principal objective.
Probable Needs for an "Average" Class

Studying the needs of adult learners is relatively easy as they often have precise goals and reasons regarding their study of the target language. An "average" class, most probably a secondary language class or beginning university class (average in that they comprise the bulk of foreign language learners), is considerably different in this respect. In the secondary school where the needs of learners are particularly difficult to predict, some conclude that "needs analysis" is of little benefit or that a structurally oriented approach is probably best. The general goal for such a class would then be "the mastering of the finite system by which linguistic creativity is created." Others disagree, arguing this to be an oversimplification and that there is a "common core" of language use which can be determined for a "general" student. Thus,

... our goal for students is to be able to interact freely with others; to understand what others wish to communicate, in the broadest sense, and to be able to convey to others what they themselves wish to share ... If the idea can be accepted that

... one of the most characteristic features of communicative language teaching is that it pays systematic attention to functional as well as structural aspects of language, combining these into a more fully communicative view; if the traditional approach to culture and civilization can be employed, highlighting its communicative dimensions; and if we can attempt to determine the needs and goals of the learners, despite a certain
unpredictability, then there seems to be a basis for a more well-rounded secondary or university class with more complete semantico-communicative implications.

The development of the fuller semantic dimension of language can be facilitated by integrated learning verification techniques. The practical application of the communicative approach, in which these techniques play a prominent role, is as important to that approach as the syllabus itself.
COMMUNICATIVE TECHNIQUES AND STRATEGIES

Learning Factors in the Communicative Approach

The syllabus being the list of items we wish to teach, the techniques and strategies we employ to meet our objectives must reflect our objectives. If communication is the chosen goal for the learners, then it follows that it is necessary to promote a classroom situation where meaning is central and students are involved in communication or communication-like activities. By way of contrast with the structural approach, it is notable to remark it has been advocated that

... a language is learned when the learner becomes involved in real communication so that he is a user of language rather than a detached observer who analyzes and rehearses the language for later use.

Stated very simply, "we learn what we do." It is important to understand why this so. It involves theories of language acquisition, as opposed to formal learning.

Acquisition Versus Formal Learning

The communicative approach is based on student involvement in communicative activities very early in the learning experience. Again, this is different from the structural approach where the "ability" to use the language creatively is something that happens in the later stages of the learning process. However,
... according to current theory, language acquisition occurs when we are not focused on language, but when we are using language—more specifically, it occurs when we are focused on understanding spoken and written messages. The formal study of grammar has value, but it is clearly peripheral.48

A native language is "acquired." It is a subconscious process through meaningful and communicative use of the language. Formal learning is, rather, "conscious knowledge" about the language, including grammar and form. We can use our conscious knowledge about the language to "monitor" our language usage, but fluency, it is hypothesized, is a product of acquired language, not of our formal learning.44

Key concepts to be retained are meaningful and, of course, communicative. Our teaching strategies must be designed so as to involve the student more completely in a communicative situation. This is the way we focus on meaning. Specific techniques for focusing on meaning follow the next sections dealing with other possible approaches.

Other Syllabuses

The principal focus of this paper has been on two types of syllabuses and methods linked to them. They are two extremes for approaching language learning and teaching. One follows a linguistic description of language, the other an overall goal of communicative competence. Since language is not "static," as has been remarked, it can be seen from many angles, perspectives, or philosophical points of view. Rivers and Temperly classify four major approaches to language: object centered; melody and rhythm centered; verb centered; and situation centered.5 Others have chosen to see the different elements of language as constituting separate syllabuses, from which we draw the component parts of
language according to our needs: i.e., a phonological syllabus, a structural syllabus, a notional syllabus, and so on. The essential point is we probably should not restrict ourselves to one "view" of language. Language viewpoints change with time and depend on the students' needs to a great extent. The broader the language viewpoint, the more sources of input we have at our disposal. Most importantly, there is no one, "perfect" view of language.

**Other methods**

Methodology can not, similarly, be restricted to one view. Language teaching is based, as seen above, on certain hypotheses about language acquisition and even language content. This being so, we as language teachers are free to "experiment and innovate." There is "no single best way of teaching foreign languages." Each method could eventually be useful when used at the proper time and in the right situation. Very simply put: "Language teaching is a pragmatic business . . . . What works is good; what does not work is bad." We must remember that the objectives do not reflect the methods used but, on the contrary, we must use the best methods possible to achieve the learning objectives.

**Communicative Teaching**

As important as a syllabus is in the teaching of a foreign language, it is not sufficient to ensure that the students are learning to communicate. The methods, also, complete the communicative nature of the learning process.
If the communicative approach is suggested here for use in the average foreign language class, it is because it emphasizes the use of the language, thus facilitating language acquisition, and it places language in a meaningful context. Thus, it constitutes

... an alternative to aspects of traditional methodology which have long caused widespread discontent and which, in the eyes of many, are responsible for communicative incompetence - aspects like slow incremental teaching, the drilling of language items in isolation, and so on.56

Communicative teaching is not a method, per se, in the sense of a permanent, unchanging teaching procedure, but rather, it is those techniques and strategies which are employed or re-employed (in the case of structurally-oriented techniques) to develop "the learner's ability to take part in the process of communicating."57 The approach must be diverse58 and "sufficiently rich in the variety of devices that it exploits for the learner to adopt whatever learning strategy suits him best."59

General Communicative Techniques and Strategies

Certain principles regarding the nature of language behavior have become the focal point around which communicative language teaching activities have come to be centered. They concern: 1) doubt and information gaps; 2) improvisation and choice; 3) reasoning through tasks; and 4) feedback.

Doubt and Information Gaps

One of the ways language is used is to "convey information - factual information, information concerning feelings, information about what we wish to be done. The concept of conveying information
involves, as many linguists have testified, a notion of doubt.\(^6\)

We cannot convey information if the other person already possesses knowledge of that information. "Je m'appelle Daniel" can only be conveyed, as a piece of information, one time to each person. When teaching proceeds without this element of doubt, then that teaching can be considered as non-communicative.

The teacher has many means at his or her disposal of creating language activities where this element of doubt exists. These are "information gap activities," constructed so that each participant possesses only a part of the total information necessary for completion of the exercise.\(^6\) The teacher seeks to motivate students "... to bridge them [information gaps] in appropriate ways."\(^5\)

Such activities range from the simple ("Comment vous appelez-vous?" "Je m'appelle Daniel.") to the much more intricate. An intermediate beginner group might be asked to compare train and airplane travel from Paris to Toulouse on the basis of time needed for the trip and price. Each has only one part of the whole picture:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student A</th>
<th>Student B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Départ</strong></td>
<td><strong>Train</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Arrive</strong></td>
<td>3H35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Prix</strong></td>
<td><strong>Tarif</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>(Plein Tarif)</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The students complete the missing information on their form by asking questions (both questions and answers having been previously taught) and receiving the appropriate response. A sample exchange between two students might go like this:

Student A - "A quelle heure est-ce que l'avion part?"
Student B - "Il part à dix heures cinquante.
Student A - "Et combien ça coûte?"
Student B - "Ça coûte mille deux cents francs."

The same exercise can be used in different ways: How long does the trip take? Which is cheaper? I'm afraid I can't afford that. Thus the exercise can have a much broader dimension, so long as the teacher makes provision for it; e.g., "You haven't got very much money, try and convince your partner that it is best to take the cheaper system of transport": while the other partner might have instructions the following: "Try and convince your partner to take the quicker way, as you are in a hurry to get to Toulouse."

Other information gap exercises containing a greater degree of difficulty can include the giving of directions, the assembly of machines or puzzles, descriptions of people and things, in sun, wherever an element of doubt exists in real life, it should be possible to construct an exercise which can use that element to bring communicative practice to the fore. This emphasis on the message which is being transmitted and received, rather than on the structure through which the message is communicated parallels "real" communication more closely.
**Improvisation and Choice**

Doubt about what the other person is going to say is fundamental, but equally so is the notion that the participants have choice in what they say and how they will say it. The students must gradually be exposed to this ever-broadening selection of "appropriate" questions, responses and comments. Very early in the learning process, the student should know that "Très bien, merci." "Ça va." and "Pas mal." are all acceptable responses to the question "Comment vas-tu?" and so on. Both speakers should be made aware of this choice, and ample opportunities, where the choice ranges from more to less controlled, should be provided to exercise these communicative options without interference from the teacher. By allowing this widening freedom of choice, we prepare the learner for true communicative situations where there is a need for improvisation.

It has been stated that language is not static, hence, we must prepare students for the interactive nature of language.

