UNIVERSIDAD DE QUINTANA ROO
DIVISION DE CIENCIAS POLITICAS Y HUMANIDADES

FLASHCARD GAMES AS A TEACHING AID TO CONTRAST

THE USE AND STRUCTURE BETWEEN THE SIMPLE PAST

AND THE PRESENT PERFECT

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PRESENTA

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Flashcard Games as a Teaching Aid to Contrast the Use and Structure between the Simple

Past and the Present Perfect

Chapter I   Introduction

Background

I have took driving lessons 2 months ago. Several mistakes are found in this sentence, right?

It seems to be explicitly wrong written; unfortunately to the student, it is not. This has been a

recurrent situation since my first 4-monthly term as an English teacher at Universidad

Interamericana para el Desarrollo, better known as UNID.

Fortunately for a teacher, this multiple mistake posed the challenge to find a cure for this

serious disease.   The medicine at disposal was too bitter for the patients: grammar

explanations and more grammar exercises. Such medication worked only for a minority while

the majority remained in bed. As a concerned doctor, this teacher spent some time thinking

about a remedy that it would be sweet enough to make patients forget the bitterness of the

heavy drugs that were to be taken.

The research was not easy as several symptoms arose. Manifestations such as incapability to

digest base and past and participial verb forms, and patients' inability to distinguish indefinite

time from definite time were diagnosed. Although, a breakthrough was made: it was a

systemic disease. 'Break it apart!' He thought. One day, he ran across a bit heterodox idea:

flashcards games could be sweet enough to smooth grammar intake and strong enough to

illustrate and isolate the symptoms.

Description of the problem

The flashcard games act in response to the problem that UNID English 2 students have contrasting the use and structure of the above-said tenses. It is a complex situation that can be analyzed as follows:

1. A great number of language categories are simultaneously involved: present, past and past participial forms of both irregular and regular verbs; two tense structures—simple past and present perfect; and specific and unspecific time adverbs. Such a variety of language items leads students to confusion.

2. Regarding difference in use of the tenses, the course textbook presents it as a plain process of telling definite from indefinite time in the past. However, the analysis required to discriminate between indefinite and definite time in the past has proved to be difficult for the greater part of students.

3. Indefinite time adverbs are largely presented and practiced in relation to the present perfect tense whereas little attention is paid to definite time adverbs and their relation to simple past.

Topic: flashcards

Flashcards games are a tool to initially tackle with the complex topic of simple past versus present perfect. By defusing the lethal intricate grammar into its basic components and figuring out by one by one every systemic interrelation among its components, students are likely to get a better picture of the situation. Moreover, due to their relaxed character, adverse

feelings against grammar explanations and exercises are assuaged (Celce-Murcia & Hilles, 1988: 85).

The nature of the proposed material is described in the next paragraphs. A set of 287 flashcards: 225 cards contain 75 irregular verbs; 21 cards comprise the auxiliary verb have in all its forms; others 21 include the auxiliary verb did in all its forms; a 10-deck encompasses 10 definite time adverbs; and another 10-deck covers indefinite time adverbs.

As concerns verb flashcards, 3 flashcards are assigned to one verb; one is for base form, another one for simple past form and a last one for past participle form. In other words, the verb *go* is expressed in go, went, and gone flashcards.

About the auxiliary cards, both the 21-did and the 21-have sets work as wild cards for base form cards and past participle cards respectively. Similarly, the 10-definite time adverb and indefinite time adverb decks, they function as wild cards for simple past forms and past participle cards respectively in any game.

The format of each flash card is the next: 6 CM long and 3 CM wide. On the front side, there is an irregular verb form in boldface, on the backside we have none; the light colored background is intended to contrast the dark text. Three background colors are used: green, partially green and orange.

The color choice relates to the role that colors play in memory retrieval; they are more easily retrieved than text (Pennington, 1995:77). An illustration of its effectiveness as memory aid in the teaching of a foreign language is found in DAF, Deutsch als Fremdsprache, where

colors are normally used to link nouns to their respective genre in language course books like *Moment Mal,*[1] *Wieso Nicht*[2]*,* and *Warum Nicht*[2]: green highlights the neutral nouns, pink indicates the female nouns, and blue outstands male nouns.

In this work, an orange background is used for the auxiliary have in all its forms, past participle and indefinite time adverbs. A partially-green background is used for did-cards and base-form flashcards. A green-colored background is applied to definite-time-adverb cards so that they can match green simple-past cards. The partially-shared green color of the flashcard pairs making the interrogative form and the affirmative form of the simple past intends that the before-said binomials may be perceived as relative to each other, but not entirely compatible.

The flashcard games recommended as backing tool for the learning of simple past versus present perfect are: hands-on-cards activity and its variants with wild cards. The gist of those games turns out to be identical. Their difference derives from the distribution, inclusion or exclusion of either wild or verb cards. Hence, one single analysis based upon the guidelines to teaching material development can serve to detail all the activities suggested (Tomlinson, 1998:102).

Material: 30-90 Irregular verb flashcards

          10-30 list of irregular verbs or list on blackboard

Objectives:

a) Students will review irregular base form, past form, and past participial form of verbs by individual drill repetition.

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[1] Müller, M. , Rusch P. , Scherling et Al. Germany: Langescheidt.
[2] Deutsche Welle radio courses

b) Students will relate one irregular form to the other two forms by physical response—laying one hand on the card.

Variants: if wild cards are added, two more objectives appear:

c) Students will notice link between adverbs and tenses.

d) Students will ponder the relation between auxiliary verbs and verb forms.

Input: visual language and oral language

Output: physical movement and voice

Operation: matching text to voice, and matching text to text

Interaction pattern: student-to-student in 4-8 groups

Students' role: tutor and tutored

Teacher's role: monitor and facilitator

The mentioned variants are the next three below:

1. Hands-on-cards with adverb wild cards: adverbs work as wild cards for simple past forms and past participial forms.

2. Hands-on-cards with auxiliary verb wild cards: auxiliary verbs work as wild cards for base form and past participial forms.

3. A 3rd variety is a mixture of both variants. All wild packs are included as well as their objectives.

Directions: one by one, students will recite one verb form from a list while laying down one card. The recitation of the list goes on till the drawn card matches the recited form. In other words, if one player recites the word *write* and the laid-down card contains the verb *write*, or any of its other two forms—*wrote* or *written*; and also, auxiliary-verb wild cards if included. Then, once the drawn card has matched recitation, every student is supposed to stop and lay

hands on such a card as soon as possible. Unfortunately, the last player to lay hands on the card must take all recited cards as punishment and resume the recitation. The winner will be the first one to get rid of all his or her cards.

