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The Student-Teacher Cooperative

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There is very little in the professional literature on study groups. This is natural, since the study group is regarded by many a student and teacher as a learning venue not to be taken as seriously as the classroom.

There are two general reasons for this lack of interest in study groups. The first is that a study group is not mandatory and does not give academic credit, and therefore requires a motivation toward language learning that many students do not have. The second is that education in the traditional system inculcates in the student “. . . rather naive views about the nature of language and language learning,” thereby causing him to worry, “How will we know if we’re making mistakes?” and to think that, “. . . in order to learn one has to be taught” (Littlejohn: 599-600).

“How will we know if we’re making mistakes?”

A supposed “lack” of feedback is one of the main factors (other than motivational) that a student does not join a study group. The student’s concern over quantity and quality of feedback is a legitimate concern, but it is often thought of in reduced terms of error correction. Feedback in language acquisition, however, is more than that (though here the term feedback is restricted to “informational” feedback as opposed to “motivational and/or reinforcing” (Zamel:140)). In cybernetics there is a principle that the conventional one-way feedback of the classroom (teacher-to-student) is

not as effective as two-way feedback (A to B and back to A). This principle applies to the language student: "The value of feedback is not limited to the recipient. Frequently, in providing feedback, people discover something about themselves and their own needs" (Aronson:288). Applied to language acquisition, the student, in monitoring the language of a peer, will in turn benefit because the feedback he offers requires him not only to 1) review and be more aware of his own language production, but also to 2) involve himself more deeply in his encounter with the language.

A teacher's feedback in the classroom usually does not, therefore, provide as much to the student as can the feedback provided by the student himself. Many language teachers have in fact come around to the view that errors, the object of one form of feedback, ". . . should be corrected judiciously, if at all" (Larsen-Free-man:772). Research supports the hypothesis that ". . . most direct methods of intervention, in which a teacher points out and explains or corrects the error, have been shown to have little or no effect on the production of error by learners . . . [and] . . . at present, no methods of intervention have been demonstrated to have a significant effect in decreasing learner error . . ." (Krahnke and Christison:637). Krashen, in his distinction between learning and acquisition, says that it is in efforts which focus on the acquisition factor that one's time is spent most productively; learning is very much correction and monitoring. While Krashen's hypotheses have rightly been criticized as simplistic and lacking empirical support (Kwon:1991), his general concern over emphasizing attention to formal rules to the exclusion of effective acquisition-inducing practice is legitimate. And while the student's concern over lack of error correction is also legitimate, it is often carried to the extreme.

"In order to learn one has to be taught."

To say that the role of error correction is often misunderstood is not to deny that ". . . information about performance is a necessary component of learning" (Zamel:140); the point is that the

information should be obtained in a way that will help the learner acquire the language. An effective way is that in which the learner seeks out information actively and is not fed passively.

Research in language acquisition and pedagogy over more than two decades supports in quantitative terms what we always knew but were not always conscious of and seldom applied: the importance of the involvement of the learner in acquiring language. In more recent years some have been extending this basic principle to propose that encouraging students to take responsibility in directing their own study (which, if only for the absence of a teacher, is much more likely to happen in a study group than in a classroom) “. . . should bring about ‘a direct improvement in their language learning’ since they would ‘take much more responsibility for identifying and repairing their errors’ . . . In addition . . . students who are more deeply involved in controlling their own learning characteristically develop in other ways as well . . . [such as] . . . ‘increased interpersonal skills, sense of responsibility for one’s growth and learning, improvements in critical thinking and lasting curiosity aroused by the learning’” (Littlejohn: 598-599).

Still, many students and teachers are at least unconsciously daunted by the uncertainties involved in the student’s assumption of responsibility. If there is not the fear of being led astray by peers there is the fear of wasting time studying with others at the same level of “ignorance.” According to some research, however, risks the student encounters in the study group would seem to be far fewer and less severe than the classroom’s

. . . “risks” that can threaten to destroy the value of the classroom experience for the learner. For example, there is the danger that learners may feel “spoon-fed”. . . ; they may be demoralized by standards that are set too high or too low ; they may be frustrated by an inappropriate pace or teaching direction ; they may be made to feel dependent on the teacher for help or a source of intelligible target language input ; and they may be confused by inadequate, improvised explanations or by

an inconsistent treatment of errors" (Littlejohn : 596).

