THE NATURAL APPROACH

Language Acquisition in the Classroom

Stephen D. Krashen
Tracy D. Terrell

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The Natural Approach
Language Acquisition in the Classroom

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PREFACE

This is not the first attempt to present a new approach to the teaching of second and foreign languages based on a new theory of language. Earlier attempts, most notably audiolingual approaches, have not met with great success. We think that this has happened for several reasons. A major problem was that the theories were not actually theories of language acquisition, but theories of something else; for example, the structure of language. Also, the application of the theory, the methodology, was not always adequately field-tested. What looked reasonable to the university professor on paper did not always work out in the classroom.

The Natural Approach, we hope, does not have these weaknesses. It is based on an empirically grounded theory of second language acquisition, which has been supported by a large number of scientific studies in a wide variety of language acquisition and learning contexts. In addition, it has been used by many classroom teachers in different circumstances teaching various languages and this experience has helped to shape the Approach over the last seven years.

The central hypothesis of the theory is that language acquisition occurs in only one way: by understanding messages. We acquire language when we obtain comprehensible input, when we understand what we hear or read in another language. This means that acquisition is based primarily on what we hear and understand, not what we say. The goal, then, of elementary language classes, according to this view, is to supply comprehensible input, the crucial ingredient in language acquisition, and to bring the student to the point where he or she can understand language outside the classroom. When this happens, the acquirer can utilize the real world, as well as the classroom, for progress.

The Natural Approach, then, is a way to do this. It is for beginners and is designed to help them become intermediates. We do not pretend that the Natural Approach is the only approach to language instruction which is capable of accomplishing this goal; there are other fine approaches which provide comprehensible input in a variety of innovative ways and which have been demonstrated to be effective. The Natural Approach, however, is relatively simple to use and it is easily adapted to a variety of situations (e.g. foreign language, second language, public school, adult education, bilingual programs, etc.) and can be easily modified to deal with different types of students (e.g. adults, children) with different cognitive styles. The Natural Approach, unlike some newer approaches, need not be adopted in whole; we are encouraged by instructors who have initiated Natural Approach in part within their regular programs and who report dramatic improvement in their students' abilities to use their new language for communication and in their attitudes toward language study in general.

At the time this book was written, our confidence in the Natural Approach was based primarily on underlying theory (itself supported by considerable empirical evidence) and the enthusiastic reactions of students and instructors. Since the completion of the manuscript, a direct test of the Natural Approach has been carried out. Professor Wilfried Voge, in a study reported at the International Con-

Chapter Three

Implications of Second Language Acquisition Theory for the Classroom

In the previous chapter, we outlined a theory of second language acquisition. This theory consists of a set of interrelated hypotheses that are supported by empirical data. The aim of this chapter is to present very briefly some of the general implications of these hypotheses for the second language classroom. We will then discuss how these general conclusions can be applied to form a coherent approach to second language teaching: the Natural Approach. In the following chapters, these conclusions will be discussed in some detail with specific suggestions for application in the classroom.

IMPLICATIONS OF SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION THEORY

Comprehension

The most important implications derive directly from the input hypothesis. If it is true that we acquire languages via comprehensible input, and if language acquisition is central, not language learning, then it follows that the most important element of any language teaching program is input. According to the input hypothesis, language acquisition can only take place when a message which is being transmitted is understood, i.e., when the focus is on **what** is being said rather than on the form of the message. This could be referred to as the "Great Paradox of Language Teaching": **Language is best taught when it is being used to transmit messages, not when it is explicitly taught for conscious learning.**

The requirement that input be comprehensible has several interesting implications for classroom practice. First, it implies that whatever helps comprehension is important. This is why visual aids are so useful. Pictures and other visuals supply for the adult what the "here and now" does for the child. They supply the extra-linguistic context that helps the acquirer to understand and thereby to acquire. Second, it implies that vocabulary is important. Grammar-based approaches to language teaching deliberately limit vocabulary in order to concentrate on syntax. We are suggesting that vocabulary should not be avoided: with more vocabulary, there will be more comprehension and with more comprehension, there will be more acquisition! This is not to say that vocabulary is sufficient; it is to say that its importance is not to be denied. A third implication is that in giving input, in talking to students, the teacher needs to be concerned primarily with whether the students understand the message. Instructors need not be overly concerned with whether they are using certain structures; the Natural Order hypothesis does not imply that grammatical structures need to be supplied in the natural order. According to the principle of the Net (discussed with the Input hypothesis in Chapter Two), if enough successful communication is taking place and if the students understand the message, there will be input at the i+1 level, the next set of structures the student is

due to acquire, and acquisition will proceed.

The discussion of age differences and individual variations implies that comprehensible input will be the crucial element of a language teaching program for all students, young and old, grammar learners or not. While some second language students may be learners, everyone is an acquirer. Thus, the crucial and central component of any language teaching method is input that is understood.

Another implication is that the classroom may be a very good place for second language acquisition, especially at the beginning and intermediate levels. As Wagner-Gough and Hatch have pointed out, input to older acquirers tends to be more complex syntactically, it is not always tied to the here and now, and adults must deal with a far wider range of topics. [1] Because of this, adult beginners, even if they are in the country where the language is spoken, will not at first be able to understand much of what they hear around them. Natural input is often too complex for beginners and can be difficult to utilize for language acquisition. In the second language classroom, we can give adults a "concentrated dose" of comprehensible input, 40 or 60 minutes of useful input at one time. This can be much more efficient than relying exclusively on the informal linguistic environment. We are therefore very enthusiastic and optimistic about the potential of the classroom as a place for second language acquisition!

The Affective Filter hypothesis along with the Input hypothesis, implies that effective classroom input must be interesting. This is easier said than done, of course. The necessity of interesting input is founded on good theoretical reasons. We want students to be concerned with the message, not with the form, in order to bring their filters down. This means that when student interests and goals vary, there may have to be variety in the topics chosen for the classroom activities. Topics of universal appeal will be especially valuable, especially those of personal interest to the students.

Speaking

According to the Input hypothesis, speaking is not absolutely essential for language acquisition. We acquire from what we hear (or read) and understand, not from what we say. The Input hypothesis claims that the best way to teach speaking is to focus on listening (and reading) and spoken fluency will **emerge** on its own. For foreign language teaching, in situations where there is no vital need for early communication, we can allow speaking to emerge in its own time. For language students who are actually in the country where the language is being taught, we may be justifiably concerned with early production, and may want to "beat the system" by encouraging some limited early production, via routines and patterns. In such cases, such routines and patterns should focus on the immediate situational needs of the students. For these students, short, useful dialogs may be of great benefit. We must bear in mind, however, that teaching dialogs

is not the same thing as providing input for language acquisition, but rather, it is a short-term substitute.

Speaking is of course a primary goal of most language students. It is also important in that it stimulates conversation, which in turn will encourage more comprehensible input.

The Role of Grammar

As we have discussed earlier, the study of grammar does have a role in the language program. Our goal is to produce optimal Monitor-users, performers who can use grammar as a supplement to acquisition in situations where grammar use is appropriate. But this implies that grammar instruction has a limited role. Only certain rules need be taught even for optimal Monitor use: for most learners only the late-acquired simpler rules. Also, only certain students will be able to profit from grammar instruction (recall the discussion of individual variation in Chapter Two). Finally, grammar use should be restricted to situations where it will not interfere with communication. We should not expect our students to be concerned with fine points of grammar while they are speaking in free conversation; rather, the time to use the Monitor is in writing and in prepared speech.

Finally, in certain programs, there is a place for "advanced" grammar study. There are students who are, for some reason, very interested in the study of grammar for its own sake, perhaps future linguists and language teachers. Presenting advanced structure to these students in the target language could be of some use in that it is a topic of interest. The theory implies, however, that it is the language of explanation that will help with acquisition, not the grammatical facts learned! In other words, the medium is the message. If teachers realize that complex grammar is not easily usable in real performance, and that the teacher-talk input is the most valuable part of the presentation in terms of acquisition of the target language, such grammar classes may be highly beneficial. They are, however, not for everyone, and should be, at the most, an optional part of the program.

THE NATURAL APPROACH: GUIDELINES

In this section, we illustrate how the Natural Approach is consistent with the implications of the theory of second language acquisition we have just discussed. We do not claim that the Natural Approach is the only possible way of implementing these applications. Nor do we claim that the Natural Approach is entirely new. It shares many features with older "traditional" approaches discussed in Chapter One, many of which contain features that are consistent with the results of second language acquisition summarized in Chapter Two. It is, however, a coherent approach, fairly easy to adapt to different needs, and one that has already shown its worth in actual practice.

(1) The goal of the Natural Approach is communication skills. The general goal is the ability to communicate with native speakers of the target language. Particular objectives are also specified in communicative terms. For example, we expect students in beginning stages to be able to talk about themselves and their families. The focus is primarily on the acquisition of the ability to communicate messages using the target language. This is not to imply that we are unconcerned with grammatical accuracy. We are concerned, but our claim is that in the long run students will speak with more grammatical accuracy if the initial emphasis is on communication skills, since real communication results in receiving more comprehensible input, both in the classroom and in the outside world. Students who can communicate with native speakers will also tend to do so after any formal language training is completed, thus insuring futher comprehensible input and more improvement in accuracy in their speech.

(2) Comprehension precedes production. If communicative ability is based on acquired knowledge, then it follows that the students must first learn to comprehend. Most of the N.A. techniques for classroom activities in early stages are oriented to giving students comprehensible input without requiring oral production in the target language.

(3) Production emerges. Speech (and writing) production emerges as the acquisition process progresses. We expect speech at first to be incomplete and, for the most part, to contain many errors. Students are not forced to respond in the target language, and when they do start to produce, their speech usually consists of simple words and short phrases. In cases in which the instructor and students share a common language, some students may prefer to use this language in early responses, or even mix the two languages. In input-rich environments in which affective filters are low, usually this kind of mixed mode is quickly left behind.

(4) Acquisition activities are central. Since acquisition is central to developing communication skills, the great majority of class time is devoted to activities which provide input for acquisition. Subsequent sections in this book will be devoted to illustrations and discussions of activities which supply input which can be utilized by the students in the acquisition process. On the other hand, conscious learning is important for the Monitoring function for students who are able to benefit from such information and is provided as the supplementary exercises. One of the central tasks of the instructor is to present an optimal balance of acquisition and learning activities. This balance is, of course, quite different in different contexts, depending on factors which we have mentioned: goals of the students, age, ability to utilize grammar in Monitoring, and so forth.

(5) Lower the affective filter. Since input cannot be utilized by adults for acquisition if the affective filter is high, the value of all classroom activities is measured by the degree to which the affective filter is lowered, as well as the amount of comprehensible input provided.

Natural Approach and Second Language Acquisition Theory

The five simple principles of the Natural Approach are completely consistent with the hypothesis we discussed in Chapter Two.

Acquisition-Learning Hypothesis. The basic organization of the second language course is according to the acquisition-learning distinction. Most of the classroom time is spent on activities which foster acquisition; learning exercises are important in certain cases, but always play a more peripheral role.

The Natural Order Hypothesis. By allowing student errors to occur without undue emphasis on error correction, the Natural Approach teacher allows the natural order to take its course. There is no expectation that students will perform late acquired items correctly in early stages of second language acquisition. A teacher of English as a second language, for example, will not expect full correctness for the third person singular *-s* for verbs (a very late acquired item) in their students' speech, nor will instructors of Romance languages expect students to apply rules of gender agreement in the noun phrase accurately and efficiently except in situations of easy Monitoring.

The Monitor Hypothesis. The Natural Approach encourages appropriate and optimal Monitor use. Students are expected to use the conscious grammar when they have time, when the focus is on form, and when they know the rule. This occurs mostly in written work, in prepared speech, or on homework assignments. They are not expected to apply rules consciously in the oral communicative activities of the classroom.

The Input Hypothesis. The classroom is the source of input for the language students, a place where they can obtain the comprehensible input necessary for language acquisition. The Natural Approach is consistent with language acquisition theory in that it puts input in a central place in the curriculum.

The Affective Filter Hypothesis. Probably no method will be totally successful in eliminating the affective filter. The Natural Approach aims to bring it down to as low a level as possible by taking the student "off the defensive"[2] and lowering the anxiety level of the acquisition situation. This is done in several ways. First, the fact that there is no demand for early speech production (see Chapter Four for teaching techniques), reduces the anxiety of the students considerably, since it allows for concentration on one skill at a time. Second, students are allowed to make the decision, individually, when they wish to begin speaking the target language. When they do begin to speak, production in the form of single words or short phrases as responses is accepted in a positive manner. Thus, any sort of attempt at speaking is rewarded positively. Finally, errors of any form are not corrected directly (although in many cases the "correct" version of what the student has said will

be included in the teachers' response to the student, see discussion of "expansions" in Chapter Four). We do not wish students to have an excessive concern for correctness in early stages of language acquisition since, for the most part, Monitor use simply slows down the communication process and acquisition is delayed. Finally, the requirement that the input be interesting to the students will contribute to a more relaxed classroom.

The Role of Aptitude. We have hypothesized that second language aptitude, defined as a score on a standard aptitude test (e.g. the MLAT), relates primarily to language learning and not language acquisition. The acquisition-oriented second language classroom, then, should minimize individual differences in aptitude. If all students are acquirers, and if the classroom provides input for acquisition with a low affective filter, both high and low aptitude students should acquire communication skills successfully. Aptitude differences, it is predicted, will be felt in Monitor use, for example, in written work or in the homework. Aptitude differences play a large role if grammatical accuracy is emphasized; but in the Natural Approach, in which primarily communicative skills are stressed, they play a much smaller role.

The First Language. In Chapter Two it was claimed that second language performers may "fall back" on first language grammatical competence when they have to produce "too early" in a second language. They may use the "L1 plus Monitor Mode", using the syntactic rules of the first language, vocabulary of the second, and the conscious Monitor to make necessary repairs. The Natural Approach tries to minimize the necessity for the use of this mode by not insisting on early second language use in the classroom, and by allowing students to utilize less than complete sentences. It thus allows the students to use their naturally acquired competence and does not require them to rely on less natural modes of production in early stages. It should not be thought, however, that any approach will completely eliminate this mode of production. When students try to express themselves in the target language beyond their acquired ability, they will tend to fall back on the L 1 plus Monitor Mode.

Routines and Patterns. We claimed that routines and patterns are not acquired language and that they do not become acquired language. Teaching methods that rely extensively on dialogs and pattern practice do make this assumption, however. There is essentially no emphasis on pattern practice in the Natural Approach, and pre-created dialogs play a small role. There is no assumption that true (acquired) second language competence will develop from the repetition of certain sentences and patterns. The Natural Approach, in fact, does not provide for standard repetition practice in any form.

As we mentioned earlier, routines and patterns may be helpful for encouraging input in the real world, as they may help the aquirer manage conversations. Limited dialog practice, using these useful routines and patterns, is included but is not a central part of the pedagogical program.

Individual Variation. The Natural Approach has the potential of providing for all variations in Monitor use. For example, the distribution of learning exercises and acquisition activities can be varied. In some programs under-users of the Monitor, students who have no aptitude for grammar or who simply are not interested in grammar, will concentrate almost completely on acquisition activities. (Let us be clear that we still expect the under-users to improve in accuracy in their speech through acquisition.) Optimal-users will be able to add learned grammatical competence to their acquired competence through learning exercises. The over-user is prevented from overemphasizing grammar: although conscious grammar may be the focus of some learning exercises, it will not be the focus for most of the activities in the classroom, nor will it be tested extensively. For many adult second language acquirers, some learning exercises can be quite helpful even though, strictly speaking, they do not contribute directly to progress in language acquisition. As discussed in Chapter Two, the optimal-user of the Monitor will be able to use the Monitor to produce learned but not yet acquired rules (such as simple morphology and agreement rules) and to thus "fill the gaps" left by incomplete acquisition by proper use of the conscious grammar. Often these are errors that do not impair communication but mark the speaker as being "non-native."