Justification

The use of flash cards games aims at overcoming the possible main difficulty that UNID students taking level 2 have when they are asked to contrast the use and structure of simple past and present perfect. The cause of that trouble has been attributed to the failure to see the interrelation among the language items that come into play when making a distinction between use and structure of both simple past and present perfect.

Flashcard games continuously supporting both presentation and review of key words aim at helping level-two students realize the relationship among the grammatical elements. This expectancy about constant repetition in the form of flashcards responds to findings that proved steady repetition as an effective device to avoid forgetting language items (McCarthy, 1996:117).

Three reasons to propose flashcard games are found next. First, ludic activities are attractive for most people. They create a stress-free environment and a competitive spirit. The former occurs because their only task is to combine language that has already been structured for them in flashcards—it sounds easy for weak students (Harmer, 1996:245). The latter captures the attention of competitive individuals (Celce-Murcia, 1988:85). This break from previous stressing grammar explanations works as an example-creating activity and prepares the path for serious practice in the form of fill-in exercises.

Second, verb flashcards are arranged for small groups which favor student-to-student interaction, resulting in student-to-student error correction; also, small groups seem to encourage shy students to partake because there is a feeling that errors are barely exposed. (Hendrickson, 1987: 362).

Third, it is attractive for most students since it channels information for most learning styles: kinesthetically-oriented students have a chance to see the language in motion and react with physical movement. Visually-styled students are stimulated when they have to react to visual prompts. Auditory-styled students react to the audio cues when they listen to the verb form they need. (Brown, 2000:122). Such a multiple exposure to language is a key factor to successful learners (Maley, 1990:27).

The benefits for students subject to flashcards games can be lined as follows:

1) To facilitate for students the discrimination in use between simple past and present perfect

2) Students will see the connection between past participial forms and the auxiliary 'have'.

3) Students will identify the tie between the base form and the auxiliary verb did.

4) Students will notice the link between verb simple past tense and definite time adverbs.

5) Students will retain irregular verb forms of 75 irregular verbs.

6) Students will realize the bond between present perfect tenses and indefinite time adverbs.

7) To increase motivation in learners by flashcard games

8) To expose students to an output favoring auditory, visual and kinesthetic learning styles

9) To encourage student-to-student interaction

General Objective:

To describe the effectiveness of cards games as a mnemonic device for language items that are essential to understand the difference in both use and structure between simple past and present perfect tenses.

By applying the verb flashcard games, multi-channels can be reached auditory, visual, and manipulative learners.

By using the verb-flashcard games as a 5-minute review activity in every class, internalization of language items is facilitated. On the grounds that constant repetition prevents forgiving (McCarthy, 1996:117).

By means of focusing on every single link between the elements of the topic, learners will not longer produce wrong structures. That is to say, employ a game stressing on the connection between the three verbal forms of the irregular verb; another one that emphasizes the tie between auxiliary verbs and past and past participial forms; and some others that highlight the bondage between adverbs and tenses in question.

By stimulating positive motivation, it is expected that students will show interest to learn. It does not matter if they play to win or play to learn, in both cases, students will have to make use of language structures.

Chapter II   Contextual Frame work

Workplace: The Universidad Inter-Americana para el Desarrollo known as UNID was born in Tlalnepantla in 2000 in the State of Mexico being the first link of the chain. Next, in 2003, Merida and Campeche seats were opened. The UNID continued to expand. Nowadays, there are 44 seats throughout the nation. UNID sets academic interchange and direct contact with the entrepreneur world at students' disposal. A further objective of UNID is international expansion (http://unid.edu.mx, 15-04-2008).

Its mission is to mold principled individuals able to fit in an ever-changing world, having a topnotch professional and humane basis. Those professionals are to promote an authentic human-kind development and create in their future social milieu an inspiring cultural influence based upon the ever-lasting morals of Christian humanism and an educational model oriented to the labor market.

Educational model: the high education model inspired in the so-called non-traditional models has curricula that are to be taken in quarterly terms, each consisting of 14 weeks. This allows the students to capitalize on their time and complete a major in 3 years.

The proposed model has 2 stages plus an introduction in the real world of work in the 6° quarter known as "Estadia Empresarial". In the first stage, students will be given the diploma of "Profesional Asociado (PA)" or "Técnico Superior Universitario (TSU)" as long as they have completed Estadía Empresarial period in the 6° quarter. In the second stage: students will take three more quarters to attain the Bachelor's Degree.

In Chetumal Campus, students have the possibility of either get a high level technical certification or majoring in the following areas: Information Systems, Business Administration, Media and Communication Science, Book-keeping, Laws, Marketing, and Education Technologies.

English language teaching at the UNID system

Objective: after the 5 level of English, student will take the TOEIC exam getting an intermediate level. Such a score will be ranking from 520 to700, which is equivalent to 475-525 in TOEFL standards.

The English course books used at UNID universities is Top Notch series from Pearson Longman Publishing House. The authors are Joan Saslow and Allen Ascher. Notice that the choice of material and the set of goals depend entirely from the English department at the main seat in the state of Mexico.

At UNID	Course	Level	TOEFL (Paper)	TOEFL (IBT)	TOEIC
	Top Notch Fundamentals	True beginners	No points Assigned	No points Assigned	110-205
Level I	Top Notch 1	False beginners	380-425	26-38	250-380
Level II	Top Notch 2	Pre-intermediate	425-475	38-52	380-520
Level III	Top Notch 3	Intermediate	475-525	52-70	520-700
Level IV	Summit 1	High-intermediate	525-575	70-90	700-800
Level V	TOEIC preparation Course	Advanced	575-600	90-100	800+

The chart above illustrates the nature of the textbooks and their correlation with the objective; as well as, the correlation of TOIEC scores with other international certification scores (www.longman.com/topnotch, 15th March 2008).

The approach of the course is communicative, thus, language is introduced, presented, and practiced in context by model dialogs, games, role-plays, and problems solving tasks. Grammar is not explicit (Larsen-Freeman, 2000: X). In this feature, the Top Notch series seems partially to contradict the communicative approach because it offers the possibility to teach grammar either deductively or inductively via its section called "Grammar Booster" where rules are exposed and practiced out of a communicative context.

