

# **Child Language Teaching in the Pacific**

A Project for Solomon Islands Primary School Teachers (1983)

Thor May  
Australia

This is a collection of legacy language activity guidelines for Solomon Islands primary school teachers created in the course of a 1983 Australian government funded aid project. I am putting it in the public domain now (2015) as a possible source of ideas for anyone who might find it useful. One of the lessons one learns in education over the course of a career is that what goes around, comes around again sooner or later. Good ideas are lost, then found again in the next generation, or sometimes much later. The ideas here might be good or bad or adaptable for other uses, depending upon your needs.

## **A short history of the Solomon Islands Project**

In 1983 I was a lecturer in language education, mostly for aspiring teachers, at Northern Rivers College of Advanced Education, Lismore, New South Wales Australia. (The Institution has since been renamed Southern Cross University). Lismore is a small rural city in the rich farming areas of far northern NSW. The location was considered ideal for a series of sixteen week in-service programs for experienced Solomon Islands teachers who all came from rural, not urban settings.

The explicit purpose of this aid contract was to help these teachers with the management of multi-grade classrooms in their small village schools, as well as with resource creation. The Solomon Islands are within the Melanesian cultural sphere and pose a particular set of problems for educators. There are at least eighty-seven languages in the Solomon Islands, a pidgin lingua-franca (which varies a good deal). English has a fairly elitist role in business, administration and education. At the time of this project, English in official literature was promoted as a unifying national language, a proposal scarcely reflected in the

villages which essentially comprise this country. Although teaching in schools was (again, officially) done through the medium of the third language, English, teachers received no training in foreign language teaching methods. For the bureaucratic record, in classroom work teachers and students worked with the highly structured Tate Oral English course. Most of the time real teacher-student communication was in Melanesian pidgin or a local language. In other words, language problems were in 1983, and are today, central to the rather tenuous state of education in that nation.

For context, it is useful here to say a little about the colourless regime of the Gloria Tate Oral English System, originally authored in New Zealand. This system emphasized some rather grotesque assertions, such as that students must be drilled rigidly, never use language which had not been introduced in lessons, and never be allowed to make errors. The Tate System comprised a "comprehensive" and entirely closed package, which was marketed for many years by the South Pacific Commission to most Pacific Islands nations. Later, as a linguistics lecturer at the University of the South Pacific, Fiji, (1987-1990) I did my best to challenge and undermine its hegemony until directly confronted by Fiji's new Minister for Trade, appointed after a military coup, who bought out the whole Tate thing for \$100,000 with the idea that export sales of it would add to Fiji's vanishing foreign currency reserves. Suffer the little children...

The Solomon Islands aid project was undertaken by a team of lecturers at NRCAE, according to their specializations. Reading skills and theories of child language acquisition for this program were dealt with by other lecturers and are therefore not treated here. The final paper in this collection, "Evaluating Linguistic Difficulty in Natural Languages" was included to educate NRCAE lecturers and so is pitched at a slightly more academic level than the other material. The needs of the Solomon Islands teachers were practical rather than theoretical. It was necessary nevertheless to introduce a variety of new concepts in EFL teaching in a direct and uncomplicated manner.

For my main brief, I prepared a series of working papers (about 61pp.) showing the teachers how to develop local resources based on "language through experience", and inevitably making use of vernaculars or pidgin in the early stages. I considered this kind of indigenous approach critical since the financial

resources available to the Solomons education system were and are absolutely minimal and unpredictable. The worst kind of foreign aid is that which dumps expensive foreign technology into a developing country with no local involvement, no adaptation for local conditions, and no follow up support for maintenance and review. As it turned out, this "bad aid" profile was exactly how the other college components of the Solomons Project evolved (the teachers were sent back to their villages with heavy boxes of American primary school primers, utterly irrelevant to the lives of their children).

My "language through experience" suggestions were enthusiastically adopted by the Solomons teachers themselves. However their government vehemently opposed innovation. Tate was easy for the bureaucrats to administer on paper. Further, the monopoly of English competence is consciously recognized in Honiara (the capital) as an instrument of privilege, so its democratization as it were was seen as a kind of threat. The Australian college, fearful for its contract, supported the Solomons administration, so my position in the program was a bit sticky for a while. However, the Working Papers got around and eventually there seems to have been a kind of bureaucratic palace coup in favour of "language through experience", with all that this entails, in the Solomon Islands Education Department. In that sense, my subversion was an interesting exercise in language planning. Some time after I left NRCAE, the management of the aid contract became the subject of an Australian Commonwealth Government investigation.

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#### Editorial Note

- The pages which follow are photocopied from an old document. Apologies for the quality.
- The page numbers which appear in the table of contents below are those which appear at the top of the photocopied pages, and are thus slightly out of sync with the general page numbers in this paper on the bottom right hand corner of pages.

NORTHERN RIVERS COLLEGE OF ADVANCED EDUCATION

WORKING PAPERS

SOLOMON ISLANDS LANGUAGE PROJECT

Lecturer: Thor May

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3.

**Northern Rivers**

College of Advanced Education

P.O. BOX 157, LISMORE, N.S.W. 2480  
TELEPHONE - 21 2267

March, 1983.

Lecturer : Thor May

A Language Program For The Solomon Islands

It is important for every teacher to come to some clear decision about the kinds of questions asked below. (There are, of course, lots of other questions which can be asked as well). The answers arrived at by individual teachers will finally determine the fate of any multigrade teaching program.

The questions must be answered separately for every grade of primary school.

\*\*\*\*\*

1. What will be the balance between the vernacular and English language usage ? (n.b. This presumes that the nexus between 'language teaching' and English is broken).
2. What varieties of transactional, analytic and expressive language will be emphasized ?
3. What opportunities will the children have for expressing their own aptitudes (e.g. mechanical, literary etc.) in language work ?
4. What kind of individual or group project work will precede and/or accompany discussion, reading and writing by the children ?
5. What opportunity will children or groups have of reporting significant discoveries or news to the class as a whole ?

(...2



4.

6. What proportion of learning time must engage the class as a whole?  
What proportion may be devoted to individuals and groups ?

7. What will be the balance of emphasis among competing kinds of  
language : children's self-created language, teacher-talk, and  
language imposed by the curriculum ?

#####

Thor May  
15-3-83.





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Solomon Islands Project

March, 1983

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Framework for Language-Development Material through  
the Primary Grades

1. Sources for Expressive Language

- a) List LIVE encounter situations familiar to the children.  
Note who speaks to whom about what, and in what kind of language.
- b) List IMAGINARY encounter situations that are likely to appeal to the children. There is the opportunity here to incorporate both 'grown up' role play and myth/fairy tale.
- c) Identify both the REAL and IMAGINARY experiences/encounters that are important to each child individually.
- d) Prepare a list of themes for picture-stories that have obvious dramatic, humorous or other emotional content.

2. Sources for Descriptive, Analytic and Instructional Language

- a) Make a list of items to make, grow, repair, prepare...etc.
- b) Make a list of processes to discuss, describe and analyse.
- c) Survey all existing curriculum material for ideas relevant to a) and b) which can be extracted for individualized language development. This will normally require a fresh preparation of the material on work cards ect.

Note : Examples of how this kind of language may be integrated into visually sequenced booklets or cards can be found in :

Moon, C. & Raban, B. (1976) Read Your Way To Make A Window Box  
pub. Cassell

Reading Unlimited Series, (1976) The Popcorn Book,

pub. Scott, Foresman & Co.

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12-3-83





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The Work Centre Concept

March 1983

One of the more ambitious vehicles developed for multigrade teaching has been the 'Work Centre'; (e.g. see Kaplan, Sandra et al, 1980, Change for Children - Ideas and Activities for Individualized Learning, pub. Goodyear ). The technique is to place a number of tables ('Work Centres') around the edge of the room as mini resource bases. Each centre is devoted to a particular theme, and contains instructions and full resources for a specific number of projects or activities associated with that theme. The inventory board attached to each centre also makes clear what combinations of activities are optional or required, what mastery goals are intended, and what will earn 'bonus points'.

Typically, activities may be drawn from a variety of curriculum areas, and the child is afforded a range of choice at all levels. Some activities will require a degree of group cooperation and/or teacher consultation; others are more individuated.

The development of work centres requires considerable long-term preparation of course (as with all multigrade activity), as well as the specific training of staff and pupils in the relevant styles of interaction, which are much less teacher-centred than traditional instruction. The pay-off comes in greater student involvement, self-paced learning, fewer discipline problems (when properly managed) and in-class time available to the teacher for individualized help.

---



7.

### A Typical Sequence of Activities for a Work Centre

( Note that activities may branch at predetermined points into whole-class involvement. They may also set the context for other major projects at other work centres. The example below is weighted for language goals, but other curriculum areas may be built in at will).

- \* Plan how to make X .
- \* Define and assign task roles for making X ;(.."who does what..")
- \* Make or draw X (..or part of X) .
  - ⇒ \* Apply measuring, analytic, observational and craft skills.
- \* Name (orally) the parts and processes in X
- \* Tell the story of making X (.."I did a. and b. and c. ...").
- \* Write the words and story that have just been identified ; (..for pre-literate pupils the teacher will do this).
- \* Compare X to other children's creations (..similarities/differences).
- \* Invent a past and future history of X.
- \* Develop dialogues/role play/ discussion for encounter situations in the environment of X.
- \* Provide stories and other reading material that has a convincing association with the class of things like X.
- \* Show how fantasies, funny stories, jokes, mimicry, rhymes, songs, puzzles and riddles may be associated with the class of things like X.
- \* Develop experiments related to the class of things like X.
- \* Deepen and verify knowledge of the class of things like X through interviews, advice and help from out-of-school resource people; (e.g. grandparents, priest, truck driver etc.)
- \* Prepare a display of the total project when it has met the required goals ..
  - ⇒ \* Explain the display to other children in the class.

#####

Thor May



8.

<u>People familiar to children in the Solomon Islands</u>	
<u>Vernacular Speakers</u>	<u>English / Pidgin / Translation</u>
Friends	Priest
Brothers	Missionary
Sisters	Doctor
Brothers' & Sisters' Friends	Nurse
Other Peers	Teacher
Strange Child	Pilot (light plane)
	Ship's Crew
Mother	Expatriate Specialist
Father	Tourist (European)
Uncle	Shopkeeper
Aunt	Truckdriver (non-local)
Other In-laws	Visitor from another Clan
Grandfather	Other Melanesian/Polynesian
Grandmother	Visitor
	Politician
Chief	Unclassified Stranger
High Status Village People	
Old Village People	
Married Village Women	
Unmarried Village Women	
Married Village Men	
Unmarried Village Men	
Village Specialists :	
- medical/herb/magic authority	
- carpenter	
- boatmaker	
- netmaker	
- spearmaker	
- truck driver ...etc.	



9.