Initial improvisation activities are limited in scope of choice, as seen above. As this control lessens, we can employ such interactions as those provided by "speech bubbles":

It is a hot Saturday in summer. Telephone a friend and plan the day.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YOU</th>
<th>YOUR FRIEND</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Greet your friend and say your name.</td>
<td>Answer the phone and say your name.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suggest something to do in the afternoon.</td>
<td>Return greeting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree. Suggest a time and place to meet.</td>
<td>Disagree. Make another suggestion.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In the example, choice is evident in the variety of questions possible, such as: "Would you like to go the cinema (movies)?" or "How about seeing the new Star Wars film?" In fact, each element of the activity is limited only by the knowledge of the student and his or her growing ability to put together and use appropriate utterances.

Role play, the acting out of roles in, once again, more or less controlled situations, can provide an even more abundant source for improvisation. Usually, only the general outlines of the interaction are given. Such an interaction might, simply, be set up as follows:

Student A

Jean-philippe, vous savez que Marc, votre ami, est libre ce samedi soir. Vous avez très envie qu'il voie les diapositives de vos vacances en Grèce. Marc est timide. Insistez pour qu'il vienne.

Student B

Marc. Vous savez que Jean-philippe, votre ami, a l'intention de vous inviter chez lui, voir les diapositives de ses vacances en Grèce. Vous détestez les diapos et vous n'aimez pas la Grèce non plus. Si il vous invite, refusez poliment.

The situation, the relation of the two people, the tone and the probable outcome of the conversation resulting from the above activity seem evident. The actual exchange, however, should afford the best occasions for the exercise of choice and improvisation.

feedback

"The provision of feedback for the learner is an essential part of all stages of learning." In the initial stages of learning when there is little actual communication taking place, the teacher provides the
bulk of learner feedback through the acceptance or the rejection of
the student's "utterance." We can talk of feedback from the teacher as occurring primarily in the presentation or "pre-communicative" stage of a lesson or development of a language element. It is in this part of a lesson where learning verification techniques are particularly valuable for the proper assessment of miscomprehensions and the clear and economic provision of feedback. This is presented in greater depth in the third chapter.

With communicative activities where, as has been mentioned, the teacher intervenes sparingly, if at all, the feedback is provided through the activity itself. If, as in the first "information gap" activity, the response "Il part dix heures cinq." is received to the question "A quelle heure est-ce que l'avion part?" then this response constitutes feedback. It cannot be claimed that this is a real communicative situation, but all aspects of the situation, including the existence of feedback are meant to parallel a real communicative situation. "Only when the pupil is using language for communication can he get feedback in the form in which it occurs in language acquisition." In real communication we have aims in our use of language and meeting or not meeting those aims provides feedback, even if this is an extremely simplified version of a more complex process. The student, in effect, will gradually learn to judge the success or failure of his or her communicative efforts and react accordingly.

Meaning Through Tasks

The above learning activities can be seen to include a common and, pedagogically speaking, very important element: that is, in each
activity, the students have a goal to attain or a task to complete. Task completion is the core of the learning activity in a communicative classroom. "The skills of understanding, speaking, reading and writing do not exist in isolation ... the skills must be redefined as "Listen and ...," "Read and ...," Write and ...." Task dependent activities are an attempt to recreate a real language situation in that, in a real language situation, we always participate for a reason and we are always implicated in the communication taking place. Thus, a task gives us a reason, if not a genuine personal one, to communicate. Through tasks, we concentrate on meaning and not just on the structure. It is this way in which fluency is developed. It has already been indicated that some linguists hypothesize that acquisition takes place when we are concentrating on meaning. The "monitor hypothesis" developed by Krashen indicated that fluency is due to what we have acquired. Hence, task-oriented activities can, according to these language hypotheses, favor language acquisition and fluency.

Finally, in a real language situation, we are accountable for the content of our communication, the manner that we communicate and so on. We do not, as has been suggested, communicate in isolation. Students are therefore required to complete a task dependent upon another, such as listen and write down the train schedule, Paris-Toulouse. In real life, failure to listen to such a message could result in a missed train and, since no similar test of communicative accountability can exist in the classroom, we provide for tasks which, by their nature, demand that the student perform accountably.

As noted in this section, the primary strategies and techniques we employ to teach communicatively are thus: 1) doubt, often in
the form of an information gap; 2) the development of greater and
greater choice in the form, content and manner of communication,
combined with experience in improvisation; 3) feedback from the
teacher in the early stages and then from the communicative activity itself; 4) tasks which implicate the student in the communicative exchange, develop his or her fluency through emphasis on
meaning, thus favoring acquisition.

The Role of the Teacher in a Communicative Classroom

In a communicative classroom the teacher

... is seen not solely as a grammarian but as someone who
can provide input in an environment conducive to acquisition ... ,
can help make the input comprehensible and provide the student
with the tools to get input on his own. 74

The teacher controls (only to the extent necessary), guides and facil-
itates communicative use of the language. New language is presented
in the context of language that is already familiar to the students.
She/he presents models of language behavior which are designed as
shortcuts to the inductive learning process. The language presented
is always in a meaningful context 75 and all use of language has a
reason and meaning and is not simply pieces of language in a vacuum.

The teacher provides for meaningful exchanges between students
using the new language elements and designs these language activities
to include the elements of doubt, improvisation and choice. Tasks in
the language are given to the students and feedback is provided by
the teacher when there is not such a provision in the tasks themselves.

Last, the role of the teacher is to provide a linguistically
rich and varied environment and ample opportunity to practice such para-linguistic skills as linguistic deduction and discrimination.

The teacher's use of more specific techniques can be seen in the chapter on model lesson plans.

The Basic Structure of a Communicative Lesson

"Traditional" methodology has been accused of being one of the factors leading to "communicative incompetence" in learners. Some of the reasons have been given, but the question might be asked, "In what ways does communicative teaching differ from traditional methods?" Christopher Brumfit suggests that

... the most lasting impact of the communicative movement in language teaching may lie more in a reversal of traditional methodological emphases than in a reorganization of syllabus objectives.

A communicative syllabus alone cannot ensure that classroom teaching or learning is communicative. The methodology used in structurally-oriented language courses (a) is significantly different from the "widespread post-communicative model" (b), seen schematically below:

(a)

```
I → II → III
present → drill → practice

context
```

(b)

```
I → II → III
communicate as far as possible with all available resources
present language items shown to be necessary for effective communication

drill if necessary
```
Hence, a communicative presentation uses already acquired language to create a context and need for new language. A model of the language element can then be presented to fill this need. At this point, through drill (presented in a meaningful way) and language activities giving the student ever more freedom of language use, the new language item is gradually incorporated into the learner’s linguistic repertoire. This process is illustrated in chapter VII.


4Wilkins, Linguistics, 72.

5Wilkins, Linguistics, 55.

6Wilkins, Linguistics, 145.


8One example is: Matilde O. Castells and Harold E. Dionetti, La Lengua Espanola: Grammatica y Cultura, (N.Y.: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1974). See the Table of contents.

9Christopher Brumfit, "Teaching the 'General' Student," Communication in the Classroom, Johnson, 51.

10Wilkins, Teaching, 54.


13Johnson, Communication, 1.


16 Johnson, Communication, 2


18 Johnson, Communication, 3

19 Alexander, in Second Language, Alatis, 249

20 See some of the difficulties involved with a purely notional/functional syllabus on page 11.


22 Wilkins, Teaching, 59.

23 Wilkins, Teaching, 58.

24 Widdowson, in Second Language, Alatis, 266.


26 Revell, Teaching Techniques, 91.

27 Keith Morrow, "Teaching the 'General' Student," in Communication, Johnson, 52.


32 Krashen, in Second Language, Alatis, 104.

33 Johnson, in Communication, 2.

34 Brumfit, in Communication, Johnson, 46.
35 Wilkins, Linguistics, 56.
36 Brumfit, in Communication, Johnson, 46.
37 Wilkins, Linguistics, 35.
38 Wilkins, Teaching, 3.
39 Morrow, in Communication, Johnson, 53.
41 Morrow, in Communication, Johnson, 54.
42 Littlewood, Communicative Language Teaching, 1.
43 Wilkins, Teaching, 56.
44 Johnson, in Communication, 10.
45 Stern, in Second Language, Alatis, 139.
46 Wilkins, Teaching, 59.
47 Stern, in Second Language, Alatis, 158.
53 Wilkins, Teaching, ix.
54 Wilkins, Teaching, 56.
55 Morrow, in Communication, Johnson, 39.
57 Littlewood, Communicative Language Teaching, xi.
59 Wilkins, Teaching, 85.
60 Keith Johnson, in Communicative Approach, Brumfit, 200.
61 Revell, Teaching Techniques, 6.
64 Christopher Brumfit, "'Communicative' Language Teaching: an Educational Perspective," in Communicative Approach, Brumfit, 186.
66 Wilkins, Teaching, 72.
67 Wilkins, Teaching, 77.
68 Morrow, in Communication, Johnson, 65.
69 Littlewood, Communicative Language Teaching, 6.
70 Alexander, in Second Language, 260.
73 Littlewood, Communicative Language Teaching, 17.
75 Wilkins, Teaching, 69-71, 75.
76 Christopher Brumfit, in Communicative Approach, Brumfit and Johnson, 183.
CHAPTER III

