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ABSTRACT

A discussion of second language teaching techniques that appeal to adult students looks at general principles of motivation and how they may apply in specific classroom activities. Theories of motivation and human needs are examined, and the role of language in meeting communication needs is considered. Communication activities for developing language proficiency at various levels are also discussed. The activities include some that are level-specific and some that can be adapted to the level of the participants. The adapted communication activities include paraphrasing (summarizing) an oral presentation, asking questions about an overheard conversation, reading authentic texts for key information, reconstructing newscasts, role-playing real life situations, and interpreting for a mute monolingual English speaker. (MSE)

ACTFL MASTER LECTURE SERIES

Motivating the Language Learner Through Real Communication

Frank W. Medley

January 1984

Faculty and Staff Development Division
Assistant Dean for Instruction

DEFENSE LANGUAGE INSTITUTE
FOREIGN LANGUAGE CENTER
Presidio of Monterey, California 93944-5006

FOREWARD

For the past several years, prominent members of the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) have been presenting lectures to the faculty and staff of the Defense Language Institute, Foreign Language Center. The purpose of these lectures has been to discuss recent trends and developments in foreign language learning and teaching as well as to strengthen professional contacts between DLIFLC and ACTFL.

The ACTFL Master Lecture, "Motivating the Language Learner Through Real Communication," by Dr. Fred W. Medley, was presented at the DLIFLC in January 1984. This paper is published to make the content of the lecture fully accessible to the DLIFLC professionals.

The ideas and opinions expressed in this paper are those of the author and do not necessarily represent an official position of the DLIFLC nor of any other element of the United States Department of Defense.

Inquiries should be addressed to:

Commandant
Defense Language Institute
Foreign Language Center
ATTN: ATFL-DIN-FS
Dr. Lidia Woytak, Editor
Presidio of Monterey, CA 93944-5006

The only student who becomes proficient in a foreign language, generally, is that student who wants to become proficient. The attitude of the learner is undoubtedly the single most important factor in the development of facility in another tongue. In a recent study, Naiman, Fröhlich and Stern (1975) asked a group of thirty-four students who had been identified as "good language learners" to list the factors that influenced second language acquisition. The two words most often used were immersion and motivation. (cited in Krashen, 1981) Since the setting at the Defense Language Institute (hereinafter referred to as DLI) already approaches immersion, our discussion today will focus on some general principles of motivation and some specific classroom activities that serve as examples of the types of learning environments which appeal to the adult student learning a second language. This is the first of four papers that will be presented to DLI personnel in which practical methods and techniques for the teaching of foreign languages will be discussed. While all performance areas and culture will be treated in this session, the other addresses will center on speaking and writing, listening and reading, and the cultural context.

Motivation has been defined as "the recognition by a person of a situation that he feels stimulated to complete or which stimulates him to contribute to its stability or modification. It is a general term used to refer to any arousal of an individual toward goal-directed behavior." (Theodorson and Theodorson, 1970) Samuel Ball summarizes the large body of research on motivation with nine general statements, some of which have direct implications for foreign language instruction His observations are presented here without additional comment, since they are largely self-explanatory.

1. People are differently motivated.

2. People need to see themselves as responsible for their own learning.

3. Successful performance should be attributed to ability.

4. Cooperative learning situations are less threatening, but competetive [situations] lead to greater self-esteem.

5. Students should see themselves as origins of their own behavior rather than as 'pawns pushed by external forces'.

6. Mild anxiety levels may enhance learning.

7. Teachers should try to enhance confidence level of students with respect to achievement.

8. Overstructured classrooms inhibit curiosity.

9. Incentives and reinforcements influence behaviors; individuals have their own set of preferred reinforcements.

(Ball, 1982)

With these principles in mind, then, let us consider another concept that is equally important to an understanding of how to motivate students with real communication activities.

