

Literary Texts and Grammar Instruction: Revisiting the Inductive Presentation

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Abstract: *This article outlines an approach to explicit grammar instruction that uses literary texts as comprehensible, meaning-bearing input. In this approach, which employs strategies from the teaching of grammar and the teaching of reading, literary texts serve as the basis of the inductive presentation of new grammatical forms and as a springboard for communicative practice of these forms after explicit instruction. The goal is to provide learners with meaning-bearing input to assist their acquisition of grammatical forms, to raise students' consciousness about the target language, to encourage meaningful communication among learners, and to develop skills and strategies in the reading of literary texts. The presentation of the proposed technique is followed by an example of teaching French relative pronouns based upon Prévert's (1949) poem "Le Message."*

Introduction

A great deal of research in foreign language methodology (e.g., Celce-Murcia, 1985; Doughty & Williams, 1998; Herron & Tomasello, 1992; Lee & Valdman 2000; Shaffer, 1989) has addressed the role of grammar instruction in the communicative classroom, focusing in particular on the debate regarding implicit versus explicit instructional strategies. Proponents of implicit grammar instruction, relying in large part on Krashen's (1981) learning-acquisition theory, have argued that learners acquire language naturally when provided with sufficient comprehensible input, and do not require any explicit focus on form. Proponents of explicit grammar instruction, on the other hand, have argued that direct teacher explanation of forms is essential for successful acquisition. Much of the discussion suggests that some form of explicit grammar instruction does indeed have its place in the foreign language classroom. According to Adair-Hauck, Donato, and Cumo-Johanssen (2000, pp. 147-8), the rationale for teaching grammar explicitly is multifaceted. First, learners draw on both automatic (nonanalyzed) and controlled (analyzed) language knowledge for communication. Second, literate adult learners have established expectations regarding language instruction, and include explicit grammar instruction within these expectations. Finally, grammar instruction raises learners' consciousness concerning differences between their first language (L1) and the foreign language.

Assuming that explicit grammar instruction does have a place in the foreign language classroom, it is important to determine how best to teach that grammar. According to VanPatten (1993, p. 435), language acquisition begins with comprehensible, meaning-bearing input; consequently, this type of input must play a role in the teaching and learning of grammar. Indeed, if we are teaching grammar for communicative purposes, then beginning grammar instruction with comprehensible input that is both meaningful and contextualized is intuitive. As VanPatten suggested, allowing students to first comprehend and manipulate meaning-bearing input that targets specific grammatical forms should facilitate the acquisition of these forms.

This article presents an approach to grammar instruction that uses literary texts as comprehensible, meaning-bearing input. In this approach, which employs strategies from the teaching of grammar and the teaching of reading, literary texts serve as the basis of the inductive

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presentation of new grammatical forms and as a springboard for communicative practice of these forms after instruction. This approach is consistent with Barnett (1991, p. 9), who claimed that "The teaching methods [for language and literature] are also comparable: Inductive presentation of elementary grammar follows a pattern not unlike the apparently sporadic¹ questioning that guides students to define central themes of a novel." The goal of the proposed technique is to provide learners with meaning-bearing input to assist their acquisition of grammatical forms, to raise students' consciousness about the language they are learning, to encourage meaningful communication among learners, to develop strategies and skills in the reading of literary texts, and to allow students to see the essential link between literature and language. Following an overview of relevant grammar and reading research, the proposed approach is outlined and exemplified with a sample lesson plan for teaching French relative pronouns.

Background

To situate the approach to explicit grammar instruction proposed here, an overview of relevant research on the teaching and learning of grammar and reading is essential. This overview summarizes research on explicit grammar instruction, reading models, the role of literature in the beginning foreign language classroom, and the role of literature in explicit grammar instruction.

Approaches to Teaching Grammar

According to Adair-Hauck et al. (2000, p. 148), "an explicit method of grammar instruction involves direct teacher explanations of rules followed by related manipulative exercises illustrating these rules." This kind of explicit instruction is often referred to as the *deductive approach*. Critics of the deductive approach argue that it tends to emphasize form at the expense of meaning and that it does not provide comprehensible, meaning-bearing input (VanPatten, 1993, p. 436). In contrast, *inductive approaches* to explicit grammar instruction provide such input, focusing first on meaning, then on form. According to Shaffer (1989, p. 395), in the inductive approach, "student attention is focused on grammatical structures used in context so that students can consciously perceive the underlying patterns involved." In an inductive approach, the instructor first presents the form in a meaningful context, such as a paragraph or story, then encourages students to recognize patterns in the language sample presented. Once students have ascertained the function or meaning of the form, the instructor then provides an explanation, followed by meaningful, sequenced practice. As Celce-Murcia (1985, p. 301) pointed out, "one of the best times for [learners] to attend to form is after comprehension has been achieved and in conjunction with their production of meaningful discourse."