Age Difference. Child-adult differences in second language acquisition and performance can easily be dealt with by the Natural Approach. First, as we have said, all performers, young and old, are acquirers, and the aquisition-oriented classroom will serve everyone. We will, of course, need to consider differences in *what* is discussed and dealt with in the classroom. Clearly, children in second language programs (ESL, FLES) will not be interested in the same topics that adult students are interested in. The principle of providing comprehensible input remains the same, however.

According to our discussion, most adult students differ from children in that they have a greater ability to consciously learn grammar rules. (On the other hand, they have higher affective filters.) Accordingly, the proportion of learning exercises (aimed at building and using the Monitor) will vary according to age: for younger children almost all language skills must be acquired directly from natural language acquisition experiences. Learning exercises will be used only for older students, and then in a judicious manner since acquisition activities are more important even in the case of adults.

Notes

1. Wagner-Gaugh and Hatch 1976.
2. Stevick 1976.

Chapter Four

Getting Started with the Natural Approach

Goals

A decision on the methods and materials to be used in a course is possible only once the goals of that course have been defined. The purpose of a language course will vary according to the needs of the students and their particular interests. Often students must be able to use a language for some specific purpose: working in an area in which a different language is spoken, reading technical material, traveling in a foreign country, working with members of a language minority group, and so forth. The purpose of a language course may simply be pleasure: many would like to be able to speak another language not because they need to, but because they think that they will enjoy the experience.

In addition to language courses for specific purposes, there are general language courses as a part of the secondary or university curriculum. The purpose of these courses in various parts of the world is similar, but there are some notable differences. In Europe, especially in smaller countries, the study of other languages is highly valued because of their usefulness. A Dutchman, in order to do business or to travel, must use another language. In other parts of the world, on the other hand, the communicative function is not as highly valued since the language being studied is not used in normal daily activities. Such is the case in the United States and in much of Latin America. In the United States, it is not necessary to be able to communicate in another language in order to do business or travel, although both activities may be enhanced by knowledge of another language. In Latin America, there is no need to know much of languages other than Spanish or Portuguese for oral communication, although a reading knowledge of English is extremely helpful in many professions. Therefore, the relative importance given to language study and to the acquisition of various oral and writing skills will necessarily vary according to the needs of the students.

The approach in general language courses is to try to develop the "four skills" — listening comprehension, speaking, reading, and writing. There are other possible goals, however. One goal often mentioned in connection with these courses is to develop a greater cultural awareness on the part of the students. Or, others may wish to promote a more open attitude toward speakers of other languages. In some cases, instructors place a high value on the development of the students themselves — their self-images and their relationships with others.

What is most important is that the goals of the course be specified. In the following paragraphs we will try to explain how we think that goals may be defined so as to be useful to both the instructor and the student. We do not pretend that our suggestions cover all possible goals for language cour-

ses in all situations, rather we have tried to limit ourselves to those goals which seem to us to be common to most language courses in a wide variety of contexts. We will divide the goals according to basic personal communication skills and academic learning skills.[1] We list below some examples of each type:

Basic personal communication skills: oral

(1) participate in a conversation with one or more speakers of L2
(2) listen to a conversation between other speakers
(3) listen to announcements in public places
(4) request information in public places
(5) listen to radio, television, movies, music

Basic personal communication skills: written

(1) read and write notes to friends or workers
(2) read signs, including instructions
(3) read and fill out forms (applications and other documents)
(4) read advertisements (windows, newspapers, magazines)
(5) read and write personal letters
(6) pleasure reading

Academic learning skills: oral

(1) present a class report
(2) listen to a lecture
(3) listen to a movie or other audiovisual presentation with academic content
(4) listen to and participate in panel and classroom discussions

Academic learning skills: written

(1) read textbooks
(2) write reports, essays
(3) read and discuss literature
(4) study for and take an exam
(5) take notes in class

We have two reasons for focusing the language course in terms of these sorts of competencies. One is to point out that in most cases the general language course cannot possibly attempt to develop all of these skills in the target language. The second is that in formulating the goals of the course, the need of the students for these sorts of skills should be considered. For example, it is often the case that students learn how to analyze poetry in another language, but cannot read signs or instructions in that language. We are not saying that one skill is intrinsically more important than the other, only that each skill should be carefully considered, and the proposed goals of a language course should be justified in terms of usefulness and basic educational philosophy.

Goals in a Natural Approach Class

The Natural Approach is designed to develop basic personal communication skills — both oral and written. It was not developed specifically to teach academic learning skills, although it appears reasonable to assume that a good basis in the former will lead to greater success in the latter. Thus, in the remainder of this text we will concentrate primarily on basic personal communication skills with only passing reference to the teaching of academic learning skills. Please remember that in doing this we do not mean to imply that academic learning skills (the reading of literature, for example) are not important — they certainly are, but only that other methodologies, or modifications of the method presented here may be called for.

Basic personal oral communication goals may be expressed in terms of situations, functions and topics. For example, we define situations in which the students must use the target language, for example, in a hotel, the function of the interaction, in this case a request for information, and the topic of communication, e.g., obtaining lodging. In the following outline, we list topics and situations which are likely to be most useful to beginning students.

Preliminary Unit: Learning to Understand

TOPICS

1. Names
2. Description of students
3. Family
4. Numbers
5. Clothing
6. Colors
7. Objects in the classroom

SITUATIONS

1. Greetings
2. Classroom commands

I. ***Students in the classroom***

TOPICS

1. Personal identification (name, address, telephone number, age, sex, nationality, date of birth, marital status)
2. Description of school environment (identification, description and location of people and objects in the classroom, description and location of buildings)
3. Classes
4. Telling time

II. ***Recreation and leisure activities***

TOPICS

1. Favorite activities
2. Sports and games
3. Climate and seasons
4. Weather
5. Seasonal activities
6. Holiday activities
7. Parties
8. Abilities
9. Cultural and artistic interests

SITUATIONS

1. Playing games, sports

III. ***Family, friends and daily activities***

TOPICS

1. Family and relatives
2. Physical states
3. Emotional states
4. Daily activities
5. Holiday and vacation activities
6. Pets

SITUATIONS

1. Introductions, meeting people
2. Visiting relatives

IV. ***Plans, obligations and careers***

TOPICS

1. Immediate future plans
2. General future activities
3. Obligations
4. Hopes and desires
5. Careers and professions
6. Place of work
7. Work activities
8. Salary and money

SITUATIONS

1. Job interview
2. Talking on the job.

V. ***Residence***

TOPICS

1. Place of residence
2. Rooms of a house
3. Furniture and household items
4. Activities at home
5. Household items
6. Amenities

SITUATIONS

1. Looking for a place to live
2. Moving

VI. ***Narrating past experiences***

TOPICS

1. Immediate past events
2. Yesterday's activities
3. Weekend events
4. Holidays and parties
5. Trips and vacations
6. Experiences

SITUATIONS

1. Friends recounting experiences

VII. ***Health, illnesses and emergencies***

TOPICS

1. Parts of the body
2. Physical states
3. Mental states and moods
4. Health maintenance
5. Health professions
6. Medicines and diseases

SITUATIONS

1. Visits to doctor
2. Hospitals
3. Health interviews
4. Buying medicines
5. Emergencies (accidents)

VIII. ***Eating***

TOPICS

1. Foods
2. Beverages

SITUATIONS

1. Ordering a meal in a restaurant
2. Shopping in a supermarket
3. Preparing food from recipes

IX. ***Travel and transportation***

TOPICS

1. Geography
2. Modes of transportation
3. Vacations
4. Experiences on trips
5. Languages
6. New experiences

SITUATIONS

1. Buying gasoline
2. Exchanging money
3. Clearing customs
4. Obtaining lodging
5. Buying tickets
6. Making reservations

X. ***Shopping and buying***

TOPICS

1. Money and prices
2. Fashions
3. Gifts
4. Products

SITUATIONS

1. Selling and buying
2. Shopping
3. Bargaining

XI. ***Youth***

TOPICS

1. Childhood experiences
2. Primary school experiences
3. Teen years experiences
4. Adult expectations and activitie

SITUATIONS

1. Reminiscing with friends
2. Sharing photo albums
3. Looking at school yearbooks

XII. ***Giving directions and instructions***

SITUATIONS

1. Giving orders at home
2. Giving instructions at school
3. Following maps
4. Finding locations
5. Following game instructions
6. Giving an invitation
7. Making an appointment

XIII. ***Values***

TOPICS

1. Family
2. Friendship
3. Love
4. Marriage
5. Sex roles and stereotypes
6. Goals
7. Religious beliefs

XIV. ***Issues and current events***

TOPICS

1. Environmental problems
2. Economic issues
3. Education
4. Employment and careers
5. Ethical issues
6. Politics
7. Crime
8. Sports
9. Social events
10. Cultural events
11. Minority groups
12. Science and health

SITUATIONS

1. Discussing last night's news broadcast
2. Discussing a recent movie

The preceding list only suggests situations and topics that students could use in oral communication with speakers of the target language. These topics are also appropriate for reading and writing activities, if these latter skills are goals in the language course. Also, for each topic and situation there are various language functions which the students will acquire: making an invitation, reacting to others' opinions, asking others to do something, asking for clarification, and so forth.

What do we expect of the students mastering these goals? We expect that they will be able to function adequately in the target situation. They will understand the speaker of the target language (perhaps with requests for clarification) and will be able to convey (in a non-insulting manner) their requests and ideas. They need not know every word in a particular semantic domain, nor is it necessary that the syntax and morphology be flawless — but their production does need to be understood. They should be able to make the meaning clear but not necessarily be accurate in all details of grammar.

The Role of Grammar in Setting Goals

The goals of a Natural Approach class are based on an assessment of student needs. We determine the situations in which they will use the target language and the sorts of topics they will have to communicate information about. In setting communication goals, we do not expect the students at the end of a particular course to have acquired a certain group of structures or forms. Instead we expect them to be able to deal with a particular set of topics in a given situation. We do not organize the activities of the class about a grammatical syllabus.

It is important to delineate clearly the relationship between grammar and communication goals. In order to communicate about a certain topic in a particular situation, there are a series of language functions which may be expressed by certain grammatical structures (including both syntax and morphology) and certain vocabulary. For example, if the students are to learn how to order meals in a restaurant, they must know some appropriate food and restaurant-related vocabulary. But in order to communicate their desires, beginning students can simply string the appropriate lexical items together in some "logical" order, even if they have not yet acquired (or learned) any syntax or morphology.[2] This strategy will in many cases be sufficient for basic communication. Thus, of the two tools for communication, vocabulary and grammar, the former is clearly the most essential one.

On the other hand, we clearly do want and expect that students will acquire grammar — we do not expect that Natural Approach students will continue to use only simple "stringing" techniques to produce speech. It is also our goal to produce efficient "Monitor users,". i.e., those who can Monitor when appropriate without interfering with the flow of communication. Thus, we want to plan for both acquisition opportunities and for learning possibilities where appropriate.

In embracing a "communication" philosophy, we are not rejecting the idea that students need to acquire (and in some cases learn) a great deal of grammar. In fact, according to the theory of second language acquisition outlined in Chapter Two, our experience is that they will acquire more

grammar this way. Stated simply, focusing on communication goals provides far more comprehensible, meaningful input and encourages more language acquisition, than basing the course on grammar. If we provide discussion, hence input, over a wide variety of topics while pursuing communicative goals, the necessary grammatical structures are automatically provided in the input.

We believe that relying on a grammatical syllabus, no matter how "contextualized," would not be as efficient even if the goal were just the acquisition of syntax. As noted in Chapter Two, the grammatical syllabus assumes that we know the correct Natural Order of presentation and acquisition; we don't: what we have is information about a few structures in a few languages. The net of structure provided by communicative and comprehended input, on the other hand, will automatically provide the "next" structure, or $i+1$, even if the teacher or syllabus designer does not know precisely what that structure is.

Also, grammatical syllabi only work for those students who happen to be ready for the "structure of the day". However, all learners vary in their rate of acquisition. As some students may have had a chance to acquire some of the target language outside the class, it is highly unlikely that all students will be at exactly the same stage of development. Aiming at one grammatical structure at a time is likely to miss the mark for many, if not most, students. On the other hand, if the students understand most of what is said, $i+1$ is supplied for everyone (even though it may be a slightly different $i+1$ for different students), and language acquisition will take place.

A third problem with grammatically-based syllabi is that in nearly all cases there is no real provision for review. If students miss a structure, they nearly always have to "wait until next year"! This is not the case with natural, communicative input. A given student's $i + 1$ will be provided over and over assuming there is enough input. Finally, what may be the most serious problem with the grammatical syllabus is that a grammatical focus invariably distorts any attempt to communicate. The goal of even the most clever contextualization is teaching structure, and this seriously constrains what can be discussed or read. It thus appears to be the case that we not only don't have to use a grammatical syllabus in encouraging acquisition, it is better not to even try.[3]

The learning of syntax and morphology for the Monitor function, on the other hand, although of far less importance than acquisition in most contexts, can be provided for by a grammatical syllabus. Recall, however, that the Monitoring function makes sense only after there is something to monitor, i.e., after communication strategies are somewhat developed and after the acquisition process is well established. Therefore, we defer discussion of the grammatical syllabus and the use of grammar exercises in the Natural Approach to Chapter Six, concentrating for the present on the most important aspects of the Natural Approach course — communicative activities for acquisition.

General Communicative Goals

In planning a communicative based syllabus, we use three stages as a basis for beginners; all involve personalization and the use of familiar topics and situations. The first stage is aimed primarily at lowering the affective filter by putting the students into situations in which they can get to know each other personally. We call this the **personal identification stage.** The students learn how to describe themselves, their family, and their friends in the target language. This implies learning to talk about their interests, studies, desires, future plans and daily life as well as these same topics in relation to others close them and their fellow classmates (Topics I-V, pages 67-68). These are also the same topics which the students might discuss with native speakers in real situations in first encounters.

The second stage consists of giving the students comprehensible input about **experiences** and allowing for opportunities to engage in conversations about their own experiences. Students like to talk not just about themselves, but their trips, vacations, and a wide variety of experiences, such as the happiest moment of their lives or the saddest one. They will want to recount experiences from their childhoods as well as primary and secondary school experiences. It also includes using the target language in common situations they are likely to encounter in traveling or living in a country where the target language is spoken. This stage continues the focus on lowering the affective filter. (Topics VI-XII).

The third stage we suggest for beginners consists of input and discussions, concerning **opinions.** They discuss political issues, civil rights, marriage, family, and so forth, and gain the competence to express their own views. (Topics XIII-XIV).

Within these three stages, there is ample opportunity to include a wide variety of communicative situations: a trip to the doctor, making purchases, preparing a meal, and so forth.[4] Which of these specific goals is chosen will depend on its relevance to the interests and needs of each group of students.

Informing Students about Methodology

Not only should course goals be specified, but experience tells us that whenever possible students can and should be informed as to the relationship between the goals and the particular methodology which will be used to attain these goals. There are several reasons for this. First, in language teaching our goal is not simply to teach someone "so much" Spanish or French. Our goals should also include teaching our students how foreign and second languages are acquired. We want to equip our

students to use the natural environment for further language acquisition, to progress to more advanced stages in the language studied, or to acquire additional languages. Some discussion of the general principles and strategies of second language acquisition will make our students less dependent on us.[5]

Second, thanks to a long tradition of pattern drill and conscious rule teaching, some "de-briefing" is usually necessary. Teachers of English as a second language, for example, know that many students expect a diet of drill and grammar. The Natural Approach needs to be introduced and often even justified to such students.[6] Students need to be given some idea as to what they can expect to be able to do in the target language after completing a given course of study.