Abraham Maslow (1970) has theorized a hierarchy of needs to explain human behavior (see Figure 1). According to the theory, the most basic needs of the organism are those related to survival -- the physiological needs. Maslow speculates that "in the human being who is missing everything in life in an extreme fashion, it is most likely that the major motivation would be the physiological needs rather than any others. A person who is lacking food, safety, love, and esteem would most probably hunger for food more strongly than for anything else." (p. 37) In the taxonomy, however, as one need is met, another emerges, as one moves up the scale toward the higher needs.

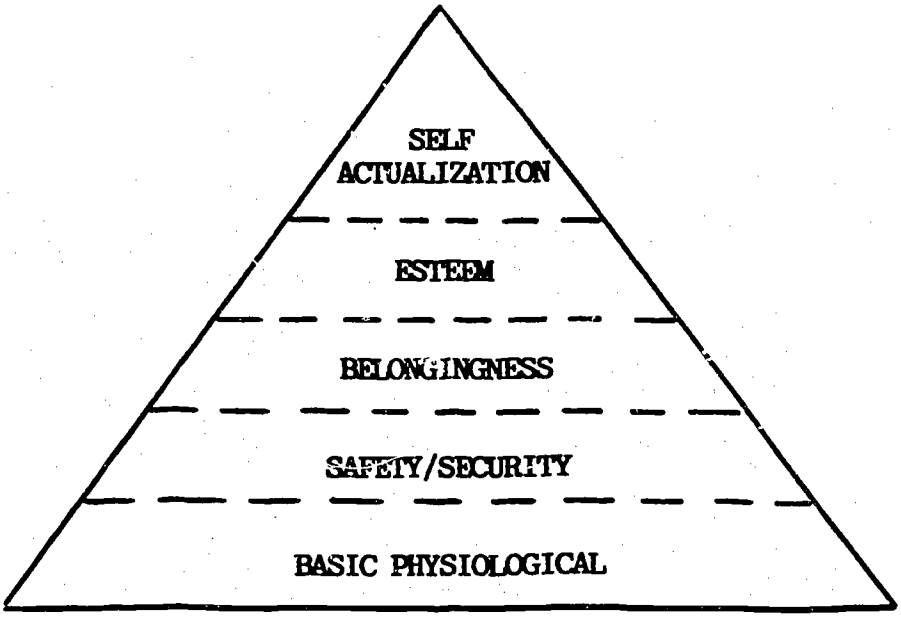

Figure 1
MASLOW'S HIERARCHY OF NEEDS

As language teachers, we are not generally expected to overtly address the basic physiological needs of our students. However, the types of activities that we bring into the classroom can influence all other needs categories identified by Maslow by providing students with a sense of security, a feeling of belonging to the class, a positive image of themselves as users of the second language, and finally by establishing in them a desire to continue in their pursuit of excellence beyond the initial period of instruction. Our students, just as we, "like" those things that meet their (our) needs, either consciously or subconsciously. To the extent that we meet these needs of the students, then, we "motivate" our students. And, as Guntermann and Phillips (1982) point out, students regard communication with members of other cultures as the principal purpose of foreign language today. (p. 1) Thus, if we teach our students to communicate in the second language, we are meeting a specific "need" which they, themselves, have iden-

tified. And similarly, those classroom activities that involve real communication will be most motivational to the students, since they are most immediately related to their needs and interests.

In a study of motivational variables in second-language acquisition reported by Gardner and Lambert (1972), motivation was classified as either "integrative," where the learner desired to know more about the people of the language group and to use the language for social purposes, or "instrumental," where the learner was interested in the utilitarian aspects of the language. But while this distinction may prove useful in analyzing the reason for wanting to learn a language, the fact remains that it is necessary for students to feel that the classroom activities lead to fulfillment of their own needs, so that as learners they will be motivated to perform in the instructional setting.

Currently there is great interest in the profession in using the concept of proficiency as a principle around which to organize instruction. And as functional proficiency more and more becomes the primary goal of language teaching, it also becomes of greater importance to distinguish between those activities that simply drill language form (i.e. pattern drills) for the sake of drill and those activities that lead to real communication.