The lay-out of a typical unit consists of:

Preview: real language exposed by means of real printed text and conversation audio

Two lessons for controlled practice in the form of making similar conversations

Two more lessons for free-practice in writing and speaking by articles and surveys

A unit check-point to assess students' progress

A unit wrap-up aimed at eliciting students' output through visual cues of the situations in which the recently acquired language is used—it turns out to be a speaking test.

Grammar contents:

Unit 1: Present perfect: yet, already, ever, and before / past participles

Unit 2: Present perfect: additional uses—for and since, would rather

Unit 3: The future with will / had better

Unit 4: The past continuous / direct object placement / phrasal verbs

Unit 5: Count and non-count nouns: indefinite quantities and amounts—some, any, a lot of, many, and much, someone and anyone

Unit 6: Negative yes/no questions and Why don't . . . ? /Used to

Unit 7: Gerunds and infinitives after certain verbs/ gerunds after prepositions/expressions with prepositions

Unit 8: the passive voice

Unit 9: Comparisons with as . . . as/ the infinitive of purpose

Unit 10: possessive pronouns/ factual and unreal conditional sentences

Components: teachers' edition, students' book, students' workbook, class audio program, copy & go ready-made interactive activities for busy teachers, complete assessment package with Exam View software, and Companion website: www.longman.com/topnotch

Course schedule: there are 2 sessions per week. Every session lasts one hour and a half. One unit is expected to be seen in a week. Consequently, the entire course book is taught in 10 weeks, which leaves just one week to review.

As for the grading system, 70% of the grades is distributed in tests. There are 3 examinations per term. Two partial examinations are 15% each, and one final examination having % 40. The remaining 30% percent is divided into class work 10% maximum, homework %10 and a project 10%. Remark that there is certain flexibility in this 30% as one teacher can assign 20% to homework and 10% to class work or 10% to class work and 20% to a project.

Chapter III   Theoretical framework

Knowledge of words

One definition of knowledge implies a division between receptive knowledge and productive knowledge. The former refers to the fact that the individual can predict the occurrence of the language item into a specific grammatical pattern whereas the latter entails not only competence but also total performance, that is its pronunciation, spelling, collocations, context, and synonyms.

Other Authors' definitions follow a criterion of stages of knowledge, such as Paribakht and Wesche; Leung and Pikulski; and Grabe and Stoller.

Paribakht and Wesche (1997) number five stages applied to the word knowledge:

The word is not familiar at all.

The word is familiar but its meaning is not known.

The meaning is known.

The word is used with semantic appropriateness in a sentence.

The word is used with semantic appropriateness plus grammatical accuracy in a sentence.

Leung and Pikulski (1990) rank knowledge of language item from 0-3 being 0 the lowest level of knowledge and 3 the highest. In other words, 0=no recognition of the word meaning, 1=a general, but vague sense of the word meaning, 2=a good sense of the meaning of the word but not the best meaning, and 3=the most appropriate meaning of the term.

Grabe and Stoller (1997) stratify knowledge in 6 stages:

1. Words being entirely unfamiliar

2. Words having a slightly certain degree of familiarity

3. Words having been in the environment

4. Words being familiar and understandable

5. Words being familiar and understandable, but presenting a need for more accurate meanings

6. Words having multiple meanings and their most appropriate meaning could be accessed at the time of reading.

Learning strategies

A plausible description is as follows: the means, which students resort to in order to complete the processes of acquisition, storage, retrieval, and further use of information presented to them. These are catalogued as direct and indirect strategies (Oxford, 1990). Among direct strategies, memory, cognitive, and compensation types can be found.

Memory strategies—also known as mnemonics, occurs when an individual relates unfamiliar information to significant familiar information by means of mind imagery; that is to say, if the term 'plumber' is to be committed to memory, an individual may imagine a plumber he or she knows personally wearing an overall checked with the legend 'plumber'. Another example is to assign a 2L-unfamiliar term to a 1L-term according to their similarity of sound and fusion them in one mental image. Say, the word 'blue' sounds like the onomatopoeia for drowning 'Blup!' in Spanish, so the subject may conceive the image of himself about to drown in the sea and his or her face going all 'blue'. The more vivid the image is, the more possible the retrieval of the item will be.

Cognitive strategies enable students to produce and learn new language through practical reasoning exercises such as summarizing, analysis, and in general everything that involves

student participation. Role-plays, repetitions and games are just some of the cognitive strategies that can be found under this label.

Compensation strategies are those strategies that students use to fill their gaps in grammar and vocabulary. Among common compensation strategies are guessing the meaning, changing to the mother tongue, using mime, asking for help, etc. The main purpose is to get the message across no matter the lack of knowledge.

Metacognitive strategies are used to take control over their own learning, that is that they center, plan, organize, and evaluate their learning. The personality of each student is directly involved because metacognitive strategies are determined by the students' sense of responsibility.

Affective strategies concern the control on attitudes, emotions, motivations, and values so that they do not interfere with the learning process.

Social strategies are employed when a student interacts with others by using the target language, departing from the premise that language itself is a social behavior. Examples of social strategies are: making questions, and working in groups.

Personality Factors

They play an important role in the learning process as students are not only faced with a language but also with a different view of the world. Such cultural and ideological contrast gives rise to reactions that may be adverse or favorable to the acculturation process. In the

next paragraphs, the influential personality traits like affective domain, self-esteem, risk-taking, anxiety, empathy, and extroversion are dealt with (Brown, 1994).

The affective domain refers to the emotions or feeling that occur when people are under the next conditions:

The development of affectivity begins with receiving stimuli form the environmental milieu.

Individuals must go beyond reception in order to respond.

Subjects resort to their own values to deal with culturally-different individuals and customs.

People must organize their values into a system of beliefs.

People understand each other in terms of their value system.

Self-esteem is molded by previous experiences of the individuals and the assessment they make of the stimuli and themselves. As stated by Brown.

"It is a personal judgment of worthiness that is expressed in the attitudes
that the individual holds towards himself." (1994: 137)

Inhibition refers to a defense mechanism of the ego, which leads individuals to avoid situations that are perceived as likely to hurt them emotionally. This feature of personality obstruct students' performance, which, in its turn, conceals the real competence that student may have.

Risk-taking is expressed as the ability to make intelligent guesses showing a pro-active response, if mistaken. This drive to act favors the practice of language leading language

apprentices to success. Conversely, students not having much risk-taking attitude seem to be less prone to language interaction.