Often, "... learning of a language is made difficult not so much by the difficulty of the language itself but by the student's fears—fears of being a student, fears of being constantly evaluated, memories of past failures in language learning..." (Bofman : 67).

This is not to propose that the study group replace the classroom. It is to propose, however, that a properly devised and maintained study group program is in most ways as beneficial to the learner as study in most classrooms. The study group student who knows how to use the selected material can get as much native-speaker correction (even without a native speaker present) as he does in the classroom, and it is higher quality correction because it is actively sought. He can get at least as much exposure to the language, and as much effective exercise of the language; in the classroom oriented to active student participation the teacher deliberately limits his verbal input, thereby giving less modeling input, and in the traditional classroom the student speaks only a small fraction of the class period. The student in a study group, who naturally joins with those of his own ability, works at his own level and pace; in most classrooms the difference in fluency levels is more pronounced. Study group students select material and activities which meet their specific interests and needs, thereby increasing effectiveness while enhancing motivation; in the classroom the teacher selects material and activities even before knowing the students, and often bases selection on the expected lowest common denominator.

The initiative which the study group requires of its participants guarantees the members' more active personal involvement, which improves their individual and classroom language study outside the study group. And, because the study group student takes responsibility for and exercises authority over how he works with

the language, his experience with the language is deeper and more concrete than the classroom students' experience. The language which students devote to the negotiation common in procedural discussion is a good example.

The Student-Teacher Cooperative

The student-teacher cooperative study group provides for the needs of the student and makes good use but requires little of the teacher's physical presence. It employs a general format which meets the needs of the student and which can be applied to different study groups and various materials. Once the program is launched the students take over and maintain it themselves.

The counselor provides the material and a standardized program of activities to exploit the material, shows the students how to do the program, guides them through three or four sessions, and then lets the students take charge of their learning, optionally making an occasional visit (once every two weeks or so) to give encouragement.

A well designed teacher-student cooperative program provides for the students' personal involvement in their learning (through assumption of responsibility) and active, structured use of the language. It allows the teacher to give guidance to his students' efforts, at the same time freeing him of the unnecessary and often ultimately obstructive role of language monitor. And there are rewarding by-products of this study group: it forges a deeper relationship between the teacher and students, which will contribute to the students' classroom study, and gives the individual student a new perspective of and attitude toward his individual language study.

For all the importance placed on student involvement in his learning, the fact remains that even the highly motivated student

usually does not have as much experience in acquiring a language as would the teacher willing to help a study group, who has also been a learner, probably has professional training in pedagogy, and certainly has experience in the problems which students encounter. One example of the result of the student's lack of experience is the "free talk" study group, in which the students do not use native speaker input (written or aural) but only produce language which they already possess (with all its gaps and faults); this leads to minimum language development and maximum error fossilization. (While those teachers who use communicative activities to the exclusion of grammar and claim that language can be acquired simply through using it may object to this idea, the results of several studies show that production without modeling input does not assist much in achievement of the ultimate goal: ". . . low levels of linguistic competence appear incompatible with high levels of communicative competence" (Rea Dickens and Woods: 626).) The other extreme is the study group which translates *Time* articles into their language and gets minimum exercise of the target language. The teacher can therefore be helpful as a counselor to the study group.

The key elements in a successful study group program are the material and its exploitation. (It is assumed from this point that the teacher agrees that some structure is required in a program to provide for maximum efficacy.)

