

GRAMMAR GAMES AND CREATIVE DICTATIONS

Mario Rinvoluceri, Pilgrims, sponsored by Cambridge University Press.

The session started with a movement exercise. People worked in threes : A had to mime packing 15 things she would need on a desert island. B watched carefully and then simulated unpacking on the island; this entailed understanding and remembering what had gone into the rucksack. C took notes on what she reckoned was both packed and unpacked. At the end of the exercise A, B and C discussed their view of what had happened.

This concentration - observation exercise is a variation of one I have learnt from Judy Baker, who works in the All's Well tradition. I used it at the beginning of this session to give people a break from what, for some of them, had been a whole day of linear, aural discourse.

Words to Poem

A set of 20 to 30 words were dictated. They included a lot of structure words and a few content words. Participants wrote as many sentences as they could using these words and these words only. People read out the sentences they liked. Finally, the Australian poem, from which the set of words had been taken, was read to the group. Since the poem was an ingenious re-cycling of the set of words, we had virtually already written the poem and a bit more ! The grammar content of the exercise was the exploration of the properties of the word HAVE. You will find the full exercise, Present Perfect Poem, on pages 81 and 82 of Grammar Games, Cambridge University Press, 1985.

Translation Othello/Reverse

Play a quick game of Othello before reading what follows :

- Make a paper board with 64 squares.
- Take another piece of paper and draw the same sized 64 squares both sides of it.

- Let us say that we decide to use the exercise for working on 'faux amis' in English and French. Take the pair prétendre and claim. Write prétendre in a square on one side of your sheet and shade the square in. Write claim in the corresponding square on the rear side of the sheet - don't do any shading. Add another 63 pairs of 'faux amis' with French on the shaded side of the paper and English on the unshaded side.
- Photocopy the 64 square board so that there is one for each pair of students.
- Photocopy the sheet with the 'faux amis' so that the copies have the French on one side and the English on the other. You need one sheet per two students.
- In class : pair the students. Give each pair a board and a 'faux amis' sheet. Ask the students to chop up the 'faux amis' by folding and tearing.
- Get someone to explain the rules of Othello.
- Add the following language rules :
 1. Player A plays French (shaded)
Player B plays English (unshaded)
 2. In classical Othello A may turn over a row of B's pieces providing she has got pieces at both ends of B's row. In Translation Othello A may only turn over B's pieces if she can accurately translate two of B's row of English words into French. If there is only one English word in the row, A only need translate one word.

You will find the above description totally unclear unless you have played normal Othello !

The power of the Othello frame as a translation or grammar game is considerable, since the players are continually trying to turn each other's pieces over : in the above example you win the game two thirds by learning the 'faux amis' and one third by gamesmanship.

One can use the exercise for teaching new vocabulary, using translation, 'synonyms' or 'opposites'. One can also work on grammar, e.g. on the shaded side you have the positive form of the adjective and on the unshaded side you have the comparative form : good on one side and better on the other. The frame works well with irregular noun plurals, e.g. hypothesis/hypotheses.

Someone, somewhere, could produce a marvellous computer game from the board version of Grammar/Translation Othello - it would be an excellent homework/self study tool. If you think you could do this please let me or Peter Donovan at Cambridge University Press know.

Mutual dictation

Each person sat opposite a partner and was given half a story. The partner had the other half. People took dictation from each other as a way of completing their texts.

In the feedback after the dictation work several people expressed the feeling that this Syrian story is extremely sexist.

Half Text A

It was a very, very crowded.
 standing near the front , onto a strap. Sitting
 beautiful . before getting
 .
 He begins girl and
 pricks her ears . - she looks
 interest. But he tells and lonely.
 tender sympathy. he needs a wife !
 The bus at the next
 and talk , without looking
 has her !

Half Text B

hot day and the bus was very . There was a tall, handsome man
 of the bus, hanging near
 him there was a girl. The man has another half hour to go
 to his destination.
 He talking to the telling her he is very rich.
 She up. He talks to her about his big farm - at him
 with . her he is sad . She looks at him with
 . He tells her !
 The man suggests they both get off the stop
 things over. She gets up and gets off, behind her.
 He taken seat !

Criminal Dictation

I dictated a series of questions about the participants' level of criminality. These they wrote down on the left hand sides of their pages. In the middle of the page they either wrote YES or NO depending on whether they had or had not committed the particular crime. I then dictated the maximum punishment that could have been meted out to them in a U.K. court in 1979. Punishments went on the right of the page.

These were the questions and punishments :

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|---|---------------------------------|
| 1. Have you ever smoked marijuana ? | £500 fine/3 months |
| 2. Have you ever avoided paying your TV licence fee ? | £1000/6 months |
| 3. Have you travelled on the underground without paying the fare ? | £200/3 months |
| 4. Have you ever broken the speed limit ? | £100/endorsement |
| 5. Have you ever bribed a garage to pass your car as fit to drive ? | £1000/6 months |
| 6. Have you ever evaded customs duty ? | £1000 or up to 3 times the duty |
| 7. Did you ever steal stationery from your place of work ? | £1000/6 months |
| 8. Have you ever used your company phone to make personal telephone calls ? | £1000/6 months |
| 9. When given too much change by a shopkeeper, have you ever kept it ? | £1000/6 months |
| 10. Have you ever travelled 1st class on a 2nd class ticket ? | £50 |
| 11. Have you ever wound back the clock on your car ? | £1000 |
| 12. Have you ever kept money that you found ? | £1000/6 months |
| 13. Have you cheated on expenses ? | £1000/6 months |
| 14. Have you taken 'souvenirs' from a hotel ? | £1000/6 months |
| 15. Have you lied about your income to the tax authorities ? | £100/4 months |

You will find a couple more interactive exercises in The Q Book by Morgan and Rinvoluceri, currently on the Pilgrims Pilot list and forthcoming with OUP in 1986.

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