

Materials design for teaching English at the Junior High Level¹

(Materiais para o ensino de inglês no ensino fundamental)

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ABSTRACT: This paper looks at the materials produced to teach English at the junior high level (fifth through eighth grades) in the Amazonas State public schools. In addition to looking at the instructional materials themselves, focusing on the types of exercises and learning experiences, it also discusses (1) the educational setting (needs, wants, expectations, goals, objectives, PCNs); (2) the learning situation (learners, teachers, and constraints such as time and class size); (3) the methodological approach; (4) testing, and (5) teacher preparation.

RESUMO: Este artigo descreve os materiais produzidos para ensinar inglês nas escolas públicas de ensino fundamental (da quinta à oitava séries) no Estado do Amazonas. Além de descrever os próprios materiais, com ênfase nos exercícios e nas experiências de aprendizagem, discute também (1) o contexto educacional (necessidades,

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desejos, expectativas, metas, objetivos, PCNs); (2) a situação de aprendizagem (alunos, professores e restrições, como tempo disponível e tamanho das turmas); (3) a abordagem metodológica; (4) avaliação e (5) preparação dos professores.

KEY-WORDS: materials design, public schools, total physical response.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: produção de materiais, escolas públicas, resposta física total.

INTRODUCTION

This paper looks at the materials used to teach English at the junior high level (fifth through eighth grades) in the Amazonas state public schools. Over the last four years, experimental materials based on Total Physical Response —TPR (Asher, 2000) have been produced for the 5th, 6th, 7th and 8th grades, and are being used in the public schools throughout the state. In 2000, the first level was introduced. Since the methodology² was new to the students and to most of the

² In this paper, “methodology” is used as a general term encompassing all of the “activities, topics and learning experiences ... and how these are used within the teaching/learning process” (Richards, 1990, p.11). “Method” is more specific and refers to a particular system of learning recognized in the literature as such (see Richards and Rogers, 1986; Larsen-Freeman, 1986). The term “technique” will be reserved for “any of a wide variety of exercises, activities or devices used in the classroom for realizing lesson objectives” (Brown, 1994, p.51).

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teachers as well, it was decided to have a gradual implementation of the materials. Thus for the first year all four grades used the same set of instructional materials, and each subsequent year one new level has been introduced.

From the outset it is necessary to point out that these materials are being developed in two stages. The first stage, recently completed with the production of the materials for the eighth grade, concentrated on the development of exercises³ that use TPR. The second stage will be the development of controlled game-like communicative practice activities and other exercises commonly found in EFL textbooks, such as information and opinion gap activities, simple dialogue-like exchanges, short reading passages, vocabulary development exercises, poems, songs, Jazz Chants, language games, etc.

OVERVIEW OF THE MATERIALS

Each book consists of 14 double-page units (see Appendix A for an example of a typical unit). The left-hand page is always a *Point and Touch* exercise. The right-hand page has various types of TPR activities, as well as some simple supporting written exercises. The books also include a brief explanation for the students in Portuguese on how to use the materials, four short review lessons and a word list with the Portuguese equivalents. The teachers also receive a Teacher's Guide, a set of wall posters, and a set of colored cardboard figures to be used in some of the TPR exercises.

³ The terms "activity" and "exercise" are being used interchangeably.

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THE EDUCATIONAL SETTING

In the selection or development of instructional materials it is important to take into consideration the educational setting in which they will be used. Here we will look at needs, wants, expectations, goals, objectives and the National Curriculum Guidelines (PCNs).

Needs

It is useful to make a distinction between actual and potential needs. Junior high students in Brazil do not have an immediate and pressing need for English. However, there is a potential and often very real need for older students, especially at the university level, to learn English, as today many jobs and professions require at least the ability to read, and not infrequently the ability to speak the language. High school students looking for a job or a traineeship are discovering that frequently a knowledge of English is required. Like many other cities in Brazil, Manaus has a number of multinational companies, as well as an important tourism industry, which means that there are job opportunities for those who can speak English (for further discussion on needs and reasons for teaching English in Brazil, see Garrido, 1991; Oliveira, 1991; for a different point of view, see Moita Lopes, 1996).

Wants

In designing a curriculum or pedagogic materials it is also important to take into consideration what the students want to learn, that is, their wants. Of course when dealing with such a large and heterogeneous population as the junior high students in the state of Amazonas (approximately 186,000

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students), dispersed over such an immense geographic area, it is impossible to make generalizations that will hold for everyone, but based on informal surveys with teachers in the state capital during various training sessions over the last few years, we can affirm that in general there is a desire to learn to speak the language, particularly among the younger students. This would seem to be borne out by the proliferation of language courses in Manaus itself, and throughout Brazil. This is also corroborated by Tilio (1979, p.507, cited in Tilio et al., 1991) in her study of the attitudes of the Paraná State teachers and students towards the teaching and learning of English in which she concluded that “on the whole the skills which the pupils showed themselves greatly interested in acquiring and developing were listening and speaking” (p.311).