As the name implies, a pattern drill involves stimulus-response situations in which emphasis is placed upon form over content, such as one finds in an item substitution drill:

Stimulus: I am going to town. (cue: we)

Response: We are going to town.

Many pattern drills can be manipulated successfully by the learner even

though he may have little or no understanding of the meaning of the contents. For example:

Teacher: This is a chair. (table)

Student: This is a table.

Teacher: desk

Student: This is a desk.

Teacher: that

Student: This is a that.

Teacher: No! No! That is a desk.

Teacher: window

Student: Window is a desk.

and so on . . .

Because of this susceptibility to meaninglessness, Paulston (1970) has classified structural pattern drills as either mechanical, meaningful, or communicative. Mechanical drills are completely manipulative in nature and require no attention to meaning, provided the student can repeat or supply the appropriate form.

Meaningful drills may still involve some linguistic manipulation, but in order to respond correctly the student must first understand tha language content of the stimulus. For example:

Stimulus: Where does the President live?

Response: The President lives in the White House.

As in the mechanical drill, the response is largely preordained, and emphasis is still on form.

Communicative drills go a step further. Not only must the responder understand the content of the stimulus, but also he must supply new infor-

mation to the other person involved in the interchange. It is precisely this freedom of response, or open-endedness, that distinguishes the communicative drill. For example:

Stimulus: What did you do last night?

Response: I went to the movies. (for example)

At this point, the activity is still a drill in that there is probably no real need to convey the information given, other than to demonstrate mastery of, perhaps, a past form of the verb to be. If, however, the first speaker continues the exchange by asking for additional information, the drill may become real communication. Suppose, for example the activity continues with the following:

Speaker 1: Oh? What movie did you see?

Speaker 2: We went to see Star Wars.

Speaker 1: Did you enjoy it?

and so on.

Now that new information is being asked for and given, the drill would be classified as communicative.

Pattern drills are an outgrowth of what is known as the audiolingual method, popular during the 1950's and 60's. Higgs (1984) places the approach in a historic perspective, noting:

> "The audiolingual method was inevitable. We knew what language was; we knew how it was learned. How to teach it could not have been more obvious. And it didn't work. Not because speech is not the primary manifestation of languages or because students could not master the patterns of the new language, but because, again, after mastering them, students could not use the languages as they had expected to. The method promised habits. It delivered habits."
>
> (p. 2)

As the preceding examples illustrate, at times it may be difficult to distinguish between a communicative drill and an activity involving real

communication. Stevick (1984) identifies three characteristics that must be present in order to refer to a speech act as real communication. First, one or more of the parties involved must know or see something after the interchange that he or she did not know or see before. Secondly, there must be a framework of shared information, usually of a more general nature, within which the interchange occurs. (The example used by Stevick is that it does no good to say "The book is in the drawer." if the person spoken to does not know which book and which drawer is being referred to.) And thirdly, there must have been some purpose for transmitting the information. Otherwise, the exchange would be pointless, and of no real communicative use. The obvious implication for the classroom activity, then, is that for an exercise to be considered real communication, it should involve the exchange of information between two or more individuals, and the information itself should be useful. And although there may be preliminary activities that lead up to the real communication, it is this interchange of real information that embodies the purpose of foreign language study, at least in the eyes of most students.

At this point, let's take the DLI Foreign Language Center Language Skill Level Descriptions for levels 0+. 1-1+, and 2-2+, and consider some real communication activities that might be used to develop proficiency at those levels, respectively.