CLASSROOM ASSESSMENT AND LEARNING VERIFICATION TECHNIQUES

Classroom Assessment

The Forms of Testing

Tests serve several purposes in the foreign language classroom. Through certain tests we are able to determine language aptitude and attitudes toward the language and culture. Since these tests are prelanguage learning evaluations, they are not of primary concern here. Once the language learning process has begun, however, there are several ways we evaluate the efficacy of this process. Some tests are employed to evaluate how much of the material taught has been retained; these are achievement tests. For classroom purposes, achievement tests are the most common form of evaluation, including quizzes, chapter, quarter, semester and final tests. With progress tests, it is possible to evaluate student progress in the language over a given period. This testing form implies a test at the beginning of the determined learning period and another at the end of the period to ascertain student achievement. Finally, the level of the student's overall abilities in the language, independent of chapter or course content, is evaluated by means of a proficiency test.

Why Do We Test?

As has been suggested above, we give tests to find out how much students have learned, but they can also be used to diagnose problems.
moreover, we test for other reasons: to rank students, to set standards and to gauge our ability as teachers. Quizzes are shorter and easier to construct, apply and correct. Because they are easier to manipulate, they can: 1) serve to reinforce learning and response, 2) give the teacher insight into student difficulties, 3) give students a sense of achievement, 4) be used as a springboard for new material, 5) give a progress reading and 6) balance grading. What Do We Test?

The next logical step is to look at what the content of a foreign language test should look like. Generally speaking we test what we teach:

It is of course axiomatic that the classroom testing program closely parallels the instructional activities of the learning sequence. Test content must, then, reflect course content. The use of a purely structural teaching syllabus would therefore imply a test designed to evaluate "specific aspects of grammar acquisition." In the four skills approach, assessment most often revolves around pronunciation, spelling, vocabulary and grammar, usually relying on features of formal usage. Communicative testing, similarly, is based on the notion of communicative competence on the part of the student. There are, however, different interpretations of the notion of communicative competence from which three primary views can be singled out. The first view interprets communicative competence as the ability to receive and convey information. The second view stresses the appropriateness of communication considering such factors as topic, place, interlocutor.

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and so forth. Effective performance of speech acts is the emphasis in the third view.  

Suitability and Weaknesses of Testing Forms

There are many possible testing forms, but most language tests are psychometric discrete-point tests designed for quick, objective marking.

A discrete-point test aims to test only one component of language at a time (e.g., vocabulary), through only one skill (e.g., reading), and one aspect of that skill (e.g., receptive cognition). These tests are objectively scored and are generally highly reliable. Because they test one language component at a time, discrete-point tests are ideally suited for the structural syllabus or for those syllabuses according a significant role to structure: they could also be expected to be suitable for certain listening and reading-comprehension exercises.

In light of theories of communicative competence, however, discrete-point testing has come under increasing criticism.

... an independent, decontextualized sentence is a very tenuous basis for making accurate judgements about a person's mastery of a language. It may well be that such snippets will allow us to examine certain limited details of language performance, but ... any adequate test must consciously encompass in its design wider strategies and purposes of language use. Adding up the separate hits of language performance, however many, cannot tell us the whole story.

A student's ability to express ideas fluently and comprehensibly cannot, for example, be tested in this way. Discrete-point tests can give us information about what is on the surface of language, but not about what is underneath.
In a "communicative" sense, psychometric discrete-point tests are lacking in that they do not attempt to account for certain factors which are inherent to communicative test design:

First, it is self-evident that communication requires the actual use of the language to send and receive messages.

Second, the basis of produced or received messages is primarily semantic in nature.

Third, participants in a communication event engage in that event for specific purposes, usually to request information about some topic or to react to a request for information.

Fourth, the course of series of communicative exchanges in a developing communication event is only partially predictable.

Fifth, natural communication takes place in a specific and concrete context which enables the participants to identify and to react to pertinent sociolinguistic parameters.

In fact, many of the criticisms leveled at the structural syllabus could in fact apply to discrete-point testing.

As it is usually conceived, four skill assessment relies on features of formal usage. Such assessment generally fails to take into consideration the interactive nature of language, where interplay exists for instance, between speaking and listening or between reading and writing.

In actual foreign language teaching/learning situations one would be hard pressed to find many examples of communicative testing in use. Fewer critics can therefore be found of such testing.

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procedures. Certainly, as such methods become more common, criticism will surely center on problems of length, reliability and implementation difficulties concerning those factors of communication previously mentioned.

Use of a communicative syllabus and, hence, of communicative testing has been espoused in this thesis for reasons already given. Nonetheless, testing must parallel course content, whatever that content might be. We cannot test accurately when the course syllabus and the testing methods are in conflict. It would seem evident at this point that communicative competence, for example, cannot be measured by purely discrete-point testing. Moreover, when conflict exists, students tend to "perceive the priorities of the course by what is tested."¹⁴ There is also evidence of a "washback effect where the techniques used to test a language are conflated with the methods used to test one."¹⁵

The Nature of Testing

Testing, be it achievement, progress or proficiency, evaluates what is known, learned, or not learned by students. Testing, discrete-point, communicative or other, "follows up" the learning process and is thus, by its very nature, "post-facto". The goal of testing is not to intervene directly in the learning process, but to assess the results of that process.

Testing cannot, therefore, be used in the presentation of new language items, nor can it be used for immediate reinforcement of learning. The comprehension of new language elements can be evaluated after their presentation, but not throughout the process of pre-
sentation. Tests can help spot errors and misconceptions that have arisen, but cannot do so as they arise. Tests cannot be used to consolidate and define the language element being taught, nor can they verify understanding of the communicative context. It is, in fact, not the role of testing to serve the above functions. However, an instrument capable of performing these actions would be invaluable to the language teacher. With these needs in mind we now turn to learning verification techniques.

The General Nature of Learning Verification Techniques

The "Raison d'Être" of LV Ts

Learning verification techniques (LV Ts) have multiple applications. They are, in the first instance, intended to define, reinforce and redefine context and the language elements. In a communicative classroom, context helps give meaning to and define the nature and use of the language elements. LV Ts used in the presentation of context help to build up a situation, to elicit information and vocabulary and to involve students in the presentation. LV Ts used in the presentation of the language elements (structure, notions, general notions, stress and intonation...) help to define structure and vocabulary, to eliminate other meanings and they lead inexorably to the model sentence.16

LV Ts provide feedback for student and teacher in the presentation stages of a lesson. They have an immediate diagnostic value. They provide for economical, clear and concise presentations, leaving more time for the production stages of a lesson. A basis for effective practice can be ensured through their use and, generally, LV Ts can
help encourage conditions conducive to language "acquisition", as opposed to "formal learning."

The Place of LVT's in a Presentation

LVT's are employed as an integral part of a lesson and not merely as a post-facto test of performance. Thus they are found in the presentation of the context and of the model of the language element, as well as in the production stages of a lesson. A teacher can use LVT's continuously throughout the lesson, although instances of their use diminish as teacher control of production decreases. A teacher may also use LVT's whenever she/he feels the need to reinforce, redefine, consolidate or verify the comprehension of the language element being presented or already presented.

The Form of LVT's

Because LVT's are meant to be used rapidly and efficiently, they are brief, unambiguous and concise. Since most presentations are usually oral, LVT's are usually in oral form, but may take written, graphic, symbol or mime form.


2. Pinocchiaro, FL Learner, 205-6.


9 Carroll, "Another Way?" in Language Testing, Heaton, 2.

10 Disick, Individualizing, 22.


13 Carroll, in Language Testing, 3.


16 International Teacher Training Institute, one month intensive TEFL course, International House, Lisbon. Personal notes.

17 Wilkins, Teaching, 65.
CHAPTER IV

THE UTILITY OF INTEGRATED LEARNING VERIFICATION TECHNIQUES

FOR BOTH STUDENT AND TEACHER

Utility of L V T's for the Teacher

Learning verification techniques were conceived to facilitate and improve classroom teaching and learning; they are a means of clarifying the presentation of the context and of the language element. This highlighting draws attention to important elements of the presentation. At the same time, we are able to define the important elements of the presentation.