Expectations

With the exception of those (usually older students) who need a language for a specific purpose, such as academic reading, people usually equate learning a language with learning to speak it and come into a language classroom with that expectation. In a survey of 553 state school teachers from seven states Silva and Oliveira (1985) found that the majority of the teachers believed that “no lo grau o professor de língua estrangeira deve procurar desenvolver o máximo possível a linguagem oral” (p.144). Oral practice activities have “face validity.”

Goals

For these materials the following goals were established:

1. To provide the students with a basic vocabulary and

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an audio-oral foundation of the basic structures of English.

2. To help the students to acquire the use of a limited set of elementary communicative functions.
3. To lead the students to the automatic and direct processing of the language without recourse to translation, that is, the ability to think in English.
4. To foster a desire to learn the language.
5. To foster positive attitudes towards the language and the language learning process.
6. To engender in the students the feeling that they really can learn to speak English.

Considering the potential needs of the older learners discussed above, one of the major goals would be to produce learners who have a reasonable ability to read and a moderate ability to communicate orally, being thus prepared to use the language for academic studies or for job-related communication, such as working as a tour guide. However, attaining even a moderate communicative ability takes considerable time and consequently would be more appropriate as a goal for the end of high school. Hence it is reasonable to believe that the linguistic and communicative goals at the junior high level should be considerably more limited (goals 1-3).

Goals 4-6 are related to the students' attitudes, feelings and motivation to learn. We heartily agree with Harmer (1991) when he states, "it seems reasonable to suggest that the motivation that students bring to class is the biggest single factor affecting their success" (p.3). But if the students do not come with this motivation, then it is the teacher's job to engender it.

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Objectives

The principal objective is that the learners will be able to understand and carry out the commands presented in the books (including re-combinations of the words into new commands) when spoken by the teacher or an audiotape. This objective has several advantages. First of all, it is concrete and observable, leaving no doubt whether it has been reached or not. When a student correctly performs a command spoken by the teacher or a classmate, it is an overt sign that he⁴ has understood what was spoken and that communication has taken place. Secondly, it is realistic and achievable. Often textbook writers have unrealistic expectations as to what it is possible to achieve in a typical public school classroom. Thirdly, because it is achievable, it gives the students a feeling of success, the feeling that they really can learn the language. Fourthly, it is easily measurable. It is easy to determine whether the students are making progress, not only as part of the required official tests, but more importantly, on a day-to-day basis. Thus the teacher is constantly being provided with feedback as to the students' progress. Fifthly, it takes into consideration the fact that learning a language is a process that takes time and that some learners need more time than others. Thus, it is not expected that the commands presented in unit 5 will be completely assimilated in the space of the classes allotted to that particular unit. All of the commands are recycled within each book and again throughout the other books in the series. Commands presented in the fifth grade are used again in the sixth, seventh and eighth grades.

⁴ The pronouns "he", "his", and "him" are being used merely as a stylistic convenience, and should be considered unmarked forms.

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Thus, rather than work with a list of detailed behavioral objectives (Findley & Nathan, 1980; Lee, 1973) we have preferred to use objectives which are less precisely stated (e.g., The students will be able to understand and carry out commands given by their teacher and their classmates), coupled with a process-based approach which focuses on “the classroom tasks and learning activities that learners should engage in, and the intrinsic worth and value of these exercises for their own sake, without specifying precise learning outcomes” (Richards, 1990, p.4).

PCNs

The National Curriculum Guidelines (MEC/SEF, 1998) make a strong case for a focus on reading in the public schools, stating that “o foco na leitura pode ser justificado pela função social das línguas estrangeiras no país e também pelos objetivos realizáveis tendo em vista as condições existentes” (p.21). Nevertheless they leave the door open for the development of the other skills:

“Isso não quer dizer, contudo, que dependendo dessas condições, os objetivos não possam incluir outras habilidades, tais como compreensão oral e produção oral e escrita. Importa, sobretudo, formular e implementar objetivos justificáveis socialmente, realizáveis nas condições existentes na escola e que garantam o engajamento discursivo por meio de uma língua estrangeira” (p.21).

THE LEARNING SITUATION

Here we will look at the learners, the teachers and

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constraints such as time and class size.