Materials

Some language materials on the market provide many activities ranging from mechanical exercises to games to discussion, some provide only a few, and some provide none at all designed for language learning. Our study group can use almost any genre of material, from integrated texts (with tapes) to readers to supplemen-

tary language development materials to materials designed for individual language study, and even to media products developed for native speakers. The range of usable materials is limited only by the imagination of the counselor and the requirements of the students. And their effectiveness in the study group is limited only by the quality of their exploitation. We can supplement any of these materials with standard adjustments which enhance activities provided in the material, standard generic activities which can be added to the material, or both.

Enhancement activities. The basic principle involved in enhancing activities provided in the selected material, as in almost any language activity, is getting the students to actively and properly exercise the language. In a reader text's multiple choice activity designed to look closer at the reading the student who has been conditioned by the traditional education system will tend to look at the question, say "A!" or b, or c, and then go on to the next item. Such activities can be enhanced to induce active involvement with the language. The mental processing of aural signals can be exercised by having one of the group (the only one looking at the exercise) read the lead to the others. Involved use of the language will be provided when the other group members (referring to the reading) offer their own idea without seeing the choices. Then they can exercise their short-term memory and get added listening exercise—not to mention fun—if they have the leader read the choices to them, they select the best choice, and then decide who had previously given the closest answer to the best choice. Even the most mechanical exercises become interesting and effective when students put their whole selves into it.

Generic added activities. This kind of activity is termed generic because it can be applied to a general aspect of language and general type of material (such as a reader, an integrated text/

tape, a TV broadcast). Just two examples of generic added activities are the "WH-is?" (which can be used with any listening material) and the word forms activity (which can be used for vocabulary in any text.) Examples of these activities, with specific directions on procedure, are presented later.

Program Execution

Before getting started. It is essential to the success of the study group to plan its program realistically and clearly before the introductory session. One important factor in planning is determination of the personality and the objectives of the study group. One study group will want intensive study, another will want casual study, one will want to focus on one aspect of language, and another will want integrated study. Using a discussion book like *Trial by Jury* will probably not satisfy those who want intensive or focused study; using a reader text like *Developing Reading Skills* will disappoint the group that wants casual study.

Once an appropriate material is selected, activities must be prepared (if not already available from previous study groups' material of the same genre). Activities are tested and proven before they are presented to the study group; almost any activity will have bugs, and if a study group activity is presented before most of the bugs are worked out, it may well cause the study group to lurch back in uncertainty at the outset, just when it needs a smooth start to get up momentum.

Launching the program. *At the first session,* the counselor discusses with the students the basic principles of a student-teacher cooperative. (They will already have been introduced in general to the concept when this type of study group was first suggested to them.) These principles include the study group spirit (initiative

and responsibility); rules (attend regularly and punctually, don't hurry through the activities, only the leader of the activity looks at the text and the others listen or they'll go blind, only English from the time you walk in the door or your tongue will fall out . . .); program elements (session leader, proper balance of structured exercises and discussion . . .); and a reminder of the counselor's role (to counsel, not teach or correct). The material is introduced section by section; both the objectives and procedure for each activity are explained.

At the second session the counselor helps in problems with principles and procedure. While language mistakes are not corrected by the counselor, students are encouraged to help their mates with "judicious" correction (avoiding inhibition of discussion). Here, as at every session, the counselor's praise and encouragement are essential. The counselor's participation will be required again at the group's third and fourth sessions if the material requires two or three full sessions to cover one unit. The counselor participates at these sessions in the same way as at the second session. But at the end of this session weaning begins: the students are reminded of the spirit (initiative and responsibility) of this kind of study group, and told that, as agreed even before the group was launched, the counselor's next visit will be a certain number of sessions later.

Maintaining the program. *At the following week's visit* the counselor's participation is more as guest than as counselor, though help is provided when requested. Toward the end of the session the counselor comments on procedure as required; the students are congratulated for having maintained the spirit and developed the ability to be on their own from this point.

Activity Examples

A few examples of enhancements and additions are presented here, just to provide an idea of what the counselor can create for standard application to many study groups using different materials.