Input-rich grammar instruction such as the inductive approach is beneficial to learners for a number of reasons. First, as VanPatten (1993) stressed, acquisition begins with input. Additionally, input-rich instruction that encourages students to induce meaning provides learners with the opportunity to reflect upon the language they are learning to use. A great deal of research (e.g., Ellis, 1992; Herron & Tomasello, 1992; Kelley, 2001; VanPatten, 1993) has focused on this notion of student discovery. When students' attention is drawn to a form within a communicative context, they are able to make and test hypotheses about grammar, thereby raising their consciousness about the language they are learning. According to VanPatten (1993, p. 438), when students' attention is drawn to grammatical forms in the input, the result is more efficient intake. This claim is supported by research evidence from VanPatten and Cadierno (1993), showing that when grammar instruction and practice involve interpreting and attending to input, learners more successfully understand and produce the targeted grammatical structure over time than subjects exposed to traditional (i.e., deductive) grammar instruction. Ellis (1992, p. 238) argued that "consciousness-raising facilitates the acquisition of the grammatical knowledge needed for communication," and proposed a number of characteristics typical of consciousness-raising activities:

1. There is an attempt to isolate a specific linguistic feature for focused attention.
2. The learners are provided with data which illustrate the targeted feature and they may also be supplied with an explicit rule describing or explaining the feature.
3. The learners are expected to utilize intellectual effort to understand the targeted feature.
4. Misunderstanding or incomplete understanding of the grammatical structure by the learners leads to clarification in the form of further data and description/explanation.
5. Learners may be required (although this is not obligatory) to articulate the rule describing the grammatical structure. (p. 234)

Finally, input-rich inductive grammar instruction encourages students to view grammar not just as isolated letters, words, and phrases, but also as a meaningful component of contextualized language use. Grammar instruction that draws students' attention to both grammatical forms and their meaning in context mirrors approaches to reading instruction that also focus on these interdependent variables—research that is considered next.

Foreign Language Reading Models

The goals of reading instruction are many. Most important, the purpose of foreign language reading is to construct meaning. In addition, the development of reading skills and strategies contributes to overall language proficiency, builds

language awareness, and develops critical thinking skills. Reading models, which identify the strategies and processes learners use to construct textual meaning, are defined based upon the interaction between reader and text. Current reading research distinguishes three major reading models: *bottom up*, *top down*, and *interactive*.

Bottom-up reading models are text driven. According to Barnett (1989, pp. 12–13), “in bottom-up reading models, the reader begins with the written text (the bottom), and constructs meaning from the letters, words, phrases, and sentences found within and then processes the text as a series of discrete stages in linear fashion.” Readers who process texts from the bottom up employ a number of strategies to construct meaning, including decoding, word recognition, and syntactic feature recognition. Text comprehension, therefore, is often determined by a learner’s ability to recall a text, provide summaries, or translate specific words, phrases, or passages.

Top-down reading models, on the other hand, are reader driven. Much like bottom-up models, top-down models view reading as a linear process, moving from the top (i.e., reader-based cognitive processes) to the text itself. A learner’s background knowledge and personal experiences, or schemata, play a critical role in constructing textual meaning from the top down. According to Barnett (1989, p. 13), “the reader uses general knowledge of the world or of particular text components to make intelligent guesses about what might come next in the text; the reader samples only enough of the text to confirm or reject these guesses.” Readers who process texts from the top down employ strategies such as accessing schemata and making inferences about the content, organization, and rhetorical structure of texts to construct meaning.

Swaffar, Arens, and Byrnes (1991) argued that both bottom-up and top-down processing contribute to the construction of textual meaning. They advocated interactive models of reading, which constitute a hybrid approach to the processing of written texts. Barnett (1989) provided the following definition of this hybrid approach:

[Interactive reading models] are not linear but rather cyclical views of the reading process in which textual information and the reader’s mental activities (including the processing of graphic, syntactic, lexical, semantic, and pragmatic information) have a simultaneous and equally important impact on comprehension. That is, as in top-down models, the reader uses his or her expectations and previous understanding to guess about text content, but, as in bottom-up models, the reader is still dependent on what is in the text (p. 13).