L V T's are valuable to the teacher for their diagnostic function throughout the lesson. Any part of the presentation deemed important to students, highlighted and/or defined can be checked to verify student comprehension of the point. These checks immediately follow the presentation of the important point, so that the teacher can immediately spot and correct any misconceptions or errors that might hinder complete assimilation of the new language element. In the same way, they aid in the illumination of general problem areas. Having verified student comprehension of the important elements presented, the teacher can use the same L V T's at a later point to reinforce these same elements and recall them to the student's attention.

When the teacher verifies student understanding of the individual parts of his presentation, he is sure of where he stands with students.
at all times, as far as the lesson is concerned.

Since correction is immediate, this saves the sort of backtracking which necessarily occurs when comprehension checks are post-facto, such as quizzes or tests. Instead, the teacher checks and corrects during the lesson, thus assuring that she/he is advancing further into the lesson on solid ground.

In later stages of the lesson, L V T's can be used to test student retention of the new language element. They also can serve as a short form of review, once again highlighting important points already presented. An advance and check presentation such as this, keeping in mind that checks are quick and short so as not to interrupt the flow of the lesson, gives students confidence which, need less to say, facilitates the task of the teacher.

Utility of L V T's for the Student

Benefits for the student when L V T's are used parallel those of the instructor. The students are able to grasp more easily the important parts of the lesson which are highlighted, clarified and/or defined through L V T's. If the students seem at all confused, the teacher can employ L V T's to recall and reinforce the essential elements of the lesson. This dispels the confusion by allowing students to see and correct initial errors and misconceptions. Thus, students have an immediate source of constructive feedback, the importance of which is indisputable, at crucial points in the lesson. L V T's highlight and clarify sociolinguistic parameters (e.g. context) and lead infallibly to the model of the language element being presented. Such a presentation which takes into account the essential factors
involved in a communication event and then brings them home to the students, will help the students to develop a fuller comprehension of the language elements presented. This is because LV T's help underline the full socio-semantic dimension of language.

Students can use LV T's as a tool for self-assessment as other students are corrected or when they are unsure. Students having participated in the advance and check process are more prepared to continue. LV T's allow a more complete mastery, by the students, of the material taught, thus giving them more confidence, an important factor in motivation.
CHAPTER V

LEARNING VERIFICATION PROCEDURES

What We Verify

As with testing, through the use of L V T's we check what we teach. We must then verify context, the language elements of the presentation, the form of these language elements and the semantic value or concept inherent in the elements. With L V T's we may also verify communication skills.

The Verification of Context

Context checks are the L V T's applied particularly to context. Context consists of those elements of the communicative syllabus which are identified and reacted to by the participants in a communication event. These sociolinguistic parameters include the social setting, the nature of the topic, the social status of the interlocutor and the addressee, the mood, etc... Although context does not necessarily have to be developed at all levels for all lessons, it is often, especially in beginning to intermediate levels, one of the keys to providing a meaningful lesson. Language presented meaningfully has already been seen to be of great importance in the foreign language classroom. To verify that context has been understood by the students because it is important to the introduction of a language element. What and how we say something depends on the context in which it is said. In many cases, the understanding of context is prerequisite to a complete
understanding of the model and its semantic implications.

The Language Elements of the Presentation

Two aspects of the language elements are subject to verification checks; they are form and concept. The language elements are composed of those elements of the communicative syllabus which do not belong to the realm of context. They are: structure, functions, general notions, specific notions, style and register, vocabulary and para-linguistic features (nods, gestures, facial expressions... ) when it is possible to present them.

The Verification of Form

The structural or mechanical aspect of the above language elements is form. Form checks are those LV T's employed to verify pronunciation, spelling and syntactic features of the language. When applying form checks, we focus on form rather than on the semantic aspect of the language element which cannot, in reality, be separated from form.

The Verification of Concept

Again, the basis of a produced or received message is of a primarily semantic nature. Concept checks focus on that aspect of the language element and not on form. Concept is concerned with simple denotative meaning, but also with connotations, ideas of social appropriateness and so forth.

Verifying Communication Skills

Preponderant views of the four skill model have been deemed inadequate in terms of the communicative syllabus because of their
static character. These communication skills are actually interactive so that, in fact, we are listening and speaking or listening and writing.

Communication skill checks are L V T's which can verify the ability of the student to communicate effectively, as typified by the formulae: listen and... read and... write and... speak and...

We can add tasks to help provide meaning to these checks.

Simple listening and reading skill checks would include checks of discrimination and total, main idea or selective comprehension. Speaking and writing skill checks might be based on the ability to improvise, the facility of implementing the element of choice in communication and/or fluency.

More general communication skill checks could deal with the suitable use of ideas such as social appropriateness and the general ability to communicate thoughts and ideas. Successful task completion is also a good parameter for such skill checks.

**Guidelines for L V T Construction and Use**

Learning verification techniques as seen in any of their various "check" forms must conform to certain general criteria if they are to have utility for the student and teacher. They must be designed and presented in a "highlighted" fashion so that students are aware of their importance.

Since checks are meant to be rapid-use tools, they must be concise. To be effective, they must be clear and cannot contain superfluous elements which might clutter the lesson and obscure the essential point.
Last, checks are unambiguous. Checks reduce the context or language element to its simplest form or semantic unit. They necessarily lead to one "answer" or conclusion.

Possible Difficulties and Weaknesses of L V T's

Checks, in order to be useful, are simple and categoric. This means breaking meaning, context or form down to its simplest level. There is, implicit in this formulation, a judgement taking place regarding language on the part of teacher or textbook. Language is not static and is, in many ways, elusive. The best remedy to this problem is probably a thorough knowledge of the language and honest, skillful treatment of the same by the teacher.

There are additional problems with L V T's which may be inherent in any attempt at assessing student language learning. Using skill areas to implement an L V T, other than the one used for presentation of a language element may throw off the results. A concert presented orally, for example, may be understood by a student, but he may not be able to respond correctly to a written check if he has difficulties in reading or writing. Furthermore checks, being based on previous language acquisition, may be ineffective when previous language elements have been incompletely or incorrectly acquired.

Finally, some skill areas are incompatible with certain L V T's. It is difficult to check pronunciation with a written or non-verbal response, in most cases.

Classroom Use of L V T's

Some L V T's can be used with all members of the class at the same time. This can be the case when a written response is
required to an oral check. However, many, if not most, V T's when
given orally are intended for a quick verification of student compre-
hension. Asking all the students in the class would certainly be
too long and would result in class inattention. Rapid checks should
be used with one or a few students in succession at a time. When
you use checks systematically, all students will have ample oppor-
tunity to participate. Because anyone might be chosen to answer
and because the students will become aware that the point underli-
ned by an L V T is important, students will give their attention to
the L V T, to the response and to the correction, if necessary. It
is probably best not to rely on those that always know the answers
nor to dog those who never seem to, but rather allow both groups
to participate adequately. 2

1 Hugh Davis, teacher trainer: International House, Lisbon,
Portugal, "The Problem of Concept and the Use of Concept Checks,"
Book Proposal Extracts, personal copy. (photocopied).

2 TEFL intensive course, personal notes.
CHAPTER VI

THE FORM OF L V T's

General Comments on the Form of L V T's

Now that we have considered an inventory of the possible forms that L V T's may take for classroom use, it is appropriate to look at specific checks.

Learning verification checks generally take the form of questions with short responses. When dealing with concept, we often rely on series of short questions to delimit the particular concept; this is referred to as the concept question paradigm. Other checks may require simple assent or disapproval of a statement. They may, also, take a non-interrogative form such as with symbols, visual aids, pictures, realia or mime.

Criteria for L V T's and Examples of Good and Bad Checks

Context Checks

The setting, the mood, the subject of the communication event, the role and social status and other features of the interlocutors are often of crucial importance in what we say and how we do so. Our assurance that students have completely understood the implications that this has for language, or at least for the language element being introduced, can be provided by L V T's. **Context checks** affirm that students have understood the situation, simultaneously highlighting those ele-
ments composing the context. At the same time, they narrow the context to lead unequivocally to the model of the language element.

**Example of a context check in French**

The context for such concepts as the general notion of presence/absence (il y a, il n'y a pas) is relatively easy to establish. Using visual aids in an oral presentation, we might develop the following situation: "Jean a faim. Il a envie d'un morceau de pain. Il va dans la cuisine." At this point we can elicit from students, using our pictures: "Il regarde dans le placard. Il regarde dans le frigo. Il regarde sur la table. Mais . . . ." This is the cue for the model sentence, "Il n'y a pas de pain sur la table (dans le frigo . . . ."

