



Increasing Use of the  
Target Language in Classroom  
Interactions

Constance K. Knop

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In today's foreign language classroom, more and more teachers are focusing on developing students' communicative abilities. The Proficiency Guidelines developed by ACTFL (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, 1985) and ACTFL's development of National Standards (1994) have promoted an emphasis on oral proficiency. Current textbooks and methodologies claim that proficiency is their goal in foreign language study. This goal is in line with surveys of foreign language students which consistently find that the main reason why students enroll in a foreign language course is to learn to communicate in that language (Arendt and Hallock, 1979). Indeed, oral proficiency seems to be commonly accepted as a major goal of most foreign language programs throughout the United States.

There is a good deal of evidence to suggest that the more foreign language input learners are exposed to, the greater will be their proficiency. Research and theory on second language acquisition indicate that students' linguistic growth is related to the amount of time spent with the language in meaningful exposure to it. Krashen (1982) refers to this as "comprehensible input". Opportunities to communicate in that language are also cited as important to developing oral proficiency. Met and Rhodes note that "both research and experiential data suggest that the amount of time spent on language learning and the intensity of the experience have significant effects on the acquisition of significant levels of foreign language proficiency" (1990, p. 438). Intensity refers to time on task and use of the target language for communication. Thus, it is hypothesized that the more students hear the target

language in meaning-filled contexts and the more they use it in realistic interactions, the greater will be their linguistic growth. Rivers explains that "students... achieve facility in using a language when their attention is focused on conveying and receiving authentic messages -- messages that contain information of interest to speaker and listener in a situation of importance to both -- that is, through interaction...interactions between people who have something to say" (Wilga Rivers quoted in Curtain and Pesola, 1994, p. 117).

Clearly, travel abroad and immersion experiences would greatly affect language acquisition. But, for the majority of our students, foreign travel and living abroad are not easily accessible. Instead, the foreign language classroom is the environment in which they are most likely to need the language to communicate. Thus, it is important for foreign language teachers to consider how they can increase the use of the target language in classroom interactions so as to promote students' oral proficiency. The National Association of District Supervisors of the United States recognizes the importance of the target language as the medium of instruction. In its publication, "Characteristics of Effective Foreign Language Instruction Guidelines" (1992), the Association has listed these principles as its first two characteristics of effective instruction:

The teacher uses the target language extensively, encouraging the students to do so.

The teacher provides opportunities to communicate in the target language in meaningful, purposeful activities that simulate real-life situations.

However, not all teachers are committed to using the target language for classroom instruction and interactions. For example, a recent survey of foreign language teachers in Illinois found that while there was a relatively high amount of language use reported by

elementary teachers (70%), there is a "relatively low amount of teacher use of the target language in junior high and first and second year high school classes. That was only about 50% at these levels with many citing as the reason a focus on grammar and the need to cover the material in the textbook." (Connor, 1995, p. 7)

Even teachers who wish to use more target language in class express concerns. Some teachers question how one can expect first year students to understand and use the language. In response, one might ask: What is so difficult in the first-year curriculum that students cannot understand the interactions and the material in the target language? The vocabulary and grammar in first year are very concrete and can easily be acted out or visualized. As for classroom routines (e.g., taking attendance, asking students to open their books or take out a piece of paper, etc.), students can infer the meaning of target language utterances from their experiences in these routines in other classes. Moreover, if students are not trained and expected to use the target language starting in first year, they are very resistant to using it in succeeding years.

In contrast, other teachers state that they expect students to hear, understand and use the target language exclusively at all times from the first day of instruction. However, they do not always provide the students with the wherewithal to comprehend and produce the target language in classroom interactions. Since very few textbooks present classroom-related language or activities to help students understand target language use, it is crucial that teachers plan ways of enabling students to understand and use more target language in classroom interactions.

Thus, the purpose of this article is to present strategies and activities that have been

used successfully by foreign language teachers to increase target language use. By implementing these approaches in a systematic, progressive manner, teachers can gradually enable and empower their students to understand, interact and communicate in more classroom situations in the target language.

### I. DEVELOPING "LANGUAGE LADDERS"

The "language ladder" is one effective strategy for systematically building students' use of the target language in the classroom. A "language ladder" consists of a set of commonly used classroom expressions focused on a common classroom function -- that is, a communicative interaction typically used in class, such as "expressing confusion". Each day the teacher introduces one expression related to that function which students are expected to learn and use henceforth in classroom activities. The expression could be written on a piece of construction paper with the English meaning on the back.

The teacher presents the target language expression to the students, repeating it in the target language and also showing its English meaning two or three times while saying it. Adding a gesture and emotive quality whenever appropriate would further reinforce the meaning and would wean the students away from needing the English equivalent. After teaching the expression, the teacher numbers it and posts it under a visual representing the function. The different expressions written on construction paper of various colors under the function creates the image of the rungs of a ladder -- hence the name, "language ladder", used for this strategy.

LA CONFUSIÓN	(CONFUSION)
1. No sé.	1. (I don't know.)
2. No comprendo.	2. (I don't understand.)
3. Repita Ud., por favor.	3. (Please repeat.)
4. Otra vez, por favor.	4. (Once again, please.)
5. ¿Cómo?	5. (What?)

Once the expressions are posted, students are responsible for understanding and using them in class. Students could also copy them onto a separate page in their notebooks to reinforce them further. This gradual building of a language repertoire is not as overwhelming as suddenly expecting students to use the target language at all times. Moreover, there is a sense of progress and achievement in mastering an expression a day and being able to communicate more and more in the target language. Since the expressions are numbered, the teacher can simply call out that number when students say a given expression in English. Experience has shown, however, that at least one student will always recall the target language expression and will cue others in the target language when they use the expression in English.

To motivate students even further in learning the new example in the language ladder, some teachers use a "password" technique (Knop, 1994). In order to leave the room that day, students must say the expression to the teacher at the door. To avoid their simply reading it,

one might take down the expression before class ends and also ask students to use a gesture or emotive quality when saying the expression to convey its meaning. If the teacher does not have time to stand at the door, alternative approaches to using the password strategy include:

- 1) Appointing a student monitor to whom others must say the password. The student typically is even more demanding than the teacher in insisting on accurate production of the expression.
- 2) Asking the whole class to give the utterance at the end of class as a closure activity for the day.
- 3) Having students turn to a partner to say and act out the expression (or even to two or three partners) before they leave class.