Anxiety is associated with feelings of frustration, uneasiness, self-doubt, apprehension, or worry. Students may feel anxious because of communication apprehension, for fear of negative social evaluation, or test anxiety.

Empathy is the process of reaching beyond the self as well as understanding what the others feel or understand. Since human beings are inherently gregarious is impossible to overlook the effect this factor has on the interaction patterns such as pair-work activities where the lack of empathy of one student may rush his or her partner into giving or not giving an accurate response.

Learning styles

As regards learning styles, there are three main classifications. The cognitive criterion of Kolb (1984), the categories on sensorial basis made by Reid (1995), the personality classifications applied to learning styles by Myers and Briggs (1987).

According to Kolb, there are convergent, divergent, assimilator, and accommodative learners. Convergent students are good at working with abstractions and conducting tests, consequently, they prefer problem-solving activities and tasks where ideas are to be applied. Divergent learners can easily work with physical objects; they learn from experience and speculate about possible scenarios. Assimilators tend to identify patterns and induce rules, in other words, they render facts into theory; and accommodative-styled individuals are merely

manipulative, therefore, completing tasks and plans results attractive for them (1984, cited in Mendez, 2007: 109-110).

Other authors affirm that there are as many learning styles as learners; although, some styles have been proved to dominate. These are visualizers, verbalizers, manipulative, rational and holistic learning styles—which is a combination of two or more styles in a subject. A purely rational explanation of a grammar rule will reach a rational-styled individual; a visual representation will catch the attention of a visualizer. A mobile presentation will favor a manipulative student and a mixed input will be of great help for a holistic-styled learner (Maley, 1988 Cited in Rossner & Bolitho, 1990:29).

Other researchers consider that only visual and auditory are the most dominant learners' styles in English as Second language learning. They are manifest in the preference for certain learning activities. Visual oriented students prefer reading and studying charts, drawings, and other grammatical information while auditory learners prefer listening to lectures and audiotapes. Of course, most successful learners use both (Brown, 2000: X).

Motivation

In terms of ESL, motivation has been identified as being the sum of attitudes and affective traits of a learner that influence his or her endeavors to learn a second language. Its classifications are: instrumental, integrative, resultative, and extrinsic (Ellis, 1997; Schunk, 1997). Other authors like Gardner and Lambert; and Iyengar and Lepper

Instrumentally motivated-learners are driven in their learning a language by functional reasons such as to approve academic requirements, get a better position, and be granted a

scholarship, and so on. In contexts like adult education, this kind of motivation seems to be the main drive to success in language learning.

Integrative motivation refers to learners who prefer to learn a second language because they are attracted to the people and culture of the target language because they may be influenced by the desire to manipulate and to pass off as people of the foreign culture.

Resultative motivation is referred as the result of learning. Learners who have good experiences and success in learning may become more or in some contexts, less motivated to learn.

Intrinsic motivation involves students' curiosity and flows as a result of the interest of learners and the extent to which they feel personally involved in learning activities.

According to Gardner & Lambert, motivation can be classified into instrumental and integrative. The former refers to the inner need to fulfill a goal; and the latter is the will to relate to others socially (1972).

As to Iyengar and Lepper, there are also intrinsic and extrinsic motivation types. Extrinsically motivated students take part in an activity to obtain some reward or avoid some punishment that is external to the task. In English teaching this prize is called grades or teachers' approval. Whereas an intrinsically motivated students join in to succeed in the activity despite the nature of the reward; they develop a competence to control difficult situations—success is all, the reward is insignificant (1999:368).

ESL Games

An ideal definition that encompasses its nature, scope and benefits is as follows:

> "Games are an agreeable way of getting a class to use its initiative in English and as it
> is gently competitive, it increases motivation. It is also a contrast to periods of
> intensive study." (Haycraft, 1978: 121)

One important trait of educational games is that dynamic and active responses are elicited from students who act in accordance with the demands of their roles in the game. Hence, students used to assume passive attitudes in the classroom are moved to action; also, teachers change the role of instructor for those of facilitators and organizers.

According to research, the active and dynamic attitudes of games promote the memory stimulation as we remember a 90% of what we do, a 10% what we read, a 20% of what we hear, and a 30% what we see (O'Connor & Seymour, 1992).

Another important feature of ludicrous activities is that playing and learning become a fusion. In other words, in one side, some students join in either to win or have fun, though, they will have to resort to language to achieve their goal. On the other side, the individuals who want to practice the language find a funny and risk-friendly chance to do so (Bello, 1990).

According to Carrier, there are three moments in a lesson when games are appropriated to employ (1980, cited in Martinez, 2000: 28).

As an introduction:

A) To open the class in a stimulating way

B) To know to what extent students have assimilated the contents.

To reinforce any language item important enough to be constantly reviewed or practiced.

To wrap up the lesson in a invigorating manner that allow students to set into practice their acquired language.

Chapter IV   Memory Report

Description of activities performed

Being in charge of a class implies complying with the institution policies, reporting activities to academic and managerial departments, and covering the objectives of the language course Top Notch 2 in the scheduled time.

First, disciplinary regulations are as follow: mobile phones are not allowed in class, students are not consented to arrive more than 10 minutes late, and do not talk when the teacher is explaining; as for teachers, no late is permitted if recurs more than three times in a term, dismissal proceeds. It is important to apply these policies given that teachers are constantly monitored and admonished if the policy enforcement is neglected.

However stern it may look, qualities like coherence and group control are awarded to teachers.   These attributes play a great role in the creation of a receptive atmosphere without detrimental disruptions.

As regards reporting activities, the two partial and final examinations are submitted to the English department for approval and reproduction one week ahead of the schedule examination date; also, grades and graded exams are delivered. As to obligations with the managerial department, just graded final exams and graded class lists along with printed lists of the grades registered on the institution website are handed down.

As for covering of the scheduled time, examinations are taken in the scheduled date, time, and place; exams cannot last more than the normal class time. One lesson should be seen in one week span so that the whole language course can be completed in 12 weeks.

Motivation problems in students

The main part of the problem is the lack of motivation in students which reflects in their null interest to do some self-study of the viewed lesson, which generates a gap between the taught and the yet-to-teach content. Being this a spiral curriculum-based course, the resulting scenario is desperate because students end up renouncing the course or showing unconcern to either low grades or failure.

'It is just an ominous burden to carry in our way to get a bachelor's degree', it seems to be the general answer when questioned about the importance of English. This feeling among students may be attributed to a complexity of internal and external factors difficult to prove. Therefore, I opt to make some assumptions based upon my observation and subjects' opinions, which are divided between their beliefs and institution policies.