To verify that students have understood the context leading up to the model, the teacher can use context checks:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Context check (Teacher)</th>
<th>Correct response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Où est-il?&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;Dans la cuisine.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Qu'est ce qu'il cherche-t-il?&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;Il cherche du pain.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Pourquoi?&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;Il a faim.&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The context for the concept of presence/absence is thus established and understood by the students.

**Example of a context check in English**

Intonational changes in English are deeply semantic in nature. The simple utterance "I'm hungry" can be either exuberant, plaintive, questioning or a pure statement of fact. The context in which it is said lends it its particular semantic overtones. Were we to try to show this sentence as a model of intonational changes when the inter-
locutor was in a very good mood and in an informal social situation, we would first begin our presentation making the above situation and mood explicit, perhaps, beginning with the general situation and gradually narrowing to the personal mood of the speaker. To verify student comprehension of these important elements of the context, we could proceed to check in the following manner:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Context check (Teacher)</th>
<th>Correct response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Is he alone?&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;No, he's with some friends.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Is he happy or sad?&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;He's very happy.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>or &quot;How does he feel?&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;He's very happy.&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After an exuberant, "I'm hungry" is introduced, we might reinforce the mood with further checks:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Context check (Teacher)</th>
<th>Correct response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Is he really hungry?&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;Yes&quot; or &quot;No,&quot; depending on presentation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Is he upset about it?&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;No,&quot; (He's in a good mood ...).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Example of a bad context check

After the same presentation, this question is asked: "Is he happy, excited, surprised or just crazy?" A student would be hard pressed to answer this question. It is perhaps too long and certainly contains too many concepts to choose from. Moreover, these moods are very similar and may lead to the same intonational change. The question certainly doesn't narrow the context to the point where the model sentence can be presented without fear of ambiguity.
Concept Checks

Implicit in language is a semantic undertow which the mere manipulation of structure, tense changes and so on, cannot account for. Between the native language of the students and the target language, there is sometimes a great deal of semantic overlap and, often, very little at all. Concept checks are very important when a particular concept is different from one in the native language or altogether absent. Such is the case of the "present perfect" for native speakers of French learning English. Concept checks, like those for context, are short and unambiguous. They usually consist of short series of questions, as seen below, which serve to illuminate and define the semantic value of the language element and which is referred to here as a Concept Question Paradigm (C & P). Of course, we cannot use the language element itself in a concept question. We cannot test with what is being introduced.

Example of a concept check in French

The model sentence: "Il prenait son repas à la même heure tous les jours," is an example of the concept of a discontinued past habit, akin to the "use to" structure in English. After presenting the context and verifying it, we might establish the following C & P to highlight and define the concept:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concept check (Teacher)</th>
<th>Correct response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Est-ce qu'il prend son repas à la même heure maintenant?&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;Non.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Et autrefois?&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;Oui.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Souvent?&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;Oui. &quot;Pour les jours.&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Example of a concept check in English

Having chosen the concept of a "discontinued past habit," as illustrated through the structure "used to + infinitive," we present a context leading to our model sentence. We might say something like, "When David was a little boy, he rode his bike all the time. Every day, he rode his bike to school. When he was sixteen he learned to drive and never rode a bicycle again." We want to introduce the model sentence, "David used to ride a bike;" but, before doing so, we verify that the concept has been assimilated through the use of a concept question paradigm:

Concept check (Teacher) Correct response
"Does he ride a bike now?" "No."
"Did he ride a bike?" "Yes."
"Often?" "Yes."

This CQP composed of three questions excludes other possible concepts, but the one illustrated by the model sentence.

Examples of bad concept checks

The above paradigm is concise and to the point. It can be referred to at a later time as an informal rule of thumb of that particular concept. Because it is concise and limited in scope, it is easy to transgress those delimitations into other conceptual areas or flounder in vague territory. For the above concept, questions such as "Is he riding a bike?" and "Does he like riding a bike?" are obviously bad examples of checks.

They are irrelevant and confusing. "Did he use to ride a bike?" is unacceptable because it uses the language element being
introduced. We cannot evaluate comprehension in this manner. If the question is asked, "Is he in the habit of riding a bike?", it is easy to see the confusion with "I'm used to it". The guidelines are quite strict, in fact, for a Concept Question Paradigm.

Form Checks

When we are not focusing on the concept implicit in a new language element, we focus on its form, which is, after all, one of the components of correct language usage. We are usually expected to be able to spell and pronounce correctly as well as manipulate the syntactic features of the language appropriately. Form checks verify that we are doing these things correctly; they isolate and highlight the form being checked. They are also unambiguous and concise. Form checks should be presented in a meaningful context.

Example of a form check in French

When focusing on the form of the "passé composé avec le verbe être comme auxiliaire" we can verify that subject verb agreement is being done properly through the following riddle:

Jean-Pierre cherche sa femme et son fils à la maison. Ils ont laissé un mot chacun, mais le chien a déchiré les papiers. Aidez Jean-Pierre à recoller les morceaux. Où sont-ils?

The correct answers are: "Je suis allé au match de football (Fils)." and "Je suis allée à la boulangerie."
Example of a form check in English

We wish to check the form "used to + infinitive" in written form. Students are asked to solve a mystery by finding the answers to a series of questions. The answers are given, but the words are jumbled.

Form check:
"The missing woman's identity card indicated she was a waitress. Detective Jones went to the town cafe and showed her picture to the cook. He asked: "Does she work here?" The cook answered "Used/she/work/to/here."

Correct response:
"She used to work here."

The students have found the correct syntactic order and are one step closer to solving the mystery.

Example of a bad form check

If the cook had responded, "that/used/she/could/it/to/work/be/here," the student would probably be confused. "It could be that she used to work here" is certainly not concise, but contains superfluous (and thus confusing) elements which seem to go beyond what was taught.
Earlier, it was suggested that, since LVT's are destined for practical use, they must be seen within the framework of an actual lesson. Although several examples of the use of checks have been given, it would be useful to see how certain LVT's are of aid in certain parts of the lesson, how they are gradually succeeded by other forms of checks and how, given the general course of the lesson, we can actually plan for their use appropriately in the various stages of the lesson. In fact, two lesson plans are presented here. They are both based on the communicative syllabus and corresponding methodology. They are, respectively, based on the inductive and deductive approaches. These are not, of course, the only approaches possible.

The Inductive Presentation

Economical presentation of new language often takes an inductive form. Implicit in the inductive presentation is the notion that a need has been created on the part of the students, for either a new language element or the explanation and definition of the core element. Need constitutes a meaningful context for the introduction of new language. Then, from a specific example, a model of the language element, we proceed to semantic-linguistic generalizations and practice with the new language. The inductive model which follows is economical
in that the teacher creates a precise context for new language and channels that context towards the establishment of a need for the new language element. At that point, the "model" is given.

By isolating and focusing on particular pieces of language, we aim to shortcut the (natural and thus random) inductive learning process.

The pieces of language on which the learner is to model his own behaviour should always represent significant generalizations about the structure of the language.

Most commonly, and rightly, it is the grammatical system which is learned in this way: but the generalizations could equally represent significant facts of stylistic or socio-linguistic use.

In many foreign language classrooms, the model of new language is accompanied by rules governing the linguistic behavior of that element and explaining its use. The communicative approach neglects neither the semantic value of the new element nor its linguistic form. Generalizations taking the form of rules are generally avoided, however. Relying on rules places the emphasis on "formal learning," as opposed to "acquisition." To "enhance" acquisition, the communicative approach to the inductive lesson places new language in a meaningful context; important points are highlighted and defined by L V T's; we provide for meaningful practice and ever increasing freedom in the use of the new language.

The Deductive Presentation

In the standard deductive approach, "students are given a grammatical rule with examples before they practice the use of a particular structure." This explicit approach works well with advanced students when dealing with complicated aspects of the
grammatical system. The model lesson plan which follows uses a "modified" deductive approach where generalizations about the model are implicit and not explicit. In the modified approach, we can highlight semantic guidelines for use of the new language element through concept questions and, if desirable, context checks; these may be given to the students outright or quickly elicited and reinforced. Once again, it is an attempt to avoid analysis through "rules," when it can be avoided. LV T's can continue to be used in the production stages of the lesson, as in the inductive model.