Enhancement activities. The first example is a multiple choice exercise from *Developing Reading Skills*. The text's directions: "Exercise A, Analysis of Ideas and Relationships. Circle the letter next to the best answer." The activity can be enhanced and presented to the students as follows:

Whenever the item permits [in each unit one or two items require all students to look at the exercise], do it according to this method. It will give you more real practice in using English, and the exercise will be more fun.

1. Each of you is a leader for a few items in this exercise. Divide the items equally among your group.
2. The leader refers to Exercise A; others refer only to the reading.
3. The leader turns the lead into a question. For example, the original lead for #1 is, "The main idea of this article is that:" Change it to "What is the main idea of this article?"
4. Others correct the grammar of the question if you hear a mistake.
5. Answer the question, without looking at the choices; use (and exercise) the language in the reading to support your answers.
6. The leader reads the choices (but not the letter of each choice) from the exercise; others listen and then discuss

which of the choices is best, and which of your answers is closest to the best choice.

Generic added activities. The first example is an activity made for *Audio Magazine*, by Sisayongosa, for the "VOA News," which comes with no activities. This material is intended for (passive) individual study. The activity presented here can be adapted to any listening passage, from any source, for any study group; thus "generic." Its objectives are to focus attention on the contents of the passage, to give a tempting introduction to its language, and to stimulate some use of the language in the passage in post-listening discussion. (This activity requires intense concentration, and should not be suggested to a study group with a more casual orientation.)

AFKN News. WH-is? Before you listen to the passage on the tape, assign one WH- ("Who is . . .," another student "Where is . . .," another "When is . . .," and so on.) to each group member. Listen to the passage. One student asks, "Who is X (name)?" Another student answers the question by describing the person's role in this news story. (Some passages will not have one of these elements.)

Example :

The "Who is . . .?" student asks: "Who is Gorbachev?"

Another student: "Gorbachev (is the one who) warned that Russia would not allow states to leave the union."

The "What is . . .?" student asks: "What is Estonia?"

Another student: "Estonia is (the country) where Gorbachev got into an argument with secessionists."

Another versatile and interesting generic activity is for vocabulary development. (Some texts provide word forms exercises, and steps 3 through 6 can be applied as an enhance activity.)

Word Forms. This activity is good not only for 1) learning and reviewing word forms, but also for 2) learning new useful phrases (which are included in the dictionary's sample sentences), 3) grammar review, 4) listening, and 5) short term memory development. It takes time, though, so do only one or two in a session.

1. Each member selects one word from the passage.
2. Look up your word in either Longman's or Oxford or Collins Cobuild. The word should have 1) at least three forms, and 2) one sample sentence for each form. If it doesn't, select another word from the passage.
3. Tell the others the base form of the word (the form of the word as it appears in the article). Then, say the sentence; say "blank" where the target word form should be.
4. Another member says the complete sentence with the correct word form. (Leader: If the replier says the word form before the complete sentence, don't say anything—just wait for the replier to say the complete sentence. Also, listen for function words and grammar markers.)
5. Did you find any useful phrases in the sample sentences?
6. The leader presents the next form of the base word (according to steps 3 and 4).

Using "Catch the Error," grammar can be exercised with any passage from any material. (The students can make a baseball game out of it if they want: form teams, use coins to represent base runners on a baseball diamond drawn on the spot; the phrase is pitched by one team, and the batter on the other team either gets a hit or makes out.)

Catch the Error. Select a short sentence or phrase (not

exceeding ten words) from the passage. It should have a language element which you yourself might have trouble with. Read it to your study group mates, with or without an error. One of the group says the *entire* sentence correctly.

And, for general development of the speech process (turning ideas into speech), here are some discussion questions originally designed for an *Audio Magazine* study group. The questions are applicable to almost any passage of any type and any length.

Standard Discussion Questions.

At least two of these questions can be used for any news report. Select the ones which are best suited to the report which you are studying.

-Could this general situation happen in Korea? Could each major element of the situation happen? How would it be similar, how different, if it happened in Korea?

-Where else in the world has this happened before? What finally happened?

-What should be done to correct this situation? What should each participant do?

-What additional (outside) factors could change the general situation, or specific elements of the situation?