### **Creating Language Ladders**

Once teachers become aware of the need to provide students with useful classroom language, they usually ask how they might go about developing language ladders. The following guidelines have proven useful for creating ladders that respond to students' communicative needs.

#### 1. **Select a Common Function in a Classroom Context**

Again, "functions" refer to communicative purposes we carry out through language. In the classroom, students carry out functions as they interact with the teacher and as they interact with each other. Thus, as a first step in creating a language ladder, teachers may first identify common student functions.

##### a. **Functions in student-to-teacher/teacher-to-students interactions**

Since students are going to interact in the role of students each and every day of class,

they need to learn expressions in the target language to carry out the communicative interactions that typify discourse between students and teachers. The state of Wisconsin's A Guide to Curriculum Planning in Foreign Languages (Grittner, 1985) identifies communicative functions needed by students as early as first year of study for "Basic Survival in the Classroom", including:

- 1) Seeking information (What page is it? Which exercise?)
- 2) Expressing confusion or lack of understanding (I don't know. I don't understand. Please repeat.)
- 3) Making excuses (My homework is at home. I was sick.)
- 4) Asking permission (May I go to my locker? May I go to the bathroom?)
- 5) Making small-talk and responding realistically to basic questions about health, weather, time (I'm fine. It's nice out.)

The guide also identifies functions carried out by teachers that students need to understand (and which they may eventually use with each other), such as:

- 1) Exchanging greetings and leave-takings
- 2) Giving directions (Open your books, please. Take out a sheet of paper, please.)
- 3) Praising and encouraging (Good work! You're doing well! It's an easy test.)
- 4) Chastising or disciplining (Please pay attention. Please don't speak English.)

After identifying common classroom interactions, one could choose a function for the week and introduce it in a classroom context. For example, "complaining" is a common student function. One could announce that there was a test that day and when students begin

their usual litany of complaining in English, the teacher could say in the target language: "You need this expression" and then teach that day's sample for the function of complaining, posting it under a visual of a test and a frowning face (or even the word "complaining" in the target language) to show the function. On succeeding days, additional expressions would be added. Note that during the following week, one could teach the function of "expressing pleasure" or "expressing gratitude", to encourage positive expressions in class as well as provide antonyms for complaining which would further reinforce its meaning.

b. Functions in student-to-student interactions

In interacting with each other, students often use language to express feelings and emotions. Indeed, adolescents' speech is replete with emotive language. Unfortunately textbooks materials do not always provide a full range of examples for students to express their affective needs. Thus, when an emotive interjection or rejoinder does occur in curricular materials, we could exploit and expand upon it to meet students' linguistic needs for self-expression.

For example, if students have learned "Chic alors!" in a dialogue or reading passage, one might first identify the function by asking or explaining why it was used (On dit "Chic alors" si on est content--You use "Chic alors!" if you are happy.) Then one could set up several contexts in the target language to which students would respond "Chic alors!" (E.g., There's no homework tonight/no test this week.) Finally, the teacher could indicate that there are other ways of expressing contentment and introduce variations on the function, such as "Chouette! Sensas! Super! Hypercool!" The following week the teacher could teach a language ladder with the function of expressing displeasure as a means of providing students

with alternatives for expressing feelings. In this way, students expand their range of possibilities for expressing emotions and for interacting with each other.

Other common student-to-student functions include:

- 1) Expressing likes and dislikes (which could be taught in the context of curricular content, such as food or pastimes)
- 2) Expressing agreement and disagreement (which could be taught as a means of reacting to others' expressions of likes/dislikes in personalized question-answer sessions)
- 3) Giving compliments (about clothing or appearance)
- 4) Inviting someone (to one's house, to a movie)
- 5) Accepting or refusing an invitation (to be taught as a follow-up to the inviting functions)

2. Select 5-6 Encodings To Carry Out The Function In A Given Context

Once functions have been identified, they need to be set in a context before one selects "encodings" (i.e., expressions for carrying out the function). For example, "making excuses" is a function that students carry out quite often but what they would say depends on the situation in which they are carrying out that function. They could make excuses about 1) why they don't have their homework, 2) why they are late to class, 3) why they didn't do well on a test or 4) why they were absent. Clearly the encodings for the function would change according to the situation. Thus, it is important to decide on both a function and a context before deciding on expressions to teach in the language ladder.

Let us say that we have decided to teach the function of "expressing surprise" and we

have also chosen a context: the teacher is going to give a unit exam today. Now we need to select encodings for the function, expressions that carry it out. Some possibilities are:

FRENCH

1. Ça alors!
2. Sans blague!
3. C'est vrai?
4. Ce n'est pas vrai!
5. Ce n'est pas croyable!
6. Ça m'étonne!

GERMAN

1. Ach so?
2. Das ist ja toll!
3. Nicht zu glauben!
4. Sie machen wohl Spass!
5. Was Sie nicht sagen!
6. Ach du liebe Zeit!

SPANISH

1. ¿De veras?
2. ¡Caramba!
3. ¡Híjole!
4. ¡Dios mío!
5. ¡No lo creo!
6. ¡No me digas!

One could try to arrange the presentation of the expressions by "register" level, going from mild surprise to stronger surprise, as shown in the French ladder. This provides an additional meaning reinforcer for helping students recall the expressions.

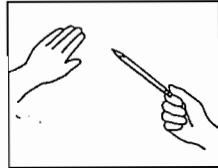
### 3. Visualize The Context, Function And/Or Encodings

As another way of helping students understand and remember meaning, we could visualize the language ladder. For "expressing surprise", one teacher wrote SURPRISE!! (in French) across a red banner which she placed in the middle of her bulletin board. Then she cut jagged shapes out of construction paper, writing the encodings on the various shapes and attaching yarn and a thumb tack to each one. When she taught the ladder, she tacked the end of the yarn for each expression into the SURPRISE banner, concretely linking them into the function of surprise. Other teachers have used these visualizations of language ladders:

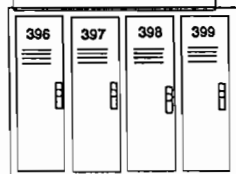
#### Examples of "Language Ladders"

##### #1 Making Requests

Puis-je emprunter...  
...un crayon?  
...une feuille de papier?