Correct expectations will both encourage students as well as prevent disappointment. Here is a sample of what students can be told:

*After 100-150 hours of Natural Approach Spanish, you **will** be able to: "get around" in Spanish; you will be able to communicate with a monolingual native speaker of Spanish without difficulty; read most ordinary texts in Spanish with some use of a dictionary; know enough Spanish to continue to improve on your own.*

*After 100-150 hours of Natural Approach Spanish you will **not** be able to: pass for a native speaker, use Spanish as easily as you use English, understand native speakers when they talk to each other (you will probably not be able to eavesdrop successfully); use Spanish on the telephone with great comfort; participate easily in a conversation with several other native speakers on unfamiliar topics.*

In addition, we find that it is helpful to give to the class information about how the class will be conducted, i.e., a sort of "rules of the game" which they will need to know in order to participate successfully in the initial acquisition experience. The following are suggestions:

1. *Your teacher will speak in French (for example) exclusively. You may answer in either English or in French. You are free to use English until you yourself feel ready to try speaking French. You should not try to use French until you are comfortable doing so. (This, of course, applies only to classes with a common language which the instructor understands.)*
2. *When you do try to speak in the new language, the teacher is interested in what you have to say — not whether you have said it perfectly. Neither you nor the teacher will be overly concerned with grammar errors in your speech while you are a beginner.*
3. *You do not have to use full sentences. You may talk in short phrases or even use just one word when that is appropriate.*
4. *Remember that as long as you **understand** what the teacher is saying, you are acquiring French. This means that you should focus on **what** is being said, the message, rather than on **how** it is being said.*

Developing Strategies for Listening Comprehension

Since the main thrust of the course, especially in initial stages, will be the acquisition rather than the learning of language rules, it is absolutely essential that the student comprehend speech in the target language as quickly as possible. Very often students, especially those with previous language study experience, believe that the ability to comprehend another language develops slowly after much study of vocabulary and grammar. If this were the case, very few people would acquire languages in natural situations. It is important that students understand the process by which they will comprehend what the instructor says to them in the target language.

Most adults expect to understand a new language by learning the meaning of every word they hear. Instead they should learn to interpret general meaning without always understanding all the details. This is neither automatic nor simple for most adults. They must be told that the instructor will use words, forms and structures that they have not yet studied or discussed. However, by paying close attention to the context and the key words in the sentences, they will be able to make a good guess at the meaning of the sentence. This "contextual inferencing" is the secret to learning to understand a second language and to the eventual success of the student in the acquisition process. The students should be aware of this "inferencing" strategy, since on the first day the instructor will begin speaking in the target language, and will want them to experience immediate success in understanding. They should leave the class thinking, "I really did understand most of what was said and it wasn't so difficult." What must happen is that by hearing everything in a clear context, the student is able to follow the communication without necessarily understanding all of the language *per se*. When this goal is attained, students will believe they can understand a new language. This is an important psychological barrier which must be broken through if the students are to be successful in language acquisition.

We turn now to a discussion of actual classroom activities that can be used at different stages of student development in the Natural Approach classroom.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES IN EARLY STAGES

Listening Comprehension (Prespeech) Activities

Since we do not wish to force students to produce utterances in the target language until they have had an opportunity for the acquisition process to begin, the first hours of class must be devoted to activities in which

the students receive comprehensible input. This means that they must be able to participate in a language activity without having to respond in the target language. There are several techniques to achieve this goal.

Particularly good is the technique developed by James Asher which forms the basis for his Total Physical Response Approach. This technique consists of giving commands to students and having them actually act out what the teacher says. Since the students are not forced to produce responses in the target language, they are able to focus their entire attention on comprehension of what is said. At first the commands are quite simple: *stand up, turn around, raise your right hand.* In fact, many instructors incorporate these sorts of commands into initial language instruction. However, TPR is not limited to these simple commands.

Parts of the body as well as body actions can be taught through TPR: *lay your right hand on your head, slap your left leg, touch your right foot with your left hand, put both hands on your shoulder, first touch your nose, then stand up and turn to the right three times,* and so forth. The use of classroom props greatly expands TPR: *Pick up a pencil and put it under the book, touch a wall, go to the door and knock three times.* Any item which can be brought to class can be incorporated: *pick up the record and place it on the tray, take the green blanket to Larry, pick up the soap and take it to the woman wearing the green blouse.*

There are several other techniques which provide comprehensible input and which require as student responses only identification of students in the class. One is to use physical characteristics and clothing of the students themselves. The instructor uses context and the items themselves to make the meanings of the key words clear: *hair, brown, long, short,* etc. Then a student is described: *What is your name?* (selecting a student). *Class, look at Barbara. She has long, brown hair. Her hair is long and brown. Her hair is not short, it is long.* (Using mime, pointing and context to ensure comprehension). *What is the name of the student with long brown hair? (Barbara).* Questions such as *What is the name of the woman with short blond hair?* or *What is the name of the student sitting next to the man with short brown hair and glasses?* are very simple to understand by attending to key words, gestures and context. And they require the students only to remember and produce the name of a fellow student. In fact, in such activities the students may be only consciously focused on remembering names, and often soon "forget" they are understanding another language. (This is a good sign of a low affective filter.) The same can be done with articles of clothing and colors: *Who is wearing a yellow shirt? Who is wearing a brown dress?*

The use of visuals, especially pictures cut out from magazines, can also serve the same purpose. The instructor introduces the pictures to the entire class one at a time focusing usually on one single item or activity in the picture. He may introduce one to five new words while talking about the picture. He then passes the picture to a particular student in the class. The

student's task is to remember the name of the student with a particular picture. For example, *Tom has the picture of the sailboat, Joan has the picture of the family watching television,* and so forth. The instructor will ask questions like: *Who has the picture with the sailboat? Does Susan or Tom have the picture of people on the beach?* Again, the students need only produce a name in response!

It is also possible to combine the use of pictures with Total Physical Response: *Jim, find the picture of the little girl with her dog and give it to the woman with the pink blouse.* Or, one can combine general observations about the pictures with commands: *If there is a woman in your picture, stand up. If there is something blue in your picture, touch your right shoulder.*

If the group is small, another technique is to describe several pictures, asking the students to point to the picture being described:

Picture 1. *There are several people in this picture. One appears to be a father, the other a daughter. What are they doing? Cooking. They are cooking a hamburger.*

Picture 2. *There are two men in this picture. They are young. They are boxing.*

In all these activities, the instructor attempts to maintain a constant flow of comprehensible input. The students will be successful if the instructor maintains their attention on key lexical items, uses appropriate gestures, and uses context to help them understand. If the students are literate, writing the key words on the chalkboard will give a visual image for key lexical items, and draw the students' attention to the content words.

The comprehensibility of the input will be increased if the instructor uses repetition and paraphrase: *There are two men in this picture. Two. One, two* (counting). *They are young. There are two young men. At least I think they are young. Do you think that they are young? Are the two men young? Or old? Do you think that they are young or old?* The instructor can weave these repetitions naturally into discourse so that they do not sound like repetitions. Nor is there need to pause at each potential question point for an answer, since each question is usually paraphrased in two or three ways before the instructor expects a response.

The whole point of this section is that it is relatively simple to teach comprehension without requiring more than minimal production. There are numerous advantages of a preproduction stage. The students are given the opportunity to become comfortable with the class activities, the instructor, and with classmates without being forced to respond in the target language. In addition, production of utterances in a new language is much more complex than comprehension. In order to produce an utterance, the students must recall the words they wish to use, articulate new sounds, and use as much syntax and morphology as they have acquired

(and/or learned). Doing all of this requires a tremendous amount of conscious "processing time" for beginners. By concentrating on comprehension strategies only, all attention can be directed to developing comprehension skills. An equally important goal of this preproduction stage is to convince students that they will be successful in the language course. Finally, the preproduction stage allows the student an opportunity to begin the acquisition process.

We have no illusions that the sort of input in the target language and the interaction with the students described above constitute "real communication." At this stage, however, the techniques described are realistic enough to (1) provide comprehensible input, (2) maintain focus on the message and (3) help lower affective filters. Thus, we can be assured that the acquisition process will begin.

This preproduction phase with concentration on comprehension is especially important for students living in an area in which the target language is the language for daily communication in the society. In these second language contexts, the ability to comprehend speech in a wide variety of contexts takes on added importance. If the instructor concentrates on giving the students experience with comprehension of speech through vocabulary recognition, the ability of the students to understand speech outside the target language classroom can increase very rapidly. If, on the other hand, the students are required to produce (with accuracy in pronunciation and grammar) everything they hear in the input, their progress will be very slow both in the target language classroom and more importantly in their interactions with native speakers outside the classroom.[7]

Early Production

Target language production in an input-rich natural environment begins with single word utterances or short phrases. The shift from answers with gestures, names, or with *yes-no* to producing words in the target language usually comes naturally and spontaneously after several hours of input. The length of time of the preproduction period will of course vary with the amount of input provided and the rate at which and degree to which the affective filter can be lowered. Our experience is that adults make the transition from listening to production quite rapidly. Some adults begin producing single words or short phrases after one or two hours of comprehensible input. Others need up to ten or fifteen hours of input before they feel comfortable enough to produce. Adolescents often need considerable exposure to the new language before they attempt to produce utterances. This is probably due more to affective factors than to any intrinsic difficulties with language acquisition.[8] Young children very often show a delay in production from one to six months.[9]

The transition from preproduction input to a stage in which the students begin to speak is simple if opportunities for production are made available

gradually within the normal comprehension (preproduction) activities. The earliest verbal responses in the target language will be *yes-no* in reply to a simple question: *Does Brian have the picture of the boy with his brother? Is the boy tall? Is he wearing blue jeans? Does Jean have the picture of the men playing golf? Is there a mountain in the picture? Is it raining? Does Jane have the picture of the woman talking on the phone? Is she beautiful? Is she wearing a blue blouse?*

The next step integrates the use of "*either-or*" questions into the comprehension questions: *Is this a dog or a cat? Is this woman tall or short? Is Mary wearing a red or a green blouse?* Acceptable answers are: *dog, tall, green.* Answering an either-or question amounts to no more than a repetition of a word which the instructor has just pronounced. Thus, although the students are actually producing target language words for the first time, the correct pronunciation and form are immediately available in the preceding input.

From either-or questions, it is an easy step (although one not necessarily taken immediately) to ask for identification of items which have been introduced several times. *What is this? What color is her skirt? What is he doing?* In all cases the students need only say a single word to answer the question. Or, the instructor may start an utterance and leave a pause. *He has on a red . . .* Most students will immediately say *shirt* (if indeed it is the shirt that is red).

These input techniques for encouraging early production do not constitute a discrete stage of language development but rather are an extension of the comprehension stage. When the instructor begins to ask questions and make comments which require single word responses, the emphasis is still on giving comprehensible input. At first, most of the questions should require only gestures or names as answers with only a few requiring single word answers. As the students become comfortable with producing responses in the target language, their use can be increased, but the goal of supplying large quantities of comprehensible input is still more important at this stage than the students' initial attempts at production.

The following is an example of ***teacher-talk*** based on pictures, i.e., comprehensible input, which includes examples of all of these techniques for encouraging early production.

> *Is there a woman in this picture? (Yes). Is there a man in the picture? (No). Is the woman old or young? (Young). Yes, she's young, but very ugly. (Class responds no, pretty). That's right, she's not ugly, she's pretty. What is she wearing? (Dress). Yes, she's wearing a dress. What color is the dress? (Blue). Right, she's wearing a blue dress. And what do you see behind her? (Tree). Yes, there are trees. Are they tall? (Yes). And beside her is a . . . ____ (dog). Yes, a large dog is standing to her right.*

It is also important to continue to expand the net of comprehensible input. The net of syntax and morphology will expand naturally without any overt attention on the part of the instructor. However, new vocabulary can be deliberately introduced into this sort of input.

What do you see in this picture? (Man). Yes, there is a man. Where is he? (Beach). Yes, he is sitting on the beach. What is in front of him? (Students don't know the word). *That's a sailboat. Is it large or small? (Small). Is it in the water or on the beach? (In water). Yes, it is floating* (new word, use mime to explain) *in the water. Can stones float? (No). Can people float? (Some). Right. If you know how to swim* (new word, use mime), *you can float.*

Indeed, new words should be introduced and then reused many times before the students are expected to use them in their responses. Thus, at any given time the comprehensible input serves to introduce new vocabulary, reuse vocabulary which has previously been introduced, and to give an opportunity for the students to produce vocabulary which has been used by the instructor so often that it has been acquired (or in some cases learned). In this way, at the same time the students are producing words they have acquired, the input contains new words which will form part of the material to be acquired. Comprehension, in this way, always outpaces production, not just in the preproduction stage, but throughout Natural Approach activities.

The early production activities that we have suggested correspond to the "personal identification" stage, thereby allowing the instructor to concentrate on lowering the affective filter while providing input for expanding listening comprehension. Any of the first few topics listed as goals at the beginning of this chapter would be appropriate in this early stage.

To this point we have only suggested the use of visuals, mostly pictures, as a basis for oral input and single-word responses. These techniques can be used with both children and adults and with students who have no literacy skills. But if the students are at all literate in their first language, there are two other sources of stimuli for giving comprehensible input in the single-word stage: charts and advertisements.

	Natalia	Abdul	Helmut	Ito
8:30	ESL	Math	Science	Social Studies
9:45	Break	Break	Break	Break
10:00	Math	Science	ESL	ESL
11:15	Phys Ed	Art	Health	Art
12:00	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch
1:00	French	History	ESL	ESL
1:45	Social Studies	ESL	Speech	Phys Ed

Charts collect information in an easily interpretable form. The chart above is an example of school subjects of foreign students in a secondary school in an English speaking country. Teacher talk using the chart as a basis for providing comprehensible input might run like this:

This is a chart of the schedule of classes for four students. What are the names of the students on this chart? (Natalia, Abdul, Helmut, Ito). What time is the morning break? (9:45). Right, the morning break is at nine forty-five. Do classes begin at 8:30? (Yes). Is that earlier or later than our classes begin? (Earlier). What is Abdul's first class of the morning? (Math). Does anyone in our class have Math at 8:30? (Students respond perhaps by raising their hands or by other gesture). *What class do you have?* (addressing one of the volunteers) *(Biology). Does Natalia have PhysEd or Math at 11:15? (PhysEd). Do these students have lunch at the same or different times? (Same). Yes, everyone eats lunch at ____ (twelve o'clock). Which student takes a foreign language? (Natalia). Does anyone in our class speak French?* (follow-up with appropriate response or question).

This chart can be redone using actual students in the class and their particular schedules. Most of the topics from the first section of the communicative syllabus (pp. 67-70) can be adapted in this fashion. The following are illustrations of charts from the subtopic "Students in the classroom" (p. 67)

Select three other students in your class and fill in the appropriate information. The teacher talk which will supply the comprehensible input will mainly consist of questions and comments. For example:

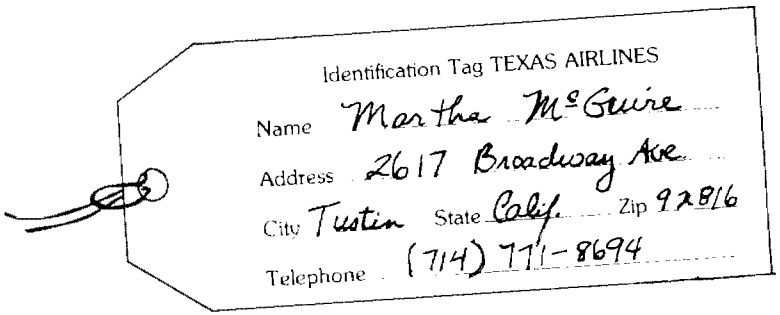
Let's count the number of students with blue eyes. One, two, three, four . . . Are there any others? (Jim). Oh, of course, we can't forget Jim. Yes, he has blue eyes. Now, who has brown eyes? Does Martha have brown eyes? (Yes). And what color is her hair? (Brown). Is it light brown or dark brown? (Light). Is she wearing a dress today? (No.) A skirt? (Yes). What color is the skirt? (Blue). Yes, it's a blue skirt with white stripes (new word). *Who else is wearing a skirt? (Betty). Let's try to describe it. It's _____ (green). Does it have stripes? (No). It's a solid color* (new word). *Does the blouse match?* (new word). *Look at the blouse. What color is the blouse? (Light green). Do the two greens match?* (show meaning of match).