An approach to reading instruction that encourages interactive processing is essential for the construction of textual meaning. Such an approach is certainly input rich

and meaning bearing. Indeed, interactive reading tasks go beyond a focus on grammar and sentence structure toward more complex meaning construction. Nevertheless, grammatical forms and textual detail play an important role in the interactive processing of texts. As Swaffar et al. (1991, p. 24) pointed out, both top-down variables (e.g., reader background, reader perspective, text schema, text structure, episodic sequence), and bottom-up variables (e.g., illustrative detail, surface language features of the text, reader language proficiency) interact to allow the reader to comprehend a text.

Literature in the Beginning Language Classroom²

Literary texts are a valuable source of input for the purposes of language instruction. Barnett (1989) argued that reading is not only an important factor in the development of overall language proficiency but is also a source of comprehensible input. A great deal of reading research from the past two decades (e.g., Barnett, 1991; Hoffmann & James, 1986; Knutson, 1997; Kramersch, 1985; Schofer, 1990; Schultz, 1995; Swaffar et al., 1991) has focused on the use of literary texts in the beginning foreign language classroom, and on the use of interactive reading strategies to facilitate both the interpretation of meaning and the examination of language structure. According to Knutson (1997, p. 52), “Recent reading research points to the benefits of working with texts for the purpose of drawing students’ attention to formal features of written language as well [as to meaning].” Research espousing the use of interactive reading models to assist in introducing literary texts in the beginning foreign language classroom is motivated by a number of factors, including the significant difficulty language students have when making the transition to so-called “content-oriented courses” that focus on the reading and analysis of literary texts. Researchers in favor of introducing literature from the start of language instruction advocate a spiraling of language and content (Kramersch, 1985) in which the development of skills in reading and literary analysis contributes to the development of overall language proficiency, and vice versa. As Barnett (1991) pointed out, linguistic and literary development are indeed intertwined.

One way in which to integrate literature into beginning language instruction is through careful text selection and the use of interactive reading models. For decades, reading instruction has been determined based upon a hierarchy of tasks and text types. Students typically move from basic comprehension of short, authentic texts relating to real-world experiences (elementary-level courses), to the interpretation of expository texts or literary excerpts on topics related to history or culture (intermediate-level courses), and finally to the close analysis of full-length works of literature (advanced-level courses). This traditional development of reading skills, moving from bottom-up to top-down

processing tasks and from short texts to complete works of literature, has hampered the development of reading strategies that promote the construction of meaning, and has created obstacles for students moving from proficiency-oriented to content-oriented courses (Paesani, 2004).

When integrated into the curriculum in conjunction with well-designed, interactive reading tasks, literature becomes accessible to beginning learners. For example, Shook (1996, pp. 206–7) argued that beginning language learners benefit from early exposure to literature because literary texts possess a number of characteristics absent from other types of texts. Literature is compelling, evocative, creative, and memorable, for instance, and may be of high interest to language learners, fostering insight into the nature of the target language and culture. Schultz (1995, p. 3) claimed that “. . . it is never too early to introduce literature into the language classroom.” Barnett (1991, p. 10) echoed this belief: “At the elementary level, literature as well as contemporary cultural realia should enter the curriculum early, offering students a variety of interesting approachable material without subjecting them to lectures on Baudelaire and symbolism.” Finally, according to Westhoff (1991, p. 34) “. . . beginning foreign language students should be reading a lot right away and must therefore have texts that are natural and interesting as well as appropriate for them.”

The introduction of literary texts at the beginning levels of language instruction must be accompanied by adequate preparation to read these texts. Encouraging strategies that reflect the interactive process of reading provides this preparation. In particular, prereading tasks that activate readers' schemata, reading tasks that guide comprehension and interpretation, and postreading tasks that allow readers to reconstruct meaning and personalize texts, help ensure that beginning learners will construct meaning and go beyond plot summary or text recall to focus on the development of both proficiency skills and content knowledge. Moreover, the implementation of these kinds of interactive reading activities may facilitate the use of literary texts as comprehensible input in inductive approaches to grammar instruction.