The learners

While there is some variation, particularly in the evening where the learners are older, the age range in general is from around 11 in the fifth grade to around 14 in the eighth grade. In the fifth and sixth grades the learners are in essence still children and are thus less likely to benefit from abstract rule-based learning. They are usually full of energy and have a short attention span for anything that they consider boring, useless or too difficult (Brown, 1994). They need activities that are more concrete than abstract, activities that center on the “here-and-now” and in particular activities that stimulate as many of the senses as possible. Thus the TPR command-action methodology seems well suited to this age range. However, although it can be used as the major technique, TPR cannot and should not be the only type of activity. The students need a wide variety of activities. TPR is still a very effective technique for students in the seventh and eighth grades; however, with older students, its successful use depends a little more on the how the teacher implements it in the classroom.

Since at the junior high level there is no real need to know English, the learners are not always particularly motivated. They have neither an integrative need to be part of a community that speaks the foreign language, nor an instrumental motivation to learn it for professional purposes. Many do not know why they are studying the language. The result is a teaching situation which Abbott (1981, p.12) has called “TE-NOR”: the Teaching of English for No Obvious Reason. In this case it is up to the teacher and the materials to arouse and maintain the interest of the students.

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The teachers

One of the major problems related to the teaching of English in the state school system concerns the teachers. For the most part the teachers are linguistically and methodologically unprepared to teach English. Although there are some teachers who have a university degree in “Letras” with a major in teaching English, the vast majority have degrees in such diverse areas as Portuguese, history, or geography, and are teaching English only because the principal of their school has told them to take on a group or two for which there is no teacher. Most of them have had little or no specific preparation in how to teach English. At best, they have finished a course in a language institute, and have a reasonable command of the language. At worst, in addition to not knowing how to teach, they also do not speak the language⁵.

This has implications for teacher training and also for the materials themselves, the major implication for the materials being that they have to be such that they can be used successfully by a teacher who is not proficient in the language and who has had little training in how to teach English. It seems that a TPR methodology, to a large degree, meets the needs of this situation, particularly if the teachers have access to an audiotape. The commands do not require a high proficiency in the language, and the basic technique itself is easy to learn and easy to apply. But of course the teachers still need training in how to use the materials.

⁵ In a recent survey carried out at the State Secretary of Education (SEDUC), it was found that in 2002 in the Amazonas state capital Manaus there were 533 teachers teaching English (often along with other subjects) in the public schools. However, only 69 or 13% of them had graduated in “Letras – Língua inglesa”.

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Constraints

Two important constraints which must be taken into consideration are class size and the number of class sessions per school year.

Classes tend to be large, with classes of 40 or more students being common. This certainly does make an oral approach more difficult, but not impossible. For one thing it means that the classes must be more teacher-fronted or teacher-controlled than one now finds in language institutes where the smaller number of students permits a variety of group work activities. Thus, the TPR activities in these materials have been structured so as to give the teacher as much control as possible. For example, the basic configuration of the TPR activities is to begin with a teacher-controlled activity in which the teacher gives the commands and the class responds as a whole (*Everybody, point to the ceiling*) or two or three students perform the actions in front of the others (*Pedro and Maria, please walk to the door*). This teacher-fronted aspect helps the teacher to maintain disciplinary control over the students. There are a large number of actions that can be performed by all of the students at their seats simultaneously, thereby insuring maximum controlled participation, even in a class with as many as 50 students. But even when the majority of the students are only watching a couple of students performing actions at the front of the class, the students at their seats are receiving comprehensible input, which is believed to be essential for language acquisition (Krasen, 1985). Furthermore, each unit begins with a *Point and Touch* exercise, which, after being presented as a teacher-fronted whole-class exercise (*Point to the man who is from Japan*).

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Now touch the woman who is from China.), is then done in pairs.

The second constraint is the number of class sessions per school year. The students have two 50-minute classes per week over a period of two 20-week semesters, for a total of 80 class meetings. This in itself is very little time, especially considering the usually excessive number of students in class. And to make matters worse, classes are frequently not held due to any number of reasons, ranging from official national holidays to “teacher’s day” to the celebration of the principal’s birthday. Thus the instructional materials have to be designed in accordance with the real and limited number of class sessions that the teacher will have with the students. The first version of these materials began with 25 two-page units, the next year that number was reduced to 20 and finally now to 14.

THE METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

The basic methodology is a combination of (1) Total Physical Response, (2) Audiolingual-like substitution frames, and (3) controlled game-like communicative practice activities.