As regards beliefs, two mistaken attributions are given to English in the university population. The former is the unpractical use of English in real life, and the latter is the expectancy of English courses having a low level of language.

They affirm not to see any relation between English and their majors because it will not help them to improve their performance as lawyers, accountants, advertisers, teachers, and engineers in information systems. Possibly, the orientation of students to local employment market, where foreign investment is rare, conditions this inability to envisage working either abroad or for a foreign employer. This misconception about the effectiveness of language learning results in the ineffectiveness of instrumental motivation as a motivating factor.

Students expect English to be easy. The basis of this idea is their previous experience in learning English at high school where the content of the subject used to be less demanding than at a higher level; therefore, they meet a level of English beyond their expectancies. Facing this scenario, a large number of students refuses to change their expectations about English and make the respective effort involved to meet the new demands of the subject whereas just a few individuals accept the challenge.

Regarding institution policies, the next three applied to English appear to affect students in their motivation: the subject is differently gradable; it is seemed as free of charge; and it is not a compulsory class in each term. As they tend to create an atmosphere lacking negative motivational factors; the closest penalty is not taking the "estadía" period in the 6th term. In other words, a great number of learners do not see themselves threatened by an immediate punishment if they overlook English requirements.

English is differently gradable. The grades obtained in English class do not affect the term average or the final average in the majors; in spite of the fact that, they are registered in a scale from 5-10—6 being the minimal grade. The language course having no impact on other areas seems to produce satisfaction with low grades in the non-positive-motivated population. English is view as a free course. This situation affects students in both positive and negative ways. All additional courses are charged; not charging for the course intends to favor the decision to take it; conversely, the enrolled people think that they will not be wasting money if they quit the language lessons. The likely or unlikely loss of money appears to play an important role on students' decision about staying; in brief, the free-of-charge class is perceived as no threat by the negative-motivated individuals.

Concerning English not being compulsory, it allows students freedom to choose when to register according to their time availability. This policy proves to be favorable for students who where placed in levels higher than level 2. By contrast, those who were placed in level 1 cannot miss English levels because they are asked to have finished the five levels of English before the 6 term. It is not itself a factor but in conjunction with the belief that English is easy turns out detrimental to some people because they neglect studying English as they expect to catch upon the failed courses by taking the placement exam.

To sum up, basing on my personal observation, it can be said that the majority of students taking English tend to be more driven by negative motivation rather than by positive motivational factors; As evidenced in the low impact that a future reward in the form of an asset added to their CV has on students' motivation. In opposition, the conclusion of 5 levels of English as requirement for their professional "Estadia" period as a negative measure appears to be a more effective deterrence means for individuals.

Unfortunately, the penalizing threat of preventing them from doing their 'Estadia' and the consequential falling behind terms until they get the language level are apparently not strong enough to have students to set to work; and neither serious enough to stop great part of students from neglecting to take the course in due time.

This apparent failure of punishment as well as the positive-intended policies as motivating factors leads to think that the population is neither positive nor negative motivated. In a personal analysis of this situation, I dare say that positive and negative motivational policies are in balance, but this balance mutually neutralizes their effects—creates confusion about the

validity of one over the other one. A recommendation would be tilting the scale to one side so that one approach may exert the most influence on students.

Re-teaching as remedial strategy

One point is that they affirm not to understand the grammar explanations. This stance of students gives a hard time for teachers explaining grammar points when previous points have not being assimilated yet. Several excuses are given: students stressed from work, having not good foundations on language, or textbook being way too much beyond their level of language, which are beyond the control of a teacher to solve in a short period.

Two tangible causes are that students do not do self study activities, and they constantly miss classes. Plagiarism in homework illustrates the former; the latter can be manifested in the situation that in one class, there are some people and the next class, some others. Disciplinary strategies were applied such as plagiarized assignments being rejected and previous class quizzes for those who were absent. Both of them proved to be no deterrence for students as they did not get out of the habit of plagiarism and missing classes. Stating that they felt confident enough to pass the course despite the fact that their points for homework and missed classes accounted for nothing.

Re-teaching came up as an alternative course of action. The use of re-teaching viewed content in every class aimed at preventing forgetfulness in students so that they could anchor new language items to prior taught items, as well as a means to keep fresh language structures that are used at the end of the term in the final exam. The re-teaching here involves more than a previous class quick review. That is to say, if we are to see the simple past in its interrogative

forms, then, a contrastive analysis with the simple present is required followed by a previous class review activity.

The features of such re-teaching are the following: the time distribution for each review is of 20 minutes in each class. This time is divided in two halves: 10 minutes for immediate taught content, and 10 more minutes to review language structures that were to be memorized in the long term.

Concerning the immediately reviewed content, simulations and information-gap activities are employed in this stage of the lesson given that their jocular nature appeals students to partake and creates a relaxing atmosphere where risk seems to be minimal.

Simulations usually succeed in getting people to talk because they feel less pressure to talk, and obtain some cues about language structure to practice by watching other students in interaction. The most used simulation in my classes is the "Celebrity Press Conference", which consists of two roles: the celebrities and the reporters. The celebrities or their managers answer questions made by the reporters using the structures and vocabulary previously seen; after a few questions, students switch turns. The average time employ is 10 minutes. The seating arrangement is four students or five students at the front facing the class sitting in ordinary arrangement.

As to information-gap activities, I have students line up in two rows and give them information-gap sheets. Next, they rotate to switch places. The roles of either asking for information or giving information depend on the line they are. That is, one line is the question-line and the other one is the answer-line as they rotate they assume questioner and

information-giver roles. For variety's sake, various seating arrangements can be used instead. Two chair lines either facing each other or being in a back-to-back position. The time for this activity is 10 minutes.

Regarding the language constantly reviewed, 74 irregular verbs in its three forms have been chosen complying with the demands of the textbook Top Notch 2. Also, items related to the tense structures of simple past and present perfect. That is to say, indefinite time adverbs and definitive time adverbs; the auxiliary verbs have, has, and did.

The criterion of selection was based upon the prior experience of teaching level-two students and their future use in higher levels. My personal experience has proved that students have more trouble learning irregular past and past participial forms than regular past and past participial forms. Also, they take great pains relating the auxiliary verbs and the past and past participial forms, and linking indefinite and definitive time adverbs to the present perfect and simple past tenses respectively.