Situations familiar to children in the Solomon Islands

Domestic

Cooking & Food Preparation  
 Cleaning  
 Washing  
 Entertaining  
 Assigning Tasks  
 Adult Instruction & Control  
     of Children  
 Running Messages  
 Conveying News & Gossip  
 Playing  
 Loss of Items : Searching  
 Making New Items : Clothing,  
                             Utensils ..  
 Sickness  
 Emergencies & Crises  
 Transition : Death, Marriage\* etc.  
                     (\*taboo)

Conflict

Domestic  
 with Other Children  
 Extended Family  
 Village  
 Tribal  
 Other Outsiders  
 Economic  
 Sexual\*(\*taboo)  
 Possession  
 Unpopular tasks

Occupational

Gardening  
 Hunting  
 Fishing  
 Plantation Work  
 Labouring  
 Other Cash Work  
 Making/mending Work Items  
 Bartering (..rich in tradition)

Outings

A picnic  
 A Festival  
 to the Shop(s)  
 to Town  
 Fishing Expedition  
 Gathering Expedition (e.g. for  
     spear shafts)  
 Trading Expedition

Visits

to Extended Family  
 to Friends in Village  
 to Other Village Houses  
 to Another Village  
 to Professionals (e.g. Doctor,  
     Priest, Lawyer, Teacher..)

Planning

What to do.. / How to do A ...



Work Centre : The House

Grades I/II

The following is the partial outline of a Work Centre, hastily assembled with the help of Ezekiel Ivinui, Michael Mose, Christopher Harvi, Augustine Olibuma and Owen Newman. It can be much refined to broaden the range of skills developed, and to branch more systematically into maths, science, social studies etc.

---

A. Planning a house

- discussion of the type of house
- location of the house
- materials needed
- who does what job ? / ..appointment of a leader

B. Making the (Model) House

- collecting materials, tools
- measurements
- cutting to size
- assembly

- C. i) Draw other kinds of houses ) Further developmental  
ii) Draw the village that the house is in. ) activities possible here

D. Tell the story of making the house

E. Make labels for all the parts of the house

F. Write some instructions for anyone else who wants to make a house.

G. Make up a history (past & future) for this house.

H. who Lives in This House ?

- models/drawings of people in the house.
- What is something funny/sad/bad.. about each of these people ?

(cont. ../7



11.

The House (Work Centre) (cont.)

H. cont.)

- Describe the people in this house (...orally).
- Make a story card for each person in the house.

I. What is something funny/sad/dangerous...that happened in this house ?

→ draw → tell → write → role play

J. What work does each person in this house do ?

- models/drawings of people dressed for work
- describe the daily routine
- tell/write the story of one person's day

( .....branch point for another work centre.)

K. Read the story of Peter's House (S.P.C. Readers)

J. Find out (by interview) and tell the story of the Chief's House.

M. Tell/write about own house. (...developmental activity possible here)

N. Prepare a display of all work done on The House Project.

O. Explain to, and discuss the display with, the class as a whole.

---

*Thor May*



NORTHERN RIVERS COLLEGE OF ADVANCED EDUCATION

SOLOMON ISLANDS LANGUAGE PROJECT

LANGUAGE FUNCTIONS

Lecturer: Thor May

Language courses are normally developed according to some guiding principle. For example, the Tate Program attempts to develop a sequence of grammatical structures. The author claims to have graded these structures according to difficulty. She also claims to have included the main structures needed to generate English sentences. We may question her success, but structurally designed courses are very common and generations of teachers have used them with some effect.

A more recent way of organising language teaching material has been the so-called 'Functional/Notional Syllabus', first developed in Europe and lately very popular in Australian courses for immigrants. The idea of a functional/notional course is to give students the expressions they will need to do particular jobs in the language. For example, it is essential to know how to make requests, to apologise, to explain, to contradict, to clarify, to generalise, to make excuses... and so on. Of course, very important language functions may require syntactic structures which would not be taught until a quite advanced stage in structurally designed courses. The attitude of functional/notional syllabus writers is that if people can see a clear use for language, then they will learn the structure, no matter how 'advanced'. To some extent experience bears them out.

My own technique in teaching English to non-English speaking immigrants in Australia has been to combine elements of both the 'functional' and 'structural' course approaches. That is, I attempt to ensure that whatever examples are used to practise a particular grammatical structure, they are realistic sentences likely to be used in actual situations. Conversely, I compile a checklist of language functions to be covered in the course and take care to work them into lessons.

Below are some examples of short and (hopefully) realistic dialogues. They are not, in this instance, controlled for grammatical structure, but the main language functions which they employ have been analysed out.



13.

A. (Two children talking)

<u>Language function</u>	<u>The Knot</u>
Reporting	+ Chris' showed me how to make a new knot.
Clarifying Question	- What knot?
Clarifying Response	+ You use it } for nets and things. it's used }
Process Explanation Sequence Demonstration	You sort of loop it and wind it round and round. Then you put the end through the loop. See, like this.
Contradiction	- That's not a knot for nets, you dope. (Friendly informal, to peer)
Correction	That's a knot for tying fish hooks.

B. (Child and teacher talking)

<u>Language function</u>	<u>The Knot (Part 2)</u>
Polite question to child	+ What did you do yesterday Ezekial?
Reporting to Superior	Chris showed me how to make a new knot, sir.
Clarifying Question	+ What kind of knot did he show you?
Clarifying Response	- It's used to make nets, I think
Process Explanation Sequencing Demonstration	You make a loop first. Then you wind it round and round. After about six turns you put the end through the loop, and pull the loop tight. He did it like this.
Polite Contradiction	+ Are you sure that knot is used for nets Ezekial?
Correction	I think it's used for tying fish hooks, isn't it.
Polite Acknowledgment	- Yes sir, I think so.



14.

C. (Two children talking)

The Argument

Language function

Transmitted instruction	+ Mr. Ivenu says you've got to give me the glue.
Disbelief	- You're just making that up Michael K.
Threat	You'll get into trouble for telling lies.
Denial; Challenge	+ I'm not! You go and ask him.
Demand	Give me it!
(Angry) Demand	- Leave it alone!
Appeal to Authority	+ Mr. Ivenu! Michael is taking my glue.
Disciplinary Expression: Clarifying Question	▽ All right you two. What's going on?
Competing Claims/ Explanations	+ Michael is trying to take my glue, sir. - I only want to borrow some glue, sir. I don't have any left.
Instruction Admonition	▽ Newman, give Michael some glue. And I don't want any more trouble from you two. Understand!



15.

D. (Two children talking)

The Early Mark

Language Function

Appreciation	+ That was really neat of Miss M. to let you out early.
Evaluation	- Mm. She's OK, except when she gets mad.
Request for Help	What'll I tell her when she asks me about Uncle Chris tomorrow?
Clarifying Question	+ What do you mean?
Clarifying Answer	- Well, like he didn't turn up after she let me out and all.
Reassurance	+ That's not your fault. Anyway, she knows he didn't come.
Generalisation	She knows everything around here.
Request for help	- Yeah, but what'll I say?
Advice	+ Just say something happened and he didn't come.

E. (Teacher and Child talking)

The Early Mark (Part 2)

Greeting; Invitation to Speak	+ Good morning Maisie. Do you have something special to tell us today?
Dilemma	- Yes miss. No miss.
Query; Reiteration of Previous Knowledge	+ Why Maisie, what's the matter? I thought your uncle was coming home.
News; Explanation	- Yes miss. But he didn't come. He said he was coming but he didn't come.
Reassurance	+ Well, never mind. Perhaps something delayed him. I'm sure he'll come soon.
Acknowledgment/Wish	- I hope so, miss.





16.  
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Solomon Islands Project

Lecturer : Thor May

April, 1983

Working With Grammatical Structures In Themes : Advice On  
Curriculum Development For Teachers

The Solomon Islands language syllabus requires you to use material containing certain grammatical structures. You must innovate and use your imagination to do this well. Pupils usually can't and won't remember unrelated sentences, no matter how important the grammar.

Therefore :

- \* Have a theme
- \* Make sure that the theme is interesting.
- \* Make sure that the language is idiomatic ; (i.e. what people actually say or write in real life).
- \* Don't let the structural aim destroy the storyline.
- \* Put the structure you want to teach into the story/dialogue as naturally as possible.
- \* If the material is very interesting it doesn't matter too much if the examples have some words or structures which haven't been taught yet. Pupils will guess the meanings with your help. (It is impossible to teach all the necessary structures in English anyway. Even linguists know only some of the rules).
- \* Keep in mind not only grammar but the language functions in your examples. (Will your material show pupils how to apologize, request, complain, explain etc. in real life ?)

#####

(cont.2



17.

What Can Carry A Theme ?

- \* A model
- \* A complex picture ;(e.g.people doing different things in a house).
- \* A series of pictures
- \* A story
- \* A dialogue/conversation
- \* A discussion
- \* An interview
- \* A report
- \* Instructions about how to do/make something
- \* A poem                                 }
- \* A song or rhyme                 } You have to be clever to build  
  } special grammar into these.
- \* A puzzle
- \* A game
- \* A work centre containing all of the above

#####



18.

Example of Grammatical Structure Deliberately Built

Around A Theme (... I am sure that you can improve on this example).

Structure : A is Z; B is Z too / A is Z and B is Z too

Theme : Houses (Note : I have not controlled the language of the instructions in this example).

- A.
1. Read this story with your partner.
  2. Try to say it without looking.
  3. Draw Peter and Robert's houses.
  4. Copy the story into your book too.

\*\*

Peter : Dad made my house.

Robert : My dad made my house too.

Peter : My dad made my house and Uncle O's house too.

Robert : Well, my dad made my house and his canoe too.

#####

B.

1. Find the missing words.
2. Now read this second story with your partner.
3. Try to say it without looking.

\*\*

- a. Peter's dad made his ..1.. and Uncle O's house ..2..
- b. Robert's dad made his ..3.. and his canoe .4..
- c. My own dad made ..5.. and ...6. ..7.
- d. Peter has a clever .8.. and Robert has a clever dad ..9..
- e. My own dad is pretty .10... too.

1. ---

4. ---

7 . ---

10. ---

2. ---

5. ---

8. ---

3. ---

6. ---

9. ---

#####

(cont. 4



19.

C.

Think of some houses like this :

- a.        high        wide
- b.        big        comfortable
- c.        old        ugly
- d.        new        nice
- e.        creepy        horrible

Now make sentences like this :

- a.    Uncle O's house is high and wide too.
- b.
- c.
- d.
- e.

#####

D.

These sentences are a little different. Can you make others  
Like them ? :....>

Your house is funny but nice too.

My house is old but comfortable too.

#####

*Thor May*



20.

NRCAG

Solomon Islands Project - LANGUAGE

Lecturer : Thor MAY

Structure : V+ing

Theme : What is Happening ?

Teachers.note : The language of the instructions is not controlled here. Adjust.

A. WHAT IS HAPPENING IN THE VILLAGE ?

Game : How many people and things can you think of ?

EXAMPLES : 1. Father is fixing a net

2. The priest is visiting Uncle Albert

3. Uncle Albert's pig is running away.

⋮

Take turn about with your partner. Each time you miss a turn you lose a point. THE LOWEST SCORE WINS.

\*\*\*\*\*

B. List (write down) all the things you and your partner thought were happening.  
Draw three of them.

\*\*\* \*\* \*\*\*\*

C. Pick some of the things that are happening in the village. Put them together into a story.

---

D. WHAT ARE THE ANIMALS AND PLANTS AND THE ELEMENTS DOING ?

Game : Play as for the Village Game.

EXAMPLES : 1. The wind is blowing

2. The birds are singing

3. The ants are ....

---

Structure : V+ing

Theme : FACES

Visual Support : CARDS with funny faces 'doing' different things :

.... smiling, crying, talking, winking, worrying, sniffing, yawning, shouting,  
whispering, coughing, laughing, gulping, stretching .....