Hair color			
brown	✓		
black			
blond			
red			

Eye color			
black			
brown	✔		
green			
blue			

Clothing			
tennis shoes	✔		
jacket	✔		
skirt			
blue jeans	✔		
sweater			
suit			
shorts			
	Mike		

Another useful activity in the early production stage is to use a form and have students interview each other to obtain the desired information. The following, for example, is a luggage tag belonging to Martha McGuire.


Identification Tag TEXAS AIRLINES
Name Martha McGuire
Address 2617 Broadway Ave.
City Tustin State Calif. Zip 92816
Telephone (714) 771-8694

The students interview a classmate and then fill out the required information on a blank luggage tag.

In the follow-up teacher talk, the students will report on their classmates. *John, who did you interview? (Mike Evans). What is the name of the street where he lives? (Seville Way). And the city? (Lancaster). Who else in the class lives in Lancaster?* (several raise hands). *Let's count together, class.* (Class counts with instructor). *What is Mike's zip code? (78713). Does anyone else have exactly the same zip code?* (two raise their hands). *Does anyone have almost the same zip code? What is it?* (referring to the student who raised her hand).

Timetables are an excellent source for creating input with extensive use of numbers. The following is a flight schedule.

Los Angeles	Mexico City	Flight
lv 11:15 am	ar 3:40 pm	744
lv 6:45 pm	ar 11:10 pm	746
lv 11:40 pm	ar 4:05 am	742
Mexico City	**Los Angeles**	**Flight**
lv 8:30 am	ar 11:05 am	741
lv 3:00 pm	ar 5:30 pm	743
lv 5:00 pm	ar 7:30 pm	745

The complexity of the teacher-talk input will depend on the cognitive sophistication of the students. Adults who are used to interpreting such timetables will have no trouble with the following sorts of questions even in very early stages since the questions only require the use of numbers in the replies.

What time does flight 746 arrive in Mexico City? (11:10 pm). Does the flight leaving Los Angeles at 11:40 arrive before 7:00 the next morning? (Yes). If you need to be back in Los Angeles at 12:00 noon, what flight will you take from Mexico City? (741). How long is the flight from Mexico City to Los Angeles? (remember the time change) *(Three and one-half hours).*

Students with less experience with such cognitively demanding tasks can be given much simpler input.

What time does Flight 744 leave Los Angeles? And what time does it arrive in Mexico City? How many flights per day are there from Los Angeles to Mexico City? And how many return flights are there? If you miss the first flight of the day, how long do you have to wait until the next flight?

Simple advertisements are helpful in early stages as a basis for providing input which contains numbers used in prices. The following are sample clothing ads accompanied by possible teacher-talk input.

DESIGNER SPORTSWEAR... up to 60% OFF

Jackets	were $88-234	NOW $35-94
Blouses	$44-70	$18-28
Pants	$76-84	$30-34
Skirts	$54-128	$22-51

$16.99 Jeans	**9.97**
$24 Stretch Jeans	**16.97**
$16.99 Corduroy* Jeans	**9.97**
$20.99 Western Shirts	**13.97**
*Polyester and cotton	**thru Jan. 30**

How much are the jeans? How much do you save? Which costs more, the jeans or the corduroy jeans? How much were the Western shirts originally? If you buy one shirt and two pairs of jeans, what is the least it will cost you? Look at the ad for the sale on designer sportswear. What is the cost now of the least expensive skirt? And the most expensive skirt? What was the most expensive item mentioned in this ad? The least expensive? If you buy a skirt and a blouse, what is the most it could cost you? And the least?

Extending Production

How long the students stay in the one-word stage will vary individually. Although questions using the techniques described in the previous section do not require more than a one-word response, it is possible to expand the answer and many students do so and produce short phrases after several hours of comprehension activities.

One of the earliest models we use to encourage the development of early production is the ***Open-Ended Sentence.*** Here, the students are given a prefabricated pattern, a sentence with an open slot provided for their contribution.

Very simple sentences which can result in lists of words are helpful: *In this room there is a _____. I am wearing a _____. In my purse there is a _____. In my bedroom I have a _____. After class I want to _____.* Although the student is obliged only to produce a single word creatively, many will quickly use short phrases to fill the slot.

Also useful for early production is the ***Open Dialog.*** Two and three line dialogs lend themselves to creative production even when the student is only beginning to make the transition out of the one-word stage. They may be written on the board or on an overhead projector.

— Where are you going?	*— Hi, my name is _____.*
— To the _____.	*— Pleased to meet you. I'm _____.*
— What for?	*— Are you from _____?*
— To _____.	*— Yes. (No, I'm from _____.)*

These dialogs are practiced in small groups depending on the number of participants in the activity. Since many of the later production activities involve working in small groups, this helps to prepare the class for this sort of language activity.[10]

Another useful technique in early stages is ***association.*** This activity provides exposure to a great deal of comprehensible vocabulary in an interesting and meaningful way. The meaning of a new item is associated not only with its target language form but with a particular student. To illustrate the model, let us consider the following example, intended to get students to participate in conversation about activities they enjoy doing.

The students are told that the goal of the activity is to learn to talk about things they like to do. This will entail learning *I like to* and *He/She likes to* as ***prefabricated patterns,*** that is, as memorized "chunks" that can be used as unanalyzed pieces of language in conversation, and that also may serve as comprehensible input. The pattern should be written on the board and remain there throughout the activity.

I like to _____
you like to _____
he likes to _____
she likes to _____

Each student will indicate a single activity he or she enjoys: *I like to fish, to swim, to play basketball* and so forth. Each student chooses only one activity and no student may choose an activity if it has already been selected. Suppose the activity first chosen is "to eat." The instructor writes on the board *eat* while saying *Jim likes to eat.* (Students are not required to do choral repetition, but some do repeat the word, or the entire utterance at this point). Next, the instructor makes several comments or asks the student simple questions about the activity. In this case, the instructor might comment that we all like to eat, or that most of us eat too much, or anything else which the class can understand.

The instructor then asks the next student for an activity and repeats the process. After several verbs have been introduced, the instructor systematically reviews by asking questions which require only a single word answer. *Who likes to eat? Does Martin like to ski or to play volleyball? Joyce doesn't like to run, does she? Does Jim like to swim?* This conversational review during the activity has two goals: to provide more comprehensible input and to allow time for the association of new vocabulary with individual students.

In addition to these activities, all of the techniques described in the previous section can serve to extend speech. The use of pictures is the same as in the preproduction stage except that the instructor input includes questions which can be answered in short phrases or sentences. The same is true of charts and advertisements.

MANAGING CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

Student Responses

In the early stages of speech production we use ***random volunteered group responses,*** which place little demand on the individual student but allow early use of the target language. The instructor asks a question and anyone and everyone can respond as they wish without raising hands. Suppose, for example, that the instructor asks about the weather: *How's the weather today?* Some students will answer internally, silently. Others will mumble a barely audible response. However, some students, perhaps half of the class, will utter responses which are both audible and comprehensible. They will probably include *fine, good, cool, cloudy,* and so forth. That is, they are all correct answers (semantically) and all are produced at approximately the same time. In cases of questions with a single logical answer, as in most of the questions from the preceding section, the responses will be the same, but somewhat dispersed in time. In initial stages practically all activities are done in this mode. The result is that the students hear a great deal of input during a single class session (usually several hundred utterances) to which they all can respond in some way.

Random volunteered group responses are not as orderly as a group choral repetition, but approximate real communication while the latter do not. Our experience is that older groups adapt themselves rapidly to this sort of response freedom. For children, it is the normal way to respond.[11]

Student Errors in Early Stages

The possibility of the students making errors in early stages is limited simply because the possibilities of oral production are also limited. During Total Physical Response (TPR) activities, the students may err only by failing to understand and by executing the command incorrectly. It is unlikely however, that the entire class will misunderstand; therefore, there will always be a correct model to imitate. In our experience with TPR, students constantly check the actions of their classmates and self correct almost immediately when necessary.

In the other activities of the prespeaking stage, the only responses which are required are the names of the other students in the class and perhaps a simple *yes* or *no*. Mistakes with these activities usually stem from a misunderstanding of the question (indicated by silence or the identification of the wrong student) or from forgetting the name of the student being described. In either case, unless the instructor has asked the question of an individual student (a rare practice in early stages), correction is automatic and immediate since, as in TPR, most of the class will have answered correctly at the same time.

Mistakes appear when the student starts to produce utterances in the target language. However, in early Natural Approach activities, errors are minimized since in the activities designed to encourage initial speech production, only single word (or short phrase) responses are normally appropriate. When they occur, errors are of three types. First, the answer given may be incorrect. For example, the instructor pointing to a picture of a table asks, *What is this?* and student replies, *chair*. In this case, the instructor is justified in correcting the error directly. *No, this isn't a chair, it's a table.*

Another possibility is that the utterance is appropriate and well-formed, but pronounced incorrectly. In this case, the instructor can simply use the mispronounced lexical item in an expanded answer. For example, instructor says, *This woman is wearing a red* _____. (pointing to a blouse). A student mispronounces the word *blouse*. The instructor might reply *Yes, that's right, she's wearing a red blouse.*

Also common (and probably universal) are responses which are appropriate but syntactically incomplete or morphologically ill-formed. For example, the instructor asks, *Is this a picture of a man or a woman?* Students reply, *woman*, omitting the required article. The instructor again gives a positive response (and more comprehensible input), *Yes, this is a woman.* Or to the question, *What is the man doing in this picture?* the students may reply *run*. The instructor expands the answer, *Yes, that's right, he's running.*

The point of these expansions is to supply comprehensible input and encourage communication, not to expect that the students will correct themselves and repeat the utterance in a correct form. Furthermore, it should not be thought that the students will in all (or even in most) cases, immediately attend to and benefit from these expansions. If the student's level of acquisition is not ready for the acquisition of a particular rule, then most likely the expansion will be accepted only as a sign of comprehension and success in communication, but will not be utilized for progress in acquisition of grammar. Indeed, in many cases the rules themselves will be so complex that the student will have to hear these expansions (and other input) many times before acquisition of the particular rule or item is even begun. Thus, theoretically, expansions may not be absolutely necessary. They are probably helpful, however, in that they provide additional comprehensible input. In the activities which encourage more complex speech production, there will, of course, be more errors. The "cure" however, is the same: more comprehensible input provided by the instructor.[12]

In any case, whatever technique is followed to ensure that the student is surrounded with comprehensible input, the important point is that direct correction of errors is not necessary and will in most cases be detrimental to the objective of lowering the affective filters. We will comment further on the correction of student errors in Chapter Seven.

Reading and Writing in Early Stages

In courses in which reading and writing are not goals, the activities we have described in this chapter can be done without any reference to the printed word. With young children, this is also the case since even in the situation in which reading and writing will follow, these activities can serve as a "reading readiness" period. On the other hand, with adults (and adolescents, who will later be learning how to read and write in the target language) both reading and writing can be profitably begun during both the prespeaking and early production stages.

Initially, TPR commands are normally given only in oral form. Later, the instructor may wish to write them on the chalkboard and let the students copy them in a notebook. This is of course only a copy exercise, but it does allow for the opportunity to see in print what they already have comprehended in the spoken language. If the native language uses the same writing system or the same alphabet as the target language, this will involve only a minor adjustment of associating some new sounds to familiar symbols and perhaps a few new symbols.

With input using descriptions of class companions and pictures, many instructors using the Natural Approach report good results with a technique which includes writing new, key words on the chalkboard as they are introduced for the first time in the comprehensible input which the instructor supplies to the students. These words can be copied into notebooks by the students as they are introduced. Most instructors have reported that this technique does not, for the most part, distract from the concentration on the message of the input, since what is written are new content words, not grammatical forms (articles, function words, auxiliaries, copulas, endings and other grammatical morphemes). In addition, this often has the effect of slowing down the rate of input, thus increasing comprehension. For many students it also helps to focus on the key lexical items rather than the totality of the elements in the sentence. Finally, in our experience, many adults are quite visually oriented and this visual image of a new word helps them to retain it more quickly and longer.

On the other hand, there are dangers to supplying written input too soon. First of all, some students have reported that seeing the printed word in early stages is simply distracting. Others have reported that the practice leads them to want to produce before they have acquired enough phonology and before they have begun to make sound-letter correspondences firmly. This leads to trying to pronounce the words they have written before they are really acquired. While all of these objections are to a point valid, they can be overcome. Natural Approach instructors do not push for speech production before the students are ready and often remind them that they need not try to pronounce the words they have written until after a few hours of experience with listening comprehension.

Whether or not this particular practice of writing words on the chalkboard in early stages is used or not, we do wish to emphasize our firm disagreement with the practice in the early days of audiolingualism of not letting the students see the printed word in any form before the material is completely learned in an aural-oral mode. As noted in Chapter One, this was a very frustrating practice for both instructors and students and caused many more affectively negative feelings than could have ever been compensated for by the supposed reduction in transfer of bad pronunciation habits from the native language.

Nor should instructors worry that students who see the words which are introduced will become dependent on the printed word as is the case in many methodologies tied closely to a textbook. The students see only a few key words in each utterance and the greatest part of the input they receive is completely oral without direct reference to anything written.

We will have more to say about the teaching of reading and writing in Chapter Six.

Pronunciation

In a beginning language course, the issue of when to teach pronunciation inevitably arises. There has been surprisingly little research, however, addressing the question of whether pronunciation can even be taught or learned.

In a very recent study,[13] however, Purcell and Suter surveyed acquirers of English as a second language, and concluded that accuracy of pronunciation of English correlated with the acquirers' first language (speakers of Arabic and Farsi had better accents than speakers of Japanese and Thai), the amount of interaction with English speakers, performance on a test of phonetic ability, and the degree of concern the speakers had about their accent. Surprisingly enough, the amount of formal classroom training in ESL, even when the courses were specifically aimed at pronunciation, did not relate to pronunciation ability. Thus, it may be possible that direct classroom exercises are of limited use.

Pronunciation ability, or a good accent, may be nearly completely dependent on what has been acquired, not on rules which have been learned. It is possible to learn conscious rules about pronunciation, but performers, especially in the beginning stages, usually have too many more important things to attend to in performance.

One interesting hypothesis is that pronunciation ability, or phonological competence, is in fact acquired quite rapidly, but that speakers do not "perform" their competence possibly because they do not feel comfortable using an authentic accent in the second language. They therefore "fall back" on first language phonological competence, resulting in an "accent."[14]

If formal teaching has such a limited effect on pronunciation, then what

we can do is simply provide an environment where acquisition of phonology can take place and provide an atmosphere where students can feel comfortable and where they will be more prone to perform their competence. Thus, in the Natural Approach we do not recommend any specific activities for pronunciation, especially in early stages.

The preproduction period seems to be of benefit by allowing the students to develop a "feel" for phonology before they are required to produce it. It is not clear, for example, that direct repetition by the student after the instructor, a practice often used in the Audiolingual approach, actually encourages the development of pronunciation skills. There is experimental evidence that suggests, in fact, that a silent period may be of greater benefit.[15] In early Natural Approach activities, although students are not forced into choral group repetition of new words and phrases, some students do repeat and imitate the pronunciation immediately, while others simply listen (and may repeat internally).

Pronunciation can, of course, be presented for conscious learning via language lab exercises assigned as homework. These are groups of exercises with simple explanations for the correspondence of letters and sounds and guidelines for the production of these sounds. As we stated, it is not clear that such exercises actually improve the pronunciation of most students, but some students believe them to be helpful. Since such rules are learned consciously, however, they will be available only in situations in which the students can monitor their speech easily.

Many instructors are convinced that if they do not emphasize correct pronunciation at the beginning of a course, students will establish "bad" habits which will be difficult, if not impossible, to change later. While it appears to be true that one who has spoken a language for many years with a very strong accent may have difficulty changing, there is no evidence, on the other hand, that pronunciation habits are so firmly established in the first couple of years of language study; indeed, informal experiences with thousands of language students lead us to believe that pronunciation often improves with experience and can improve considerably as late as the third or fourth year of language study.