Total Physical Response

Extensively researched and developed by psychologist James J. Asher of San José State University (Asher, 1972, 1979, 1981, 2000), with important contributions by Garcia (1994), Total Physical Response is a delayed-speaking approach to language learning in which the students acquire the target language through listening comprehension coupled with actions. Initially the students do not speak, but instead silently act out

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commands given by their teacher. The initial commands are quite simple, e.g., *Touch your nose*, but later increase in length and complexity to directive such as, *Before you point to the chalkboard, shake hands with the student who is sitting next to Maria*.

As a classroom technique or procedure, TPR is very simple (Silvers, 1990, 1992):

1. The teacher gives a command to a group of two or three students at the front of the class and at the same time performs the action (*Walk to the door*).
2. They silently perform the action along with the teacher.
3. The procedure is repeated with new words inserted into the original command (*Walk to the window; Walk to the chalkboard*).
4. The teacher varies the order of the commands so that the students are not just performing a memorized sequence.
5. Students who were observing at their seats are called to the front and given commands.
6. If a student hesitates or does not understand, the teacher simply gives the command to someone else.

Our reasons for using TPR as a major classroom technique are as follows:

- The use of real objects and actions in the classroom makes the language concepts more concrete and easier to grasp.
- The fact that almost everything the students hear is related to an action speeds up the linking of meaning to the sounds and facilitates assimilation.
- The use of the muscular or kinesthetic sensory system aids in producing long-term retention.
- Responding physically rather than verbally reduces

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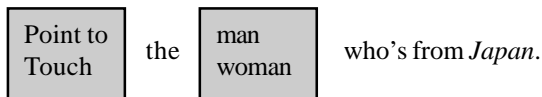
the stress that most beginning students experience when they are required to speak English in class.

- The class can be conducted in English, with perfect comprehension, right from the very first day, greatly reducing the need for translation.
- Understanding and executing commands is an objective that is concrete and attainable.
- The students learn to process the oral language instantaneously and automatically.
- It does not require the teachers to be very proficient in English.

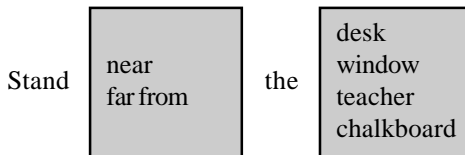
Audiolingual-type substitution frames

One of the basic procedures of the Audiolingual Method was the substitution drill in which the students orally made new sentences by inserting cued words into a slot in a basic sentence pattern. While oral substitution drills are not part of this teaching program, we have borrowed the idea of “slot and filler” frames, because they visually and inductively show the students how the words go together to form sentences.

From the *Point and Touch* exercises



From the *Listen and Act* exercises



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Furthermore, they offer the teacher a simple way of having at his disposal a large number of commands to give his students, his only real concern being to mix the order. Also, as the students will be hearing a series of commands based on the same structural pattern, there is a greater probability that the pattern will be assimilated.

Controlled game-like communicative practice activities

Although the principal methodological focus is on TPR, there are plans to include in the next version of the materials a substantial number of controlled game-like communicative practice activities, such as guessing games, information gap and opinion gap exercises, etc. There are abundant sources on how to provide practice which, although controlled, is motivating, fun and meaningful (see Byrne, 1986; Silvers, 1982; Ur, 1988; Ur & Wright, 1992; Woodruff-Wielding & Ayala, 1989).

THE EXERCISES AND LEARNING EXPERIENCES

TPR-related exercises

Eight types of TPR exercises have been developed and are used in the four books.

a) Point and Touch / Ask and Answer

Each lesson begins with a *Point and Touch* page, taken from Silvers (2000), and consists of a set of 8 to 12 figures which serve as the cues for two kinds of exercises: *Point and Touch* and *Ask and Answer*. In the *Point and Touch*

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exercises, the students point to or touch the figure that corresponds to the sentence uttered by the teacher or their pair work partner, for example, *Point to the scientist; Touch the carpenter*. This is a simple TPR exercise which is less active than the classic TPR exercises such as walking to the door. The *Ask and Answer* exercises give structured practice in asking and answering both *Yes-No* and *Wh*-questions.

Developed with the idea of offering simple, quiet exercises that can be performed by the students at their seats, either with the whole class or with the students working in pairs, these exercises offer a systematic and graded presentation of, and practice with, the basic grammatical structures. Here are some examples of the *Point and Touch* sentences used to practice specific grammatical structures:

- BE (is): Point to the man who is from Japan.
- BE (are): Touch the boys who are from Brazil.
- Possessive case: Point to Tom's father.
- HAVE (has): Point to the girl who has a parrot.
- Negative with doesn't: Point to someone who doesn't have two dogs.
- BE (was/wasn't): Touch someone who was/wasn't born in 1945.
- Comparative: Point to the taller man.
- Future with going to: Point to the boy who is going to close the window.