-How do you think this happened? What caused it to develop as it has?

-Which of the major characters is right, which wrong?

-Predict how this situation will develop in the future. Establish a concrete period (e.g., by next week, next month, next year).

The following example is the entire program designed for *When Do Fish Sleep?*, originally produced for native speakers. (Script and tapes are available from this writer.) On the tape the host presents one of life's imponderables (the title is one of them),

each of his three cohorts offers an answer (two are bluffs), the host tells the correct answer, and then the one who gave the correct answer explains it. The following is the program adapted for an advanced study group.

1. Listen to the question. Restate the question, to make sure you all understand it.
2. Each give a concrete answer. Explain fully, and be sure that everyone in the group understands exactly what your answer is.
3. Three choices—A, B, and C—are presented on the tape. Listen carefully to the first choice, then summarize it. If you think it's just a bluff, explain why. Then do the same for the second and then the third choice.
4. Listen to the narrator's summary of all the choices. Does his summary of each choice agree with yours?
5. Listen to the answer and the explanation. Who in your study group selected the correct choice? You get one point. If you also proposed this as the answer at step 2, you get an additional point.
6. Use one or more of the standard do-it-yourself activities to make the imponderable's language your own. [Here we are borrowing enhanced and generic added activities.]

The element which allows the students to continue the study group by themselves is the standardization of activities. If this is done in a way that each activity can be applied to its corresponding target in every unit throughout the selected material, the group will achieve and maintain the required direction and momentum. The more general applicability crafted into the activities, the more widely these activities can be used by the same group or other groups at another time on other types of material.

Conclusion

The student-teacher cooperative study group incorporates general approaches toward second language acquisition and language teaching which appear to conflict when espoused by extremist advocates. It recognizes the importance of both the student's thorough involvement and the teacher's guidance. It recognizes the importance of attention to correctness of speech production while it allows for the student rather than the teacher to attend to correction. And it incorporates both communicative and controlled activities, grammar and discussion, "learning" and "acquisition" aspects.

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<Abstract>

The Student Teacher Cooperative

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The study group is a tool of great potential for the language learner but is undervalued or avoided by many students and teachers. Many students think that class or an institute provide them with more effective language learning, and many teachers, in addition to their concerns over the efficacy of a study group, feel they do not have the time.

This paper addresses the doubts of both student and teacher, and proposes that learner involvement in learning is of primary importance. From this premise it postulates that a well-planned study group can meet the needs of the learner to an extent that many classroom and language institutes can not.

Also presented in this paper are the principles and execution of a study group program which meets the needs of the learner and the desires of and restrictions on the teacher. The materials which make this program viable, enhancing activities and generic added activities, are introduced.

<국문요약>

학습자 주체의 학습

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Study group은 언어 학습자에 있어, 커다란 잠재력을 지닌 도구임에도, 대다수의 학생들과 교사들에게 과소평가되고, 외면당하고 있다. 대다수 학생들은 학교 수업에서나 학원에서 더 효과적인 언어 학습을 받을 것이라고 생각하고 있으며, 다수의 교사들은 study group의 효율성에 의혹을 품고 있을 뿐 아니라, 거기에 소요되는 시간적 여유가 없다고 생각하고 있다.

본고에서는 학생들과 교사들 양측이 품고 있는 의문점을 열거하고, 학습에서는 학습자의 참여가 가장 주요하다는 점을 제안하고 있다. 이러한 전제에서 본고는 계획이 잘 짜여지고 잘 수행되는 study group은 일부 학교 수업이나 대부분의 학원에서는 할 수 없는 정도까지, 학습자의 요구를 충족시킬 수 있다고 주장한다.

또한 본고에는 학습자의 요구와 교사의 열망에 부합되며, 교사의 시간상 제약성을 극복할 수 있는 study group의 원칙들과 운영 방침이 제시되어 있다, 또, study group 활동과, 그에 포괄적으로 부수되는 활동을 강화시켜 이 계획의 수행을 돕는 교재도 소개되어 있다.