Another mistaken belief, in our opinion, is that students must achieve native-like pronunciation skills to be successful. Only language instructors set such difficult standards since native speakers never expect foreigners to speak their language without an accent. The native speaker adopts more realistic expectations: the acquirer should pronounce in a fashion which is understandable without an extraordinary effort by the native speaker. Nor should the acquirers' pronunciation be overly irritating or distracting. But these requirements are a far cry from the "perfection" demanded by many language instructors.

In summary, then, in the Natural Approach, we do not place undue emphasis in early stages on perfection in the students' pronunciation, but rather concentrate on providing a good model with large quantities of comprehensible input before production is attempted.

Expectations of the Early Stages

For us the most important goal of the early stages of the Natural Approach is to lower the affective filter. This is because a high filter will prevent acquisition — the central goal of the Natural Approach. We want students to become comfortable with the class activities and with interacting with each other in the target language. They should begin to develop confidence in their ability to comprehend the target language as well as have a positive attitude towards acquiring a new language in general.

The early activities are meant to initiate the acquisition process, to help students unconsciously adjust to new patterns of intonation, rhythm, and a new sound system. The acquisition of syntax is begun at least on the level of word order. At first students probably do little more than begin the acquisition of transformations which permute elements (as in negation or question formation), but with some experience can understand sentences using such transformations. It is doubtful if morphology is noticed (either consciously or unconsciously) since morphology in general is not necessary at first for partial comprehension and indeed acquirers in early stages usually ignore it completely. What is acquired then in this stage are general sorts of listening strategies, i.e., rules of interpretation of utterances without depending on an extensive knowledge of syntax and morphology.

On the other hand, a great deal of vocabulary must be acquired very early on, at least on a recognition level, if the student is to be successful with the Natural Approach. Indeed, many instructors who have had extensive experience teaching with Natural Approach activities characterize the early stages as consisting of activities whose purpose is to give comprehensible input with an ever expanding vocabulary.

Learning plays a very small role in Natural Approach classes in initial stages. In the case of children, all activities are directed at acquisition. For adolescents and adults, some provision for learning may be helpful although learning will not of course dominate the class. In the first place, many adults would not be happy with an approach which depends entirely on unconscious processes. They are used to studying new material on a conscious level and feel a need to "study" the language they are learning. It may be true, although we have no formal evidence, that some conscious study of vocabulary helps to speed the acquisition process since the more words the students can recognize in an utterance the more comprehensible the input will be.[16] In some Natural Approach classes in which students study outside of class, the initial homework assignments have involved exercises to review vocabulary. (For further discussion of vocabulary, see Chapter Six.)

In addition, some adults are quite proficient in the study of grammar,

and they may feel more comfortable if they can read a good succinct explanation of the forms and structures the instructor is using in the input they are receiving. In some Natural Approach courses in secondary schools and universities, the students have a grammar handbook and some students report that such materials are a great help to them.

The help from the study of grammar is probably more psychological than linguistic. It is probable that the study of grammar rules in early stages of language acquisition contributes very little directly to the ability to comprehend the input from the instructor and that its benefits are more in the area of increased security for certain kinds of students. On the other hand, our experience is that too much emphasis on grammar study can be very detrimental to the acquisition process. If the students learn a number of morphological and syntactic rules, they may spend so much mental "processing" time on these items during a comprehension activity that they "miss" some of the key lexical items and actually understand less than students who have not studied grammar. If this happens, and we have personally seen many such instances, acquisition actually falls behind. Thus, too much learning in some cases can be a detriment to overall progress in the development of communication skills.

In conclusion, the question of the integration of materials to promote learning in the initial stages of the Natural Approach becomes one of balance. Learning materials (vocabulary and grammar study) should be included if the instructor believes that the students can benefit from such study without interfering with the acquisition process.

Notes

1. We are using the terminology introduced by Cummins 1980 but now modified, Cummins 1981.
2. See e.g. Givon 1979.
3. It may be said that the Natural Approach uses a "notional" or semantic syllabus in that class activities are centered around topics or situations and not around particular structures. It is thus fundamentally in agreement with the "Communicative Approach" proposed by several scholars (see especially Wilkins, 1976). It differs from these approaches, however, in several ways. While other attempts to apply notional syllabuses focus on production exercises and error correction, the Natural Approach focuses on input. It assumes that most of the rules relating notions and functions to grammatical form (rules of communicative competence) will be acquired, not learned, and that a great deal of the grammatical structure will be acquired as well. The Natural Approach does not expect full communicative competence after one year of study. It does expect students to be able to *understand* a great deal of real language use, and thus be in a position to continue to acquire communicative competence on their own.
4. These stages could easily be adapted to a one-year college course or to a two- to three-year sequence in secondary schools.
5. We realize that often this is not possible in early stages of some second language courses due to the multilingual background of the students.
6. In these situations the emphasis must be on building trust and confidence in their instructor. For students who have had a great deal of formal instruction in the target language (but little practical experience), this can be a problem which must be resolved slowly but steadily. Restructuring and other group activities are helpful (See Chapter V and Christison and Bassano 1981).
7. For example, a child acquiring English in an English speaking country can acquire recognition vocabulary very rapidly, perhaps 15-30 new words per instruction hour. In a very short time, perhaps after 50-100 hours of concentrated input with emphasis on developing recognition vocabulary, children can begin to understand a great deal of the speech that surrounds them outside the ESL classroom. If, on the other hand, the instructor requires production of new vocabulary immediately upon presentation in the input, the rate is slowed down to perhaps 5-10 new words per hour. After 50-100 hours, the children will remain extremely limited in both comprehension and speech production. What is worse, the ability to use outside input will still be very low, and natural acquisition outside the classroom will be slowed down tremendously.
8. If students in their teens are not voluntarily producing words in the target language after fifty or so hours of comprehensible input, there may be serious affective blocks which will have to be attended to.
9. In many cases in which there is a long preproduction period, when speech production does finally begin it often develops quite rapidly and the child quickly catches up to the other children whose oral production began earlier.
10. We do not expect the patterns in the open-ended sentence to "turn into" creative language automatically (see discussion in Chapter Two). They will be useful, however, in allowing students to interact more easily inside and outside the classroom and thus gain more comprehensible input.
11. There may, of course, be individual and possibly cultural variation with respect to willingness to respond in this way.
12. Research on the efficacy of expansions has been done in first language acquisition with some studies concluding that expanding children's utterances has little or no effect on the rate of acquisition (Cazden 1965) while other studies conclude that they do help (Nelsen et al. 1973, Newport et al. 1977, Cross 1977). Our interpretation is that they help when they are interpreted by the acquirer as comprehensible input.
13. Purcell and Suter 1980.
14. See discussion of first language influence in Chapter Two.
15. Neufeld 1979.
16. This does not mean that we recommend studying lists of words with no opportunity to hear these words used in a communicative context — this sort of practice is undoubtedly an inefficient way of acquiring new vocabulary.

Chapter Five

Oral Communication Development Through Acquisition Activities

AFFECTIVE-HUMANISTIC ACTIVITIES

- Dialogs
- Interviews
- Preference Ranking
- Personal Charts and Tables
- Revealing Information about Yourself
- Activities Using the Imagination

PROBLEM-SOLVING ACTIVITIES

- Tasks and Series
- Charts, Graphs and Maps
- Developing Speech for Particular Situations
- Advertisements

GAMES

CONTENT ACTIVITIES

GROUPING TECHNIQUES FOR ACQUISITION ACTIVITIES

- Restructuring
- One-Centered
- Unified Group
- Dyads
- Small Groups
- Large Groups

The core of the Natural Approach classroom is a series of ***acquisition activities.*** By activity we mean a broad range of events which have a purpose other than conscious grammar practice. Thus, we refer to activities as opposed to audiolingual drills or cognitive learning exercises. For acquisition to take place, the topics used in each activity must be intrinsically interesting or meaningful so that the students' attention is focused on the content of the utterances instead of the form. It is also through acquisition activities that the instructor will (1) introduce new vocabulary, (2) provide the comprehensible input the students will utilize for acquisition, (3) create opportunities for student oral production, and (4) instill a sense of group belonging and cohesion which will contribute to lower affective filters.

In the early stages, as described in Chapter Four, the most important function of the activities is to provide comprehensible input, and indeed in a sense, the main task is to develop listening skills. Output in the target language is necessarily limited (usually to single words or short phrases) and plays only a minor role in furthering the acquisition process. In the "speech emerges" stage of this Chapter, however, oral production plays a more important role. In the first place, we wish to give the students ample opportunity to actualize their acquired competence: it is affectively satisfying to most students when they realize that their ability to express themselves in the target language is increasing. Secondly, as the students are able to generate more and more of the target language, this production (interlanguage) serves as comprehensible input for the other students in the class. Indeed, in this section, in many of the activities which we will describe, the student talks a great deal.

As we mentioned in Chapter Two, it is an open question whether this sort of "interlanguage talk" is helpful or harmful (or, what is more likely, both) for language acquisition. We know of no empirical studies which have investigated this question directly. However, our experience is that interlanguage does a great deal more good than harm, as long as it is not the only input the students are exposed to. It is comprehensible, it is communicative, and in many cases, for many students it contains examples of $i + 1$. These advantages, in our opinion, will outweigh the problems which might be caused by errors in the input.[1]

Each activity focuses on a particular topic and/or situation, i.e., what students in the class did last night, how to order food in a restaurant, how to apologize, how to refuse a request, what they ate for breakfast, what they like to watch on television, and so forth. The students will normally be aware of this focus. The activity may also often (but not always) have a specific form or structure which will tend to be used repeatedly in that particular activity. The purpose of the activity, however, is to supply comprehensible input, not to teach a specific structure. Most students, in fact, will probably not realize what the grammatical content of any given activity

is. This is probably to their advantage, since conscious concentration on structure and form may prevent focusing on the message and may thus impede acquisition.[2]

One of the major points of Chapter Two is that comprehensible input stimulates natural language acquisition. In order for input to serve as a basis for the acquisition process, we must insure that there is:

(1) a focus on transmission of relevant information and

(2) a means of facilitating comprehension

It is quite possible, for example, to provide utterances which have some semantic content, but which do not communicate anything of importance. Suppose an instructor says, *Roger is going to the store to buy a loaf of bread.* Such a sentence carries meaning, but it may not communicate anything unless we know who Roger is and are concerned about his trip and its purpose. If the instructor merely wishes to use such a sentence as an example of the progressive tense in English, the utterance will be of little value as input for language acquisition (although it could be a part of a learning exercise or drill). To draw students' attention away from the linguistic form of an utterance, we need to go beyond a simple meaning and focus on transmission of relevant information. This requirement implies that what is talked about needs to be truly interesting. Discussing topics that are of interest to the students is not just a frill; it is essential if language acquisition is to take place. No matter how "meaningful" we try to make grammar exercises, by their very nature they will not qualify as optimal input for language acquisition since they are not being used for real communication.

A second way to help insure optimal input for language acquisition is to provide means for aiding comprehension. As we discussed earlier, caretakers help children's comprehension by limiting the topic to the "here and now." This provides extra-linguistic support and gives children an idea of what adults are talking about, allowing them to understand language that is a little beyond their current level of competence. Similarly, the language instructor can provide second language acquirers, children or adults, with extra-linguistic support. As we mentioned in Chapter Three and exemplified in Chapter Four, this is one of the reasons for the use of pictures and other realia. Good visuals are more than an interesting adjunct; they are an integral part of the equipment needed to encourage language acquisition, especially at the beginning level.

In addition to visuals, extra-linguistic information can also be used to help comprehension. The topic discussed should be somewhat familiar to the students and they should use their knowledge of the world to help them understand. If students have a general idea of what the instructor is talking about, this will help them guess at meaning. For this reason, the instructor should limit initial discussion to topics which are familiar to all students, such as where the students live, what they generally do each day,

and other known landmarks and events. See, for example, the suggested communicative syllabus in Chapter Four. Instructors who discuss totally unfamiliar topics, people, or places, place a huge burden on the student trying to cope with comprehending messages in a new language.

The students also have an active role to play in insuring comprehensible input: when the listeners do not understand, they need to know how to regulate the input. Every language has ways of asking for clarification, asking speakers to repeat, to slow down, to explain. If such tools of communication are taught early, students will have some means of managing their own input. An added advantage of being able to use these aspects of conversational competence is that they help make it possible to converse with speakers of the target language outside the classroom.

It is also important that the difficulty level of the content of the activity be properly adjusted. If students encounter too much new vocabulary and structure in an activity, they tend to spend their time translating instead of participating in conversation. In terms of the theory, it is the instructor's job to make sure that the language of the activity is not far beyond the students' current level ($i + 1$).

Finally, the instructor must have some idea as to whether the students understand what is being discussed. It is not necessary to check whether every sentence is understood, nor is it necessary that every sentence be understood. In fact, it would be highly undesirable, as constant checking for comprehension would certainly get in the way of the information exchange that is at the core of the N.A. A variety of techniques to check comprehension are possible, ranging from directly asking the students whether they understand to merely noting whether their verbal and nonverbal responses indicate comprehension. Clearly the more involved the students are in the activity, the easier it will be to ascertain whether they understand the instructor's and each other's input.[3]

The effectiveness of any acquisition activity can be measured by the interest it evokes in the students to comment on or ask questions about the topics which have been treated. In fact, this spin-off in the form of additional interaction is the most valuable aspect of these activities since real communication normally takes place in these 'follow-ups.'

We will describe the acquisition activities in four groups: (1) affective-humanistic, (2) problem solving, (3) games, and (4) content. This division is principally for ease of exposition since in reality many of the activities contain elements of more than one type. For example, an affective activity may be turned into a game, or a game may involve a problem-solving activity, and so forth. All activities are designed to further the acquisition process. As such they must provide comprehensible input in two ways: through student interlanguage and from the teacher-talk included in the activity as well as in the "follow-up" to the activity. In all cases there is a focus on content, i.e., there is a reason for doing the activity other than just language practice.

Language will, of course, be used in the activity, but language is not the conscious focus of the activity.

AFFECTIVE-HUMANISTIC ACTIVITIES

Affective activities attempt to involve students' feelings, opinions, desires, reactions, ideas and experiences. Although not all affective-humanistic activities 'work' in all situations with all students and with all instructors, they are varied enough to be of especially high value in the Natural Approach classroom. In addition, and more importantly, they meet the requirements of an acquisition activity: the focus is on content, i.e., what the students are saying, and the instructor makes a strong attempt to lower affective filters.[4]

Dialogs

We mentioned in Chapter Four the use of open dialogs to give the students the means to produce somewhat beyond their acquired capacity in early production stages. These dialogs, normally short and interesting, contain a number of routines and patterns which can be easily assimilated. The open dialogs in addition allow the student some measure of creativity.

Student 1: Are you hungry?
Student 2: _____
Student 1: I think I'll order a _____. How about you?
Student 2: I'd prefer _____.

Student 1: Buenos días. ¿Cómo estás?
Student 2: ¿___ ___, y tú?
Student 1: _____.

Student 1: Où est-ce que tu vas?
Student 2: _____.
Student 1: Veux-tu aller avec moi _____?
Student 2: _____.

Often the interchanges are created to insure repeated opportunities to focus on particular conversational situations. In the following interaction the students talk about weekend activities.[5]

Student 1: What do you like to do on Saturdays?
Student 2: I like to _____.
Student 1: Did you _____ last Saturday?
Student 2: Yes, I did.
(No, I didn't. I _____.)

Thus, with the help of guidelines, the student can often begin to use structures which have not been fully acquired, and still maintain communicative interaction and creativity.

These dialogs need not be as rigid as these examples might suggest. As the students advance, the guidelines can allow more room for expansion and other changes as the following interchange suggests.[6]

Student 1: Guess what, _____?
Student 2: I'm sorry, what did you say you did?
Student 1: _____.
Student 2: Oh, really? When? (Where? Why? How long?)
Student 1: _____.

Finally, as the ability to participate in conversational exchange improves, we suggest the use of situational stimuli for the creation of original dialogs in a role-play situation. The students are divided into pairs for the following "original dialog".

You are a young girl who is sixteen years old. You went out with a friend at eight o'clock. You are aware of the fact that your parents require you to be at home at 11:00 at the latest. But you return at 12:30 and your father is very angry.