It is also here, within each grammatical structure, that much of the vocabulary is presented visually through the figures which serve as cues for the exercises.

b) Listen and Act

The *Listen and Act* exercises are classic TPR exercises, presented in a substitution-type format which allows the

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students to visualize the structure and permits the teacher to make many different commands from one key sentence. The exercises were developed with the idea that they would be first done as a teacher-controlled listening exercise, and later as a student listening and speaking pair work exercise.

Many of these exercises were based on exercises in *Listen and Perform* (Silvers, 1994) and *The Command Book* (Silvers, 1988). In choosing the verbs, care was taken to choose actions which could easily be performed in the classroom without the need for special props.

Fifth Grade, Unit 1

Stand up Walk Stop Turn around Sit down

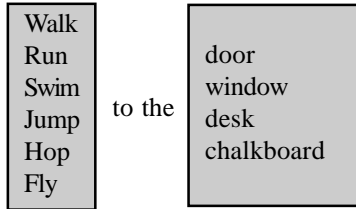
Fifth Grade, Unit 2

Walk to the	door window chalkboard television
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The teacher works with two or three students at the front of the class. After an initial demonstration, the commands are given in random order so that the students really have to understand what the teacher says in order to perform the actions. They know they will have to walk, but they never know beforehand to which of the four places the teacher will tell them to walk to.

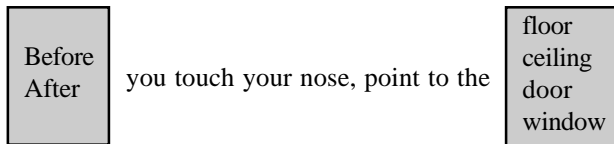
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Fifth Grade, Unit 4



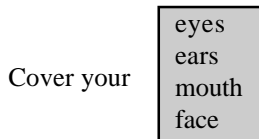
Here there are 24 different possibilities, and now the students must show even better understanding in order to perform the actions.

Sixth Grade, Unit 8



Here not only has the number of words increased, but the complexity as well. The students not only have to understand the two commands, but also must determine the order in which they are to be performed.

While some of the exercises can only be done with individual students (*Walk to the door*), many can be performed by all of the students simultaneously at their seats.



c) Act and Say

In these exercises, a modified version of Kalivoda (1987), the students (a) hear a command, (b) perform the action, and

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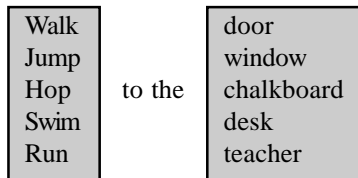
(c) say what they are going to do, doing, or did (or all three). These exercises were projected to give systematic TPR listening and speaking practice in three tenses (a) the present progressive, (b) the future with *going to*, and (c) the simple past of both regular and selected irregular verbs. Within each tense there are four separate exercises, one each for *I, he/she, they*, and *we*. Here is the first exercise used to practice the present progressive.

Seventh Grade, Unit 2

Act and Say: *I'm walking.*

Teacher: *Maria, walk to the door.*

Maria: *I'm walking to the door* (spoken as she performs the action).



To practice *he, she* or *they*, the teacher calls a boy, a girl or two students to the front of the class to silently perform the actions, while the students at their seats do the speaking. Here is an example of how the exercise works with *he* and *she*.

Seventh Grade, Unit 4

Act and Say: *He's (She's) clapping.*

Teacher: *Pedro, clap.*

Class: *He's clapping* (spoken while Pedro is clapping).

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clap	snore	shave
cry	sneeze	cough
laugh	hum	pray

d) Listen and Draw

There is also a planned sequence of drawing activities in which the teacher tells the students what to draw, or working in pairs the students tell their partners what to draw. The drawings in the fifth grade are simple, but by the seventh grade they are reasonably complex.

Fifth Grade, Unit 9

Draw a

happy face
sad face
cat
bird

in front of
in back of

 a fish.

Seventh Grade, Unit 13

Draw a big square.

1.

In the center
At the top
At the bottom

 draw a *door*.
2. In the

upper
lower

left-hand corner
right-hand corner

 draw a *circle*.
3. Next to the *door*

on the left
on the right

 draw a *fish*.

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4.

Under
Over

 the *door*, draw a *cloud*.

door	heart	happy face	mouth
circle	square	book	balloon
fish	triangle	broom	purse
cloud	sad face	butterfly	hanger

Note that number 2 above is really four commands

- (1) In the upper left-hand corner ...
- (2) In the upper right-hand corner ...
- (3) In the lower left-hand corner ...
- (4) In the lower right-hand corner ...

e) Read and Draw

The *Read and Draw* activities begin at the end of the sixth grade and are based on the *Listen and Draw* activities. Note that the following exercise prepares the students for the *Listen and Draw* exercise presented above.