- \* Separate WORD CARDS to match the pictures.
- \* Separate ONE SENTENCE CARDS to match the pictures.
- \* Separate TWO SENTENCE CARDS to match the pictures.

e.g. / Christopher is very tired. He is yawning. /

(cont.



21.

Theme : FACES (cont.)

Instructions :

1. Draw bodies for some of the faces.
2. Match the pictures with the WORD CARDS, ONE SENTENCE CARDS & TWO SENTENCE CARDS.
3. Try to write down words and sentences about the faces without help from the language cards.
4. Put the faces in pairs. Now ...  
....What are they saying to each other ? What is happening ?
5. Let each partner be a face. Tell what you are doing.  
.....Let the faces have an argument or adventure.  
..... Write the story of the argument or adventure.

\*\*\*\*\* \*\*\*\*\*

Teachers : Prepare similar picture card sets and support material for HANDS, ANIMALS...etc.

\*\*\*\* \* \* \* \*

*Thor May 15-4-83*



22.

Solomon Islands Project

- LANGUAGE

Lecturer : Thor May

NRCAE

Structure : V+ing

Theme : Going Places

(Note : The language of the instructions is not controlled here. Teachers should adjust it to the necessary level).

A. Dialogue

1. Read the dialogue with a friend.
2. Act it out from memory.
3. Write it out from memory.

\*\*\*\* + \*\*\*\*

John + I'm going home

Mary - You can't go home

+ I'm going home ! I'm not playing anymore.

- You're not going home ! You're staying here! You're playing with me !

+ Goodbye. I'm going now.

- You're being horrible. I'm not speaking to you again.

\*\*\*\*\*

B.

1. Can you name four -ING words in the dialogue ?
 

a. ....

c. ....

b. ....

d. ....
2. Now think of four other -ING words.
 

a. ....

c. ....

b. ....

d. ....
3. Put your four new -ING words in sentences.
 

a. ....

b. ....

c. ....

d. ....

\*\*\*\* \* \*\*\*\*\*

C. GAME

Mary is going to Honiara.

1. Pick five things from the card that she is taking. (Don't tell your partner what things you pick).
2. Your partner must guess what she is taking. He asks you : "Is she taking X ?"

THINGS TO TAKE

1. baskets	2. ....
3. ....	4. ....
5. ....	6. ....
7. ....	8. ....
9. ....	10. ....

cont.)



23.

C. GAME (cont.)

3. How many questions did your partner need to guess FIVE things that Mary is taking?

QUESTION SCORE : .....

4. Now change sides. Your partner picks five items from the card. You guess.

QUESTION SCORE. ....

5. The LOWEST SCORE wins.

\*\*\*\*\*

D. Finish this story :

Teachers note : This story may be set out in a picture sequence to help pupils.

On Saturday I'm going to .....

I'm taking ..... and .....and .....

I'm leaving home at ..... o'clock.

I'm ..... home at six o'clock.

I'm ..... to the main road.

Then I'm ..... a truck down to the beach.

I'm ..... by canoe from the beach to .....

I'm seeing ..... in .....

Uncle Albert is ..... home with me.

HELPING WORDS

catching

walking

coming

going

running

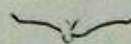
travelling

\*\*\* \*\* \*\*\*\*\*

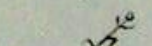
E. PICTURE CROSSWORD

F	L	Y	I	N	G			
		E			I			
		L	E	A	V	I	N	G
		L			I			O
		I			N			I
					G			N

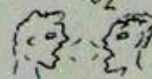
Clues (examples)



(flying)



( running)



(talking)



(carrying)

.....

Teachers note : A story theme using the crossword clues should be developed on the back of the picture crossword card.

- F. Make up your own picture crossword using -ING words.

\*\*\* \*

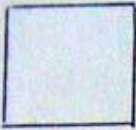





NRCAE      Solomon Islands Project - LANGUAGE      Lecturer : THOR MAY

Structure : I can hear X  
(Tate, Book I, Lesson 47)

Theme : I Can Hear Everything At Night

PICTURE & PHRASE CARDS

1.		<p>I can hear the frogs</p> <p>I can hear them</p> <p>I can hear them say..</p>	<p>at night</p> <p>in the swamp</p> <p>'croak' 'croak' 'croak'</p>
2.		<p>I can hear the owls</p> <p>I can hear them</p> <p>I can hear them say..</p>	<p>at night</p> <p>in the trees</p> <p>'toowee' 'toowee' 'toowee'</p>
3.		<p>I can hear the fish</p> <p>I can hear them</p> <p>I can hear them going..</p>	<p>at night</p> <p>in the lagoon</p> <p>'plop' 'plop' 'plop'</p>
4.		<p>I can hear the crickets</p> <p>I can hear them</p> <p>I can hear them going..</p>	<p>at night</p> <p>in the grass</p> <p>'clack' 'clack' 'clack'</p>

\*\*\*\*\*

Instructions :

1. Put these card sets together in the right order.
2. Take turns with your partner to tell about each animal.
3. When you can remember without looking, come and WHISPER about one to the teacher.
4. What ELSE can you hear at night ?  
Make a list of things you can hear.
5. Work with your partner. Answer these questions for each sound :
  - \* When do you hear it ?
  - \* Where do you hear it ?
  - \* What sound does it make ?

\* \*\*\*\*\*

TEACHERS : Construct similar exercise sets for sounds at Midday, sounds in the Jungle, sounds at the Beach, sounds in the Town ....etc.

Teachers, note : The language of instructions in the above material is not controlled.  
Adjust for pupil level.

\*\*\*\*\* \*\* +\*



25.




NRCAB Solomon Islands Project - LANGUAGE Lecturer : Thor May

Structures : When I go to X ...  
 I can + VERB PHRASE  
 ...+ PREPOSITIONAL PHRASE

Theme : When I Go To The Beach  
 (Note : The language of instructions is not controlled. Adjust.)

COMPLEX PICTURE containing :

sand/beach, sun, clouds, surf, palm trees, headland, seagulls,  
 crabs, fish, fishermen (singing) ... (making) nets, canoes,  
 observer (small boy or girl)

							
sun	palm trees	canoe					

Small vignettes of scene      Name cards (stick-on)

\*\* \*--\*\*

CARD SETS :

1. Name cards (i.e. Nouns describing the complex picture)
2. Sentence-set cards (pairs), as below....

\*\*\*\*\*

Sentence Sets :

1. When I go to the beach  
I can hear the surf

I can see it rolling in

3. When I go to the beach  
I can see the fishermen

I can hear them singing

5. When I go to the beach  
I can see the white sand.

I can feel it burning my feet.

2. When I go to the beach  
I can see the seagulls

I can hear them crying 'eek', 'eek', 'eek'

4. When I go to the beach  
I can hear the fishermen (...talking)

I can see them making nets.

6. When I go to the beach  
I can taste the salt.

I can smell it in the air.

\*\* \*--\*\*

(cont.)



26.

NRCAE                      Solomon Islands Project - LANGUAGE                      Lecturer : Thor MAY

Theme : When I Go To The Beach (cont.)

Instructions :

1. Put the NAME CARDS in the right squares.
2. Tell your partner what you can see on the beach.  
(Say : " I can see two canoes"...etc. )
3. Now practice saying these things from memory;(don't look at the picture)
4. Put the pairs of SENTENCE CARDS together.
5. Now turn over the END SENTENCE in each set.  
Try to finish each story without looking.
6. Turn over BOTH sentence cards in each set.  
Try to say everything to your partner without looking.
7. Try to WRITE these sentences without looking.
8. Make up a long story about ...  
    " When I go into the jungle I can ...  
        ... see .....  
        ... hear ....  
        ... smell ....

\* Tell this story to your partner.  
\* Write it down, and draw a picture to go with it.

\*\*\*\*\*

*Thor May*  
18-4-83



NRCAE

27.

Solomon Islands Language Project    Lecturer : Thor May

Drama In Multigrade Classrooms

Drama is an important vehicle for child (and adult) expression. It has special value in language work (vernacular or English), where the child may 'experiment' with new language and new roles without taking a personal risk. The risk can be made even less by using puppets (which the children themselves can make).

In second-language work drama/role play has the special value of making otherwise boring memory work worthwhile. The new words and structures will be retained far more effectively than if they were 'drilled' in a series of exercises.

Drama draws both on individual talent and cooperative interaction. It does not have to be intrusive on total class attention in a multigrade classroom where provision is made to screen off the drama group temporarily, or to physically move it to, say, an outside corner of the building. Since drama is such a highly focussed activity, supervision need not be intensive once children are accustomed to the process. However it is useful, even essential, for the teacher to 'set the scene' by exuberantly acting one or more parts for a couple of minutes; (sometimes he may even do a trial run through a whole scene). It can be worthwhile to appoint a child-director, even for brief scenes. This role should be rotated and leads, itself, to valuable language experience.

The little play below is very simple. Any imaginative teacher may construct many like it. The important thing is to develop a 'feel' for the world as the child sees it (...listen to children talking !) and to keep the plot simple and appealing.

A group of children may rehearse this play to perform before the class. They may want to add some language, (that's fine !). The 'house' may be mocked up with a couple of rough props, or its presence (...looking under it etc.) may be simply mimed. Children may make a special costume (e.g. a hood) for Mr Nobody. Alternatively, puppets may be made for all the characters, and the storyline extended to include a Somebody and an Anybody. The possibilities are endless.

\*\*\*\*\*

*Thor May*  
25-4-83



28.

NRCAE                      Solomon Islands Language Project      Lecturer :Thor MAY

Mr NOBODY      (...a short play for children)

Structure : INDEFINITE PRONOUNS :-  
Nobody / Somebody / Anybody

Characters :

Robert ( a small boy)  
Sarah (a small girl)  
Mr Nobody (invisible  
to Robert and Sarah )

Scene : An old,deserted house.  
It is very quiet.

#####

Robert : Hello ! Is anybody at home ?  
Can anybody hear me ?

Mr Nobody : Nobody is at home,little boy.  
(deep voice) Nobody lives here. Go away !

Robert : Sarah,who's that ?  
I can hear somebody.  
Somebody is talking to us.

Mr Nobody : I'm Nobody,and this is my house.  
I'm not Somebody. I'm not Anybody.  
I'm Nobody. Now go away !

Sarah : Can you see anybody in this house Robert ?

Robert : No,I can't see anybody at all.

Sarah : Is somebody under the house ?

Mr Nobody : Certainly not ! Somebody is not under MY house.

Robert : There is that voice again !  
Excuse me,Mr Nobody. What do you look like ?

Mr Nobody : You ARE a curious child.  
Well,I don't look like Anybody.  
He is a silly fellow.

(cont./>



NRCAE

29.

Thor May

MR NOBODY (cont.)

Sarah : Do you look like Somebody then ?

Mr Nobody : Certainly not ! Somebody always wears a coat and tie.  
He even wears a coat and tie to bed !

Robert : That's stupid.  
Can't we see you Mr Nobody ?

Mr Nobody : I'm sorry child. No.Nobodies can see each other.  
Other people can't see them.

Sarah : Can we EVER see you Mr Nobody ?