Other Presentations

While the inductive and deductive presentations are often used and will be developed here as models showing LV T's use, there are many other possible presentations. Recalling that we should not limit ourselves to only one technique or method, we must take into account student levels and needs. Certain language elements, moreover, can best be presented by other techniques. Some of the other presentations include: skill-based, simple function, multiple register function, translation, contrastive function, contrastive structure, multiple structure/single concept, multiple concept/single structure, etc. . . 6

Given the primarily semantic nature of language, context and concept will probably have to be dealt with using any of the above approaches. For this reason, LV T's adapted to the various presentations will prove to be a valuable tool.
The Inductive Model

When to Use It and Why

The inductive presentation is probably most suitable for beginning-to-intermediate levels. At these levels, we wish to enhance the process of language acquisition rather than engage the student's powers of reasoning or burden them with formal grammar which may hinder fluency. Certain language elements can also lend themselves easily, clearly and most efficiently to such a developmental sequence.

Contour of the Inductive Model

Presentation

An inductive lesson plan is composed of distinct lesson stages. In the presentation stage, the teacher prepares for the introduction of the new language element by "setting the scene." He quickly sketches the context; he then engages student participation and verifies comprehension of the important elements of that context through the use of context checks. At this point, context is narrowed so that other interpretations of the model and inherent concepts are excluded. A concept question paradigm or other form of context check may be utilized at this moment to rephrase and determine the semantic value of the model. The presentation stage of a lesson should be minimal, as little as five percent of the total lesson, so as to ensure maximum practice with the new language.

After we have assured ourselves that the context is clear,
the model is presented. We can again refer to the example, "He used to ride a bike." Before practice of form, we might again recapitulate with a concept check. Certain that the students have understood the basic concept, we proceed to focus on form. We repeat the model at natural speed and then, so that the students are aware of the constituent elements of the phrase, we decontract, enunciating each word separately: "He - used - to - ride - a - bike." We can use our fingers as if we were counting on them to illustrate the point. We do not allow the students to repeat a "decontracted" model, as it differs phonetically from the "contracted" model: /hiː juːs tuː raid ə baɪk/ vs /hɪˈjuːstəraidəbaɪk/. When students have seen the separate elements, an exercise designed to help them manipulate the form, we contract so that students have a working spoken model. If appropriate to the language being taught, as is the case of English, the teacher can "beat" the intonation much as an orchestra leader. To enable students the chance to "set their mouth around the sounds," the teacher cues for choral repetition, repeating the model sparingly if difficulties arise (or taking other remedial action) and then individually to a few selected class members, so that it doesn't drag on. Thus far, then, the students have become acquainted with the concept of the new language element in a meaningful context and are able to express the model.

The teacher then provides a short, meaningful context so that the model may be expanded: "David's sister often rode a bike
as a girl, but she never rides one now." This leads to: "She used to ride a bike." and "They. . . ." We can transfer the model to the students: "I used to go to school" and "We used to ride bikes." Using the same context, we can do choral and, then, individual substitution drilling using cues; e.g., a picture of the sister as a girl on her bike. . . We can subsequently expand or introduce new contexts as vehicles for more complex drills.

After this stage, context checks will no longer be used unless it seems necessary to clarify. Concept and form checks will have already been effected and will probably be used to correct or reinforce on an individual level when students begin pre-communicative activities in pairs and the teacher passes from group to group. As communication activities become more complex and the teacher lessens his control of and intervention in those activities, the latter LV T's will be used rarely. As the students open up to free use of the language element, skill checks can be used to verify its complete assimilation.

Chart and model Lesson Plan

The contour of the inductive model and the stages of the lesson, as indicated above, are shown in figure 1, column A. Part B of the diagram demonstrates the different types of LV T's which can be incorporated into the inductive lesson and the probable place where they will be used. A model lesson plan, illustrating the above in a practical context, follows (figure 2).
The Deductive Model

When to Use It and Why

With advanced students who are well motivated and who have acquired the basics of "linguistic reasoning," it is possible to use a deductive approach. It is a particularly useful approach when confronting complex subtleties of a language.

Contour of the Presentation

When the model is presented in a deductive lesson, students have not had the specific context pointed out to them, nor has a communication need been created through a narrowing of context. Instead, the model is given before anything else. Then the context, concept and form are deduced by students. The teacher uses student deductions as the basis for LV T's to highlight, clarify and define the important points. From this moment, the lesson closely resembles that of the inductive model. Depending on the level and ability of the students, the teacher may or may not wish to use deconstruction of the model, choral and individual repetition and drills. Control-led-to-freer practice with the language element will follow initial examples of the new language.

Chart and Model Lesson Plan for the Deductive Approach

Figure 3, column A shows the contour of the deductive model with the stages of a lesson, while column B indicates the various types of LV T's that can be used and their approximate place in the lesson.
Following the diagram is a model lesson plan using the deductive approach, intended to be a practical example of how to incorporate LV T's into a lesson (figure 4).

2. Wilkins, Teaching, p. 70.
8. TEFL intensive course, personal notes.
A. Stages of Presentation

1. Teacher creates context.
2. The context is narrowed and focused.
3. A need or gap in knowledge shown.
5. Model highlighted:
   a. concept.
   b. form (decontract-contrast-repetition).
7. Students copy
8. Intensive practice - consolidation of target:
   a. written exercises.
   b. dialogue building.
   c. listening (and...) exercises.
   d. reading (and...) exercises.
   e. etc.
9. Extensive practice and production exercises. Skills work with the target as a secondary objective.
10. Presentation of new language using the target.
11. Students produce the new language element appropriately and naturally.

B. Use of LVTs

Learner's Competence + "$X$"
**Figure 2. Model lesson plan: inductive presentation**

**Aim**

1. To teach the "present perfect." Form: I - have + en. Concept: Habit in a period leading up to the present time. Example: "He has worked there for two years."

2. Introduce parallel concepts of for (focus on period of time) and since (focus on moment in past the "habit" began).

3. Introduce the inverted question form with how long, e.g.: "How long has he worked at the supermarket?"

**Level**

Intermediate

**Problems**

1. Confusion with present tenses, e.g. "He is working..." and "He works..."
2. Confusion of for and since.
3. Confusion between contracted "He has" and "He is," both being "He's."

**Assumptions**

Students already know the simple past and discontinued past habit: "used to."

**Aids**

Pictures, whiteboard, pairwork worksheets; personal information. Roleplay cards featuring language element. Tapes with listening passages and reading passage containing concept. Task and comprehension activities to accompany reading and listening.

**Time**

This language element could be developed over several class periods.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lesson stages and complementary explanations</th>
<th>Lesson Plan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1) Create Context</strong></td>
<td>Presentation Picture of man working in supermarket. Establish it's now. Picture of man in supermarket with date: 1982. &quot;He started work there in 1982.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2) Create need for new language element. Concept Q Paradigm</strong></td>
<td>&quot;Where does John work now?&quot; &quot;When did he start?&quot; &quot;How long?&quot; 1982 Now time line on board: Indicate date started and present time. Repeat answers to Concept Qa. ASK &quot;How long?&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3) Model presentation</strong></td>
<td>MODEL: &quot;He's worked in a supermarket for two years.&quot; Decontract - Contract; Choral and individual repetition.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **4) Restate C Q P**                        | "Where does John work now?" "When did he start?" (Can refer to Time Line) "How Long?"

**5) Introduce for and since. Drill.** Show time line. Indicate difference between for and since Drill using for and since

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>two years</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>6) Provide context for expanded model. Drill.</strong> Say: &quot;John's family owns the supermarket; here they are with the date they started working there.&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Elicit: "She's/They've/He's worked there for x years. SINCE 19__._

Drill: Substitute subject as well as for and since. |
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</table>
| 7) Transfer; personalise. Introduce question form. | Introduce: "How long has John worked there?"
|   | "How long . . . ?"
| 8) 1° pairwork exercise | With information sheet. Students find out where other students work and how long they have worked there.
| 9) Vertical extension | Introduce other examples.
|   | Ask: "Where do you live?" and "How long . . . ?"
|   | "Do you have a car?"
|   | "Are you married?"
| 10) Reading | Students read text, answer questions.
| 11) Expanded pairs . . . | Students use expanded work sheet (A poll, for example).
|   | Ask questions of other students.
| 12) Listening exercise | "You are an employer. Listen to these people who are applying for a job. You want someone who is stable. You want someone who has been married at least five years, who has lived in the area two years.
|   | Choose the best person.
|   | Give reasons for your choice.
| 13) Dialogue Building | Context: Party. Each student has role card (give time to get into their respective roles.)
|   | Give example of exchange:

A

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduce yourself.</td>
<td>Greet partner. Introduce yourself.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ask what your partner does.</td>
<td>Respond. Ask the same question.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respond. Say goodbye.</td>
<td>Say goodbye.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

B

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14) Task completion | Students given specific task demonstrating ability to use new language element: Job interview, polls, mystery, murder case, and so on.
| 15) Skills work | Further work can include jigsaw reading, letter-writing, dialogue or reading summary, etc. |
Figure 3. Contour of a lesson: deductive approach

A. Stages of presentation

1. Teacher presents model.
2. Teacher presents examples and elicits generalizations from students about:
   a. Context
   b. Concept
   c. Form
3. Teacher highlights context.
4. Teacher highlights concept.
5. Optional highlighting of form:
   a. Decontract—contract
   b. Choral and individual repetition
   c. Meaningful drilling
6. Intensive practice and consolidation:
   a. Written work
   b. Dialogue building
   c. Listening (and...) exercises
   d. Reading (and...) exercises
7. Extensive practice and production. Skills work with target as a secondary objective.
8. New target element can be used for the generation of new language.
9. Students produce new language appropriately and naturally.