Seventh Grade, Unit 12

Read and Draw

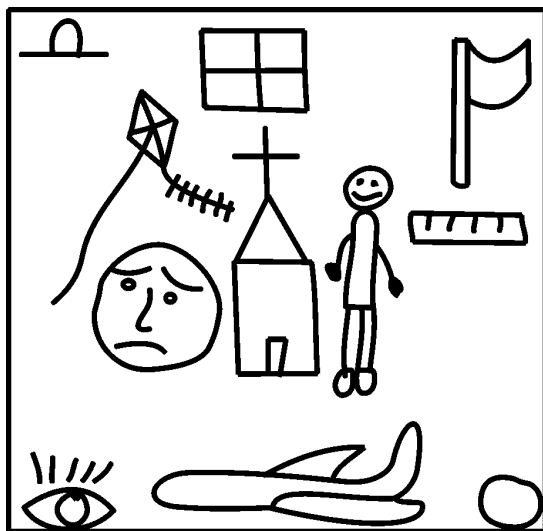
Draw a big square.

1. In the center, draw a church.
2. At the top, draw a window.
3. At the bottom, draw an airplane.
4. In the upper left-hand corner, draw a hat.
5. In the lower right-hand corner, draw a circle.
6. In the lower left-hand corner, draw an eye.
7. In the upper right-hand corner, draw a flag.
8. Next to the church, on the left, draw a sad face.

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9. Next to the church, on the right, draw a tall man.
10. Over the sad face, draw a kite.
11. Under the flag, draw a ruler.

Here is what a student's drawing might look like.



f) Geometric figures

The manipulation of cardboard geometric figures is an important activity in these materials. The teachers receive a set of sheets of cardboard from which they are to cut out the printed colored geometric figures. To use these figures, the teacher calls two students to the front desk and gives them commands while the rest of the class watches. After the teacher has worked with the students at the front desk using the large cards, he then gives the commands to the students at their seats, who perform the same actions with a set of cutouts which they have been asked to make.

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Fifth Grade, Unit 12

Put the circle

on
under
next to

 the

square.
triangle.
rectangle.

For the sixth grade, the teacher's set has two of each geometric figure, each one of a different color. Now the commands work with both shape and color, in addition to position.

Sixth Grade, Unit 9

Put the *red triangle*

on
under
next to

 the *orange circle*.

In the seventh grade, in addition to shape and color, the commands now also work with size.

Seventh Grade, Unit 8

Put the *big red triangle*

on
under
next to

 the *small orange circle*.

g) Fish cards

The teacher's kit also includes large colored fish cards which, like the geometric figures, are manipulated by students at the front desk. Fish were chosen because they have a well-defined front and back, and thus permit commands such as, *Put the green fish in front of the yellow fish.*

h) Review

This exercise consists of a series of commands from previous units, but unlike the *Listen and Act* exercises, they are not put in a substitution table format. When developing

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each review exercise, care was taken to systematically use commands from the previous units.

Other exercises

The right-hand page of each lesson also presents several other kinds of exercises: (1) *True or False*, a series of sentences related to the figures in the *Point and Touch* exercises on the facing page; (2) *Copy and Answer*, questions based on the *Ask and Answer* exercise; (3) *Read and Color*; and (4) *Write*, in which the students (a) unscramble a group of words to form a command, (b) fill in the blanks in a sentence, choosing from two words at the end of the sentence, or (c) fill in the blanks in a set of five sentences, selecting the words from a list.

CLASSROOM TESTING

At the beginning of this paper we stated that the principal objective is that the learners will be able to understand and carry out spoken commands based on those presented in the books. While for some this may seem to be a very restricted objective, we view it as being concrete, achievable and testable. Certainly the student who at the end of the eighth grade can listen to a complex command and execute it without hesitation has achieved some ability to understand and immediately process the language, a skill which will enable him to move towards the more communicative uses of the language. Thus in keeping with the idea that testing should be based on the what is done in the classroom, which itself should reflect the objectives, we have given emphasis to two types of tests, an oral test of the students' ability to understand and carry out the

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commands, and a reading test, based on the *Read and Draw* exercises.

The Teacher's Guide for each book contains six Listen and Act and six Read and Draw tests. It is expected that supplying the teacher with tests will (1) reduce his workload, and (2) provide an orientation for his teaching. If the teacher knows that this is what the students will be tested on, he will be more likely to concentrate on those kinds of activities in the classroom and will be less prone to go off on a tangent with the typical long and useless grammatical explanations and translations that so often characterize the teaching of English in the public schools.