Mr Nobody : When you grow up,children,you might see me.  
Some children become Sombodies.  
Most children become Anybodies.  
A few children become Nobodies.  
We Nobodies are special.

Robert : What a funny man.  
I hope I can see you one day Mr Nobody.  
Goodbye.

Mr Nobody : Goodbye children.  
You are too curious to become Anybodies.  
Be careful of the Sombodies.They are tricky.  
We Nobodies are pretty friendly really.  
Bye !

#####

Thor May  
25-4-83



NORTHERN RIVERS COLLEGE OF ADVANCED EDUCATION

SOLOMON ISLANDS LANGUAGE PROJECT

Lecturer: Thor May

PREDICTABLE STORIES

[Thanks to my colleague, Dr. Gary Kilarr,  
for the basic idea in this section]

Most sentences you speak are made for the first time ever. Probably never before has that exact combination of words been put together.

On the other hand, there seem to be a large number of phrases or expressions which we recognise as typical of individuals or situations. They are 'predictable'.

Many things are predictable in language. Meanings can be predicted from what we know of situations and the habits of our acquaintances. Grammatical structures are predictable from instant to instant. For example, immediately a transitive verb is used, we know that a noun is likely to follow, and so on. This predictability greatly increases the efficiency with which we can receive and 'decode' (interpret) language.

Someone learning to operate in a new medium like reading lacks many of the predictable clues available to an experienced reader. He therefore reads more slowly and misses much. Likewise, someone listening to or reading a foreign/second language lacks most of the predictable clues available to a native speaker. He will therefore be much less efficient in decoding the language.

Predictable stories have been mainly designed to help inexperienced readers. They can also be of great help to foreign/second language learners. The idea of a predictable story is to repeat a series of very clear patterns of both meaning and structure. The patterns are so clear that they might be too easy for an experienced reader, but they are very useful for the inexperienced.

The 'substitution tables' of traditional foreign language courses have something in common with predictable stories. The big difference is that substitution tables are collections of sentence patterns, common in structure but random in meaning. They are almost meaningless for everyone (teachers and students), and therefore boring. By contrast, predictable stories do have an interesting plot or storyline which can be remembered (and illustrated). This is especially important for children.

The best predictable stories are almost like poems; (some remind me of extended Japanese 'haiku'), and they often have a twist at the end.



Below are two examples of predictable stories. Notice that the second story is less 'predictable' than the first, and therefore more demanding of the reader (although the syntax is actually simpler than in the first story). In a real storybook each sentence would be on a separate page, and have a lively illustration. Teachers (and children) may make up many storybooks like this very quickly. It is an excellent way to teach and to learn language.

AS THE SUN WENT DOWN

- |              |  |
|--------------|--|
| (Page One)   | Once, deep in the jungle,<br>I found a beautiful pool.   |
| (Page Two)   | As the sun went down,<br>The birds came down to the pool for a drink.  |
| (Page Three) | As the sun went down,<br>The snakes came down to the pool for a drink.   |
| (Page Four)  | As the sun went down,<br>The lizards came down to the pool for a drink.  |
| (Page Five)  | As the sun went down,<br>The wild pigs came down to the pool for a drink.  |
| (Page Six)   | As the sun went down,<br>The birds<br>and<br>The snakes<br>and<br>The lizards<br>and<br>The wild pigs<br>came down to the pool.<br>They all came down to the pool for a drink. |



32.

SOME PEOPLE ARE LUCKY

- (Page One)      You can't always be lucky.  
Uncle Albert hit his finger with a hammer.
- (Page Two)      You can't always be lucky.  
Aunty Mary cut her finger with a knife.
- (Page Three)      You can't always be lucky.  
Cousin Jack spiked his finger with a fish-hook.
- (Page Four)      You can't always be lucky.  
Henry Ivenu burnt his finger with a hot saucepan lid.
- (Page Five)      But I was lucky today.  
I licked my fingers with honey on them.  
Yummy!





Solomon Islands Language Project

33.

**Northern Rivers**

College of Advanced Education

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Lecturer : Thor May

LANGUAGE TESTING AND EVALUATION

Language tests may perform a number of different jobs :

1. Some aptitude tests can show the best method for teaching language to each particular child. People learn in different ways. What is a good method for one person is hopeless for another. Therefore, ideally, pupils should have a choice of differently designed language programs.

Unfortunately, in most schools there is only one program, so there is no point in having a test to show the best method for each child. Also, these tests are best given in the mother tongue (they check language-learning aptitude, not previous teaching), and most of the existing ones are written in English.

The best that a Solomon Islands teacher can do is to offer his pupils a choice of different kinds of language activity, and encourage children in those things they are good at. Thus, some will be good at stories, others at grammar, others at the language in a particular subject (e.g. Science) ....and so on.

\*\*\*\*\*

2.a. Some special-purpose tests show how well a pupil has learned a particular skill or piece of knowledge. The questions and answers (e.g. multiple-choice or cloze) are usually designed to be short and specific. For example, in the Tate Program, such a test would show which children had actually learned a particular lesson.

Tests like this are important for teachers. They tell the teacher whether he is succeeding or failing. They tell him what needs to be revised or retaught. They may tell him that a certain item doesn't have to be taught at all because pupils already know it. In a multigrade or ability-grouped classroom such tests are essential. They tell the teacher what group to put the pupil in, and when that pupil is ready to move to another group.

Tests like this are also important for pupils. Everyone likes to



succeed, and a set of correct answers is always rewarding for a pupil. On the other hand, nobody likes wrong answers, so it is important now a teacher treats these. If pupils believe that wrong answers show the teacher where to help them (..and he does ! ), then they won't mind so much. Wrong answers don't mean the same thing as 'stupid'. They mean that someone needs more time or a different method of getting to understand something.

2.b. Dictation is a traditional special-purpose language test. It can be quite useful. It tests pupils' ability to understand, briefly remember and write down oral language. It also checks their spelling and punctuation. Dictation has been popular with teachers because it is easy to make up, to administer and to mark. Used sensibly it can give a teacher a lot of useful information, and that is how it should be explained to pupils. Dictation should never be seen as some kind of punishment or threat.

2.c. Comprehension questions are another traditional type of special-purpose language test. These questions test a pupil's ability to understand, interpret and evaluate the information in a particular piece of writing.

Such questions may test quite exact syntactic-semantic knowledge;

e.g. What is Mr X doing ?

Answer : He is VERB+ing

They may test sequential or causative understanding;

e.g. Why did the car crash ?

Answer : Because the brakes failed.

They may test reasoning ability, or knowledge of more abstract concepts;

e.g. After reading this story, what do you think causes erosion

This last kind of question may require quite a long answer in which the language is not controlled for grammar.

The kinds of comprehension questions used in a primary school will obviously vary with the age of children and their knowledge of English. Nevertheless, properly used they are a very powerful instrument for a teacher. He can employ a carefully designed set of questions to force children to focus on the details of a piece of writing, to give them the skills needed to find those details, and to lead them to new knowledge. The questions can equally revise and test old knowledge.



35.

3. Some language tests are open-ended. They are not about particular skills or pieces of knowledge. Rather, they give pupils a chance to show what they can do. In this sense, any project work is a 'test' which will be evaluated by the teacher and other pupils. Other varieties of open-ended tests may have a clear time limit; for example, 5, 10 or 30 minutes to make up a story.

Open-ended tests are important for teachers. They give a much fuller picture of each pupil's knowledge and abilities than special-purpose tests. The teacher may be surprised at what particular children can do. He will also find many areas where pupils need help which get overlooked in the normal syllabus. He should make a note of these and follow them up in his lessons.

\*\*\*\*\*



NORTHERN RIVERS COLLEGE OF ADVANCED EDUCATION  
ENTRY TEST: Example of Special-purpose test used with Australian Immigrants

This test has 50 questions. Lecturer: Thor May.  
You have 25 minutes to finish the test.  
Read carefully. Work quickly. Do not guess.  
Each question has only one correct answer.  
DO NOT WRITE ON THIS QUESTION SHEET. WRITE ON A SEPARATE PIECE OF PAPER.  
\*\*\*\*\*

INSTRUCTIONS : Choose the correct word or phrase ( A , B ,or C ) for each sentence.

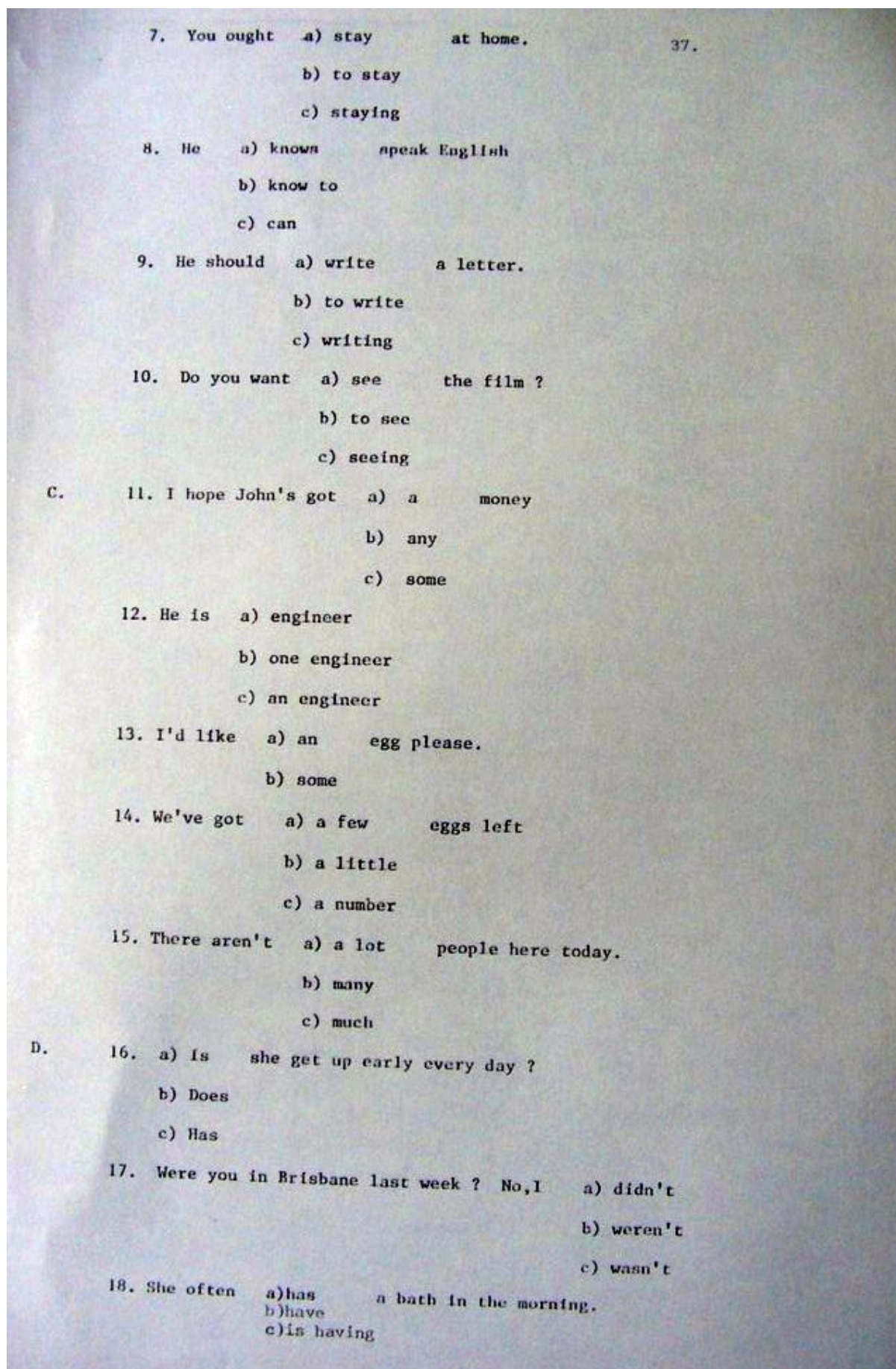
Example 1 : 52. I a) am tired today  
b) is  
c) are  
Only a) is correct, so write 52 a) on your answer paper.