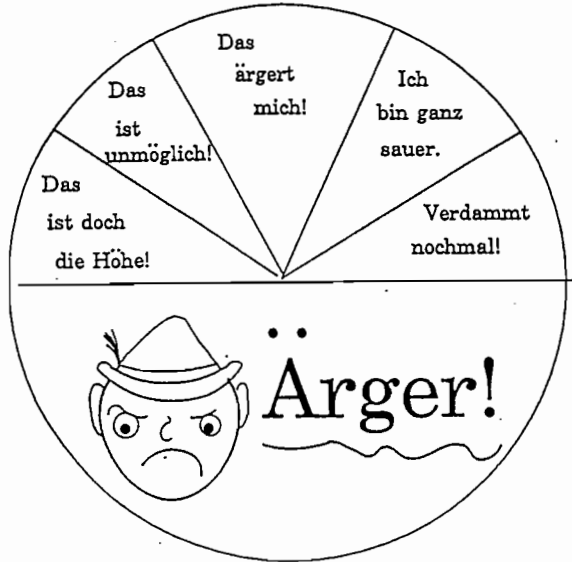


Puis-je aller  
à mon casier?



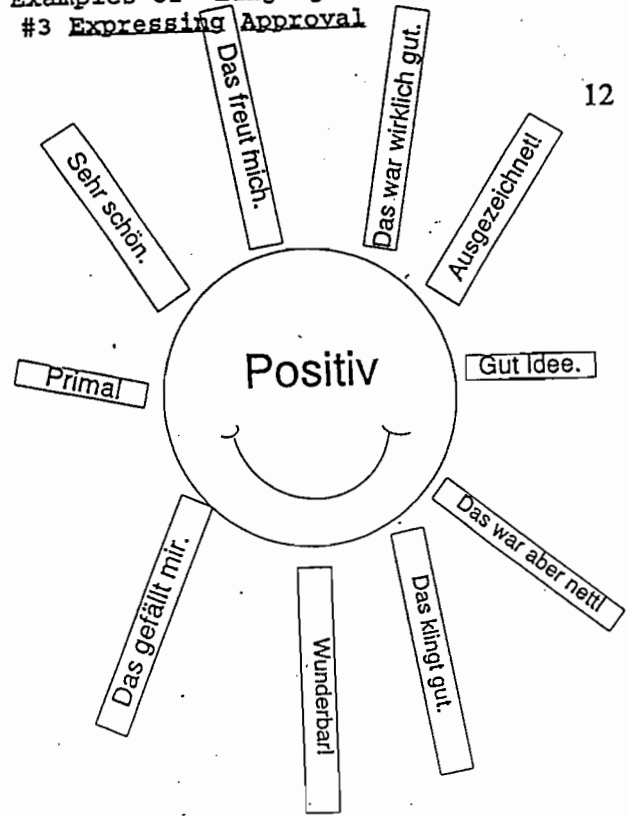
Examples of "Language Ladders"

#2 Expressing Anger



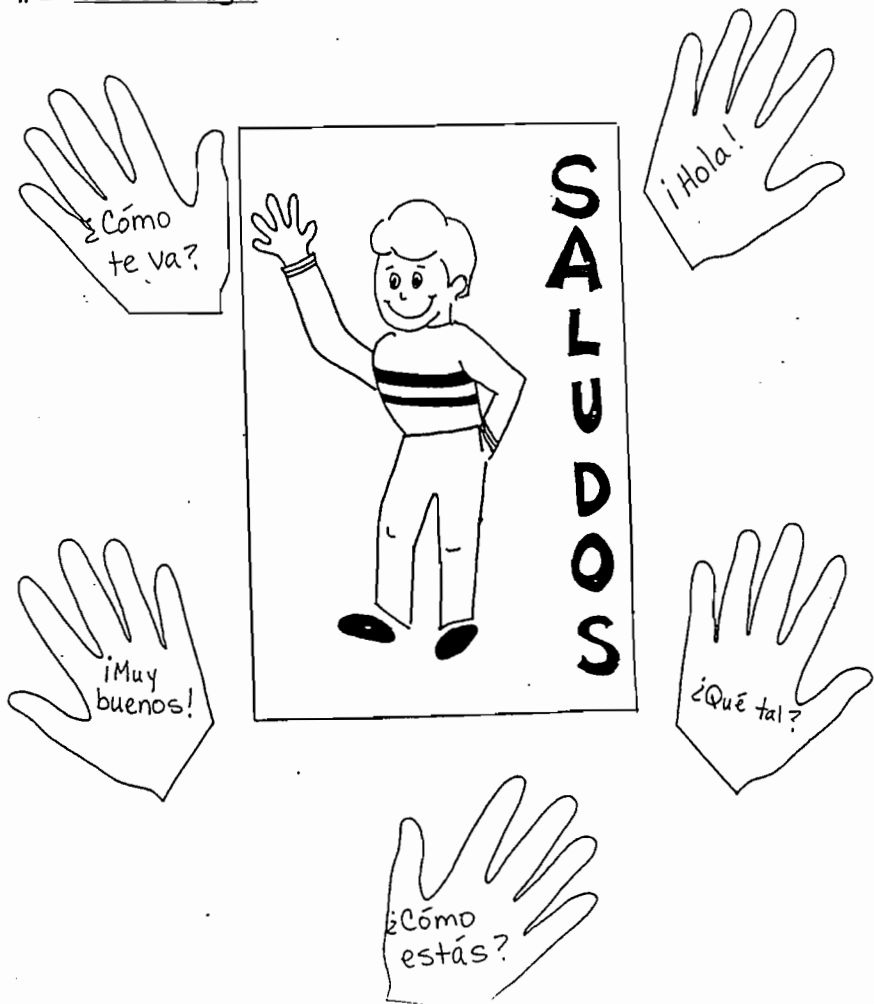
Examples of "Language Ladders"

#3 Expressing Approval



Examples of "Language Ladders"

#4 Greetings



# Examples of "Language Ladders"

#5

Requesting Quiet  
(in class)


**¡HAY MUCHO RUIDO!**

ESCUCHEN UDS.. POR FAVOR
¡ ATENCIÓN, POR FAVOR !
¡SILENCIO!
¡CÁLENSE!
¡CARAMBA!

CORTÉS

↓

DESCORTÉS



Making Excuses  
(about homework)



**EXCUSAS**

Accepting an Invitation  
(to go to the movies)

**Accepter une invitation**

Tu veux aller au cine?