The Listen and Act test

Although ideally the students would be tested individually, each student being required to respond to a series of commands, this is difficult to do in a typical public school teaching situation given the large number of students in each class, as well as the number of different groups each teacher normally has. In view of this we have devised a group Listen and Act test (see Appendix B for an example).

Here is how it works:

The students are divided into groups of five, and each student in the group receives the grade that his group earns.

- The teacher gives each student in the group one command, worth two points. If the student performs the command correctly, he earns two points for the group; if it is only partially correct, he earns one point; if it is totally wrong, no points.
- The teacher then adds the points that each of the five students earned and that is the group's grade, which

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is then attributed to each of the members. Thus if all five students correctly execute their individual commands, the group receives a 10, that also being the grade each student will receive.

On the class before the test, the teacher could divide the students into their respective groups and give them a set of commands to practice, with the students in the group taking turns giving the commands.

The Read and Draw test

Each of the six Read and Draw tests in the Teacher's Guide has four versions, which would be used simultaneously to minimize cheating (see Appendix C for two versions of a test). These tests have three advantages. In the first place, they are easy to apply: the teacher just photocopies the pages and distributes the tests to the students who read the sentences and make their drawings in the space provided. Secondly, they are easy to grade. Thirdly, they are individual tests as opposed to the Listen and Act group test.

These tests (the group Listen and Act tests and the individual Listen and Draw tests) are not difficult or tricky. They are simple and objective. In fact, if the students have been participating in class, actively carrying out the commands given by the teacher, they should be prepared for the tests. Of course any extra practice at home, especially performing the commands while listening to an audiotape, would certainly enhance the learning. But the classroom activities in themselves are expected to be sufficient preparation for the tests. This being so, the teachers are encouraged to give the students a grade for their participation over the course of the semester.

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Two final points regarding testing should be made. In the first place, as the students perform the commands in the classroom the teacher can easily see how they are progressing. Thus in a sense the students' progress is continually being evaluated. On the other hand, however, the teacher needs to view learning a language as a process that takes time. The teacher with a group of fifth grade students needs to mentally project this group ahead to the eighth grade and realize that much of what now seems difficult will be mastered by then.

TEACHER PREPARATION

Since the materials were first introduced in 2000, we have been giving two short 4-hour training sessions each year. In these sessions we have (1) introduced the teachers to the theoretical assumptions of Total Physical Response, so that they would better understand why this approach has been adopted, (2) shown them a documentary film showing the application of TPR in the fifth grade at a public school⁶, and (3) given specific training in how to use the materials in the books.

It is obvious that we need to invest much more in teacher preparation. The teachers who have attended our training sessions have given positive feedback about the materials, and of course have often drawn attention to defects. But unfortunately there are many teachers who have not been trained, either because of a lack of communication on the part of SEDUC or simply because each year there is an influx of

⁶ This film was presented at the VII ENPULI at the Federal University of Ceará in 1985.

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new teachers. This is a serious problem, and when one takes into consideration the situation of the teachers located in the interior of the state of Amazonas, the situation becomes critical. The Teacher's Guide provides information about how best to use the materials, but in reality, without a specific training program, it is not enough.

We are currently studying with SEDUC a better way of reaching all of the teachers in the capital, probably by giving training by school zones. Also, we are thinking in terms of a greatly expanded program which will include training in both language and methodology. As to the teachers in the interior, one solution would seem to be the production of a training video. Another possibility is to use our methodology students at the university and offer some kind of grant for them to do the training.

FINAL OBSERVATIONS

We will close by making a few general comments.

- In general the teachers who have been trained to use the materials have provided positive feedback.
- This is not always the case with teachers who have not been trained. They tend to either adopt another book or to teach the materials through translation and grammar explanations.
- The acceptance of the materials is best in the fifth and sixth grades.
- The greatest problem with the use of the materials comes from the evening students who are older, and less inclined to perform the actions.
- The greatest single factor in how the students view

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the materials is the teacher's attitude and his relationship with his students.

- There is a need for more variety in the exercises, particularly exercises that are of a more communicative nature.
- There is a need for a new graphic design and page layout.
- These last two items will be dealt with in the second stage of the development of these materials.