In further levels, the discrimination between finite or non-finite tenses is fundamental when a contrast is demanded among simple past, past continuous, present perfect, and present perfect continuous. That is, level 3 and 4 of the English program.

As regards future use of structures in advanced levels, it is thanks to the economic feature of language that past participial forms and the auxiliary verb 'have' are recycled in highly periphrastic structures like 'She will have arrived', 'He would have been' or 'He must have known'. Such structures are seen in level 4 and 5 of the UNID English Program.

Flashcard games as format to re-teaching activities

Once that the content to re-teach had been selected, it was necessary to choose a format that would appeal to students' attention. Games were the immediate response due to its motivational features that were to raise the impeding competitive spirit in students. As to the kind of game, text flashcards containing language pre-structured for them was the appropriate choice for my students for they felt more confident if they were to manipulate language chunks instead of forming language structures.

In the subsequent paragraphs, the manner in which the general objective and the specific objectives were covered is exposed. For that purpose, it is compulsory to restate the main objective "to facilitate for students the discrimination between the use and structure of simple past and present perfect tenses".

Similarly, integrative objectives should be brought up again: 'students will recognize the connection between past participial forms and the auxiliary verb have in all its forms'; 'students will identify the tie between the base form and the auxiliary verb did'; 'students will notice the link between verb simple past tense and definite time adverbs'; and 'students will realize the bond between present perfect tenses and indefinite time adverbs'.

To achieve the general objective of facilitating for students the discrimination between the use and structure of simple past and present perfect tense, we must achieve two specific objectives. The former refers to the differences in structure, which refers to connecting auxiliary verbs to verb forms; and the latter relates to the difference in use, which covers linking tenses to adverbs.

As regards structure distinction, the game rules do not allow auxiliary verbs different from 'have' to match past participial forms regarding the present perfect; similarly for the simple past, the auxiliary did is the only possible match for verbal base forms. Thus, flashcard patterns like 'have' + 'go'; 'have' + 'went'; and 'did' + 'gone' do not integrate as valid pairs for the present perfect tense. As to simple past, the cards combinations 'did' + 'gone'; 'did' + went; and 'have' + 'go' do not unite correctly.

The disparity of forms is pointed out by a mismatch of colors (See, Illustration 1). Conversely, the card patterns 'have' + 'gone'; and 'did' + 'go' join together in a harmony of colors for present perfect and simple past tenses respectively.

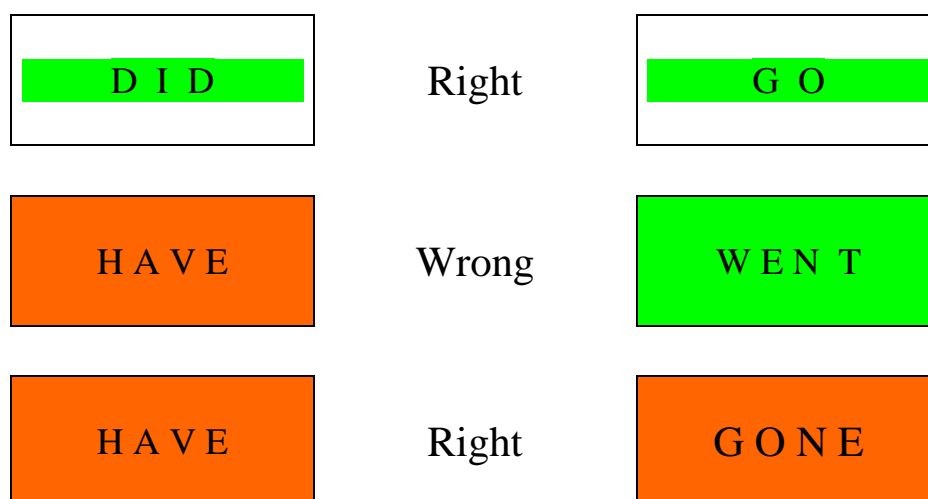|		
D I D	Right	G O
H A V E	Wrong	W E N T
H A V E	Right	G O N E

Illustration 1, color mismatch evidences wrong pairs whereas color harmony indicates correctness.

In this stage, the need of monitoring seems to become minimal as students get familiar with verb forms; even, it can be eliminated if a list containing the three-verb forms of the verbs to practice is provided.

Concerning the differences in use, the game regulations smooth the progress of telling definite from indefinite time. Upon matching adverb-flashcards to structure-flashcards, students

become aware of the fact that indefinite time adverbs impose the use of present perfect and definite time adverbs rule the simple past.

In terms of game regulations applicable to present perfect, it is ordered that the only possible matches for indefinite-time-adverb-cards are past-participial cards and have-auxiliary cards; consequently, only some binomials are feasible: past-participial flashcard + indefinite-time-adverb flashcard like 'eaten' flashcard and 'yet (-)'

Flashcards can be enunciated as trinomials 'she hasn't eaten yet' or 'I haven't eaten yet'—the third element 'has or have' are gotten by the shared color background of the other two cards (See illustration 2).

Whereas the remaining pairs like 'ate' + 'yet-'; 'eaten' + 'last night'; 'eat' + yet; and 'eat' + 'last night' cards are impossible seeing the fact that the cards do not share the colored background which can lead to the third element.
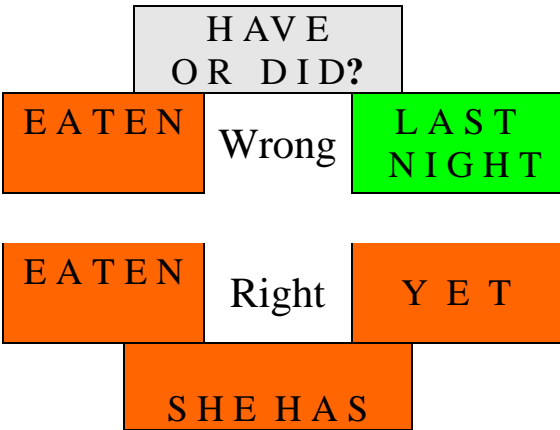

Illustration 2, a color sharing binomial leads to the auxiliary verb—though it is not present in the deck whereas a bicolor pair does not allow any relation to a specific auxiliary verb.

Remark that color backgrounds not only function as link among the adverbs, past participial, and auxiliary verbs; but also, as indicator of rightness given that correct pairs share colored background.