Your father: Well, I'm waiting for an explanation. Why did you return so late?

You: _____
(Continue)

In suggesting the use of dialogs, we must be clear on how they are to be used. They are not, of course, the center of the program, as they are in audiolingual teaching. Dialogs should be short and should contain material that is useful in conversation. Their function is to smooth the conversation by helping students to sound more natural and more fluent with commonly discussed topics and to help them regulate input and manage conversations.

Mastery of dialogs thus has little to do directly with the acquisition process. They do, however, help beginning and intermediate students interact in conversations. This ability is especially important for students of a second language since they face immediate conversational demands outside of class. In addition, the instructor can follow up on the conversations the students have created by discussing what went on in the dialog and soliciting the students' reactions. This interchange can produce a great deal of comprehensible input.

Interviews

Students are divided into pairs and are given a series of questions to ask their partner. In early stages, the interview can be given in matrix form (on the chalkboard, overhead projector, or reproduced), so that the students

are required only to supply a single word or short phrase.

What's your name? My name is _____ .
Where do you live? I live in _____ .
Do you study or work? I _____ .

The best interviews are those which focus on interesting events in the students' own lives, for example, a series of questions about childhood:

When you were a child, did you have a nickname? What games did you play? When during childhood did you first notice the difference between boys and girls? What is something you once saw that gave you a scare?

Another possibility for interviews is to choose the role of a famous person; the two participants create both questions and answers.

Interviews in the Natural Approach normally have a clear situational or topical focus. In the following interview, the focus is childhood illnesses:

What illnesses did you have as a child? Who took care of you? Did you have to stay in bed for long periods of time? Were you often sick as a child? What is the most serious illness you ever had?

Interviews can be constructed around a particular grammatical structure. For example, in the following interview the questions all make use of past tense verbs.

Did you go to the beach a lot last summer? What did you do at night? Did you often go to the movies with friends? Did you work? Where did you live?

If the conversational exchange is interesting enough, the grammatical focus will probably not interfere with the interaction and the activity will be successful in giving an opportunity for conversational interaction. However, a bit of restructuring with a semantic and contextual emphasis will shift the focus away from grammatical form.

Did you go to the beach last summer? Who with? Which beach did you go to? What did you do there? Why do you like the beach?

What did you do at night? Did you often stay home? Did you go to the movies often? What was your favorite activity on weekend nights?

Where did you live? With your parents? With your family? With friends? Did you like the place where you lived?

Did you work last summer? Where? What did you do there? Did you like what you did? What did you like best about working?

The difference between the two is clear: the first uses the interview technique as an excuse for practicing certain verb forms. The second serves as an opportunity to allow the students to talk to each other about past experiences. In the follow up with the instructor, the students will have ample

comprehensible input as well as multiple opportunities to express themselves in the target language.

Interviews which focus on the students themselves, their wants, needs, feelings, opinions are the most successful. They allow for frequent interaction on a one-to-one basis. This interaction has at least two beneficial aspects: the students get to know each other in a more personal way, lowering, hopefully, affective filters, and they are given many more opportunities to express themselves in a low anxiety situation in the target language than if all activities were instructor-centered.

Thus, interviews are helpful to the acquisition process in several ways: they lower affective filters, they provide meaningful interaction in the target language, they allow for opportunities to use routines and patterns, which, as we have noted, help acquisition indirectly. Finally, they provide comprehensible input: student interlanguage during the interview and teacher-talk in the follow-up.

Preference Ranking

This activity is conducted orally but the material must be printed and distributed to the students. It consists of a simple lead-in statement followed by three or four possible responses. Students must rank (1-2-3-4) the responses according to their own preference.

My favorite summer activity is:

_____ *swimming*
_____ *reading novels*
_____ *playing tennis*
_____ *cooking*

The point of preference ranking, of course, is not the initial ranking itself, but the follow-up conversation between the instructor and the students. It is in this follow-up that the students will receive teacher-talk input (and some student interlanguage) as well as have the opportunity to express their opinions and feelings in the target language. The following is a possible example of teacher-talk follow-up to the above preference ranking:

Who ranked swimming as number one? (Mark raises his hand). *Where do you swim, Mark? How often? When did you first learn to swim? Have you ever swum competitively? Who else in the class swims a great deal?* (Betty raises her hand). *Did you mark swimming as your first preference? Why not? What did you mark? (playing tennis). Why do you like tennis more than swimming?*

Personal Charts and Tables

The use of charts and tables was introduced in Chapter Four as a means of providing comprehensible input while requiring only one-word or short

answers. But they can also be used at more advanced levels. Their role in providing input is the same, but the questions in the input can be more open, allowing the students opportunities for more complex responses.

The construction of tables of information about the students in a particular class, for example, can serve as a basis for interesting discussions. In the following example, the instructor has begun to create a chart of the weekly routines of the class members on the chalkboard.

	Monday	Wednesday	Saturday
John	works	studies	plays baseball
Jim	studies	has baseball practice	works in supermarket
Louise	studies	has swim team practice	plays waterpolo
Herman	works at record store	lifts weights	visits friends

After the chart is completed it can serve as a basis for lively questions and discussions which provide the desired comprehensible input. The level of the discussion depends on the level of the class. For students only beginning the "speech emerges" stage, the following questions would be appropriate:

Who has baseball practice on Wednesdays? What does John do on Saturdays? Does Herman lift weights on Wednesdays?

As the students' ability to produce increases, so does the difficulty level of the instructor's input.

Does Jim have baseball practice on Wednesdays? What team is he on? What position does he play? Who plays water polo on Saturdays? Why does she play on Saturdays? Does she ever play during the week? Does she play for fun only or is she on a team? What position does she play? Do girls and women ordinarily play water polo? Why? Why not? Do you suppose Louise knows how to swim? Well? Why?

Charts may also be created so that the students first fill out the chart with personal information and then this information serves as a basis for the class follow-up discussion. In the following chart for a beginning Spanish course, the students are asked to say whether or not they did certain activities yesterday, and if so at what time of the day. The activities include: Did you wash your car? Did you go to the beach? Did you watch television? Did you clean house? and so forth.

Actividad	Sí/no	Hora
1. Lavó su carro?		
2. Fue a la playa?		
3. Miró la televisión?		
4. Limpió su casa?		
5. Fue de compras?		
6. Leyó el periódico?		
7. Fue a una fiesta?		
8. Vió a su novio(a)?		

In the follow-up, the instructor will extend the conversation as naturally as possible. For example,

Did you wash your car? Did you go to the beach? Did you watch television? Did you clean house? and so forth.

Another technique used in charts is to ask the students' opinion about some issue. In the following table, the students are asked to consider each activity in relation to health — is the activity good, bad, or irrelevant to good health?

Commandments for Health

1. Take a bath daily.
2. Eat vegetables frequently.
3. Lie in the sun.
4. Do exercises.
5. Drink a glass of wine daily.
6. Smoke cigarettes.
7. Drink 10 cups of coffee daily.
8. See a doctor regularly.
9. Keep your house clean.
10. Don't spend much money.

Students examine the commandments, make notes and then participate in a follow-up in which they must justify their answers. The follow-up can be done in small groups or with the class as a whole — it might be wholly student directed or controlled by the instructor depending on the proficiency of the students.

Revealing Information about Yourself

Many activities involve simply supplying personal information as a basis for discussions (as in the chart activities of the previous sections) or stating

opinions about some issue or topic. In the following example, the students have to match beverages and occasions.

Occasions	Beverages
(1) breakfast	(a) soft drinks
(2) lunch	(b) coffee
(3) dinner	(c) tea
(4) before going to bed	(d) iced tea
(5) at a party	(e) mixed drinks
(6) on a picnic	(f) beer
(7) to celebrate	(g) fruit juice
(8) after playing football	(h) milk shake
(9) after swimming	(i) lemonade
(10) to stay awake	(j) milk
	(k) water

In the follow-up, teacher talk will supply comprehensible input:

What do you drink for breakfast? (coffee). How many drink coffee? Why is coffee such a popular drink in the morning? In which countries is coffee not used? What is a popular substitute for coffee? Are there some religions which do not use coffee? What is the name of the stimulant in coffee? What are other popular breakfast drinks? (juices). What are your favorite juices?

In a similar activity, the students use adverbs of frequency to describe their eating habits.

How frequently do you eat the following foods? Use (1) a lot (2) sometimes (3) almost never (4) never for your answers.

1. For breakfast I eat:
   a. eggs
   b. ham
   c. cereal
   d. hamburgers
   e. beans
   f. bananas
2. For lunch I eat:
   a. a sandwich
   b. spaghetti
   c. fried potatoes
   d. a salad
   e. fried chicken
   f. pancakes

The follow-up teacher-talk is similar to the previous activity on beverages:

Who eats eggs for breakfast? How do you cook your eggs? Does anyone like soft boiled eggs? Who eats meat in the morning? What kind? Why are certain meats preferred for breakfast? Why not? Does anyone eat hamburgers for breakfast? Why? Why not? Bananas?

The following activity combines several techniques. It is a problem solving activity in which the students cooperate in a small group to create a chart.

You and your friends decide to put together a pot luck meal. Each one of you will bring something different. Decide who will bring what and fill out the following table.

Name	Food

In the follow-up, the instuctor will want to find out who is bringing what and why they decided to bring that particular dish. Maybe some of the students will volunteer to explain one of their favorite recipes.

Activities Using the Imagination

There are various sorts of experiences in which the students are asked to imagine some situation, some person, or some interaction which might take place. After a period, they are asked to describe to the class what they "saw" and "said".

One common technique is to ask that students close their eyes and imagine a place with certain characteristics, for example, a pleasant place or a frightening place. After they have finished their visualizations, they voluntarily describe what they imagined either to the class as a whole or in small groups.

Visualizations serve as a basis for comprehensible input in two ways. First, the instructor may choose to guide the visualizations explicitly (appropriate pauses are not marked):

Think of a pleasant place. It may be outdoors or indoors. Look around you. Notice as much as you can. Try to feel the air around you. What is the weather like? Can you see the sun? Is it cloudy? Is it warm? Cold? Is it a calm day or are there storms on the horizon? Perhaps it is raining. Now get up and walk around your environment. What is the first thing you see? Look at it carefully. Describe it in your mind. Is it large? What is the shape? Are there colors? Is this thing you see alive? What is it doing?

Another common activity is to imagine some hypothetical situation and ask the students to relate what went on in the situation. For example, the instructor might ask the student to speak with Napoleon and give him advice in his campaign against Russia. Or, the student might interview his great, great grandmother as she crossed the plains in a covered wagon on the way to California.

In these sorts of activities, the students usually are divided into groups for the initial part of the activity and then the instructor does the follow-up with the class as a whole. In this initial stage, the students receive a good deal of

interlanguage input and have ample opportunities to express themselves using their imagination. In the follow-up, the instructor has the opportunity to give comprehensible input in the form of questions, comments, and reactions.

In some activities the students may be asked to role play. A favorite topic is a group of people marooned on a desert island. Or, another group may be the first explorers on another planet describing by television what they encounter on the new planet.

The important point with activities using the imagination is that the students be interested in each other's experiences and that the focus be maintained on the topics which arise. It is the instructor who in the follow-ups to these activities must continue to provide good comprehensible input.

PROBLEM-SOLVING ACTIVITIES

The primary characteristic of these sorts of activities is that the students' attention is focused on finding a correct answer to a question, a problem or a situation. Language is used to present the problem and solve it, but language is not the overt goal of the activity. These sorts of activities are only successful if the students find them interesting, either because they are useful in some way or simply because they are an enjoyable activity. In many cases, they can be personalized; often they can be transformed into a game.

Comprehensible input in problem-solving activities is supplied in several ways. Often, the instructor gives comprehensible input in explaining the problems to be solved. In many cases, the students work on a problem in small groups using the target language to discuss and solve the problem or find the desired information. This produces, of course, interlanguage input. In other cases, the class and instructor discuss the problem together and solve it together, providing ample opportunities for both sorts of input: teacher-talk and student interlanguage.

Tasks and Series

In the tasks model, the instructor or students choose a specific activity. The object is to describe all the components of the activity. Suppose, for example, the topic is "washing a car." There will be three stages in the activity. In the initial stage the instructor will guide the students in developing the vocabulary necessary to talk about the activity. Then, together the class and instructor create utterances to describe the sequence of events to complete the activity. For example, in the above activity the class might say, *First I look for a bucket and a sponge or some rags. Then I park the car in the driveway. I use the hose to wash the car first with water only.* These utterances are developed slowly with interspersed discussion. *Which is better to use, a sponge or a clean rag? Should you use soap or other cleaners (such as detergents) to wash a car?* During the final stage after the sequence is constructed, the discussion will broaden to include questions and discussion concerning the specific activity in the students' own lives. *How often do you wash your car? When? Where? Do you enjoy it? Why? Why not?*

If possible, students can actually do the task, which turns this into a TPR lesson. Consider the following example.[7]

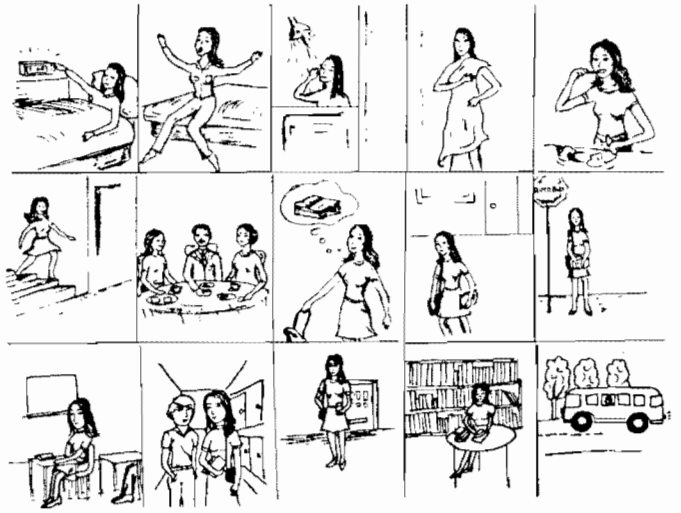
GOOD MORNING

1. It's seven o'clock in the morning.
2. Wake up.
3. Stretch and yawn and rub your eyes.
4. Get up.
5. Do your exercises.
6. Go to the bathroom.
7. Wash your face.
8. Go back to your bedroom.
9. Get dressed.
10. Make the bed.
11. Go to the kitchen.
12. Eat breakfast.
13. Read the newspaper.
14. Go to the bathroom and brush your teeth.
15. Put on your coat.
16. Kiss your family goodbye.
17. Leave the house.

For this activity, the instructor brings to class as many props as possible. In this case, a minimum amount of items would include a washcloth, a toothbrush, a newspaper, and an overcoat. In preliminary conversation, the instructor talks about the props and introduces the students to the context of the series. Step two is an initial demonstration of the series in which the instructor repeats the sentences one by one demonstrating the action described by each sentence. This may require several presentations if a number of new words is involved. The third step involves the class. As the instructor again repeats the series the students must all act out the activity being described. If desired, the students read and copy the list of sentences. The instructor can answer any questions and clear up doubts that remain about the meaning of specific words or phrases. Finally, the students work in pairs and give each other these same commands (perhaps in random sequence, if they like).

One useful technique for stimulating student narration as well as pro-

viding input is the "series". This consists of a series of photographs or drawings which make a story. The students create the story using the language at their particular level. In the following example, the normal reaction is to narrate the story using past tense. But there are other possibilities. The instructor may ask the students to imagine that this is what is going to happen, or to give their reaction to each event.



Comprehensible input in a series activity can be supplied by the teacher-talk which may precede students' creation of the story and/or accompany it:

What is this young woman doing in picture one? (waking up). Where is she? What time of day shall we say it is? Do you want to give her a name? How old is she? What does she do in picture two? What does she do in picture three? Why? etc.

Charts, Graphs and Maps

Newspapers, magazines, and brochures in the target language can be excellent sources of tables, charts, diagrams, maps and so forth. These contain information which can be utilized to create communicative situations quite easily since in all cases the student will be involved in searching out information. Thus, message focus is automatically maintained. If interest in the task is created, the activity can be successful in providing input.