Avec plaisir!	★★★★★★
Chouette!	★★★★
D'accord!	★★★
Pourquoi pas?	★★
Bien, oui, si tu veux.	★

## II. OUTLINE OF LESSON PLAN ON THE BOARD

Another way of helping students understand and use the target language is to put an outline of the lesson plan on the board. The outline would be written in the target language and can contain examples to be used in the activities.

### Lesson Plan

- |    |  |    |   |
|----|--|----|---|
| 1. | Révision du dialogue,<br>"Au Café"   | 1. | Review of the Dialogue,<br>"At the Cafe"  |
| 2. | Un nouveau verb: <u>prendre</u><br>Que <u>prenez-vous</u> au café?   | 2. | A new verb: prendre<br>What do you order (take) in a cafe?  |
| 3. | Expressions de quantité:<br>Je prends du pain.<br>Je prends <u>beaucoup de</u> pain.<br>Je prends <u>un peu de</u> pain. | 3. | Expressions of quantity:<br>I take some bread.<br>I take a lot of bread.<br>I take a little bread.                  |
| 4. | Exercice écrit:<br>Expressions de quantité   | 4. | Written exercise:<br>Expressions of quantity  |
| 5. | Le négatif:<br>Je prends du pain.<br>Je ne prends pas de pain.<br>Je prends du beurre.<br>Je ne prends pas de beurre.    | 5. | The negative:<br>I take some bread.<br>I do not take any bread.<br>I take some butter.<br>I do not take any butter. |
| 6. | Un jeu: Jacques dit...   | 6. | A Game: Simon Says  |

The written support on the outline helps many students better understand oral communication. Some students can guess at meaning when they see the written word (especially if it is a cognate) while others need the memory support of the written form. The outline can also be used for oral practice. The teacher could ask the students what the next activity is, encouraging attention and focus as well as building students' oral skills in classroom language. Finally, the written examples give students a model to follow in the activities.

Teachers have exploited the written lesson plan in the following ways:

1. At the Start of Class

For a choral warm-up and as a means of providing an advance organizer (advocated by Hunter, 1982, and others), one could ask students to read the outline aloud, either repeating after the teacher or reading it on their own. Students could also read the outline to each other in pairs. As an alternative, students could copy the plan to give them writing practice. This activity also works well in settling the class down and getting everyone on task. Many students have reported using this daily written plan as part of their review before tests. Teachers have also asked anyone who was absent to obtain copies of the plans from other students for the days that were missed.

2. During Class

In proceeding from one activity to the next, a teacher could use the outline for closure and transition. E.g., after completing an activity on food vocabulary, one could ask, "Alors, c'est terminé, le vocabulaire sur la nourriture? Vous avez dit ce que vous préférez commander au restaurant?" (So we've finished the food vocabulary? You've said what you

prefer to order in a restaurant?). After students have said "yes", the teacher (or a student) could check off or erase that item on the outline, visually showing completion and progress, and then ask, "What's next?", leading students to announce the next activity. Some teachers use the strategy of "correct the teacher" or "rubbishing" with the outline (Rivers, 1988), announcing the next activity incorrectly (e.g., reading the topic for number 5 when the class is really ready for the second activity) and asking students if that's correct or not. Students will listen more actively and get more involved when they have to decide if the teacher is following the outline appropriately.

### 3. At the End of Class

For closure on the entire lesson, students could read aloud--chorally or with a partner--all the activities completed that day, providing students with more oral practice and also a sense of accomplishment. One could also ask students which of the completed activities was their favorite or which one they enjoyed most (a forced choice--all students MUST choose one), giving students the opportunity to state their preferences and allowing the teacher to take an informal survey on students' reactions to activities.

Some teachers are unable to write their plan on the board due to limited board space, back-to-back classes, or lack of access to the room in which they teach. Alternatives they have used then include writing the plan ahead of time on an overhead transparency or on easel paper or else having a student write the plan on the board while they begin the class session.

In summary, providing an outline of the lesson plan on the board in the target language enables students to understand more readily what teachers are saying by giving

students written and memory support and by encouraging their focus and attention. The written plan can be exploited for oral and written practice throughout the class hour, building students' use of the target language for classroom activities.

### **III. "INFORMAL PAIR" INTERACTIONS**

Both research (Nerenz and Knop, 1982; Gaies, 1985) and classroom practice (Curtain and Pesola, 1994; Knop, 1994; Snyder, 1994) have shown that students' use of the target language may be increased through student-to-student pair interactions. Some teachers are reluctant to use pair work in class as they envision fairly lengthy application activities, such as the writing of original dialogues, skits or other creative oral assignments. To save time while still maximizing student practice, Nerenz and Knop have suggested the use of "informal pair" activities (1982, p. 53). Students are asked to turn to a partner and to carry out a brief interaction, typically 30 seconds to one or two minutes. These interactions may be used several times in a class session during the practice phase of any activity or in its communicative phase.

Some possibilities for informal pairs in the practice phase include using them during:

- **Warm-Ups:** After answering a few questions in the warm-up, students repeat the teacher's questions (or read them off the board) and then turn to a partner to ask and answer the questions of each other.
- **Study of new verbs:** After hearing the teacher use the "you" form to elicit "I" answers, students repeat the "you" form question and then turn to ask and answer the question of a partner.

-- **Learning of a dialogue:** After learning two lines of dialogue that are linked in discourse (e.g., "I have a headache." -- "That's too bad."), students say and act out the lines with a partner.

-- **Vocabulary study:** After practicing 3-4 items in whole group setting, students turn to a partner and recite the items (pointing to visuals or using gestures).

-- **Grammar work:** For closure after a pattern practice on singular/plural forms of the definite articles, students turn to a partner and recite the articles. Or, after learning the forms of a new verb in a whole sentence, students summarize the verb forms with a partner.

-- **Dictations:** Using a dictation made up by the teacher, students give each other a practice dictation, providing practice on listening, speaking, reading and writing skills.

Informal pairs may also be used at the end of a practice activity, moving it to a communicative phase and carrying out various functions related to the content. Some functions at the novice and intermediate level (as listed in the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines, 1986) and sample content might include:

-- **NAMING:** After working on clothing vocabulary, students turn to a partner and say as many articles of clothing that they can, pointing to clothing work by other students.

-- **EXPRESSING PREFERENCES:** After studying days of the week, students tell a partner two days of the week that they like and two days that they hate. Students could easily carry out this function on almost any of the vocabulary learned early in the first year, such as colors, months, classes, sports and other pastimes, etc.