On the subject of simple past, the simple-past-form cards plus the definite-time-adverb flashcards results the only match validated by the color parity as correct, for instance 'drove' + 'a few minutes ago', both cards being green, can turned into complete sentences as 'I drove _____ a few minutes ago' or 'she drove _____ a few minutes ago'. While bicolor mismatches such as 'drive' + 'yesterday'; 'driven' + 'this morning'; 'drove' + 'always' are unacceptably wrong.

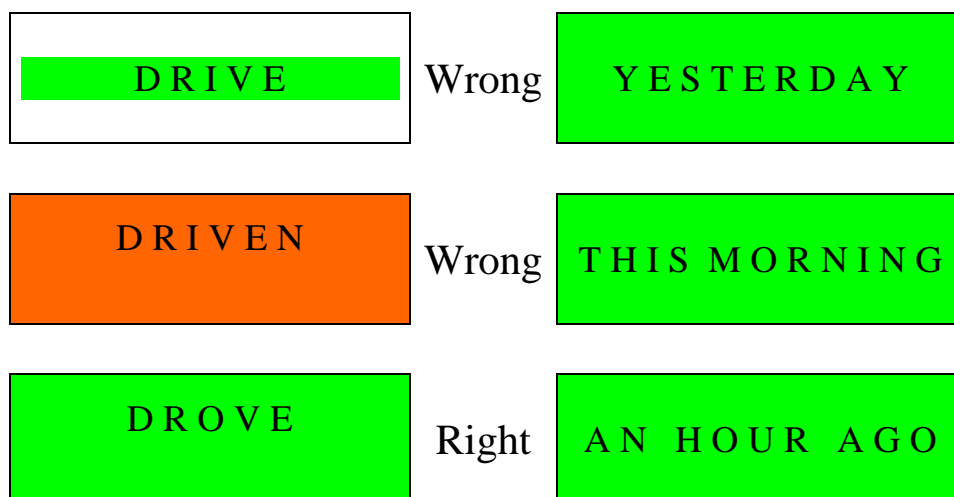| D R I V E	Wrong	Y E S T E R D A Y
D R I V E N	Wrong	T H I S M O R N I N G
D R O V E	Right	A N H O U R A G O

Illustration 3, correct pairs should exactly match color background.

In the next paragraphs, the accomplishment of additional objectives is explained. Such as objectives are: expose students to a multiple output that favors auditory, visual and kinesthetic learning styles, encourage student-to-student interaction, and students will retain irregular verb forms of 75 irregular verbs.

The flashcard game favors auditory, visual and kinesthetic styles as the game is in progress. In the beginning phase, the auditory style is stimulated when students pay close attention to

the dealer-student's enunciation of irregular verb forms; simultaneously, the visually-styled individuals get touched when the dealer lays down the flashcards as they need visual confirmation of the called-out verb. Finally, if sound matches visual representation, then, the kinesthetically-oriented students are attracted when prompted to response with a hand lay-down on the flashcard. In order to win the game, every student has to resort to their auditory, visual, and physical skills.

As for the retention of 75 irregular verbs, the flashcard activity initially promotes rote-learning by drill repetition of the base, simple past, and past participial forms (see, illustration 4). During the activity, the dealer recites the verb forms, and every student will assume that role eventually. Next, they are asked to visually and manipulatively associate one oral verb form to the other two forms, which demands concentration and intuition from students. Consequently, the initial rote-learning turns into a meaningful learning.
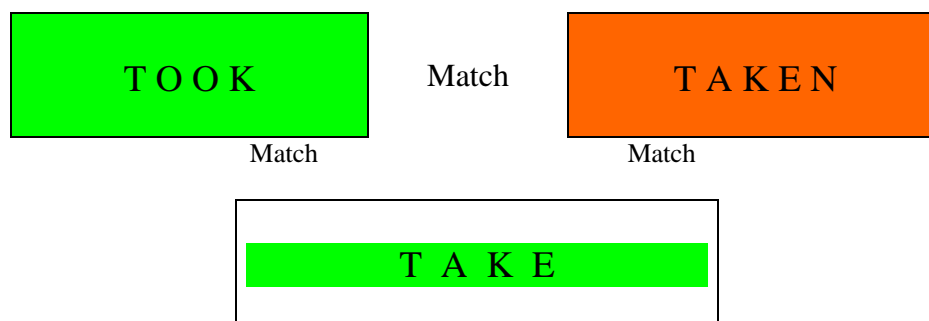

Illustration 4, verb forms match one another, although their colored backgrounds differ.

Motivation increases as fun and learning become a whole in the ludic activity. This whole of fun and learning attains any possible goal that the students may have: play to have fun, to win, and to learn. In other words, despite the variety of goals, the means is the same: practice the language, which in its turn is the means to achieve the main goal—learning. Hence, extrinsic motivation is stimulated as most students take part to be awarded something else than learning: the satisfaction of winning.

The creation of a student-to-student interaction takes place at the moment of asking students to make small groups ranging from 4 to 6 members. Such grouping produces positive attitudes in students: student-to-student error correction, and willingness to participate. Error-correction among students is due to the fact that some individuals volunteer to correct errors, and some others turn into fierce competitors who do not allow anybody to get away with breaking the rules.

The latter is due to the fact that factors affecting students' personality are minimized. Specifically, teacher's pressuring presence, and evaluation perception from students. The personality traits of risk-taking and inhibition are differently influenced—the former increases while the latter decreases; though, both reactions lead to the same outcome: a rise in participation.

Evolution as teacher

My improvement as teacher occurred in the areas of group control, and skills to modify and make teaching-material for my class.

In the beginning of my functions at UNID, I lacked group control over students, which affected my performance since students disrupted my class. I used to believe that students were mature enough to act responsibly on their own—no matter how young they may be. However, experience proved my belief to be incorrect because students tended to behave more and more irresponsible as I was more flexible in my teaching policies.

A weak consistency between my words and my actions lay at the root of my disciplinary chaos. Disruption in the form of mobile phones, chats, and breaks arose constantly.

Consequently, I learned from this situation that posing threats without sanction was of no avail.

Despite my convictions that punishment was too tough for students, I resorted to punish every single disruption. That is to say, no students were allowed to be more than 10 minutes late, incoming and outgoing mobile-phone calls lost the class attendance for the student. Also, chatting during class could have them out of the classroom, and no having their class material caused them to leave the class and be marked as absent. The effects were positive because most of them followed the rules and my class could continue without disruptions.