Example 2 : 78. When you want a prescription, you go to a) the butcher's  
b) the chemist's  
c) the supermarket  
Only b) is correct, so you write 78b) on your answer paper.  
\*\*\*\*\*

A. 1. a) These oranges are very good.  
b) This  
c) That  
2. Are a) that people very nice ?  
b) those  
c) there  
3. a) It has a dog in the garden  
b) It is  
c) There is  
4. What's that ? a) They is my new car  
b) It  
c) There  
5. a) Their is a good film on at the Roma Cinema.  
b) They're  
c) There

B 6. I a) has to go to town tomorrow.  
b) have  
c) had

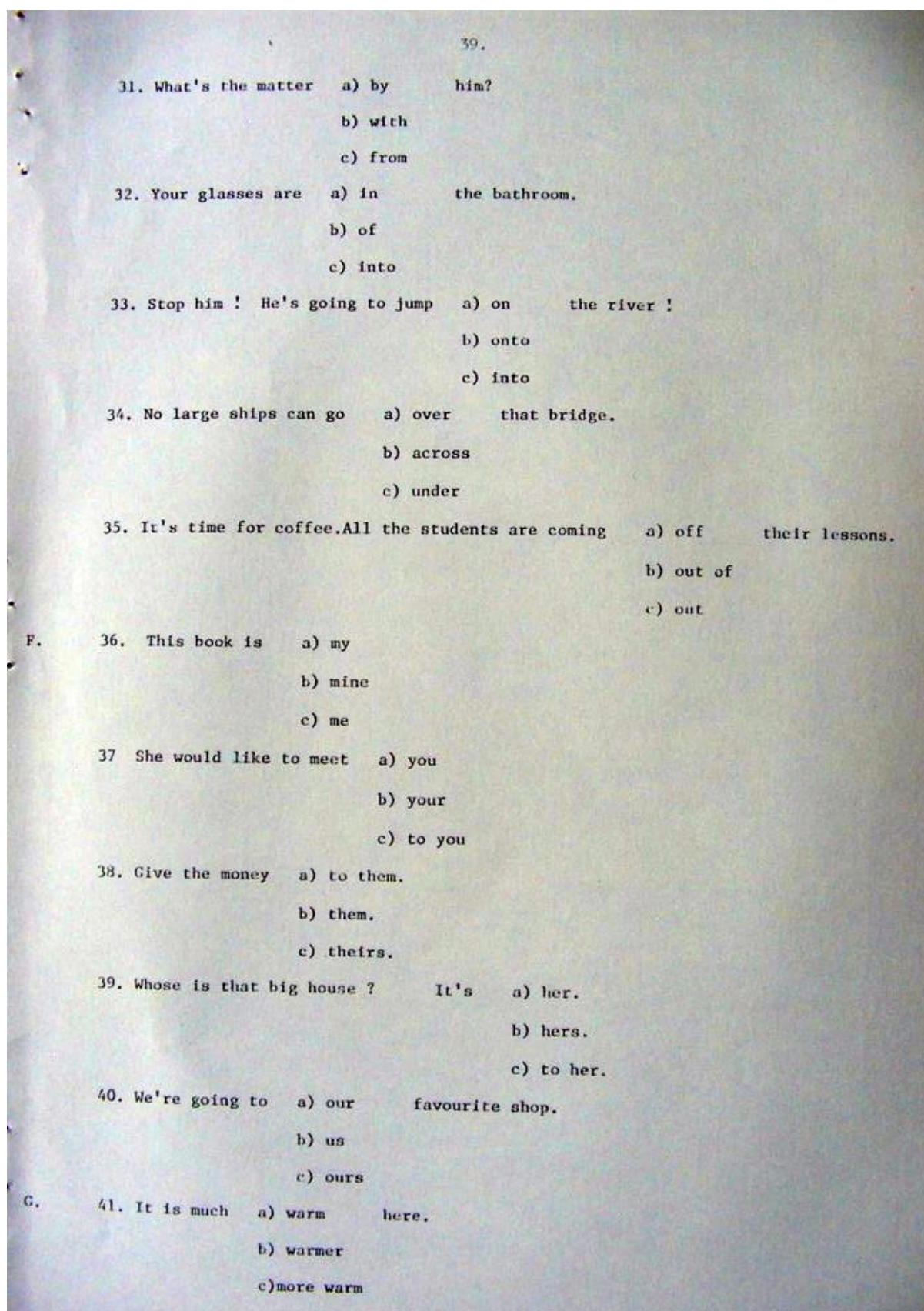






19. He a) loses his hat last week. 38.  
b) has lost  
c) lost
20. They a) caught the 7.30 bus yesterday.  
b) catch  
c) catches
21. Mary is here, but her parents a) isn't  
b) wasn't  
c) aren't
22. He a) hurries because he was late.  
b) hurried  
c) hurry
23. a) Doesn't she going to do anything today ?  
b) Does  
c) Isn't
24. They a) watch  
b) is watching  
c) are watching
25. a) Did you do much work yesterday ?  
b) Do you do  
c) Did you
- E 26. Who is she looking a) on ?  
b) at ?  
c) to ?
27. This is a nice piece a) of cheese.  
b) off  
c) -
28. Our holidays are a) in June.  
b) at  
c) on
29. They're listening a) at the news.  
b) to  
c) -
30. We came here a) in 1980  
b) at  
c) in







40.

42. She is not as old    a) that        I am.  
                              b) than  
                              c) as

43. He's    a) very        intelligent than I am.  
                 b) more  
                 c) plus

44. He drives    a) more careful.  
                      b) very careful.  
                      c) very carefully.

45. Yesterday was the    a) very hot        day so far this year.  
                              b) most hot  
                              c) hottest

H. 46. a) Where        wrote that letter ?  
                 b) Why  
                 c) Who

47. She went home early    a) because        she had finished her work.  
                                      b) while  
                                      c) without

48 a) Where        did you put it ?  
                      b) Who  
                      c) When

49. "a) How        is Bill?"        "Very well, thanks."  
                      b) Why  
                      c) Where

50. I'm going home to change first. a) Than I'm going out for a meal.  
    b) Then  
    c) Therefore

\*\*\*\*\*  
END



A Personal View of Language and Literacy Development in  
The Solomon Islands, With Special Regard to The Tate Program

Thor May, NRCAE, April 1983

I first encountered the Tate system and its consequences in New Zealand seven years ago when I taught in an Auckland high school. The school population was 75% Polynesian, from all over the Pacific, but especially the Cook Islands (for which Tate was designed). What a lot of the Island kids had in common on arrival in NZ was an inability to generate spontaneous English, and a kind of passivity : they were literally tongue-tied.

The Tate system was intended to offer security both to students and to teachers who were unsure in the language. It failed for both kinds of clients, although the reasons for that failure have not always been widely understood. With teachers it had the effect of eliminating the need for them to generate spontaneous English themselves. This meant that those teachers with shaky competence in English, and in isolated situations, depended more and more upon the formulaic incantation of Tate material, rather after the fashion of a Latin mass. They were teaching a dead language. It was not uncommon for their L<sup>2</sup> English competence to actually decline over time since their real use of the language was minimal.

As a linguistic vehicle the Tate system was based upon faulty premises. The processes of child language acquisition are even now shrouded in mystery, but enough is known to secure certain broad principles. It seems likely that for the first two or three years of life the cerebral activity of a child is largely concerned with developing the grammatical base of its first language. The achievement is an extraordinary one, never again to be matched in that individual's lifetime. We know that at the end of this period the child has acquired or inferred a subconscious grammar of L<sup>1</sup> that allows it to generate an infinite number of well formed sentences in the language. The rules of that grammar are largely unknown to researchers, and no consciously developed model of grammar has approached the generative power and delineation of any natural grammar.

(cont.)



Such rules of grammar as we use pedagogically are rules of thumb that have been shown to have some value for some individuals in monitoring the output of a second 'learned' language, but probably none at all in generating that  $L^2$  at source : a process beyond conscious manipulation. It is very useful for a language teacher to have the best possible knowledge of grammatical processes and constraints. Such knowledge does help him to evaluate and direct the  $L^2$  acquisition of his pupils. He can, where possible, put the self-correcting power of this linguistic understanding into the hands of his pupils. But it is untrue (and fairly easy to demonstrate the untruth) that mastery of any given set of grammatically structured material for its own sake, divorced from a real communicative or informational context, will give pupils the facility to communicate usefully in English (or to readily decode it).

It is well recognized in the literature, and my experience with  $L^2$  learners over the past six years has repeatedly confirmed it, that those who succeed best and most rapidly are the ones preoccupied with getting a message across, regardless of errors. Such people may or may not have good analytic capacity, but they do have an overriding urge to communicate, and, for better or for worse, they usually make themselves understood.

The Tate language materials are not concerned with communication. In fact they consciously exclude the possibility. They are based upon the premise that a natural language is a set of formulae that may be learned like complex logarithms or multiplication tables. The formulae, presented in a way that leaves no room for 'error' or innovation, are supposed to give students the capacity to generate well-formed English.

A theoretical linguist can demonstrate in short order that the rules explicit in Tate are nowhere near adequate to generate a natural language. Any honest teacher may observe that the formulae, no matter how well memorized, seem to offer little guaranteed facility for the generation of new language; that they are not incorporated, by and large, as the subconscious grammar necessary to generate real language unless they have been encountered in a genuinely communicative context. The fact is that thematically disjointed material, no matter what its syntactic coherence, has no hold on the mind.

(cont.)



If Tate is an ineffective vehicle for language learning, it can scarcely be an effective tool for the acquisition of initial literacy. The process is difficult enough in L<sup>2</sup>, even where teaching techniques make genuine and interesting use of the language; where the oral code of English is felt by the pupil to have real descriptive power which may be transferred to a written medium. There is no reward for the pupil who transfers Tate formulae to a written medium, or attempts to decode their written form. The common pedagogical result after great effort, as I have seen it amongst Polynesian children in NZ, is the ability to 'bark at print' : to read aloud convincingly enough, but with a total lack of comprehension. Such pupils are quite unable to use the written medium for any personal application (...taking notes, writing stories etc) since they have not learned that the symbols are reference systems to the world (i.e. language).

In the case of the Solomons, literacy in English would be vastly enhanced by a transitional bilingual program from Vernaculars or Pidgin. The extrinsic barriers to this must be considerable. The objections would be administrative and political, and there would also have to be a radical reshaping of teacher-behaviour.