-- **DESCRIBING:** Use 3-4 adjectives to describe to your partner your father/mother/teacher/best friend.

-- **SHARING INFORMATION:** Tell your partner 2-3 things that you're going to do this week-end (or that you did last week-end, depending on what tenses were taught or reviewed in the practice phase).

Informal pair interactions are useful for many reasons. In addition to maximizing students' practice and increasing their use of the target language, work in informal pairs reduces students' stress in being called on in a whole class setting while still giving them the opportunity to try out the new material individually. Students often monitor each other's work and give helpful, non-threatening corrections. Further, time spent in informal pairs provides a pause in learning, allowing students time to process information to long-term memory storage. Finally, by varying the seating arrangement or asking students to work with someone sitting on the left, right, in front or behind, teachers can change the membership of the informal pairs, thus insuring increased contacts and interactions between a variety of students and building student support of each other.

#### IV. CREATING GOUIN SERIES

The Gouin series is useful as an alternative format to dialogues for presenting basic sentences in a language. In this format, 6-8 sentences are arranged in a logical sequential order to demonstrate and describe how one carries out a particular activity. For example, a Gouin series could be taught in the target language on "Getting Up in the Morning":

I wake up.

I get up.

I wash my face.

I comb my hair.

I get dressed.

I hurry off to school.

Note that, in several foreign languages, these verbs are all reflexives so a grammatical formation is being taught in an indirect manner.

As in a Total Physical Response lesson (Asher, 1988), students act out the sentences. However, in contrast to TPR, Gouin series are organized in a logical sequence and students are usually directed to say the sentences while acting them out.

Because so much teaching of culture is typically done in English in foreign language classes, Gouin series can help meet the goal of increasing use of the target language. Instead of listening to a cultural mini-lecture in English or reading cultural notes in English, students have the opportunity to listen to and observe cultural information and then act it out while describing it. For example, a Gouin series on buying a loaf of bread would include these sentences:

**"A la boulangerie"****(At the Bakery)**

J'entre dans la boulangerie.

(I enter the bakery.)

Je dis, "Bonjour, messieurs/dames."

(I say, "Hello/Greetings, everyone.")

Je demande une baguette.

(I ask for a baguette.)

Je prends la baguette.

(I take the baguette.)

Je paie la baguette.

(I pay for the baguette.)

Je dis, "Au revoir, messieurs/dames."

(I say, "Goodbye.")

Et je sors.

(And I leave.)

(Knop, 1994, p. 35)

Before presenting the series, the teacher could set up a guide question or two to provide focus and to encourage active listening. E.g., using the target language, one could say: "After this presentation, please tell me what you say when you go into a bakery and what you say when you leave." In this way, students become active as participant observers in discovering behavior, both verbal and nonverbal, in a given cultural act.

The use of Gouin series is effective for many reasons. First, in this format, the need for English is reduced: the over-all context, logical sequence, acting out of sentences, and visual aids/realia convey meaning in a concrete manner. Also Gouin series are easy to recall because several meaning reinforcers are being used and because they appeal to various senses (hearing, speaking, seeing, doing) as well as to different learning styles. Finally, Gouin series teach appropriate behavior (both verbal and physical) in a cultural activity. But, instead of being passive in a lecture or reading about cultural situations, students actively listen and

can usually convey the major steps in a cultural act) and in the length of the sentences. It is usually more effective to use two simple, separate sentences rather than a compound-complex one.

-- **VOCABULARY:** Include verbs that can be acted out and vocabulary that can be easily visualized. Try to use culturally authentic materials and realia and actual objects as concrete referents.

-- **SEQUENCING:** Act out the series as you create to make sure that the sentences follow a "logical" sequence for carrying out the situation.

-- **PERSON:** Keep the same person in all sentences. Decide if you want to have a command-based series with imperatives which students will learn to give to each other or a monologue of "I" sentences which students say and act out.

-- **SETTING MEANING:** For each sentence, plan large, exaggerated gestures. In the presentation, consistently use the gestures along with visuals, realia and emotive quality. Insist that students also do the actions and use the visuals when they practice the sentences.

### Teaching a Gouin Series

Some teachers choose to teach a Gouin series primarily for listening comprehension and discovery of cultural information. In that case, they introduce the Gouin series by creating or stating a need for the information (e.g., using the target language, the teacher says, "When you go to another country, you need to go through -- point to sign -- yes, customs.") and by giving a guide question or two ("What do you need to show at customs? What must you do with your suitcase?"). Then they say and act out the series once or even twice ask the

guide questions and do the series again, with students acting out and perhaps repeating the sentences once or twice. That is, they do not expect total recall of the series but, rather, use it for having students gather information and for focusing on important actions or vocabulary in the series.

Depending on the importance of the topic and perhaps the verbs and vocabulary involved, other teachers decide to teach the series for memory, engaging the students in active practice of the sentences and actions. Appendix A lists guidelines that have been found useful by novice and experienced teachers as an aid and self-check when teaching a Gouin series in depth. Appendix B provides some samples of Gouin series.

In summary, teaching culture through the Gouin series provides an alternative activity in the target language to English lectures or readings on culture. Students have the opportunity to practice their listening and speaking skills while also developing their skills as a participant observer of linguistic interactions and physical actions in various cultural acts. As a follow-up, students may also engage in reading aloud activities or writing activities, such as re-writing a scrambled series or writing a dialogue related to the Gouin series.

## V. PROVIDING AUTHENTIC "INPUT" IN CLASSROOM INTERACTIONS

It is the major premise of this chapter that foreign language teachers should increase use of the target language in order to provide linguistic input which then influences students' "output" or production of the target language. However, as we increase our use of the target language, we also need to reflect on the quality of the input that we provide for students.

That is, are we providing input that is varied, authentic, and appropriate?

As Richards and Lockhart (1994) note, "sometimes teachers may develop a variety of

teacher talk which would not sound natural outside of the classroom" (p. 185). For example, teachers often shorten their sentences, modify their vocabulary to rely largely on cognates, and simplify the grammatical structure of sentences. While some of this reduction in language is necessary to aid students' comprehension, if it is overdone, the input may become inauthentic. At the very least, language input is likely to be limited and limiting for students' output.