In the following chart of bus fares from a timetable, the students have only to match locations with fares.[8]

FARES:	LA Int'l. Airport		John Wayne/ O.C.Apt.		Long Beach Mun. Airport		Ontario Int'l Airport	
	ADULT	CHILD	ADULT	CHILD	ADULT	CHILD	ADULT	CHILD
Anaheim	$5.20	$2.60	$2.20	$1.10	$2.60	$1.30	$5.30	$2.65
Buena Park	5.20	2.60	2.60	1.30	—	—	—	—
Fullerton	5.20	2.60	—	—	—	—	5.30*	2.65*
Long Beach Airport	4.20	2.10	3.55	1.80	—	—	6.95*	3.50*
Seal Beach	4.80	2.40	3.05	1.55	.90	.45	6.95*	3.50*
Orange	5.95	3.00	1.50	.75	—	—	—	—
Santa Ana	5.95	3.00	.90	.45	—	—	6.05*	3.05*
John Wayne Airport (Orange Co. Apt.)	6.95	3.50	—	—	3.55	1.80	6.95	3.50
Newport Beach	7.55	3.80	.90	.45	—	—	7.60*	3.80*
El Toro	7.30*	3.65*	—	—	—	—	—	—
Laguna Hills/ Mission Viejo	8.75	4.40	1.75	.90	—	—	8.75*	4.40*

This sort of chart is easily adapted to various levels. In the early production stages, questions directed at fares *(How much does it cost to travel from Seal Beach to the Long Beach Airport?)* require that the students understand the question, but they only produce numbers in their responses. As comprehension abilities increase, the same sort of table can be the basis of more complex questions *(Which is more expensive, to travel from Newport Beach to Los Angeles International Airport or to travel from Santa Ana to Ontario International Airport? If you could take a flight from either John Wayne Orange County Airport or from Los Angeles International Airport, and you were living in Buena Park, which would you prefer? What factors other than price would enter into your decision?).*

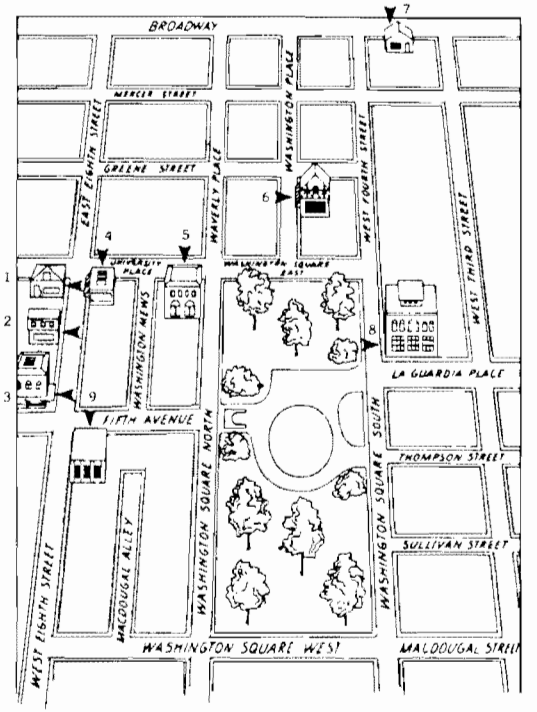
The following example of a table contains information about trips which various students took:[9]

NAME	PLACE	TRANSPORTATION	TIME THERE	SPENDING MONEY (U.S. dollars)	MONEY SPENT (U.S. dollars)
Bob Draper	San Francisco	train	3 weeks	$ 300	$ 200
Gino Leone	Naples	plane	1 month	800	700
Ann Gronberg	Mexico	plane	10 days	600	500
Kate Irwin	Paris	plane	2 weeks	500	400
Mike Young	Vermont	bus	6 days	100	90
The Thompsons	New York	plane	2 weeks	1,000	1,000
Sue Martin	California	train	1 week	200	100

After some work with these two activities, it will be a simple matter to construct a similar table using students in the class and recent trips they have made. The follow-up discussion then can go in the direction the class interests lie as we suggested in the previous section.

Maps can be used in the same way as charts, tables and graphs. In the following map, locating various buildings will allow practice in asking, giving, and finding directions. In the case of beginners with limited production, the map can be used in conjunction with an open-ended dialog, as in this case:[10]

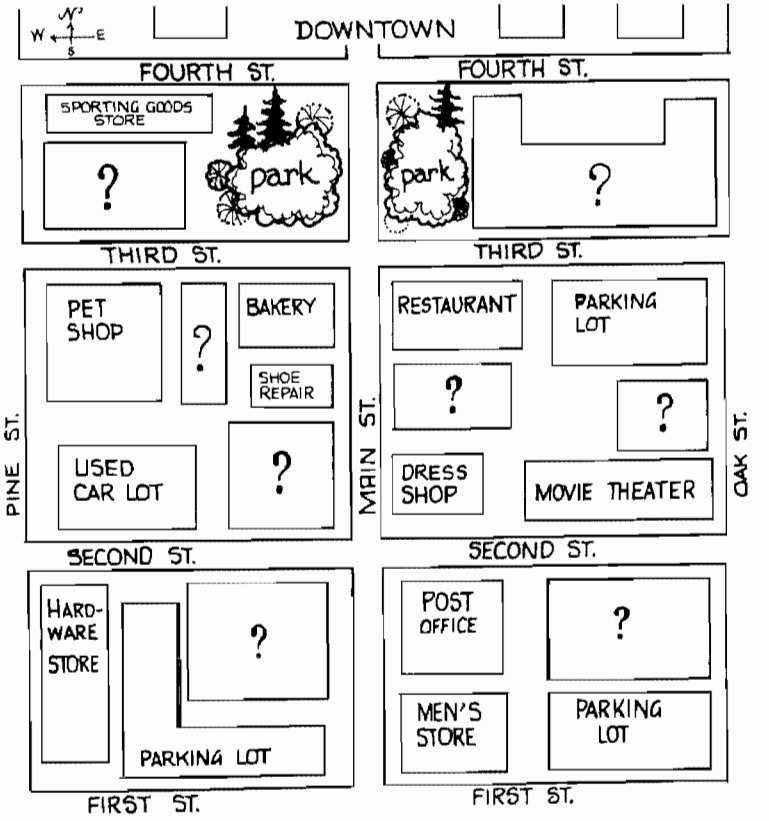
A: Can I help you?
B: Where's the _____?
A: It's on _____ .



1. Brentano's Bookstore 2. Washington Square Drugstore 3. The Art Movie Theater 4 The University Coffee Shop 5. The American Language Institute 6. The University Bookstore 7. The Village Bookstore 8. The University Library 9. The Chase Manhattan Bank

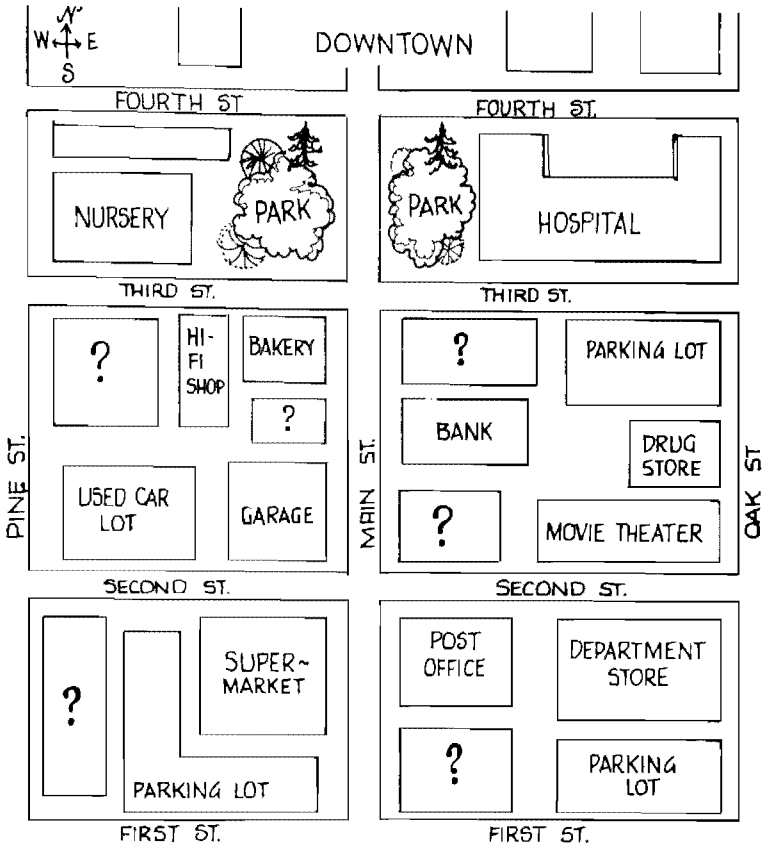
Even more profitable, of course, are copies of real maps of cities which the students could possibly visit. Especially valuable are the so-called "tourist maps" in which the places of interest are identified or pictured.

In the following map activity, students work in pairs with two complementary maps and two complementary sets of instructions. The students with Map A follow the instructions in "A" and the students with Map "B" follow the instructions in Map "B". The student with Map "A" guides the student with Map "B" to the locations that are marked on Map A but not on Map B and vice versa. These sorts of activities give the students an opportunity to produce a great deal of the target language and to receive comprehensible input in the form of interlanguage talk.[11]



"A"

1. You are at the Park. Ask your partner how to get to the Record and Bookstore. When you arrive write in the name of the store.
2. You just bought a bike at the bicycle shop and now you need to register your bike at the Police Station. Ask your partner how to get to the police station to get your bicycle license. Label the Police Station.
3. You are at the Record and Bookstore and you see that you are very low on gas. Ask your partner how to get to the Gas Station. Label the Gas Station.
4. You are at the Zoo. You have been there all day and you have a headache. You need some aspirin. Ask your partner how to get to the Drugstore. Label the Drugstore.
5. You meet a friend at the Drugstore and decide to meet for dinner at the local Chinese restaurant. You forgot to ask for directions so now you must ask your map partner how to get there from the Drugstore. Label the Chinese Restaurant.
6. You are in class one day at school and suddenly you remember that you have to get a haircut for a job interview tomorrow. Ask your partner how to get to the Barber Shop Beauty Parlor-Haircutters. Label it.



"B"

1. You rode your bike to the Zoo and when you leave you notice that you have a flat tire. Ask your partner how to get to the Bicycle Shop. Label the Bike Shop.
2. You are at the Bicycle Shop and you remember that you are supposed to take a night class at the local High School at 6:00 p.m. Ask your partner where the High School is from the Bicycle Shop. Label the school.
3. After class you need to buy groceries for dinner. Ask your partner how to get to the Super market from the High School. Label the market.
4. You are at the Park on a picnic with friends and you need a can opener for your cold drinks. Ask your partner how to get to the Hardware Store from the Park. Label it.
5. After the picnic you remember that you have to buy a gift for a friend's wedding. Ask your partner how to get to the Department Store from the Park. Label the Department Store.
6. You need to get a bus to another town. You ask a man at the Police Station how to get to the bus station. Label the bus station.

Developing Speech for Particular Situations

One of the goals of the Natural Approach is to prepare the student to use the target language in specific situations. In the "early" speech stage, we suggested the use of open dialogs and open-ended sentences. Both of these techniques are also valuable in encouraging speech production in particular situations. Suppose, for example, the situational focus is making essential purchases. The following is an example of an open dialog one might use in a post office.

Student 1 (clerk): May I help you?
Student 2 (customer): Yes, I'd like _____ *please.*
Student 1: Here you are. That will be _____ .
(amount)
Student 2: _____

The open-ended sentence will work the same except that the instructor must supply a context. For example, the instructor might propose that the students will be spending the weekend in the mountains. They will be allowed to bring only four things with them in addition to clothing and food. The questions will be: *What will you bring?* The matrix sentence is:

I will bring _____ .

A technique for somewhat more advanced students consists of creating a situation and then asking the students to supply a complete response. The following is an example of such an activity written for a unit on "restaurants and foods".

1. *You are in a restaurant full of people. You approach the hostess and you say to her "* _____ *".*
2. *You are eating out with your parents in a restaurant. All of a sudden you discover a dead insect in your soup. You call the waiter over and you say to him "* _____ *".*
3. *You know that your friend is on a diet and is very self-conscious of his/her weight. The waitress asks if you want some dessert. You interrupt quickly and say "* _____ *".*
4. *You enter a new restaurant very late and find that it is completely full. The hostess asks you if you have reservations. You say: "* _____ *".*

The descriptions of the situations themselves constitute comprehensible input, but in addition there will be ample opportunity for more teacher-talk and student interlanguage in the follow-up to the activity in which the students discuss the various responses, justifying their responses and commenting on them. These are also good occasions for discussing cultural differences, discussions which may also serve as comprehensible input.

Note that the activities described in this section are not to be done as "communicative competence" exercises — we do not demand or expect full accuracy in appropriateness, just as we do not expect it in grammar. As we noted earlier (see footnote 3, Chapter Four), the rules for communica-

tive competence, or appropriateness, are complex and only partially described by scholars. We expect such rules to be acquired after substantial interaction with native speakers. The goal of these activities is to prepare students to participate in certain real-life situations with some efficiency, so that they can gain the input that will eventually make their performance more error-free.

This approach does not preclude the possibility of directly teaching certain aspects of appropriateness and politeness that are simple to learn and important for smooth communication. These can be done as short routines and dialogs. Subtler distinctions, such as the difference between *May I help you?* and *Could I be of assistance?* or *At your service!* will wait for acquisition.

The situational dialog which we previously discussed, in which the students actually create a dialog and role-play, is the most usual technique for acquiring situational speech skills, but of course students must be fairly well advanced in speech production for it to function well. Another possibility for students who are producing a fair amount is the situation reaction. The instructor sets up the situation and solicits students' reactions. The following are three examples of possible situations:

1. *Your washing machine is broken. You called the repair service two days ago and they made an appointment with you for today at 11 am. You have waited all morning and no one has shown up. What will you do?*
2. *You just met a young woman at the school bookstore. You exchanged telephone numbers and you promised to call at 6 this evening. You call, but her roommate tells you that she has left and left no message. What is your reaction?*
3. *You are at the bank. The teller is in the middle of taking care of you when she is called away by her superior. Fifteen minutes later you are still waiting. What should you do?*

In a variant of this model, the students are divided into groups of three or four. Each group is given a hypothetical situation. The group has to decide how it would react in that particular situation and to justify its reaction to the class. Other groups will probably react differently. The class can then speculate on reasons for different reactions. For example, *You are ten years old. Today you have an exam in your math class which you have not really studied for. What can you do so your mother will let you stay home?*

Advertisements

Newspapers or magazine advertisements are an excellent source of topics for discussions. As noted in Chapter Four, they can be adapted to either early or intermediate production stages. In the following ad,[12] for example, questions for students in early production stages would concentrate on prices and other information involving numbers. *How much does a twin-size bedspread cost? What is the telephone number of the Fox Hills Mall store?* For students whose speech is more advanced, the questions should be personalized. *Do you use a bedspread? Describe it. Do you make your bed every day? Why? Why not?* and so forth.

As comprehension and production increase, the difficulty level of the ads can be increased. In the following ad,[13] there are ample opportunities for the students to practice guessing at the meaning of new words or expressions from context (*carry-on, garment bag, foam padded carrier, etc.*). Questions might include: *What is the advantage of a concealed identification area? Why do some have wheels while others do not? What is the meaning of carry-on?* And of course personalization: *Who owns a complete set of luggage? Where did you buy it? Have you used it often? If I*

wanted to buy new luggage, where could you recommend that I go for good quality? Which is more important, quality or price?

Ads can also be used to focus on certain common situations. For example, in the following ad in Spanish,[14] the instructor could focus on areas and rooms of a house. Factual questions about various houses for sale in the ad would be followed up by questions about the students' places of residence.