Level 0+: At this level, we expect the student to be able to satisfy immediate needs using learned utterances, with no real autonomy of expression. Language use will be real, but closely guided, and will involve considerable repetition of words and phrases used by the teacher. An appropriate activity for this level would be making introductions of oneself

to another person, or introducting one person to another. Students form pairs, then groups of four , making introductions. This activity develops a sense of belonging, or of being a part of the group, thus satisfying one of the needs identified by Maslow. As students become more proficient, they can begin to fill out forms prepared by the instructor that ask for biographical information. Hotel registrations, job applications, personal identification papers, and the like can be prepared for use in the class at this level. (Carton, 1983) A variation on the activity would have one student ask another for the information, and record the responses as they are given. Another variation would be to have the instructor conduct and interview of this type with a proficient speaker of the language, and in the presence of the class. Students would record the information from the interview, either in the native language or in the target language, and then retell what they have heard.

Level 1-1+: At this level, students are expected to be able to satisfy certain requirements and demonstrate use of the language at the "survival" level. Activities should reflect areas of immediate need and deal with topics that are very familiar to the students. The Rose technique (Paulston and Selekman, 1976) is a good activity for this level. Students are grouped in pairs, and one person in each pair is given a picture to describe. The other person (who cannot see the picture) attempts to draw what is described. As the exercise progresses, the "artist" may ask questions to clarify what he is to do. As a conclusion to the activity, the drawing is compared to the picture that was described, and students could be asked to post their work beside the original copies, if desired.

A second activity that is effective with students who have little creative ability with the language is called "Guess Who's Coming to Dinner." (Omaggio, 1984)

In this activity, students use the target language to a) find a partner who has ordered certain foods, and b) tell others what they, themselves, have ordered. As Omaggio describes the activity, "The playing cards [see Figure 2] list foods and beverages ordered by the student himself and by the person for whom he is searching (his 'mystery' dinner conpanion.) Students find their dinner partners through questioning one another about each item on the menu. Only when all items match has the player successfully completed the search." (p. 66)

CARD 1

you		your partner	
roast beef	baked potato	fish	rolls
red wine	coffee	white wine	coffee
peas	apple pie	green beans	no dessert

CARD 2

you		your partner	
fish	rolls	roast beef	baked potato
white wine	coffee	red wine	coffee
green beans	no dessert	peas	apple pie

Figure 2

CARDS FOR "GUESS WHO'S COMING TO DINNER?"

As Omaggio points out, the cards should reflect menus typical of the target culture. And since this activity involves social interaction, asking

and answering questions, and a topic necessary for survival (food), it is most appropriate for this level of proficiency. In addition, by shifting the time frame ("Guess Who Came to Dinner?"), students could practice use of language in past time.

Level 2-2+: At this level, students are expected to learn to narrate, describe, get into and out of survival situations with a complication. Activities that develop descriptive vocabulary and circumlocution are particularly appropriate for the level 2-2+ learner. List-making activities that have students generate words in different classes or categories, or that call on students to find alternative ways to express the same idea are excellent. One such activity involves a personal narrative. To set the scene, the student is told that he has reported to a new duty assignment in a country where the language is spoken. Since he is the first U. S. military person assigned there who is proficient in the language, there is considerable interest in him as an individual. The local newspaper has asked him to put together some information on his personal background, with particular emphasis on his childhood. In addition, he is asked to relate something of his work, travel, and background in languages. The narrative, when completed, will be used as a basis for a follow-up interview. In class, the students form groups of three, and one is designated as the interviewee. The interviewee will read his narrative and the other two members of the group take notes. After the narrative has been read, the note-takers will ask questions to expand upon or clarify the information given. Finally, the different groups will report to the class as a whole on the information obtained in the interview.

Again, the strength of the activity lies in the personal involvement of the participants, and in the transmitting of real information. In addition,

since much of the preparation for the activity can be done outside of class, there is less initial anxiety created than might be found in a spontaneous, in-depth interview.

Since the goal of DLI in its beginning courses is to develop level 2 proficiency in participants, and since successful completion of the course requires that a minimum of level 1 proficiency be demonstrated by students in two of the three skills tested, higher-level activities will not be illustrated here. Instead, several additional activities will follow, which are not necessarily level-specific. Rather, content of these activities can be adapted to the level of the participants.