The political barriers are almost certainly based upon linguistic misconception. Any country with the diversity of tongues found in the Solomons will have as a priority the creation and reinforcement of a lingua-franca. Without it, political fragmentation is almost inevitable, the movement of labour (where a cash economy exists) is inhibited, commerce and administration becomes unmanageable. However, this understandable drive for a lingua-franca can, in the nature of language, easily become self-defeating. Nowhere on the planet has it proved politically or socially productive to actively suppress regional languages. Where one language becomes ascendant it is always because of its perceived value by actual users; (English is an archetypal example). Literacy in Vernaculars or Pidgin is not going to undermine the role of English in the Solomons. The languages operate in different domains, and will always do so. What literacy in these languages will do is to rapidly and very greatly increase that proportion of the population which can make a transition to English literacy. Literacy is a tool which, like sight itself, must be

(cont.



experienced to be appreciated, but once understood in a familiar language, will find ready application in others.

The administrative barriers to change in language teaching methods in the Solomons may be more daunting than the political ones. Any system which presumes a single language of teaching and administration lends itself to centralized control. School resources may be produced in Honiara for the whole system, teachers may be relocated with a degree of freedom, and curriculum control is apparently easy to maintain. Further, where technical and human resources are limited, a comprehensive lock-step program such as Tate is attractive to administrators. All of this is beyond argument. Yet administrative convenience is no more than a euphemism for waste where the program being administered doesn't work, and can't work in principle.

Alternatives to Tate range from modified methods of English language teaching to various types of transitional bilingual program. They all devolve far greater responsibility for innovation and resource development upon regional resource centres and individual teachers. This in turn presupposes a change in the kind of rewards offered to teachers for effective planning and resource creation. However, in the very least it should be clear to administrators that tying the success of the literacy program to the success of the foreign (i.e. English) language program is loading all the odds on the side of failure for both.

Creating Vernacular, or even Pidgin, literacy material is a headache, especially in the early stages. It calls for a skillful use of local talent, combined with the versatile employment of centralized printing or photocopying facilities. It is a problem, though, which is finally amenable to social and administrative solution. Further, the student who acquires this kind of literacy can henceforth record his experience in all curriculum areas without a crippling ignorance of expression in the language itself. The alternative of promoting initial literacy in English is administratively simple, but imposes a permanent handicap upon each new student, even when the concept of literacy is mastered, for his ideas are forever imprisoned by the limitations of expression in a foreign and poorly understood tongue.

#####

c.c. Gordon Macleod, Marion Colville, Fred Goodman,

Thor May  
10.4.83



NORTHERN RIVERS COLLEGE OF ADVANCED EDUCATION

Thor May

TRANSCRIBING THE LANGUAGES OF THE SOLOMON ISLANDS

In communities where a number of languages are spoken it is usual for each language to do only certain jobs. For example, one language may be used at home, another at the market, another for dealing with the government, and so on. Thus, each language is said to have its own domain. In the Solomons, a local language like Marine or Langalanga will have its particular domain, pidgin another domain, and English yet another (usually much smaller) domain.

Any language may be transmitted by speech or in writing. Any language may be recorded in memory or in writing. Where a language is used in a formal domain (e.g., English in the Solomon Islands) it is much more likely to be written than if it is used in an informal domain (e.g., local languages). Therefore, people who use English in the Solomons should be able to read and write it, and, of course, the school syllabus insists on this.

There are also good reasons for being able to read and write local languages and pidgin. Writing is a powerful medium because it both transmits and (unlike speech) records language. There are many jobs done by local languages which can benefit from being written as well spoken. For example, people can record their own experiences, stories, local histories and legends, write memos, notes to help their memory, personal letters, diaries and so on. Most of these things will never be done in a second (or third) language like English because it is unfamiliar and lacks the emotional associations of a mother tongue. It also happens that children and adults can acquire literacy much more quickly at the personal level of a local language. Once literacy is acquired in the informal domains of a mother tongue or pidgin, it will transfer readily to the formal domain of English. The present language syllabus of the Solomon Islands education system is concerned only with literacy in English and ignores local languages. We have to accept that for now.

I am pretty sure that as communications improve and people travel more, at least some local languages will die in the future. Pidgin and English will become more important. These are natural processes; languages, like living things, are born (as pidgins), mature (as creoles), develop, and either die or change beyond recognition over time. But at any given moment in history, each language is a wonderful tool and instrument. It is sensible to make the best possible use of every language.

Alphabets have already been developed for a number of Solomon Island languages (mostly by missionaries). Any alphabet tries to match the sounds of a language with written symbols. The Roman alphabet does this rather badly for English, but is still used quite successfully. On the following pages I have recorded, with the help of Solomon Islands teachers, possible alphabets for five Melanesian languages. The alphabets are less than perfect; my



ignorance of the languages is extreme. Professional phonologists will find much to criticize. But, as with English, these imperfect alphabets are quite workable. There is no reason at all that similar alphabets cannot be developed quite quickly for the remaining Solomon Island languages. Spelling rules need not be fixed, (as they are by convention in English). For example, spelling in the Japanese kana system often varies with personal whim, yet no great problems of understanding arise. In short, Melanesian languages, previously unwritten, can become effective written languages if the will to do the job is there.

Thor May.



NORTHERN RIVERS COLLEGE OF ADVANCED EDUCATION

Lecturer: Thor MAY

Data From: Augustine OLIBUMA

SOLOMON ISLANDS - LANGALANGA DISTRICT

Sounds in the LANGALANGA Language

(Conventional Orthography)

1. CONSONANTS

Stops	( Voiceless	p	t	k
	( Voiced	b	d	g
Fricatives	( Voiceless	f	s	
	( Voiced			
Affricates		ʃ	← (write: g)	
Nasals		m	n	
Laterals		l		
Trill		r		
Semi Vowels		w		

Clusters: /kw/ ; /gw/

2. VOWELS

Short	Long
a	aa
e	ee
i	ii
o	oo
u	uu

3. DIPHTHONGS

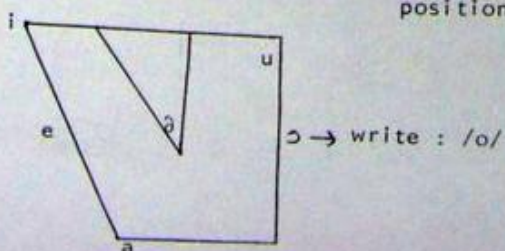
a) Centering †

Short	long
a'a	aa'a
ea	eea
ia	iaa
oa	ooa
ua	uaa

b) Non-Centering

	a	e	i	o	u
a	<del>aa</del>	ae	ai	ao	au
e	<del>ea</del>	<del>ee</del>	ei		
i	<del>ia</del>		<del>ii</del>	ia	
o	<del>oa</del>		oi	<del>oo</del>	ou
u	<del>ua</del>				<del>uu</del>

† read [a] as ə in the centering position





NORTHERN RIVERS COLLEGE OF ADVANCED EDUCATION

Lecturer: Thor MAY

Data From: N. OWEN

SOLOMON ISLANDS - NORTH WEST MALAITA

Sounds in the BAELĀE Language

(Conventional Orthography)

1. CONSONANTS

Stops	( Voiceless	<table> <tr> <td></td> <td>t</td> <td>k</td> </tr> <tr> <td>b</td> <td>d</td> <td>g</td> </tr> </table>			t	k	b	d	g
		t	k						
b	d	g							
( Voiced									
Fricatives	( Voiceless	<table> <tr> <td>f</td> <td>th(θ)</td> <td>s</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </table>		f	th(θ)	s			
	f	th(θ)	s						
( Voiced									
Affricates		<table> <tr> <td>h</td> </tr> </table>	h	← (write: g)					
h									
Nasals		<table> <tr> <td>m</td> <td>n</td> <td>ng (ŋ)</td> </tr> </table>		m	n	ng (ŋ)			
m	n	ng (ŋ)							
Laterals		<table> <tr> <td>l</td> </tr> </table>	l	<u>Clusters:</u> /kw/, /gw/					
l									
Trill		<table> <tr> <td>r</td> </tr> </table>	r						
r									
Semi Vowels		<table> <tr> <td>w</td> </tr> </table>	w						
w									

2. VOWELS

Short	long
a	aa
e	ee
i	ii
o	oo
u	uu

3. DIPHTHONGS

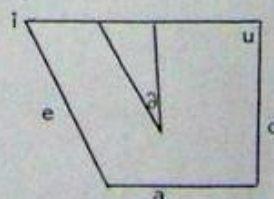
a) Centering †

Short	Long
a'a	aa'a
ea	eea
ia	iaa
oa	ooa
ua	uaa

b) Non-Centering

	a	e	i	o	u
a	<del>aa</del>	ae	ai	ao	au
e	<del>ea</del>	<del>ee</del>	ei	eo	eu
i	<del>ia</del>	<del>ie</del>	<del>ii</del>	io	iu
o	<del>oa</del>	oe	oi	<del>oo</del>	ou
u	<del>ua</del>	ui	ue	<del>uo</del>	<del>uu</del>

† read [a] as /ə/ in the centering position





NORTHERN RIVERS COLLEGE OF ADVANCED EDUCATION

Lecturer: Thor MAY

Data From: Michael MOSE

SOLOMON ISLANDS - GUADALCANAL

Sounds in the LENGO Language

(Conventional Orthography)

1. CONSONANTS

Stops	( Voiceless	p	t	k	
	( Voiced	b	d	g	
Fricatives	( Voiceless			s	
	( Voiced	v(ʋ)	th(ʈ)		
Affricates	( Voiceless	ʈ	← (write: g)		
	( Voiced	gh			
Nasals		m	n	n <sup>y</sup>	ng
Laterals		l	/		
Trill		r			
Semi Vowels		Nil			

Clusters: /kw/

2. VOWELS

Short	Long
a	
e	
i	
o	
u	

3. DIPHTHONGS

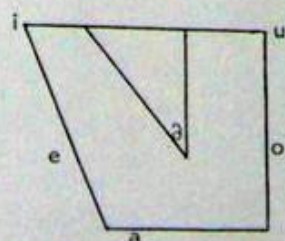
a) Centering †

a'a
ea
ia
oa
ua

b) Non-Centering

	a	e	i	o	u
a		ae	ai	ao	au
e			ei	eo	eu
i					
o		oe	oi		ou
u			ui		

† read [a] as ʌ in the centering position





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NORTHERN RIVERS COLLEGE OF ADVANCED EDUCATION

Lecturer: Thor MAY  
Data From: Ezekiel IVINUI

SOLOMON ISLANDS - FAURO ISLAND

Sounds in the MONO Language

(Conventional Orthography)

1. CONSONANTS

Stops	( Voiceless	p	t	k	
	( Voiced				
Fricatives	( Voiceless	f	s		h
	( Voiced	v		zh (ʒ)	
Affricates	( Voiceless		ɬ	← (write: g)	
	( Voiced	dʒ (ʒ)			
Nasals		m	n	ng	
Laterals		l			
Trill		r			
Semi Vowels		w			

2. VOWELS

Short	Long
a	
e	
i	
o	
u	

3. DIPHTHONGS

a) Centering †

a'a
ea
ia
oa
ua

b) Non-Centering

	a	e	i	o	u
a		ae	ai	ao	au
e			ei	eo	eu
i				io	iu
o		oe	oi		ou
u		ue	ui	uo	

† read [a] as ə in the centering position

u (write: u)  
(write: u)  
ɔ (write: o)  
(write: /a/)  
D (write: o)