Literature as Input for Grammar Instruction

The idea of using authentic texts as input in inductive grammar instruction is not new. In response to what she claims is the commonly held belief that you cannot teach reading and grammar at the same time, Kelley (2001, p. 135) argued “once we approach authentic texts, we must continue to teach grammar, which provides the underlying structure, the tree upon which the students can hang all the other bits of knowledge they accumulate along the way.” Barnett (1989, p. 112) also saw an important need for teaching reading and grammar simultaneously: “Relating language development to reading skills development is also

beneficial. Work on intensive reading of short passages and an emphasis on decoding of intricate or perplexing syntax can teach students how to handle similar situations without help.” Finally, Shook (1994) underlined the importance of using reading as comprehensible input for foreign language learning. He claimed that:

[I]ncreased exposure to FL/L2 input as a whole through reading passages will provide the learners with more opportunities to process the input they need; a natural by-product of this increased exposure to [foreign language] FL/[second language] L2 input in general will be increased exposure to the grammatical input, which, depending on the attention drawn to the grammatical input, may be used as a short-cut for FL/L2 learning. (p. 88)

Whole language learning is one method that espouses the idea of using literary texts as comprehensible input from the start of foreign language instruction. In whole language learning activities, emphasis is placed first on deriving meaning from a text and then on the analysis of the text's parts. According to Adair-Hauck (1996, p. 254), “meaning-making is realized through hypothesizing, risk-taking, predicting, approximations, making errors and self-correcting,”—principles that are also relevant to inductive approaches to grammar instruction. Similarly, in story-based language teaching and guided participation (Adair-Hauck & Donato, 2002a, 2002b; Adair-Hauck et al., 2000), instruction focuses on the functional purpose of a grammatical structure within the context of a story before focusing on form. As a result of this type of instruction, the learner comprehends the meaning of language forms through contextualized oral or written discourse.

The remainder of this article presents a form of grammar instruction that incorporates aspects of the research evidence presented here. Specifically, the proposed technique makes use of interactive reading activities and inductive teaching strategies in an input-rich context so that learners may acquire grammatical forms more easily and develop strategies and skills in the reading of literary texts.

Combining Literary Texts and Inductive Grammar Instruction

This technique combines strategies for the inductive teaching of grammar and the interactive teaching of literary texts. The end result is a lesson plan template that may be used to teach specific grammatical forms. Throughout this lesson plan, the literary text is used as a tool to both teach and practice grammar. At the beginning of the lesson, for example, the text serves as comprehensible input during the inductive presentation, and is a resource for the identification of specific forms. The text is then reintroduced later in the lesson plan and serves as the basis for meaningful, creative language use. As Knutson (1997, p. 53) pointed out,

“. . . the same text can be used at various different points during a semester, each time with a different task or focus. In rereading the same text with a different purpose, students derive a sense of accomplishment from their progressively greater comprehension and more extended use of the text.” This cyclical approach to reading promotes the development of proficiency skills as well as in-depth knowledge of the text’s content.

Instructional Sequence

Inductive approaches to grammar instruction involve four important steps: (a) the targeted form is presented to learners in a meaningful context; (b) learners are encouraged to recognize grammatical patterns present in the language sample provided; (c) the instructor provides an explanation of the grammatical form; (d) learners engage in meaningful practice. Interactive approaches to reading instruction involve three steps: (a) prereading tasks activate learners’ background knowledge to prepare them to read the text; (b) reading tasks focus learners on both global and detailed text comprehension as they read for gist or details, identify text structure or episodic sequence, and carry out decoding activities focusing on language structure; (c) postreading tasks such as text reconstruction, interpretation, and personalization encourage creative interaction with the text.

In the instructional sequence proposed here, the steps involved in inductive grammar and interactive reading instruction overlap, and all tasks are based upon the same literary text. The presentation stage of the inductive grammar treatment takes place within prereading and reading phases. Specifically, students carry out prereading activities designed to activate schemata, and reading tasks that facilitate global and detailed text comprehension. Decoding activities associated with the reading phase serve as the second step of the inductive grammar treatment. According to Phillips (1984, p. 292), “in the classroom setting, decoding plays an instructional role; thus students may be asked to decode in order to expand vocabulary, to see how the cohesive elements of the discourse operate, or to learn to make generalizations based on the writing.” It is this last feature—making generalizations about the forms within the reading—that is of importance when using literary texts to teach grammar. During decoding activities, students’ attention is drawn to the specific structure highlighted in the text. They are then encouraged to form and test hypotheses regarding the form and function of the highlighted structure within the context of the text. Once students have ascertained the form and meaning of the targeted grammar, the instructor provides an explanation, and then leads students through sequenced, meaningful practice of the form. During this last stage of the inductive grammar treatment, students are directed back to the literary text to carry out postreading tasks.