Narration: The instructor delivers an informational monologue (i.e. lecture) based on a visual aid such as a map, a piece of military equipment, a cultural artifact, etc. Students take notes, either in the native language or in the target language, and then summarize what they have heard, or perhaps ask questions for clarification. In some instances the activity could be modified to involve an unfamiliar object, for which the students will have to determine the use.

Overheard conversation: Students listen to a dialog (either live or taped) between two native speakers and make notes of the information they gather. Again, questions may be asked after the dialog is completed. In instances where a tape is used, it might be beneficial to replay the tape following initial discussion. However, the instructor should refrain from direct translation of the material. Since this activity relates very closely to what many of the students will be doing in future military assignments, the need for skill in this activity is apparent. At the same time, the question-asking and discussion involves active language use, hence the element of real communication is included, too.

Reading: Students are given a written text (travel schedule, poster, sign, advertisement, newspaper or magazine article, cartoon) and a short period of time to read it. After a few minutes, the instructor begins to ask specific questions, which call on the students to scan the material for the information requested. The activity can be used either in small groups or with the whole class, since the purpose is to give the learners practice in covering written material rapidly for key information. Before and after the activity, the instructor should emphasize the fact that the students are dealing with authentic texts, rather than contrived readings. And in making the selection of materials, the teacher should keep in mind the interests of the students, or the topic of instruction if it is appropriate for this type of exercise.

Newscast: Students listen to a taped newscast (audio and/or video) and make notes on the content. After taking notes, the group reconstructs the newscast, with the instructor or one of the students acting as the secretary and writing down the comments of the class. Once the newscast has been reconstructed, the tape is played a second time for comparison, and, if necessary, for a discussion of specific linguistic components that may have presented challenges to the group as a whole. At the more advanced levels where dialect might be included, the debriefing and replay can be useful as a teaching strategy. And the motivation on the part of the student comes from the feeling of accomplishment of having derived meaning from an original source of the target language.

Role-playing/Situations: Students are given situations involving two or more individuals, which they practice in small groups and then act out for the rest of the class. Initially, it may be helpful to discuss

the situation in the native language and perhaps identify some of the key vocabulary that will be needed for the roles. When the situations are acted out for the entire group, observers (all those not actually involved in the situation being presented) can take notes and then interpret what they have witnessed. As in the earlier exercises, it is important that the situations reflect situations that have a rather high probability of occurring in real life, and that are related to the needs and interests of the participants.

Interpreting: One student is put in the role of interpreter between a mute monolingual who can express himself only in English and only in writing, and a speaker of the target language (the class). A topic relevant to the unit of instruction is selected, and the mute person writes on a card what he wants to say and gives the card to the "interpreter." The interpreter, in turn, relays the message to the "native speaker," (the class), who makes a note of what was said and dictates a response. After several interchanges, a comparison is made between the messages written down by the "mute" and the messages received through the "interpreter." Follow-up discussion on certain expressions needed, vocabulary, circumlocutions, and the like can follow the activity.

All of the activities used here as illustrations strive to involve students in real communication in the target language, and go beyond simple drill material. Certainly, there are many more components to the teaching and learning sequence than those presented here. Neither are these few exercises meant to be adequate to address the needs of the classroom. In the coming months, you will have the opportunity to consider a number of suggestions made to you by specialists in the various skill areas and in

the teaching of culture. In addition, there are many publications that you can refer to (see Bibliography) which contain a wide variety of activities that are communicative in nature. The instructor who takes these ideas, modifies them as necessary, and incorporates them into his or her own sequence of instruction will see a renewed interest on the part of the student. Colonel David A. McNerney, Commandant of DLI has said: "We seek to instill in our graduates a desire for constant professional language development while in the military service and to contribute to the strength of this country through their language competency." (McNerney, 1983., p. 1). The motivation that results from the use of real communication activities in the classroom will lead directly to that goal, and provide the student with a sound base upon which to build a life-long interest in the study of languages.

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