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Appendix A: sample unit (fifth grade, Unit 8)

Inglês - Unit 08

He's a scientist

 <p>1</p> <p>Dan</p>	 <p>2</p> <p>Liz</p>	 <p>3</p> <p>Kate</p>
 <p>4</p> <p>Jane</p>	 <p>5</p> <p>Eric</p>	 <p>6</p> <p>Judy</p>
 <p>7</p> <p>Albert</p>	 <p>8</p> <p>Steve</p>	 <p>9</p> <p>Bruce</p>

1. an actor	2. an actress	3. a writer
4. a maid	5. a waiter	6. a waitress
7. a scientist	8. a taxi driver	9. a carpenter

Point and Touch

A Point to Touch the scientist. who's = who is

Ask and Answer

B Who's a scientist? → Albert.
Albert is.

C What is Albert? → He's a scientist.
She's

D Is Albert a scientist? → Yes, he is. No, he isn't.
Yes, she is. Yes, she isn't

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Appendix A (continued)

INGLÊS - Unit 08

1. Listen and Act

1. Stand between the **desk** **teacher** and the **chair** **door** **chalkboard** **window**

2. Spell the word
pen
cat
dog
box
key
fish

3. **Stand** **Sit** between **Pedro** and **Maria**

4. Write the word
pen
book
table
teacher

Count the letters.
How many letters?

2. Listen and Draw

Draw a **long** **short** **horizontal** **vertical** **diagonal** **curved** line.

Draw a **fish** **flower** **butterfly** next to a **house** **church** **tree**

3. Geometric Figures

Pick up the **circle** **square** and the **rectangle** **triangle**

Put down only the **circle**.
Now put down the **rectangle**.

4. Review

- Stand in back of the chair.
- Touch your knees.
- Draw a horizontal line.
- Stand in front of the teacher.
- Jump around the desk.
- Fly to the window.
- Touch something yellow.
- Draw many hearts.
- Count from three to eight.
- Write your name quickly.

5. True or False?

	T	F
1 Dan is an actor.		
2 Steve is a waiter.		
3 Albert is a scientist.		
4 Judy is a maid.		
5 Liz is an actress.		

6. Copy and Answer

- What is Albert?
 - What is Eric?
 - What is Kate?
 - What is Jane?
- * * *
- Is Albert a scientist?
 - Is Bruce a taxi driver?
 - Is Liz an actress?
 - Is Judy a maid?

7. Write

1	stand	the desk	in front of
2	a	touch	shoulder
3	jump	the desk	to
4	many	draw	circles
5	hop	times	two

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Appendix B: Group Oral Test (fifth grade, units 13 and 14)

Resposta correta = 2 pontos. Resposta parcialmente correta = 1 ponto. Some os pontos no espaço indicado. Todos os membros do grupo recebem a mesma nota, a nota do somatório

Nome do aluno	“Commands”	Pontos
	1. Stand in front of the desk and laugh.	
	2. Change places with a friend.	
	3. Give your pen to Maria.	
	4. Walk to the door and point to the ceiling.	
	5. Put the triangle on the circle.	
Somatório dos pontos		

Nome do aluno	“Commands”	Pontos
	1. Put your hands on your head.	
	2. Draw some hearts.	
	3. Run to the window and touch your nose.	
	4. Stand in back of the teacher and cry.	
	5. Put the circle between the triangle and the square.	
Somatório dos pontos		

Nome do aluno	“Commands”	Pontos
	1. Shake a friend.	
	2. Write your mother’s name.	
	3. Stand next to the desk and sneeze.	
	4. Swim to the door and wave to the class.	
	5. Draw a chair between a tree and a house.	
Somatório dos pontos		

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Nome do aluno	“Commands”	Pontos
	1. Put your book under your desk.	
	2. Show your hands to the class.	
	3. Hop to the teacher and point to the floor.	
	4. Stand in back of the desk and cough.	
	5. Draw a flower between a church and a cat.	
	Somatório dos pontos	

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Appendix C: Read and Draw Tests (fifth grade, units 11 and 12)

Cada frase vale 2 pontos. Some os pontos (máximo 20) e multiplique por 5.

Name	A
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. In the center draw a triangle.2. In the upper left-hand corner, draw a heart.3. In the lower right-hand corner, draw a circle.4. At the top, draw a happy face.5. At the bottom, draw an airplane.6. In the upper right-hand corner, draw a hat.7. Over the triangle, draw a butterfly.8. In the lower left-hand corner, draw a window.9. Next to the triangle, on the right, draw an eye.10. Next to the butterfly, on the left, draw the sun.	

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Name	B
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. In the upper left-hand corner, draw a chair.2. In the lower right-hand corner, draw a square.3. At the bottom, draw a fish.4. At the top, draw a rectangle.5. In the center, draw a tree.6. Next to the tree, on the right, draw a sad face.7. In the upper right-hand corner, draw a star.8. Next to the tree, on the left, draw a church.9. In the lower left-hand corner, draw a comb.10. Under the sad face, draw a ruler.	

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