This instructional sequence has a number of important benefits to learners. First, this approach provides students with comprehensible, meaning-bearing input. As a result, students are focused first on meaning and then on form. Second, this inductive approach to grammar instruction encourages learners to form and test hypotheses and raises their consciousness about the language they are learning. Next, because this approach incorporates activities that encourage interactive processing of texts, students have the opportunity to develop reading skills that contribute to overall language proficiency. Finally, this instructional sequence is cyclical in nature, moving from meaningful activities to form-focused activities back to meaningful activities, all using the same literary text. In this way, learners are able to focus on form while using the language to communicate.

This sequence of activities is similar to Adair-Hauck and Donato’s (2002a, 2002b) PACE model—a story-based approach to focus-on-form instruction. The PACE model is comprised of four stages, each of which is based upon an authentic story, presented to students orally and manipulated throughout the lesson:

1. Presentation: The instructor tells the story
2. Attention: The instructor highlights some regularity of the language present in the story.
3. Co-Construct and Explanation: Students are encouraged to test hypotheses, generalize, compare, and evaluate.
4. Extension: Students carry out some form of creative self-expression related to the theme of the lesson and based upon the story.

Adair-Hauck and Donato’s model, however, does not focus explicitly on the development of reading skills, nor does it necessarily focus on the use of literary texts. Instead, they focus on storytelling as a means of providing contextualized input for grammar instruction; the story, which has clear episodic structure, is only presented orally with TPR, mime, and pictures used to facilitate comprehension. This approach, then, stresses listening comprehension of an oral narration, which is then followed by role-play, reading, or writing activities intended to deepen comprehension. According to Adair-Hauck and Donato (2000a, p. 271), “the framework of the story provides a continuous flow of mental images that help the learner to assign meaning and functions to the forms they hear. After these initial activities and interactions . . . , the teacher turns the learners’ attention to specific language forms or structure.” It is only during later stages of the instructional sequence that students might be presented with a written form of the story.

Text Selection

Before providing an illustrative example of the instructional sequence outlined above, it is important to consider criteria

essential to the selection of literary texts appropriate for beginning language learners. Most importantly, literary works must be accessible to students. According to Swaffar et al. (1991, pp. 137–9), texts must treat topics that are familiar to beginning language students so that they may easily access background knowledge. Westhoff (1991, p. 32) echoed this claim: To be appropriate, a “text should contain enough fresh, unknown elements to give the learner frequent opportunities to hypothesize about their meaning but should at the same time have enough familiar, repeated elements to allow the learner to test these hypotheses and to read at a considerable speed.” Swaffar et al. further claimed that texts must be of interest to learners, they must have a substantive plot and clear sequential development, and they must be of an appropriate length with a minimal amount of description. Furthermore, it is helpful to choose texts in which grammatical structures are repeated and high frequency or transparent vocabulary is used. Finally, whenever possible, literary texts should be integrated into the themes treated in the lesson or chapter.

Teaching French Relative Pronouns: “Le Message”

Prévert's (1949) well-known poem “Le Message” (see Appendix) serves as the basis of the lesson plan presented here. This literary text is appropriate for a number of reasons. First, “Le Message” is highly repetitive; each sentence in the poem has the same structure, thus facilitating learners' ability to make generalizations about the grammar. Second, this poem contains numerous vocabulary items that are high frequency (e.g., *door, chair, cat, open, read*) or transparent (e.g., *fruit, caress, river, route*). Furthermore, the text has a clear sequential development, presenting events in strict chronological order. Finally, “Le Message” treats topics such as daily routine, bad news, anger, and death, with which students are familiar and in which they are potentially interested.

The lesson plan for “Le Message” is appropriate for beginning language students at the elementary level. The targeted grammar, the French relative pronouns *que* and *où*, is typically presented during the second semester of a two-semester elementary French course sequence, or the third semester of a three-semester sequence. Because of the number and variety of tasks, this lesson plan may be implemented over two class periods. During the first class period, learners carry out prereading and reading tasks, and identify and practice the targeted forms; during the second class period, learners carry out postreading tasks that culminate with the creation of their own poem. Approximately 40 minutes of class time should be devoted to the tasks performed on day one, and 20 minutes of class time to the tasks performed on day two. In addition, instructors may wish to assign some tasks for completion at home.