B. Use of LV Ts
Figure 4. Model lesson plan: deductive presentation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lesson stages and explanations</th>
<th>&quot;Lesson Plan&quot;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2) Teacher and students expose: a) Context Elicit: &quot;Où était Paul hier soir?&quot; &quot;Au bal.&quot; &quot;Qu’est-ce qu’il a fait, la-bas?&quot; &quot;Il a dansé et il a bu.&quot; &quot;Est-ce qu’il a beaucoup bu?&quot; &quot;Oui.&quot;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) Concept</td>
<td>&quot;Est-ce que Jean est content auprès de Paul?&quot; &quot;Non.&quot; &quot;Pourquoi?&quot; &quot;Il pense qu’il a trop bu.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restate concept</td>
<td>Rephrase, highlight concept.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) Form</td>
<td>Repeat &quot;Il n’aurait pas dû boire autanx.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>test form</td>
<td>Elicit component parts from students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- give other infinitives (such as: dépenser, dormir, manger)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- short drill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) Elicit affirmative mode of model (with passive question).</td>
<td>Reiterate Paul’s situation (Gueule de bois). Ask: &quot;Qu’est-ce qu’il aurait dû faire?&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;Il aurait dû boire de l’eau.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) Students give other examples (of possible course of action.)</td>
<td>&quot;Il aurait dû aller à la maison plus tôt.&quot; (etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5) Picture sequences.</td>
<td>Picture sequences show sequence of events in past which have evidently &quot;mal terminés.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elicit examples of first model. (Expand model; elle, il, elle . . . )</td>
<td>Students: &quot;Ils n’auraient pas dû toucher le bouton.&quot; (ETC.)</td>
</tr>
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</tbody>
</table>
| 6) Work in pairs | Students find other possible courses of action corresponding to picture sequences: "Ils auraient dû . . . ."
| 7) Listen and . . . (write) | Students listen to a situation with unfortunate results. They must indicate in two columns . . .
|   | 1
|   | Qu’est-ce qu’il (elle, ils)
|   | n’aurait pas du faire?
|   | 2
|   | Qu’est-ce qu’il (elle, ils . . )
|   | aurait dû faire?
| 8) Roleplay | Each student has role card giving context of past events and of course, present situation (setting, character, etc). The role play is designed so as to feature use of the new language element.
|   | - Students have time to prepare roles.
|   | - Roles are played once or twice, for more natural use of the language.
| 9) Transfer: Free stage of language | Now the teacher asks: "Pensez à des choses semblables (to picture sequence, etc) qui vous sont arrivées."
|   | Students proceed as for picture sequence above.
|   | Teacher can reinforce concept with questions:
|   | - "Est-ce que vous êtes contents de ce qui vous est arrivé?"
|   | - "Pourquoi pas?" (Peut-être: "Je n’aurais pas dû . . . .")
|   | - "Est-ce qu’il n’y avait pas une autre façon d’agir?"
|   | (élève: "Si, j’aurais dû . . . .")
| 10) Skills work | The frequency of this new language element will decrease as it is incorporated into the students existing competency. Further skill work should reflect this and may consist of letter-writing, story summaries, further task completion, etc.
CHAPTER VIII

LINKING LEARNING VERIFICATION CHECKS TO SKILL AREAS

Having considered why, how and when we use LV T's, we now take up two final aspects of their design. First, teachers issue LV T's and students respond through one of several skill areas, as provided for in LV T design. The formulation of LV T's varies according to these modes. Second, the form of checks varies not only according to the particular aspect of the language element group being checked (context, form, concept, etc. . . ), but can also vary within one group (e.g. context). These variations occur because of the language element, the stage of the lesson and the level of the students.

LV T Modes: Eliciting, Receiving and Responding

Cue Mode

The teacher in a communicative classroom employs LV T's by issuing cues and eliciting correct responses from students. Cues may be expressed through any one of three cue modes: oral, written or non-verbal. Oral cues are those issued by the teacher in spoken or recorded form. Non-verbal cues may consist of mime, pictures, diagrams, symbols, realia, classroom objects, etc. . . Written cues may include either specially designed or authentic material selected by the teacher for use in the classroom.

Directions to students for using the cues, whether oral, written
or non-verbal, may also take an oral, written or non-verbal form.

Reception Mode

necessarily, the student receives the cues in the following ways:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher cue</th>
<th>Student reception mode</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Oral cue</td>
<td>Listening</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Written cue</td>
<td>Reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-verbal cue</td>
<td>Observation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Because of this correlation between cue and reception mode, they will be considered as synonymous from this point and referred to as the cue mode.

Teacher cues must, of course, be as clear and consistent as possible if the student is to understand them correctly. Students will quickly become attuned to "standard" cues and will become more adept at understanding new cues and their use.

Response Mode

Just as there are three cue modes, there are also three response modes. Regardless of what form the cue mode takes, the student can respond orally, in written form or non-verbally. The teacher chooses and includes in directions to students the skill role through which students are expected to respond.

Student response, regardless of the mode, is meant to demonstrate student comprehension of context, concept, form or other. The following examples demonstrate how a teacher might provide a cue and the way in which the student could respond.
Cue mode | response mode
---|---
Oral: "Can he ride a bike?" | Oral: "No."
Written: "Dans le texte, où se trouve Hélène?" | Written: "Elle est dans une banque."
Oral: "Fermer la porte." | Non-Verbal: Student closes door.

Verifying Context

When we are checking that students have understood the situation, the mood or other factors of context relevant to the model language element to be introduced, we employ the simplest of the L V T's. We can usually highlight and verify an important element of the context with a single question:

**Teacher cue (oral)**

Setting: "Est-ce que Jean est dans un supermarché?"

Situation: "Pourquoi?"

Mood: "Est-ce qu'il est content?"

**Student response (oral)**

"Non, il est dans une banque."

"Il n'a pas d'argent."

"Non, il est trèse heureux."

After having verified that context is clear to students, we can proceed to model presentation (assuming an inductive presentation).

Verifying Form

What We Test

At the stage of the lesson where we are focusing on form or not concept we use form checks to verify structure, oral production, vocabulary and other "non-context" items of the communicative syllabus.
Regarding structure, we probably will want to verify correct use and the ability to manipulate and change structure correctly. We also verify the pronunciation, stress and intonation changes of oral production. With vocabulary we assess spelling, correct pluralization and so on. The remaining non-context items of the communicative syllabus, such as functions, general notions and specific notions, can often be broken down into smaller units where we can test correct usage, spelling, manipulation, structure changes and, more generally, syntax.

**Form in a Meaningful Context**

As part of a communicative strategy, we always try to place form checks in a meaningful context, rather than produce them as isolated exercises which have no bearing or what came before or will come after in the lesson except manipulation of structure. A possible example of a form check could take drill form:

1) Context: "Jean arrive tard du travail. Il veut faire une omelette. Il regarde dans le frigo." (This can be given in students native language.)

2) Context checks can be applied to the drill context to verify that students have understood: "Quand est-ce que Jean arrive chez lui?" "Est-ce qu'il a soif?" etc.

3) Form focus: manipulation of partitive articles, affirmative and negative (concept: presence and absence of something.)
4) Visual aids: Teacher prepares aids showing Jean's refrigerator and what he has and hasn't got in it. Teacher can use non-verbal cue, probably pointing to those things in the "he's got some" and "he hasn't got any" columns.

5) Drill:

T - Il n'a pas de tomates.
T - Il n'a pas de tomates.
S - Il a du lait
S - Il n'a pas de noix.
S - etc . . .

Teacher presents example of drill substitution using cues (visual aids.)
These responses are cued by the teacher's pointing to the visual aids. All of the vocabulary and structure will have been previously taught, of course.