In the case of one of the most common teacher functions, "directing activities", the input may even be inappropriate. Teachers often use a direct command, a register level that is not likely to gain much cooperation in the target culture. Consider, for example, the reaction of a French person if one said, "Répétez!" or of an English speaker if one said, "Speak louder!" Yet that register level permeates teacher talk (e.g., "Close your books." "Take out a sheet of paper." "Listen.", etc.).

In order to provide more variety in classroom commands and directions, teachers might reflect on using different register levels for the same command (e.g., "Open your books.") and draw up a list of alternatives, such as:

1. Voudriez-vous ouvrir votre livre, s'il vous plaît? Would you (like to) open your books, please?
2. Pourriez-vous ouvrir votre livre, s'il vous plaît? Could you open your books, please?
3. Je voudrais que vous ouvriez votre livre, s'il vous plaît. I'd like you to open your books, please.
4. Ouvrez votre livre, s'il vous plaît.

Simply adding "please" to commands ("Open your books, please.") would soften them into more of a request function and would make them more socially acceptable.

After identifying variations, some teachers have chosen to teach the alternatives through a "language ladder" as an explicit presentation to make students aware of different possibilities for giving the same command. Once students have become aware of the register level "formulas" (Would you.../Could you..., etc.), they will understand them in other contexts as well (e.g., "Would you take out a sheet of paper, please?").

Teachers might also plan to introduce variations in the forms of commands to suggest cooperation between teacher and students, such as: "Let's...(open our books/turn to page...)" or "Now we're going to...". An additional benefit is that students will learn the forms and usage of the first person plural imperative and the immediate future tense, not as isolated grammatical items, but as contextualized structures used in authentic situations and interactions.

After introducing the alternatives for commands through a language ladder, teachers might focus on using more of them in classroom interactions. For example, one could write in a different level of command for each activity on the lesson plan for several days, consciously using varied commands each day. Making an audio or videotape of class sessions over a period of several weeks followed by a frequency count and analysis of commands used would allow one to see if change was, in fact, occurring. One could also check on students' output to see if they are beginning to use different request formulas. Such procedures are in line with the current emphasis on teacher development through action research, "teacher-initiated classroom investigation which seeks to increase the teacher's

understanding of classroom teaching and learning, and to bring about change in classroom practices." (Richards and Lockhart, p. 12)

A similar process could be used to plan for more varied and authentic language when carrying out other teacher functions, such as greetings and leave-takings, praising students' work, encouraging students' efforts or disciplining students. Again, taping of one's classes would allow for an analysis of the language we typically use. Asking students to lead classroom activities would show us what output students have acquired through our interactions with them.

In summary, if we believe that it is important to use a maximum amount of target language in classroom interactions to encourage our students' linguistic growth, then we also need to exert some quality control over the input that we are giving. By analyzing recordings of class sessions, teachers can evaluate what language samples they are providing for their students. Then they can reflect on ways to vary and expand their input, particularly when carrying out common teacher functions that recur on a daily basis in classroom interactions.

## **VI. KEEPING TRACK OF STUDENTS' PARTICIPATION**

Many students need extrinsic motivation and concrete recognition for classroom behaviors, even when those behaviors are clearly related to successful learning. For example, most foreign language teachers explain to their students why it is important to speak in the target language in class. However, some students still may not be willing to make the effort to use it during activities or in interactions. Others are shy about talking in class, even in English and especially in the target language. Yet other students simply "tune out" during class sessions. For all these reasons, teachers often set up some sort of a system for

recording participation in order to motivate students to active involvement in using the target language in the classroom. Such a system also helps teachers keep track of students' efforts to participate. A record of participation is important since in-class oral performance is considered an integral part of a student's grade in many foreign language programs.

One example of a participation system involves keeping a checklist of how many times a student speaks in the target language during the class session. Using the seating chart or a list of names, the teacher simply makes a mark next to the person's name each time he or she speaks and uses the target language appropriately and realistically. (As an alternative, students could act as "score keeper," with a different student each day assuming that role.) The record is based on a frequency-count, with recognition given for all attempts to use the language. If a response is incomprehensible, the teacher might wait to make a mark (or signal with a hand gesture to the student "score keeper") and indicate where errors are, then allowing the student to repeat and earn a point for the correction. The final tally gives the teacher an objective count of how often each student is talking in the target language during class. The tally may also serve as a reminder to the instructor to call on a greater variety of students.

At the end of the day, the teacher could summarize the points per student and then record a letter grade, determining it through a curve based on the greatest number of points earned by a student. For example, if the highest number of points was 10 that day, students with 7-10 points might receive an A, 4-6 a B, etc. Since some class periods have more oral work than others, it is important to base the grading on what actually happened on a given day. If pair or small group work dominates the class period, some teachers monitor the

groups, either assigning points or a grade for students who continually use the target language and avoid English. From time to time, an "oral participation grade" might be given out to students, based on a summary of points or grades earned for the frequency of their contributions and their use of the target language. For example, teachers may hand out oral participation grades every two to three weeks to let students know how their class work is being evaluated and to encourage them to work on daily participation and use of the target language. Students will often make a greater effort to participate if they receive frequent grades based on their classroom performance.

Clearly, no one system for keeping track of students' in-class performance is going to work in all classrooms. Teachers will develop approaches that work best for them and for their students. The age and maturity level of students is one important consideration in developing a system. For example, middle school teachers tend to use very concrete rewards, appropriate to the concept level and learning needs of transescents. When students give a correct response or an especially good one, teachers may hand out a piece of candy or copies of currency bills from the target culture which students can save and use later to purchase privileges, such as a night off from homework. At the high school level, where students wish to be treated more like adults, some teachers allow students to keep track of their own daily participation and use of the target language, encouraging students to monitor their own work. Other high school teachers choose to award participation points only for some activities, such as those that are more demanding or more communicative.

Whatever system is put into place, its procedures need to be clearly explained to students so that they are not unfairly penalized for being unaware of how the system may

affect their grade. Also, of course, the approach to gathering information on participation and use of the target language has to be fairly applied in as objective and consistent a fashion as possible. Most importantly, the system must be seen as more than a gimmick. Students need to understand that an important pedagogical principle underlies any system for evaluating their classroom participation: namely, that increased use of the target language leads to greater learning for them.

### CONCLUSION:

The first step in increasing use of the target language in the classroom is for teachers to incorporate this principle into their teaching beliefs and to commit themselves to applying the principle in organizing and changing their teaching practices. Once a commitment is made, then teachers can draw upon the variety of classroom-tested strategies presented in this chapter for providing students with the wherewithal to understand and use more target language in daily activities.