The lesson plan for “Le Message” begins with prereading and reading tasks leading up to the inductive grammar

presentation. Following presentation and practice of the French relative pronouns, students go back to “Le Message” to carry out postreading tasks. All tasks in the lessons are carried out in the target language. During the prereading stage, students carry out three tasks.

Task 1: Students are given the title of the poem, and instructed to work in small groups to brainstorm vocabulary they associate with the word *message*. After a whole-class follow-up during which students share their results, the class moves on.

Task 2: The instructor lists several vocabulary words found in the poem itself (e.g., *door, letter, chair, hospital, read, run, die*). Based upon this vocabulary, students guess about the potential content of the poem. The instructor facilitates this whole-class activity, writing possible topics on the board. Once several topics have been suggested, students return to their groups to carry out the next task.

Task 3: Student groups are assigned a topic from the list generated on the board, and are asked to make a list of any poems, stories, or movies about their assigned topic. Each group shares its findings with the class.

The purpose of Task 3 is to activate students' schemata about the way specific topics and themes are treated in a presentational format. Activating such schemata will help set students' expectations about the nature of the poem, thereby facilitating the reading process.

Next, students carry out several reading tasks, culminating with a decoding activity that encourages students to induce the form and meaning of the targeted grammatical form. Tasks 4 and 5 focus on the poem's content, and Tasks 6, 7, 8, and 9 focus on the poem's structure. To help students understand the gist of the poem, students first complete Task 4.

Task 4: The instructor provides students with a set of drawings³ in jumbled order depicting the events of the story (e.g., closing a door, petting a cat, a letter, an overturned chair, a person running, a hospital). As the instructor reads the poem aloud, students listen and number each drawing, putting the jumbled pictures in correct chronological order. Students then compare their responses with a partner.

During a whole-class follow-up, the instructor verifies the correct order of the drawings. Once general comprehension has been established, students are provided with a written copy of the poem and then complete Task 5.

Task 5: In pairs, students read the poem again and decide whether they agree or disagree with a number of instructor-provided statements (e.g., “The letter contains bad news.”).

This activity is intended to deepen students' comprehension of the poem and encourage personal reflection about its themes. During whole-class follow-up, students report their findings and discuss statements where there is disagreement.

In order to draw students' attention to the grammatical forms targeted in the poem, the instructor leads them through a series of decoding tasks.

Task 6: The instructor asks students to identify patterns in sentence structure (e.g., "What does each sentence have in common?").

This whole-class activity serves as an exercise in consciousness raising. To model the next activity, the instructor identifies the relative pronoun contained within the first sentence of the poem. Students then move on to Task 7.

Task 7: Students read through the poem individually, underlining all examples of relative pronouns within the text. Then students compare their findings with their partner.

Finally, to encourage hypothesis formulation and testing, the instructor leads two whole-class activities.

Task 8: Students create a rule for the use of relative pronouns.

Task 9: Students make guesses about the differences between the two relative pronouns in the poem, the direct object relative *que* and the locative relative *où*.

This meaning-bearing, interactive, inductive presentation is followed by a brief instructor-led explanation of French relative pronouns and more contextualized examples. Next, students are led through meaningful, sequenced practice, moving from interpretation to production, based almost entirely on the content and form of the literary text. This practice consists of three distinct tasks (Tasks 10–12).

Task 10: Students are directed back to the poem and after examining a model sentence, are instructed to work in pairs to rewrite each sentence without using a relative clause (e.g., The door that someone opened. → Someone opened the door.).

Task 11: Students are given a set of sentences. They work individually and circle the appropriate relative pronoun (e.g., *La fenêtre que / où j'ai fermée.*). Then students compare responses with a partner. The form of these sentences mirrors that of the poem, and the meaning of the lexical items is transparent, thus focusing students more closely on the meaning of the two relative pronouns.

Task 12: In pairs, students perform a sentence-completion activity. Students are provided with an

antecedent and a relative pronoun, and must supply a context-appropriate clause to complete the sentence (e.g., The door that . . .).

The purpose of Task 12 is to move students toward production of relative pronouns. The first few sentences students complete are based directly on the poem, and the last few sentences are original, thus encouraging students to be more creative with the language.