As to developing teaching material for class, I was accustomed to strictly stick to the course book activities—it was the smartest thing to do as it made for an easy class preparation. On occasions, I modified the activities a bit if students found them too difficult, but I did not go further in my efforts to adapt material for the class, let alone making my own material. However, the class scenario I was about to face would demand the very best of my efforts and my going beyond my teaching limits at that moment.

Students not having a good English language basis needed language fundamentals that the coursebook was not intended to satisfy. Furthermore, modifying the activities was not possible as the level of language was high for students, then, it was necessary to go to the previous level before tackling the language level proposed. In order words, if present perfect continuous were to be seen, then an activity containing the forming of past participle of regular and irregular verbs would be used before.

Self-assessment criterion

My standard to assess my performance as teacher is based upon my ideal of what an excellent teacher should be like. It ranks from average, through good, to excellent. Average is referred as the teaching that strictly sticks to the activities suggested by the course book; good means that the teacher makes his or her own activities besides implementing the textbook activities; and excellent implies that the teacher not only makes his or her own activities, and the proposed activities, but also directs extension activities out of the classroom that will expose students to both the target language, and social interaction. Then, according to this standard, I will appraise three areas into which I divide the teacher's function: class preparation, testing, and feedback.

My class preparation is graded as good because I go beyond the suggestions of the coursebook, in the interest of appealing students' attention, I usually adapt the content of lessons to other type of activities requiring physical response, for instance, games, simulations, or information gaps. Another issue in the lesson planning is motivation. Motivation policies are to be planned too, like having students congratulate specific individuals for being 'the class hard worker' given that I do not neglect the motivational factor I can grade my planning as good.

As for testing skills, I estimate them as good since I do not only follow the assessment package suggestions, but also I include prompts relating the evaluated language to everyday's activities of students. However, I recognize that this area needs improving.

Referring feed-back, I identify it as my weak point. Unfortunately, I do not go further than the workbook activities, which results in an average performance. I think that the improvement

would be in the shape of extension activities that would demand an instrumental use of language from students.

All in all, I grade myself as just a good teacher who goes a bit beyond the textbook by designing his own material and promoting a stress-soothing atmosphere. Although, I recognize that there is still a long way to go in the quest for excellence standards that would inspire students to learn.

Chapter V

Conclusions

Given that the purpose of this paper is reporting the use of flashcards to help solve difficulties of students to differentiate the structures and use of both simple past and present perfect; then, it is necessary to comment on the results attained after its operation.

As to raising the motivation in students, the games seem to have increased the rate of attention and partaking of students in the practice activities following the game. Nevertheless, it seems to be effective just in class time as students appear not to invest time on self-study activities as reflected in the deficient quality of their homework.

Regarding the assimilation of the irregular forms of 74 irregular verbs, it can be said that most of the population showed considerable knowledge of 50 irregular verbs in all their forms.

As for facilitating students to correct link verbal forms to the auxiliary verb 'did', on the one hand, it occurred that most students no longer employ past participial forms with the auxiliary verb 'did', therefore, sentences like 'they did not gone to Paris last week' rarely presented. On the other hand, the mistake of using 'did with irregular past forms was barely reduced; that is to say that most individuals seemed to over-generalize the employ of the affirmative past forms in the negative and interrogative patterns, thus, they structured sentences as 'Did you ate pizza last night?' and 'They did not saw the movie'.

Concerning the correct matching of irregular past participial forms to the auxiliary verb 'have' by students, most students stopped combining irregular past forms with the auxiliary 'have', so 'She has took a day off' was seldom produced. By contrast, the error of using 'have'

instead of 'has' continued to display great incidence like in 'He have flown in a helicopter before'. Again, over-generalization of the 'have' to all persons seemingly lies in the background of this confusion.

As for having students telling definite from indefinite time, most students appeared not to have trouble relating definite time adverbs to simple past structures, then, sentences as 'She driven to Las Vegas last month' was rare. On the contrary, indefinite time adverbs, specifically repetition adverbs, proved to be difficult to discriminate for students, consequently, adverbs like twice, once, and a few times were usually employed in simple past sentences as in 'I went back-riding once'.

Although, the flashcard games partially met the goals they were aimed at, it can be said that they did help tackle the problem of lack of discrimination in structure of simple past and present perfect, and, to some extent, assisted in the distinction in use between simple past and present perfect.

To sum up, always bearing in mind its nature of support resource, it can be stated that flashcards games fulfilled its purpose as an aid to teach students the distinction in use and structure between simple past and present perfect.

Suggestions

After all have been said and done, it is time to share some piece of advice for those who are about to engage in ESL teaching. I would have really appreciated if someone would have told me about what areas of teaching tend to be troublesome outside the campus. Now, it is my chance to do so for someone, and I do not intend to miss it.

Be strict

For most teachers, it is a synonym of bad educator. For one sole reason is a must: flexibility can make you lose your job, especially if you are working in private schools. I know it looks stressful and dangerous to do so given that rude reactions are expected. Be strict but not impolite, even though, if someone gets aggressive—let's say a students yells at you; then, do not lose your temper. Keep on being serene but at the same time firm. A good policy to apply in those situations is to make clear that you are just following the regulations of the institution and you do not have the power to make exemptions. By doing so, most people do not take it personally, and supervisors realize you are really doing your work.

Do not be democratic

It may sound hard and contradictory to all you have been told. One point is that having several people to agree on one issue takes too much time and there will always be individuals who disagree. Another point is that some people may feel that you are not impartial as you always favor majorities. A last point is that, in the interest of democracy, you demand a unanimous decision, then, dissident individuals can be exposed to social retaliation from their fellow students. After all, what we are looking for in class is harmony, so think twice before causing adversity in the classroom.

Do not limit your class to the coursebook

I admit that is enticing when everything has been set for you. Most educators would argue that the coursebook has been proved and tested or that their expertise is mile aways from the book authors'; consequently, their contribution will be to no use. Believe me! There is nothing more detrimental to your spirit than that attitude because it deprives from the greatest joy as teacher: the feeling of creating and watching you creation become effective. Please, from time to time make your own material, so that you can realize what I am talking about.

Have your students move

Do not take for granted the power of physical movement for it helps break periods of intense learning or prepare students for an intense task. One way to do is asking them to accompany their answers with movement, for instance, they can go fetch an envelope containing the answer of look for the previously hidden answer envelope under the tables. Another idea may be using color balloons containing the answers, then, when students blow a balloon they chose an answer. I am sure that you may come up with quite a lot of better ideas.

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