NORTHERN RIVERS COLLEGE OF ADVANCED EDUCATION

Lecturer: Thor MAY

Data From: Christopher HAVI

SOLOMON ISLANDS - SANTA YSABEL ISLAND

Sounds in the MARINE Language

(Conventional Orthography)

1. CONSONANTS

Stops ( Voiceless  
(  
( Voiced

p	t	k
b	d	g

Fricatives ( Voiceless  
(  
( Voiced

f	(θ)th	s	h
v			

Affricates ( Voiceless  
(  
( Voiced

ch(tʃ)	ŋ
	ḡh

← (write: g)

Nasals

m	n	ng(ŋ)
---	---	-------

Laterals

l
---

Trill

r
---

Clusters: /br/, /bl/, /fl/

2. VOWELS

Short	Long
a	aa
e	ee
i	ii
o	oo
u	uu

3. DIPHTHONGS

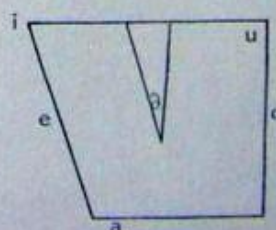
a) Centering †

a'a
ea
ia
oa
ua

b) Non-Centering

	a	e	i	o	u
a		ae	ai	ao	au
e			ei		
i					
o				oi	ou
u					

† read [a] as /ə/ in the centering position





### INTRODUCTION

From time to time attempts have been made to set parameters for measuring difficulty in natural languages. For example various formulae are available for determining the 'reading age' for written material. Unlike the context free closed languages of, say, mathematics and formal logic, the systems of natural language are so complex and permeable that reliable methods of characterizing their interaction, let alone assigning weighted judgement to relative 'difficulty' for users and learners, are not yet within reach.

Nevertheless, in the kind of material being generated in the Solomon Islands Project, we are faced with the task of evaluating the suitability of the language used in all curriculum areas. It is a task made doubly delicate by the fact that we are working in a second language for the users of our material.

In order to assist staff (if not to daunt them), I have analysed below some of the many factors which complicate the interpretation of language for all people, but particularly for those working in a foreign tongue, (e.g. English). Note (a) that this listing is in no sense exhaustive and (b) that it is not compiled as a check-list of teaching points.

There is no reasonable equation that we can apply to any group of complex language factors, nothing that permits us to say "X + Y + Z means that this sentence is too difficult for these users". Such evaluation remains more in the realm of an art than a science; it depends upon sensitivity, contact with end-users and experience. The Solomons teachers are our only present contact with end users, and we must rely upon them heavily. I can offer one mitigating factor from my own experience: where the intrinsic content of material is of great personal interest to an end user, the level of structural complexity can often be escalated without destroying the message.

### AN ANALYSIS LINGUISTIC DIFFICULTY

#### (1) Lexical Difficulty

- a) Syllabic length: Beginners in a foreign language rely heavily upon short-term memory, and often find long words (and long sentences) difficult to process.
- b) Clusters : Consonant clusters (e.g. Script) are fairly common in English but rare in many languages, including Melanesian languages. The rules for their use in English words are complicated and they are difficult for others to pronounce (just as we find Polish clusters difficult).
- c) Irregular spelling: The link between sound and written symbol in English is erratic at the best of times. The symbol [e] for example has about 13 pronunciations in English. L<sup>2</sup> learners become very demoralized by this kind of insanity.
- d) Irregular Stress: English word stress does have a degree of regularity. The penultimate syllable (2nd-last) is stressed in many words, the antipenultimate (3rd-last) in many others. And there are many exceptions. (Check out this paragraph !). English sentence stress can be varied in remarkable ways. Life is not as complicated in many Melanesian (or European) languages.



- e) Affixes: English makes use of many prefixes and suffixes, mostly to influence meaning rather than syntax. Some affixes are highly productive (e.g. un in 'unhappy'), others are much rarer (e.g. a in 'atypical').
- f) Multiple denotation: Any competent English speaker can think of several meanings for, say, 'make' or 'pick up'. With L<sup>2</sup> learners always ask, "Is this particular meaning of the word new for these people; is it rare?"
- g) Range of connotation: All words (and sentences) have both explicit and implicit meaning. The implicit meaning usually depends upon shared cultural knowledge or experiences. The connotations of 'tree', 'fish' and 'school' are quite different for Australians and Solomon Islanders. Now whose set of connotations did you have in mind when you last used those words?
- h) Specialized Application: Every trade, science and interest group applies specialized meaning to common words, (c.f. this analysis !) Scan your teaching material for specialized usages that you have taken for granted.
- i) Frequency of Lexical Item: Rare words need not be excluded from L<sup>2</sup> material if they are also important. But be selective. A good language student under ideal conditions can absorb several new words in a day, but not every day.
- j) Selectional Restrictions: "Colourless green ideas sleep furiously" sounds rather odd. 'Idea' is a word not normally associated with 'green' or 'sleep' in English culture (though poetry often employs such juxtapositions). Such selectional restrictions vary greatly among languages. Be sensitive to the unexpected puzzlement of your users over 'obvious' things.
- k) Subcategorical Restrictions: Every word is sensitive to its linguistic environment. Rigid word order rules in English create quite categorical restrictions on words. Thus only certain classes of words can occur to the immediate left of, say, 'eat'; (usually it is an animate noun). Some words, especially archaic ones, have highly restrictive environments. For example the rare verb, 'slough' almost always occurs with the preposition 'off'; (all verbs incidentally, are associated with limited sets of prepositions). With L<sup>2</sup> users, try to avoid words with very restrictive environments, or at least explain their limitations.

## (2) Measures of Structural Complexity in Sentences

- a) Sentence length: Short sentences are much easier for non-fluent as well as less able L<sup>2</sup> users (also L<sup>1</sup> users !) to process. This applies to both spoken and written mediums. Be aware however that spoken (as opposed to written) language offers no opportunity for user-review when extracting meaning.
- b) Qualifying words: Nouns in English may be qualified by determiners (the, a), adjectives (old, big), quantifiers (many, few), intensifiers (very)....etc. Verbs may also be qualified in various ways. A large number of qualifying words can confuse and distract insecure L<sup>2</sup> users.



- c. Adverbial and Prepositional Phrases: Sentences may be qualified by various phrases and there is often a degree of freedom about their placement in the sentence;

With a knife Fred cut the salami.

Fred, with a knife, cut the salami.

Fred cut the salami with a knife.

The multiple use of adverbial or prepositional phrases, or their unusual placement, can confuse L<sup>2</sup> users. On the whole they are best put at the end of sentences. (Not always though: "On the Whole" in the last sentence can only occur at the end with special pausing and stress placement).

- d. Conjunctive sentences: and, but, and or are the commonest conjunctions used for joining English sentences, and their application may often (not always) correspond to the functions of logical operators. L<sup>2</sup> users have least trouble with and, a little more with but and or. Writing L<sup>2</sup> material, it is often possible to reduce a long sentence with conjunctions to several shorter sentences. This lightens the processing load. The second sentence in a conjunctive set often has confusing deletions (see Equi deletion' below).

- e. Equi-deletion: Elements in a conjoined sentence are often deleted in English. The grammar may even require that they be deleted;

1. The bomb demolished the car and [~~the bomb demolished~~] the shop window.

2. Fred can come if he likes and so can Mary [~~come if she likes~~].

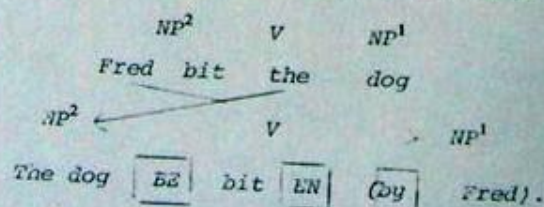
Any listener must 'recover' these deleted elements in order to interpret the sentence. This may be beyond the competence of insecure L<sup>2</sup> users.

- f. Deletion by Convention: A great deal is left out of everyday language on the basis of shared understanding. This is an absolute minefield for L<sup>2</sup> users since the rules for omission, where they exist, are often obscure:

e.g. + How would you like to come and get drunk with me ?

- If you're shouting [~~the drinks~~], I wouldn't mind [~~coming and getting drunk~~] at all.

- g. Permutation: The most frequent way of permuting subject and object noun phrases relative to the verb in English is the passive 'transformation' :



Children, certain kinds of aphasic adults, and L<sup>2</sup> learners can all experience difficulty decoding passive sentences, often assigning an active meaning. There is a good deal of individual variation in this decoding 'blockage', and some passives, by virtue of their meaning, are much less likely to be misinterpreted than others. It is wise, however, to cast a very careful eye over curriculum material.



- h) Transposition: It is possible for whole clauses to be fronted in English:

1a) [For the rain to come now] would be a disaster.

....is a transposed form of .....

1b) It would be a disaster for the rain to come now.

2a) [ That orchids grow on Guadalcanal ] is well known.

.....is a transposed form of .....

2b) It is well known that orchids grow on Guadalcanal.

The interpretation of such structures requires that users see the whole transposed clause as subject of the main verb (i.e. of BE in this case). This imposes a heavy processing burden. Clefts (the it form in the b) sentences) have their own problems of course; (see 'Clefts' below).

- i) Embedding: Written English, especially, makes extensive use of sentences embedded or 'nested' within other sentences. The normal syntactic device employed is the relative clause. There is a limit to the capacity, even of native speakers, to process embedded clauses/sentences:

?? He knew [who the man] who was wearing a yellow raincoat [which came from the Woolworths [which is in Magellan Street ] ] [was].

The ability of L<sup>2</sup> speakers to process even single embeddings before they are fairly fluent is quite limited. In spoken language such structures can create extreme difficulty.

- j) Sentential Complements: Complex sentences of the kind:

1. [I believe [that the sky is pink tonight ]  
                    ↑  
                complementizer]

....really embed a second sentence as a complement of the matrix verb (i.e. of believe in this case.) The word, that, in such sentences is called a complementizer. There are at least three kinds of complementizers in English, (THAT, FOR-TO, POSS'-ING) but not all three can go with every matrix verb :

2, [ I believe [elephants to have large appetites]<sub>S<sub>2</sub></sub> ]<sub>S<sub>1</sub></sub> ]<sub>S<sub>1</sub></sub>

3. \* $[I \text{ believe } [Wendy's \text{ playing of the flute]_{S_2}]_S$

complementizer

4. \* I like [that the sky is pink tonight]

I like [elephants to have large appetites]

I like [Wendy's playing of the flute]

Thus the combination of complementizers available to each matrix verb appears to be quite idiosyncratic. (Various linguistic models try to identify reasoned regularities, but they are hotly disputed by professional linguists themselves.)



Complex sentences employing matrix verbs are of course far more difficult than simple sentences for L<sup>2</sup> users to decode. Conscious rules for their use are rarely taught in language courses (perhaps because the 'rules' are so little known) and they can pose enormous difficulties for L<sup>2</sup> speakers trying to generate standard language. Nevertheless matrix verbs cannot be entirely avoided since some of them have a very high frequency in normal English usage.