However, increasing target language use during classroom interactions does not happen overnight. Rather, strategies need to be tried out and implemented in a progressive manner over a period of time. Teachers can systematically introduce more classroom language through language ladders and through writing the day's lesson plan on the board in the target language. They can increase students' practice the language by organizing informal pairs and more student-to-student interactions. Use of English can be reduced and use of the target language increased by presenting cultural information in the target language through Gouin series. Also instructors can monitor their "teacher talk" and make an effort to provide authentic and appropriate input in carrying out common functions and interactions in class.

Finally, we can encourage students to use more target language by recognizing and rewarding their efforts to participate in class in the target language.

In line with guidelines from state and national organizations, foreign language teachers can and should use the target language for classroom instruction and interactions. They can also provide experiences and opportunities for students to grow in their understanding and use of the target language. Through increasing use of the target language in classroom interactions, we can enable students to begin to work toward meeting their learning expectations as well as nationally stated goals of foreign language study: developing communicative abilities and proficiency in a second language.

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APPENDIX A

GUIDELINES FOR TEACHING A GOUIN SERIES

- I. Plan an introduction to the series to include:
- A. The topic/situation (shown visuals; stated as a title).
  - B. A guide question or two (After this presentation, tell me two things you can buy in a bakery.).
  - C. Instructions (Please watch me. Listen carefully. Don't speak at first.).
- II. Provide an overview of the series to include:
- A. Going through the series in the "I" form, sentence by sentence.
  - B. Pointing to objects as you say them, using large exaggerated motions/gestures for the actions.
  - C. At the end, asking the guide questions set up in the introduction.
  - D. Repeating the series once more, sentence by sentence, involving students by having them do the actions.
- III. Plan for intensive practice on the sentence by:
- A. Returning to sentence one --
    - 1. acting it out while saying it.
    - 2. calling for choral repetition.
    - 3. drilling it with varied, appropriate techniques to anticipate students' needs and increase practice.
    - 4. checking progress by calling on individual students and by fading out the cue.

- B. Continuing with sentence two, again using varied drill techniques.
- C. Reviewing sentences 1 and 2 (to associate them in meaning and sequence) before going on to sentence 3.

APPENDIX B

SAMPLE GOUIN SERIES

**GOUIN SERIES FOR A CULTURAL ACTIVITY**

Linda Christen of the Madison (WI) Metropolitan School District developed this Gouin series for her French III students during a unit where they study travel.

**TITLE:** Dans une cabine téléphonique [In a Telephone Booth]

**PURPOSE:** Calling from a pay telephone as a tourist is a common experience when traveling. We will also talk about making calls from other locations, including the post office, a café and from a hotel room. In class, the Gouin series would be followed by students creating dialogues and skits in which they call to reserve tables in a restaurant and hotel rooms.

**PROPS/VISUALS NEEDED:** Actual "télécartes" are useful as authentic materials but one could also use any credit card as a substitute or simply make one (similar to telephone calling cards) and laminate it. Sample menus from the "Polidor" restaurant would be used to whet the students' appetites.

**OVERVIEW/INTRODUCTION:** Imaginez que nous sommes à Paris aujourd'hui. Nous avons discuté nos projets pour ce soir et nous avons décidé de dîner dans un restaurant dans le sixième qui s'appelle "Polidor." C'est un petit restaurant bien connu et populaire. Il faut

téléphoner cet après-midi pour réserver des places pour ce soir. (COMPREHENSION

CHECK QUESTIONS: Comment s'appelle ce restaurant? Comment est ce restaurant?

Pourquoi téléphoner en avance?). Nous venons d'acheter nos télécartes et maintenant il faut

téléphoner au restaurant. Voici une cabine téléphonique. Pour téléphoner d'un téléphone

publique, nous employons ... quoi? C'est ça ... une télécarte. (A previous lesson would have

covered buying a télécarte at the post office.) [Imagine that we're in Paris today. We've

talked about our plans for tonight and we've decided to have dinner at "Polidor", a restaurant

in the sixth arrondissement. It's a small restaurant which is well known and popular. We

need to call there this afternoon to make a reservation for tonight. (COMPREHENSION

CHECK QUESTIONS: What's the name of this restaurant? What's it like? Why do we

need to call there ahead of time?) We've just bought our telephone cards and now we need

to call the restaurant. Here's a telephone booth. To make a phone call in a telephone booth,

we use ... what? Right ... a telephone card.]

**PRIME/DIRECTIONS:** Ecoutez bien ce que je dis. Regardez ce que je fais. La première

fois ne parlez pas, écoutez seulement, s'il vous plaît. La deuxième fois vous allez parler et

faire les gestes avec moi. A la fin, vous allez me montrer deux actions importantes avec la

télécarte. [Listen carefully to what I say. Watch what I do. The first time, don't talk, just

listen, please. The second time, you're going to talk and do the actions with me. Afterwards,

you're going to show me two important actions used with the telephone card.]

**ACTIVITY/SENTENCES:**

- |                                  |                                   |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1. Je décroche le combiné.       | 1. I pick up the receiver.        |
| 2. J'insère la télécarte.        | 2. I insert the telephone card.   |
| 3. Je compose le numéro.         | 3. I dial the number.             |
| 4. J'attends qu'on réponde.      | 4. I wait for someone to answer.  |
| 5. Je dis "Allô" et je parle.    | 5. I say "Hello" and I talk.      |
| 6. Je dis, "Merci et au revoir." | 6. I say "Thank you. Good bye."   |
| 7. Je raccroche le combiné.      | 7. I hang up the phone.           |
| 8. Je reprends ma télécarte.     | 8. I take back my telephone card. |

Anna Marie Colby-Espinoza created this Gouin series for middle school students, grades 5-8.

**TITLE:** La Aduana del Aeropuerto      [Customs at the Airport]

**PURPOSE:** The object of this series is to make students aware of the steps that one goes through at the Customs of an airport and to learn appropriate vocabulary for the situation.

**PROPS/VISUALS NEEDED:** A suitcase, two signs -- one saying "Aduana" (Customs) and another for "La Ciudad de México" (Mexico City), a passport and a play telephone.