$45,000 #JL
Casa de 3 recámaras, 2 baños, todo cerca, 20 minutos del centro. Pagos bajos.

3 casas #69
3 recámaras, 2 recámaras y una recámara cada una. Alfombradas todas. Todas pintadas.
Espinosa
8312 E. Beverly Bl.
728-0538

Si Ud. no ha establecido crédito
Pero cuenta con $16,000 para enganche, Ud. puede ahora comprar una bella casa en el área de Whittier. Múdese la próxima semana. Venga y véala.
8108 Bradwell Ave.
Luego llame al:
Sr. Chávez
961-2053—964-8449 12

FHA-INT-BAJO
3 recámaras, 2 patios 3 recámaras, lote en esquina con $4,000.00 puede escoger la suya. Area de La Puente y Baldwin Park.
Pregunte por la Sra Núñez.
Mulbearn Realty Register
962-8671 5/10

Hágase cargo del préstamo al 8½%
¡No dejes pasar esta! Casa en perfectas condiciones, valorizada en $64,000. Pago de $294. Principal e interés, taxes y seguro. 2 recámaras, chimenea y yarda grande, completamente cercada. Garage para 2 autos. A precio de venta, no necesita calificar, múdese inmediatamente. Sólo $64,000

Century 21
Baldwin Park, Inc.
962-7126 12

En Norwalk
Casas de 2 recámaras, alfombras nuevas, estuco y pintura, cocinas remodeladas. FHA, VA o convencional, como quiera nos arreglamos. Una en $59,500 y otra en $57,000 cerca de escuelas y transportación.

Long Beach (Norte, cerca Fwy. 7)
Si no califica para préstamo nuevo, asuma un préstamo viejo, no necesita calificar, casita con terreno grande, 2 recs., comedor formal, garaje doble con 'driveway'. Pregunte por precio y financiamiento.

3 unidades
Casa y duplex en Huntington Park viva en una y rente 2. Pregúntenos sin compromiso alguno.

En Artesia
Casa de 4 recámaras, 2 baños, alberca y spa con filtros, calentador y limpiador automático. Una verdadera oportunidad cerca del colegio de Cerritos. Llame ahora.
924-0999
924-9431
Ezequiel Rodríguez
Real Estate Center Cerritos 10

Por dueño se vende
Casa
$25,000
No necesita crédito
Múdese hoy mismo
1917 E. 114th St., L.A.
589-9558

Amigos hispanos
No dejen que su dinero se deprecie, inviértale ahora. Tenemos casas desde $60,000. Con préstamos de gobierno y grades facilidades de pago. Charter Oak Real Estate.
963-0394 1(

Often ads can be used simply as a lead into the particular situation the instructor and the class wish to talk about. For example, in the above ad [15] the questions would deal with the particular accommodations available in this hotel. The discussion then could range from descriptions of the sorts of

hotels the students would like to stay in, to those they have actually visited. Or, one could use this ad as a starting point for a discussion of the French Antilles.

GAMES

Language instructors have always made use of games in language classrooms, mostly as a mechanism for stimulating interest and often as a reward for working diligently on other presumably less entertaining portions of the course. Our position is that games can serve very well as the basis for an acquisition activity and are therefore not a reward nor a "frill", but an important experience in the acquisition process. In this section it is not our purpose to describe a large number of games, since these are readily available from commercial publishers, but rather to show how they can be used to give comprehensible input.

Games qualify as an acquisition activity since they can be used to give comprehensible input. Students are normally interested in the outcome of the game, and in most cases the focus of attention is on the game itself and not the language forms used to play the game.[16] Indeed, experienced instructors who work with children know that they become more involved more quickly with an activity if it is presented in a game format. This is why games are indispensable in the primary school curriculum and are used, for example, extensively in ESL classes for children. Adults, on the other hand, even when they enjoy games, often do not take them seriously as valuable language experiences. This happens when instructors have failed to integrate them sufficiently into the regular class activities and have instead used them as "relaxers" and rewards.

Games can take many forms and there are many different sorts of elements which make up a game activity. We will discuss only a few of these in order to show how games function as acquisition activities. In any particular game we may focus primarily (but not exclusively) on: words, discussion, action, contest, problem solving, and guessing. Of course, most games exhibit a combination of these elements.

It is simple in many games to focus on particular words. One common technique is to make up illogical combinations and ask the students (in teams, if desired) to figure out what is wrong with the combination. For example,

What is strange about:

a bird swimming	*a television laughing*
a table eating	*a person flying*
a tree crying	

In such games it is easy to provide comprehensible input in the discussion:

Has anyone ever seen a bird swimming? (I have). What kinds of birds swim? (penguins). Has everyone seen a penguin? Do you know what a penguin is? (a black and white bird). Where do penguins live? (where it's cold). That's right, they prefer cold climates. Can penguins fly? (no, they walk and swim). Are they good at walking? Can they walk fast? (no). They're clumsy (new word).

Other games focus mostly on discussion. In one such game each student has a word or a description written on a sign taped to their backs, which others can see but they cannot. They may ask any question they want of the other students or the other students may try to give them clues to help them figure out what is written on the sign. In this case, the comprehensible input is student interlanguage.

Action games are excellent with children, but even good for most adults. A simple action game for adults is to give them a list of descriptions and ask them to find a person to match the description. For example,

Find someone who:

1. *likes to work in his/her garden*
2. *has never seen snow*
3. *is going to visit France this summer*

The students get up and mingle in the classroom asking each other questions until they find someone who fits the description. Once again, the input is student interlanguage talk.

Almost any activity can be made into a contest. Races against the clock with teams can be organized for almost any activity discussed in the previous sections. Traditional contests can also be fun and at the same time provide input. Highly useful, for example, are shows based on television games. In one such game three students are chosen for a panel. The moderator relates the outline of an experience which one of them has had (comprehensible input). All pretend to be this person. It is the task of the class to figure out who is lying. For example, the moderator might announce that one of the panelists spent three weeks in Paris when he/she was ten years old. The students then ask questions about that experience trying to see who is lying. The rules are that the one who actually had the experience must tell the truth at all times, but the others may say whatever they wish. During the question and answer section the students receive comprehensible input in the form of student interlanguage, but after the session the instructor can recap what happened, why it was difficult (or easy) to ascertain the impostors, etc. The opportunities for extensive input are numerous. Other successful adaptations of American televison game shows are: Concentration, Password, the 20,000 Pyramid and Charades.

Most games have an element of problem solving. The problem-solving activities in the preceding section, for the most part, are adaptable as games. There are basically two types of problem-solving activities: those which depend on student verbal interaction (interlanguage input) and those which can be carried out individually with no verbal production necessary. In the latter case, the important part is the instructor follow-up to give the necessary comprehensible input. Very popular with most students are problem-solving "situations". They are presented with a situation and have to figure out an answer. For example, one student is sent from the room and will be a "criminal". The class chooses a "crime" that the student has committed. The student returns and must find out what the crime was and as many details as possible. The comprehensible input can be from student interlanguage and instructor input.

An example of "silent" problem solving are mazes: the students have to find their way out of the maze. In the follow-up they must describe how to leave the maze. The instructor takes advantage of the focus on escape in order to give more input:

What's the first turn? (to the right). What would happen if you turned instead to the left? (you would end up at the house) Isn't there a way out of the house from the back? (no). So we continue straight ahead. For how far?

Many games involve an element of guessing. Guessing games such as the well-known children's game "Twenty Questions" have been adapted to the language classroom in many forms. In its simplest form, a student is selected to be a particular famous person. The other students must ask questions which this student can respond to with *yes* or *no*. It is helpful when the students first play this game to give them specific suggestions for ways of asking relevant questions (*Are you a man? Are you dead? Did you die more than 100 years ago? Were you associated with politics?* etc.). An extension of this game consists of letting the students be anything they wish: a thing, an activity, a quality, and so forth. For example, if the student chooses to "be" an activity, bicycling, for example, the questions might be: *Do you do this activity in the evening? Do you do this activity for fun? Is this something everyone likes to do?* In this game the principal source of input is the students' interlanguage.

CONTENT ACTIVITIES

By 'content', we mean any activity in which the purpose is to learn something new other than language. In language instruction, this has traditionally meant learning academic subject matter such as math, science, social studies, art, and music in the target language. As in all other acquisition activities, the important characteristics are maintaining student interest and ensuring comprehensible input.

Examples of content activities include slide shows, panels, individual re-

ports and presentations, 'show and tell' activities, music, films, film strips, television reports, news broadcasts, guest lectures, native speaker visitors, readings and discussions about any part of the target language and culture.

These activities are used in all language classes, to be sure; however, their role in the Natural Approach classroom is somewhat different. First of all, as in the case of games, they are not just pleasurable activities used as rewards for struggles with the study of grammar. Secondly, they are always presented in the target language. And finally, they may be used earlier than in most approaches since in a Natural Approach classroom, beginners are not required to produce complete error-free sentences.

The efficacy of using content activities to teach subject matter such as mathematics, science, and history in the target language has been demonstrated in immersion programs in Canada and in the United States. In these immersion programs, children are exposed to the second language via subject matter classes and acquire impressive amounts of the second language as well as the subject matter. We believe that immersion "works" for the same reason Natural Approach "works" — it provides comprehensible input in a situation in which the students' attention is on the message and not the form.[17]

GROUPING TECHNIQUES FOR ACQUISITION ACTIVITIES

Comprehensible input is the most important element in language acquisition. In beginning stages, the instructor devotes must of the time to providing this input directly to the students. As the acquisition process develops, although we still wish to continue providing comprehensible input, the instructor must also provide for activities in which the student has the opportunity to produce the target language. Although we do not believe that production per se results in more acquisition (or in better acquisition), it is important since speech will lead to more responses from the instructor and the other students. In fact, as the students progress, much input can come from the other students in the class.

The disadvantage of student production of course is that it takes a great deal of time. If each student only talks five minutes, only 12 students will be able to speak in a single class hour. For this and other reasons, we do many of the activities we have described in this chapter in smaller groups. Only in this way will more students have the opportunity to produce a sizeable amount of the target language in a single class hour.

There are many ways to divide the class for small group activities. Christison and Bassano have developed activities based on a taxonomy of student grouping activities which we consider to be very helpful.[18] They describe six sorts of grouping techniques. We will briefly describe each with an example of the sorts of acquisition activities appropriate for each grouping strategy. The strategies are: (1) restructuring, (2) one-centered, (3) unified group, (4) dyads, (5) small groups and (6) large groups.

Restructuring

Restructuring activities require the students to move about the classroom and interact with each other. They are particularly good in beginning stages and with classes in which the students do not yet know one another. They provide for maximum physical movement and interaction with minimum threat. The level of language use can be minimal in some restructuring activities.

Example: Line-ups. Students are asked to line up according to a predetermined criterion. They will usually have to speak to each other to determine the relative ordering. Possibilities.:

(1) alphabetical according to last names
(2) the time you went to bed last night
(3) length of hair
(4) the amount of money you have in your pocket right now.

One-Centered

One-centered activities are concentrated on a single volunteer but involve the entire class. This individual may be required to use a great deal of language or only respond minimally. They can be used to give a highly verbal student the attention required or to give the shy student a chance to perform successfully.

Example: A single student thinks of something which happened to him or her yesterday. The other students have to ask questions until they can guess what the event was. Suggestions: think of a positive thing which happened, an accident, a visit, a trip, something you ate, someone who called you, etc.

Unified Group

All members of the group participate in a unified group activity. The groups may be any size and there may be several in the classroom. The main characteristic is that every member of the group must participate for the activity to be successful.

Example: Make up a story with the number of lines equal to the number of students in a particular group. (For more than a single group you can use the same story and convert this activity into a timed game.) Type or write each sentence on a single slip of paper. The students each draw at random one of the slips of paper. They memorize the line and return the paper to the instructor. At a given signal, the group tries to reconstruct the story by putting the lines in order. The first group which is successful tells

the story, line by line, person by person, to the rest of the class.

Dyads

Dyad activities involve the students working in pairs and are probably the most common of the Natural Approach activities for intermediate and advanced beginners. Dyads allow for more sincere interpersonal communication between the participants and give each student more opportunities for speech in a given class hour.

Example: Each pair of students must have a game board of squares; a grid of four by six squares is probably a good size. Each student is then given a set of small cards to fit the squares, each with a sketch or picture on it. The two sets are identical. The first student arranges the cards on the grid in any fashion. Then this student must give directions to the other student for placing the second set of cards in identical fashion. After the directions are complete, the students match grids to see how accurate the directions were. If the students do not know the name of an object on the cards, they may explain or describe the object, but they should not use native language equivalents.

Small Groups

Small groups are useful in many Natural Approach activities. Many instructors prefer to do almost all acquisition activities first in small groups (especially problem-solving and information gathering activities) before doing them with the class as a whole.

Example: Give each group a set of twenty pictures. The purpose is to group the pictures together according to something they have in common. You may want to specify how many different groupings the students should attempt. Each group should justify their choices.

Large Groups

These activities usually involve larger groups (7-15) or the class as a whole.

Example: Have the students in the class bring a single small object which is in some way identified with themselves. Put all of the objects in a grab bag. Then, have a student select a single item. The members of the class should try to guess to whom the item belongs. The guess should be accompanied by a reason or justification.

We have not tried to be exhaustive in listing the possibilities for the creation of acquisition activities in this chapter. Rather, the above sections are meant to be examples of the sorts of activities which we believe lend themselves easily as a basis of acquisition in the classroom, that is, they can provide comprehensible input, focus the student on messages (meaning) and contribute to a lowering of the affective filter. There are numerous other

possibilities detailed in the professional literature. These include the use of music, television, radio, slides, skits, shows, games of all sorts, and a wide variety of realia which focus the student on the activity itself rather than the form of the language used to participate in the activity. Effective instructors have always made use of these sources of input, but they were usually used too sparingly, since they were believed to be of more value as entertainment than for "serious" language study. Our claim is that the opposite position is closer to the truth — language can be acquired best by involving the students in activities in which the focus and attention of the student is on the message being transmitted during the activity.

Notes

1. Krashen 1981, presents some evidence that suggests that exposure to "interlanguage talk", the speech of other language acquirers, may be useful, particularly at early stages of language acquisition.
2. Learning, of course, also has a place in the Natural Approach. However, since its role in language performance is limited (essentially to the Monitor function), we will concentrate in this chapter on activities which promote acquisition. We will return to the role of learning in Chapter Six.
3. This point cannot be overemphasized. If the instructor is unaware of the comprehension levels of the students, the input can become much too complex; the result is non-comprehension and no acquisition.
4. For numerous suggestions for affective activities, see, particularly, Christenson 1977, Galyean 1976, Moskowitz 1978, Winn-Bell Olsen 1978, and Christison and Bassano 1980. Only some of the activities we will suggest are our own creation. Also, keep in mind that these are offered as examples of what might go on in a Natural Approach classroom.
5. This example is reprinted from Yorkey, R. et. al. 1978. p. 277.
6. Ibid, p. 425.
7. This example is reprinted from Romijn and Seely, p. 14.
8. This is a fare schedule from Airport Service, Inc., Anaheim, California.
9. From Yorkey, R. et. al., 1978. p. 425.
10. From Castro, O. et al. Book 1, p. 155.
11. From Winn-Bell Olsen, 1977, pp. 39-46.
12. From the Los Angeles Times.
13. Ibid.
14. From La Opinion (Los Angeles)
15. From L'Express (France).
16. It is possible to play games which do focus on particular structures or forms. For example, one can play "Bingo" in which the squares are verb forms (or some other grammatical point). The student-instructor interchange which accompanies the game can still provide good input for acquisition, while the content of the game is learning practice.
17. Immersion classes are linguistically "segregated," that is, only second language students are grouped together and no native speakers are included in such classes. This helps to insure the comprehensibility of the input since instructors cannot gauge their speech to the native speakers and leave the second language acquirers behind. See e.g., Cohen and Swain 1976. For further discussion of the use of subject matter teaching in more advanced levels, see Krashen 1982a.
18. Christison and Bassano, 1981.

Chapter Six

Additional Sources of Input for Acquisition and Learning