Ways to Verify Form

Although not constituting a complete list, the following general strategies can be employed when verifying form: they are given in order from simple to more complex. 1) Repetition of the model sentence chorally and individually allows the teacher to discern errors of pronunciation, stress, intonation and syntax. The meaningful context is that of the presentation. 2) The teacher can employ substitution drills, as above. 3) Students can be asked to correct speaker or written errors. 4) Fragments of sentences can be ordered to test syntax. 5) Students can do oral or written completion exercises or 6) can circle correct structures.
in the manner of multiple choice. 7) They may also require reading passages that have been mixed (jigsaw) according to syntactic logic. 8) Given context and the base form of a sentence, students can write correct, complete sentences. 9) Students can indicate intonation patterns in spoken utterances. 10) Students may be asked to change the intonation of a sentence according to cues.

**Verifying Concept**

Concept checks focus on the semantic base of the language and not on its form. Context, either implicit or as made explicit by the teacher with student participation, is the background necessary to full understanding of meaning. In the presentation stage, the concept question paradigm is the base of concept checks, at least as far as grammatical meaning is concerned. Other basic strategies employed to verify that the concept is clear and understood are identification by students of the concept, the choice of the correct concept in a given context, task completion and correct use of concept in a free context. Only a summary of possible checks is given here because the extended chart gives specific examples of concept checks.

**Summary of the Learning Verification Techniques Hot for Concept**

Having developed the idea that LVT's can be of value to both teacher and student in the L. L. classroom, the following chart (Figure 5) is intended to summarize this development within the context of a classroom situation. Use of such a chart, perhaps redesigned to apply more directly to the foreign language concerned, serves as easy reference for the provision of concept checks in daily lesson plans. Although concerned primarily with the idea of concept, it is
also intended to be, more generally, a basic model for similar charts pertaining to form, context, communication skills or other fundamental elements of a lesson which might be conceived of by teachers from their own point of view.

The chart is divided, from left to right, into those areas of the communicative syllabus which are subject to concept checks (functions, General notions, Structure...). Each of these areas is further divided into three parts representing the synonymous cue-reception modes: oral/listening, written/reading and non-verbal/observation. Each cue-reception mode for each area intersects vertically with each of the three response modes. At these intersections are found practical examples of concept checks. Thus, in the area of functions, when the cue is oral, we can find examples of checks where the student responds orally, others where the response is written and still other checks where the response is non-verbal. A teacher preparing a lesson can plan for LV T's to be used in that lesson by choosing the area of the new language element, the mode through which the student will be expected to respond. In the chart, the possible concept checks are listed in presumed order of difficulty, from simple to more complex in descending order.

1Cue modes are primarily oral, written or non-verbal, i.e., we may accompany an oral cue with a descriptive gesture (non-verbal) and so on.

2Here, non-verbal applies only to the fact that the cue used to elicit student response is unspoken and unwritten. Verbalization is probably inherent to the thought process, at least in a language classroom.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ORAL</th>
<th>WRITTEN</th>
<th>NON-VERBAL (NV)</th>
<th>ORAL</th>
<th>WRITTEN</th>
<th>NON-VERBAL (NV)</th>
<th>ORAL</th>
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</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>6) Correct speaker error.</td>
<td>7) Oral completion, focus on concept.</td>
<td>8) Write story, dialogue writing.</td>
<td>9) Complete written task.</td>
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<td>4) Choice of appropriate (SN)</td>
<td>5) Choice of appropriate (SN)</td>
<td>6) Choice of appropriate (SN)</td>
<td>7) Choice of appropriate (SN)</td>
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<tr>
<td>9) Appropriate use of (SN)</td>
<td>10) Appropriate use of (SN)</td>
<td>11) Appropriate use of (SN)</td>
<td>12) Appropriate use of (SN)</td>
<td>13) Appropriate use of (SN)</td>
<td>14) Appropriate use of (SN)</td>
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<td>15) Use of (SN)</td>
<td>16) Use of (SN)</td>
<td>17) Use of (SN)</td>
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<tr>
<td>21) Use of (SN) in fitting way, letters, notes, stories, etc.</td>
<td>22) Use of (SN) in fitting way, letters, notes, stories, etc.</td>
<td>23) Use of (SN) in fitting way, letters, notes, stories, etc.</td>
<td>24) Use of (SN) in fitting way, letters, notes, stories, etc.</td>
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<td>26) Use of (SN) in fitting way, letters, notes, stories, etc.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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**Note:** The table continues on the next page.
Other language elements.

Oral Production consists of:
1) Intonation
2) Stress
3) Pronunciation

- Style and Register

The following chart for verification of concept in intonation is a model for the remaining language elements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Oral Production, First Part (Intonation)</th>
<th>Oral</th>
<th>Written</th>
<th>Non-Verbal (NV)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) Identify intonation changes corresponding to concept, e.g.: attention.</td>
<td>1) Identify intonation changes.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) Recognition of (I) changes representing same concept.</td>
<td>2) Close phrases according to intonation.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) Conditional intonation changes in situations.</td>
<td>3) Indicate intonation error in symbol form.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) Correct intonation changes in context.</td>
<td>4) Write responses to changing voice of song, etc.</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5) Supply intonation from written context.</td>
<td>5) Correct intonation error from context.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6) Supply appropriate intonation for roleplay, etc.</td>
<td>6) Supply appropriate intonation from written context.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7) Using story, dialogue, etc. explaining mood, humor, etc. implicit from intonation.</td>
<td>7) From mood cards and picture sequence, write story using literary devices to approximate probable intonation.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Oral Production, Second Part (Stress)</th>
<th>Oral</th>
<th>Written</th>
<th>Non-Verbal (NV)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) Identify intonation changes.</td>
<td>1) From context, use written devices meant to give tone approximate intonation changes: letter, note, story-writing.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) Close phrases according to intonation.</td>
<td>2) Choice of appropriate symbols, mood cards, etc. for above context.</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3) Conditional intonation changes in situations.</td>
<td>3) From mood cards and picture sequence, write dialogue using literary devices to convey concept of change in intonation.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) Correct intonation changes in context.</td>
<td>4) Contrastive use of same utterance, different contexts.</td>
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</table>

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>Oral</th>
<th>Written</th>
<th>Non-Verbal (NV)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) Identify intonation changes.</td>
<td>1) Intonation pattern changes from mood cards.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>2) Close phrases according to intonation.</td>
<td>2) Roleplay, dialogue, etc. including intonation changes suggested by mood cards. Action, suggested by picture sequence, etc.</td>
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<td>3) Conditional intonation changes in situations.</td>
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CHAPTER IX

CONCLUSION: IMPROVING FOREIGN LANGUAGE

TEACHING AND LEARNING

The primary concern of this thesis has been the use of certain techniques designed to improve teaching and learning in the foreign language classroom. Because these techniques have grown out of socio-cultural viewpoints and methods, that are currently evolving it was felt necessary to elucidate them. They include, in particular, the communicative syllabus and certain hypotheses regarding language acquisition which place emphasis on meaningful communication.

Learning Verification Techniques are designed for actual use in the foreign language classroom. So that their full value could be seen and appreciated it was thus imperative that a genuine classroom context be taken for granted. Two model lesson plans and the communicative rationale behind them were the result. Initial examination of communicative classroom techniques were also demonstrated and their use justified from a standpoint which accepted meaningful communication as central.

The communicative syllabus was chosen as the basis for the model lesson plans because it takes student needs into account and promotes natural use of the language in a meaningful context, thus encouraging acquisition and fluency. Furthermore, it prepares students better for actual communication in the language.
The role of LVT's as a means of verifying student comprehension and enhancing student learning goes beyond the role played by tests in the classroom. The place of testing was analyzed and contrasted with the potential utility of LVT's for both student and teacher.

Design and utilization of LVT's in actual lessons was demonstrated so that their formulation and use could be seen as viable. The accompanying diagrams and the chart for classroom use of concept checks were meant to illustrate these same points.

The incorporation of LVT's into foreign language lessons is valuable because it gives the teacher more accurate feedback, allows for clearer presentations and provides a tool for reinforcement and redefinition of important points as well as for verification of comprehension. The student is able to understand presentations better and receive constructive feedback at crucial moments. When new material is presented clearly and concisely and when the teacher is assured of student comprehension, greater time can be given to student use of the language. Language thus, develops from a more solid base.
SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Books Cited


Journals Cited


Other Materials Cited


International Teacher Training Institute, International House, Lisbon. One month intensive TEFL course, September, 1982 (personal notes).

Other Works Consulted