**OVERVIEW:** Vamos a México para ver lo que pasa en la aduana. ¿Qué es una aduana? ¿Cuándo pasamos por la aduana? ¿Lugares dónde no se pasa? (Teacher can write down places on blackboard.) Vamos por avión, y llegamos a la Ciudad de México. ¿Adonde

vamos? ¿Cómo? ¿Por qué? Imagínense que ya estamos en el aeropuerto. Díganme dos cosas que hace una persona en la aduana. Escuchen... [We are going to Mexico to see what happens at Customs. What is Customs? When do we go through Customs? Places where you don't have to pass? We go by plane, and we arrive in Mexico City. Where are we going? How? Why? Imagine we are already there at the airport, tell me two things a person does at Customs. Listen...]

**SERIES:**

- |                                   |   |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| 1. Camino por el aeropuerto.      | 1. I walk around the airport.<br>(Teacher walks around.)  |
| 2. Llego a la aduana.             | 2. I arrive at Customs.<br>(Teacher points to aduana sign.)   |
| 3. Saco el pasaporte.             | 3. I take out the passport.<br>(Teacher shows passport.)  |
| 4. Abro la maleta.                | 4. I open the suitcase.<br>(Teacher shows and opens suitcase.)  |
| 5. Digo ... "no traigo regalos."  | 5. I say ... "I'm not bringing any presents."<br>(Teacher shows empty hand.)                                |
| 6. Cierro la maleta.              | 6. I close the suitcase.<br>(Teacher closes suitcase.)  |
| 7. Paso por el detector metálico. | 7. I walk through the metal detector.<br>(Teacher walks through imaginary object, and makes beeping noise.) |
| 8. Llamo un taxi.                 | 8. I call a taxi.<br>(Go over to phone and make imaginary call.)  |

**CHECK:** Ask students two things that a person does at Customs. Then have student do actions while repeating series. One may want to break up series into parts, and teach 2-3 lines a day.

### EXTRA SAMPLES OF GOUIN SERIES

#### I. Gouin Series related to classroom situation

##### A. TITLE: **Passer une interro (Taking a Test)** (developed by Diane Hesse)

This series is intended for a seventh grade class in the first half of a Level I sequence. The goal of the series is to reduce student anxiety and the stress that surrounds test-taking, and to help the students develop skills to make them more successful test-takers. I plan to use this Gouin Series after studying classroom objects (page 50, Dis-Moi), but before the Chapter I test.

Props/Visual Aids Needed: a copy of Dis-Moi textbook, a student desk, a pencil, a "quiz," and teachers desk.

OVERVIEW: Aujourd'hui, vous êtes nerveux. Pourquoi? Parce que vous allez passer une interro. (Hold up a copy of test with A grade). Qu'est-ce que vous allez passer? (SS: Une interro). Et vous êtes..... (Teacher looks nervous) (SS: Nerveux). Alors, je vais vous expliquer comment passer une interro pour ne pas être nerveux. Ecoutez bien. Après, vous allez me dire deux choses que vous allez faire quand vous passez une interro. Combien de choses? (SS: Deux) Que vous allez faire quand vous passez une.... (SS: Interro).

Today you are nervous. Why? Because you're going to take a test. What are you going to take? (SS: A test). And you are....(Teacher looks nervous) (SS: Nervous). Well, I'm going

to explain how to take a test so you don't have to be nervous. Listen closely. Afterwards, you're going to tell me two things that you will do when you take a test. How many things? (SS: Two). When you're going to take a .... (SS: Test).

**SERIES:**

1. **Je mets mes livres sous le pupitre.**  
I put my books under the desk.  
(I would sit in a student desk and put my textbook under my seat.)
2. **Je prends un crayon.**  
I take out a pencil.  
(I would take a pencil out of my pencil case and hold it up.)
3. **J'écris mon nom à l'interro.**  
I write my name on the test.  
(I would write my name large on the upper right corner of the test sheet and hold it up so students can see.)
4. **Je regarde les questions.**  
I look at the questions.  
(I would scan the sheet without writing on it.)
5. **Je réponds aux questions.**  
I answer the questions.  
(I would pretend to write in answers.)
6. **Je vérifie mes réponses.**  
I verify my answers.  
( I would again look over the sheet, nodding, smiling, etc.)
7. **Je rends l'interro à Madame.**  
I hand in my test to Madame.  
(I would stand up and put the test on the teacher's desk.)

B. TITLE: **Trabajamos en parejas (Pair Work)**  
(developed by Cheryl Caruso)

GOAL: To teach students the appropriate behavior before and during pair work in class. It is also meant to introduce the "we" form of regular -ar verbs in the present tense.

STUDENTS: Level I (freshmen or junior high student), novice (low to high). This would be used at the beginning of the school year, perhaps in the unit introducing -ar verbs.

OVERVIEW: Hoy vamos a aprender cómo trabajar en parejas--grupos de dos personas. Voy a decir seis frases--después, ustedes van a decirme una cosa que hacemos cuando trabajamos en parejas. (Check question) Después, ustedes van a decirme cosa que hacemos cuando trabajamos en parejas.

Today we are going to learn how to work in pairs--groups to two people. I am going to say six sentences--afterwards, you are going to tell me one thing tha twe do when we work in pairs. (Check question). After, you are going to tell me thing that we do when we work in pairs.

### Prime

Primero, vamos a practicar dos palabras nuevas. Trabajamos (t. shows visuals, does some varied drilling and fades cue). Pareja--esto es una pareja (t. shows visual)--dos personas (t. does modeling, varied drilling and fades cue). Ahora, escuchen, no hablen, por favor.

(Check) ¿Van a hablar?

First, let's practice two new words. We work (t. shows visuals, does some varied drilling and fades cue). Pareja--this is pair (t. shows visual)--two people (t. does modeling, varied drilling and fades cue). Now, listen, don't talk, please. (Check) Are you going to talk?

### The Series

1. **Escuchamos a la profesora.**  
We listen to the teacher.
2. **Formamos una pareja.**  
We form a pair.
3. **Hablamos en español.**  
We speak in Spanish.
4. **Escuchamos uno a otro.**  
We listen to each other.
5. **Trabajamos juntos.**  
We work together.
6. **Trabajamos por dos minutos.**  
We work for two minutes.

Practice of sentence will be assisted with teacher and a student pantomiming and gesturing (for example, gestures for "we listen," "we form," "we speak.")

### Check

Teacher will ask the check question and then put students into groups where they will practice the series for two minutes. Teacher will then choose 2 or 3 "parejas" to go through the series for the whole class.