- k. Topicalization : The simplest and commonest of English sentences have the structure:

Noun phrase [Subject] + Verb + Noun Phrase [Object]

The Subject is typically the concept or thing about which the Object provides new information.

Sometimes however it is desirable to emphasize this information focus. Hence the colloquial:

*Bill, he is a disaster !*  
topic focus (Where Bill and he refer to the same person).

Sometimes it is necessary to shift the focus altogether.

Passives achieve this :

1. *Fred bit the dog.*

topic focus

2. *The dog was bitten by Fred.*

topic focus

Clefts also achieve an unusual topic focus:

*[It would be a disaster] for the rain to come now.*  
Neutralizing cleft      topic focus

So-called pseudo clefts also have this effect :

*[What we need] is immediate action*  
Neutralizing pseudo-cleft      topic focus

The perceptive reader will think of other topicalizing techniques in English. The important point for our purposes here is that they all represent a shift from the standard patterning and stress placement of simple Subject + Verb + Object. English sentences most familiar to L<sup>2</sup> users. They may therefore slow down or confuse decoding of the message.

- l) Presupposition: Presupposition plays a crucial part in the interpretation of natural language. Sometimes it is signalled unequivocally by the matrix verb:

1.a) *I realised that you disliked him.*

b) *I didn't realise that you disliked him.*



Both a) and b) presuppose that 'you disliked him'.

Sometimes the presupposition is less certain, although likely:

2. *I won't be here after 5 p.m.*

.....probably (but not necessarily) presupposes that 'I will be here before 5 p.m.'.

It is asking a lot to expect people struggling with L<sup>2</sup> to draw reliable inferences of this kind, for both linguistic and cultural reasons, and material should be surveyed for such unintended complications where they are important to the meaning.

m) Tense: Formally speaking, English has only two verb tenses :

NON-PAST (unmarked) and PAST (marked with the suffix [-ed] on regular verbs).

The future is indicated by a modal auxiliary like WILL. The most frequently used verbs, unfortunately, have irregular PAST forms. Nevertheless, compared to many languages, the inflections of English are relatively simple. Decoding English tenses is not likely to be a major problem. There will be the usual learner-errors in creating new sentences, particularly where tense agreement is necessary in compound sentences with more than one verb.

n) Aspect: If English has a relatively simple tense structure, its use of ASPECT is often subtle and baffling. ASPECT indicates the relationships in time between events or items in the sentence, sometimes with the speaker as a reference point.

### 1. Continuous Aspect

*He is cleaning his teeth*

...describes a process (normally of limited duration).

Note: The simple present tense in English normally describes a habit:

*He cleans his teeth (every day)*

### 2. Present Perfective Aspect

*He has eaten lunch*

....describes an event that occurred sometime before NOW. It can't usually describe a single exact point in time:

*\*He has eaten lunch at 12 noon today.*

### 3. Past Perfective Aspect

1. *He had drunk 3 cups of coffee by 1 p.m.*

....describes an event that occurred at sometime before a past point of time. It can't usually describe the exact time of occurrence.

2. *?He had drunk 3 cups of coffee at 1 p.m.*

(There are exceptions to the rule however, just to confuse things. It is possible to give sentence 2 an interpretation).



There is no way that any realistic use of language can avoid fairly extensive use of tense and aspect. It must be expected however that L<sup>2</sup> users will often come adrift on the subtleties of aspect, so teachers should at least arm themselves with some explanations.

o) Agreement (Concord) Rules: The possibility of confusing tense agreement in compound sentences has already been mentioned. Gender is largely eliminated in modern English, except in the pronominal system (I, he, she, it, you, we, they....etc.), so serious difficulty is unlikely. Some problems do arise with number agreement in mass and count nouns (some milk & several apples). These are learning problems of production (encoding) rather than sources of confusion in decoding.

p) Anaphoric and Cataphoric Reference: Anaphora are the devices in a language which permit reference to something previously mentioned in the text (or dialogue), something yet to be specified, or something external to the text altogether.

(a) Anaphoric items refer to a previous reference:

e.g. Wash six apples. Put them in a flat dish.

(b) Cataphoric items refer to something yet to be specified:

e.g. If he's not careful, John will lose his job.

(b) Exophoric reference refers out of the text altogether:

e.g. It looks rather bare. [Context: The new office...]

Not only pronouns are anaphoric. Demonstratives (*this, that, these* etc.), definite articles (*the*), comparatives (*more...than...etc.*) all have an anaphoric function. Likewise a whole category of sequencing words like: *therefore, however, nevertheless, so that, then, after that...* and so on.

The effect of anaphora in discourse is to create cohesion. Beyond sentence-length, they are the only language markers showing cohesion, holding the dialogue together.

Of course, the anaphoric devices of each language are different, and they are rarely taught to the ESL learner. He is thus likely to miss many of the cues available to a native speaker, and be unaware of how to generate them in his own speech. A special problem for the learner are multiple anaphora - for example, the repeated use of a pronoun like it, sometimes with different references in the same passage.

### (3) Discourse Cohesion

The basic unit of linguistic organisation in all languages is normally taken to be the sentence. However, sentences themselves generally occur in longer strings of utterance or text, and their placement in these larger entities is not random.

The role of anaphora in discourse cohesion has already been mentioned. While anaphora disambiguate references and sequence in a text, anaphor density also imposes a processing load on the user: his mind has to recall or anticipate other elements of language. For the



language learner, struggling to hold half a dozen words of the new language in his short term memory, an utterance with high anaphor density may remain partly uninterpreted. Similarly, ambiguity in anaphor reference may well defeat him. One of the more certain measures of fluency in a language is the facility with which anaphora are manipulated and decoded.

The sheer length of utterance, or paragraph length, are important considerations in making language accessible to an ESL learner. In general, the briefer the text, the more accessible it is to the insecure user, again for reasons of processing/memory.

Internal organisation in a text may of course be more, or less, opaque. There are many ways of developing an argument; for example, deductive, inductive, thematic, empirical or eclectic approaches. Each has its own conventions, and many of these conventions are culture-specific. Thus the English style of deductive argument is largely unknown in many societies. It is as well for those who hope to teach or evaluate ESL learners to be familiar with prevailing conventions in the source language, and to be quite explicit about their own systems.

#### (4) Cuing

Cuing in language is the process of signalling to a user what is about to be said. It is part of a much more general process. There are essentially two time frames within which an organism can cope with any problem:

- a) it can 'respond on impact': the event has not been anticipated; it is therefore handled reflexively, or held in memory while a response is being formulated; or
- b) it can anticipate an event, alert itself to the likely important features of that event, and hypothesize an adaptive response. The second style of problem solving is by far the most efficient, and is characteristic of higher-order animals which normally seek to maximise this style of experience.

Language use is a supreme example of anticipatory behaviour. Most of the formal devices of Syntax unconsciously cue a competent user to the structures which will follow. Anaphora is wholly concerned with this aspect of language. Similarly, argument, attitude development and other kinds of meanings are typically anticipated by a listener from instant to instant.

Needless to say, the learner of a language is severely disadvantaged in all kinds of anticipatory interpretation. Not only is he unfamiliar with the formal conventions of the language, but the culture and shared knowledge on which its use is based are probably unfamiliar as well. This adds up to a problem of surpassing complexity.

To be effective, language material designed for ESL learners must incorporate cues for the decoder which are far more explicit than those needed with a native speaker. Some common cuing techniques in



ESL teaching are:

- previous use of the material
- answer cues embedded in questions
- situational cues (physical objects)
- other contextual cues (e.g. winking, shrugging, leaving the room)

(5) Idiom

"It is my earnest desire that you enter into conjugal relations with my person" would be an odd way to propose marriage in English. Grammaticality is a necessary but not sufficient condition for felicitous language use. For every L<sup>2</sup> speaker, English is a minefield of idiomatic usage: things that seem logical can't easily be said (e.g. the marriage proposal above) whereas other 'normal' expressions seem insane:

e.g. "I'll tell on you" was quite incomprehensible to the S.I. teachers when they encountered it in a children's story.

Hence the L<sup>2</sup> teacher must always attempt to see language (including his own statements) through the foreign eyes of students. There is value in learning idioms, but their density in any given utterance must be controlled.

(6) Concept Difficulty

Many English-language students are apt to find themselves dealing with concepts more difficult and more advanced than those normally encountered in their own cultures. This is especially the case for students from small or emerging nations who are forced by lack of indigenous books and facilities to pursue their career training in an English language medium.

Conceptual difficulties play a large part in setting the learning horizon for native speakers too of course. But often a difficult idea can be disseminated to a wide audience by the judicious use of language. Two of the controlling factors especially pertinent to L<sup>2</sup> teachers in this kind of language management are ease of reference and type of inference.

a) Factors affecting ease of reference:

More Accessible Reference

- personal
- concrete
- specific
- factual/historical

Less Accessible Reference

- generalized
- abstract
- class/generic type
- hypothetical



b) Types of Inference

- logically necessary /formally presupposed (e.g. a syllogism)
- culture specific (e.g. '*He beckoned*' → ∴ He wanted X to approach)
- specialized to topic/discipline (e.g. '*The NP was immediately dominated by an S'*' → ∴ It was a subject NP.)
- explicit in the utterance (e.g. '*I avoided the intersection* → because it was dangerous')
- implicit in the utterance (e.g. '*She had a black eye*' → ∴ something/someone had hit her.)
- personally verifiable (e.g. '*We're getting wet*' → ∴ It is raining.)
- verifiable in principle (e.g. '*The water-table is at a record low*' → ∴ There has been a drought.)

This list of inference types is illustrative rather than exhaustive. The alert teacher will see that each imposes its own special demands upon the L<sup>2</sup> user. Many inferential processes are extended, some with hidden presuppositions, and the issue then becomes how many steps an insecure L<sup>2</sup> user can process without losing track of the anaphora and the argument.

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Thor May





Professional bio: Thor May has a core professional interest in cognitive linguistics, at which he has rarely succeeded in making a living. He has also, perhaps fatally in a career sense, cultivated an interest in how things work – people, brains, systems, countries, machines, whatever... In the world of daily employment he has mostly taught English as a foreign language, a stimulating activity though rarely regarded as a profession by the world at large.

Thor's eventually awarded PhD dissertation, *Language Tangle*, dealt with language teaching productivity. *Language Tangle* (2010) is aimed at professional educators and their institutional keepers, and accordingly adopts a fairly discursive style. In the 1980s Thor walked away from earlier PhD work in formal syntax *Grammatical Agency* after concluding that existing models of generative syntax were unsatisfactory. Published papers relating to this were *Verbs of Result in the Complements of Raising Constructions* and *Purposive Constructions in English*. In the early 1990s he discontinued yet another sprawling PhD dissertation in cognitive linguistics from the university of Melbourne, parts of which can be seen in the Academia.edu repository as *The Generative Oscillation Model*, *Postsupposition* and *Pastiche Talk* and a couple of other papers.

Thor has been teaching English to non-native speakers, training teachers and lecturing linguistics, since 1976. This work has taken him to seven countries in Oceania and East Asia, mostly with tertiary students, but with a couple of detours to teach secondary students and young children. He has trained teachers in Australia, Fiji and South Korea. In an earlier life, prior to becoming a teacher, he had a decade of finding his way out of working class origins, through unskilled jobs in Australia, New Zealand and finally England (after backpacking across Asia in 1972).

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