Finally, students carry out a series of postreading activities designed to provide additional practice of the targeted form and to promote creative, personalized language use. To further explore the poem's content, students complete Task 13.

Task 13: In small groups, students answer questions that encourage them to analyze and formulate opinions about its themes. The questions in this task focus on the narrator and his/her role in the events of the poem, the possible message contained within the letter, and the emotions students associate with the poem and its protagonist(s).

Instructors may wish to provide students with the discussion questions in advance, allowing preparation time outside of class and thereby facilitating class discussion. Following this postreading discussion, students write their own poem following Prévert's style. This creative, communicative task is comprised of several subactivities:

Task 14: The instructor leads a whole-class activity in which students brainstorm possible topics (e.g., the book, my family, love).

Task 15: Students select a topic and work individually to brainstorm appropriate vocabulary. Students then share their vocabulary lists with a partner, who suggest additional vocabulary appropriate to the selected topic.

Task 16: Students write their poem.

Task 16 may be started in class and completed as homework. In addition, instructors may wish to add a peer-editing component to the writing task to promote development of writing and revising skills. As a follow-up, students can present their poems to the class either in the form of a poetry reading or a published collection of class works.

"Le Message," with its simple, repetitive, yet meaningful content, is clearly well suited to the approach to inductive grammar instruction presented here. Nevertheless, numerous other texts and genres may be exploited for use with this type of instruction. For example, texts with clear episodic structure such as fairy tales may be appropriate for presenting past-tense forms; literary excerpts with ample

descriptive adjectives may be appropriate for presenting masculine and feminine forms; or dramatic excerpts with short dialogues may be appropriate for presenting verbal paradigms.

Conclusion

The approach to explicit grammar instruction presented here makes use of widely accepted strategies in both the inductive teaching of grammar and the interactive processing of written texts. This hybrid approach is unique in that it makes use of literary texts in an unfamiliar way: as comprehensible input for the acquisition of grammatical forms and as the basis for meaningful, form-focused communicative language use. The result is that learners focus on meaning before form, they increase their consciousness about the target language, and they develop reading skills and strategies. The principles embraced by this approach are motivated by research in language teaching and learning, and may be applied to the teaching of other skills, strategies, and linguistic features, thus increasing learners' exposure to comprehensible input. In a broader sense, this approach to grammar instruction may lead to better articulated language programs where even at the beginning levels of study, learners develop their language proficiency while increasing content knowledge. Certainly, the development of language skills prepares students to effectively communicate in more advanced language classes, but early exposure to literary texts and skills development in literary analysis and interpretation prepares students to carry out the complex language tasks expected of them in literature courses. Moreover, the strategies proposed here for the beginning classroom may apply to the instructional contexts of advanced language study. Indeed, these strategies promote interaction with a literary text, and emphasize meaningful language use. More importantly, however, this approach allows students to see the essential link between literature and language, thus narrowing the gap between so-called proficiency- and content-oriented courses, and encouraging students and instructors to see language study as an integrated whole.

Notes

1. While this type of questioning may seem sporadic, as Barnett (1991) suggested, its format must in fact be purposeful and methodical to achieve its goal.

2. The term *beginning language instruction* is used here to refer to the first two years of university-level foreign language instruction. The first year of language instruction is typically referred to as *elementary*. At some universities, this year of instruction spans three semesters rather than two. The term *intermediate* is used to refer to the second year of foreign language instruction. At some universities, intermediate language courses are referred to as bridge courses, and may span one or two semesters.

3. Drawings may be culled from a number of sources including clip art, photographs, JPEG files, or line drawings created by the instructor.

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Appendix*Le Message*

*La porte que quelqu'un a ouverte
La porte que quelqu'un a refermée
La chaise où quelqu'un s'est assis
Le chat que quelqu'un a caressé
Le fruit que quelqu'un a mordu
La lettre que quelqu'un a lue
La chaise que quelqu'un a renversée
La porte que quelqu'un a ouverte
La route où quelqu'un court encore
Le bois que quelqu'un traverse
La rivière où quelqu'un se jette
L'hôpital où quelqu'un est mort*

Translation:

The Message
The door someone opened
The door someone closed again
The chair someone sat in
The cat someone stroked
The fruit someone bit into
The letter someone read
The chair someone knocked over
The door someone opened
The route someone runs down again
The woods someone runs through
The river someone throws himself into
The hospital where someone is dead

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