

## II. COMMUNITY LANGUAGE LEARNING: Introduction by Diane Larsen-Freeman

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1. Students are whole persons.
  2. People learn best when they feel secure.
  3. Students should have the opportunity to generate the language they wish to learn.
  4. The teacher should “understand” what the students are feeling.
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**Video Presentation:** Next, we will see a demonstration of a method called **Community Language Learning** or **CLL**. Based upon the more general Counseling-Learning approach to adult education developed by Charles Curran, CLL calls upon teachers to become skillful “understanders” of their students as “whole persons.” Becoming a skillful understander means recognizing and accepting the struggles students face as they attempt to internalize another language. Watch how “whole-person learning” is put into practice in the CLL demonstration lesson by my colleague Bonnie Mennell.

**[Video Demonstration of Community Language Learning by Bonnie Mennell:  
See CLL Materials following Commentary]**

**Video Commentary:** You may have noticed that the teacher began the lesson by telling students what they were going to be doing for the class. The teacher does this, recognizing that any new learning experience can be threatening. When students have an idea of what will happen in class, they often feel more secure. People learn best when they feel secure.

What came next in the lesson was the teacher’s inviting the students to first visualize and then to describe their homes. Each student was given a time limit and towards the end of the activity was reminded that they had only one minute left. Setting and enforcing time limits also enhances student security.

Afterwards, they listed the words they needed for the descriptions. Curran believed that students should be given an opportunity to assert themselves, to be actively involved, and to invest themselves in the learning experience. One of the ways of allowing for this is for the students to have the responsibility for generating the language they wish to learn or to work on.

The students next inquired about the meaning and practiced the pronunciation of the words they had listed. You may recall that the teacher stood behind the students as she read the words after them. This is done in the belief that the superior knowledge and power of the teacher can be threatening. If the teacher does not remain in the front of the classroom, the threat is reduced and the students can focus their full attention on the words in front of them.

When the students practiced the words individually, they chose which words they wished to have the teacher repeat, an exercise termed the “Human Computer.” The students control the computer; they can turn the computer off anytime. The students learn to discriminate: to listen carefully to see if what they are saying matches what the teacher is saying.

The students were next asked to use the new words to make their own sentences. As the teacher repeated each student's sentence, she corrected it — never overtly, but rather by repeating the sentence correctly in a nonthreatening manner.

The last part of the lesson was devoted to a feedback session in which the students reflected on what they had experienced and felt during the lesson. The teacher listened and showed each student she understood what each one was feeling. In this way, students have an opportunity to feel accepted as whole persons, to learn about their own learning, in addition to learning about the language.

**[End of Commentary]**

## **VIDEO DEMONSTRATION LESSON PLAN**

### **Teaching Points**

1. Meaning and pronunciation of student-generated vocabulary for describing the house.

### **Objectives**

1. Students will generate, clarify the meaning of and practice the pronunciation of a list of vocabulary words needed to describe the house.
2. Students will create an image of their home in a fellow student's mind through words.
3. Students will learn about each other's worlds and thus strengthen the learning community in the classroom.

## **Video Lesson Steps in Sequence**

### **[Setting the Scene]**

1. The teacher tells the students what they are going to be doing during the next two days of class (working with vocabulary and structures needed to describe their homes) while the students listen.
2. The teacher invites the students to think about their house in their country or in the U.S. and to visualize the setting, the rooms, the objectives, the feelings, the smells, the people, etc. in their minds. The students close their eyes (if they are comfortable doing so) and imagine their houses.

### **[Oral Description]**

3. The teacher asks the students to work in pairs and to take turns describing their houses to each other. Each student works with the person next to him/her. The teacher tells the students to allow time for each person to speak and tells them how much time they have to do this.
4. The teacher reminds the students when it is time for the second person to speak (*students switch roles*) and later that they have one minute left. (*Students conclude descriptions.*)

### **[Word Lists]**

5. The teacher asks students to make a list of the special words they need to describe their houses. Students individually write a list of words in their notebooks. They write as many as they can/want to.
6. The teacher invites the students to call out the words from their lists which she writes as a group list on the board. Students randomly call out words of their choice.

7. The teacher asks the students to first read the group list silently and think of the meanings of the words and then to ask for clarification on any new words or words they are uncertain about. Students can choose to call out words or to remain silent and to offer explanation/examples or to simply listen. The teacher repeats the explanation/examples provided by the students. She provides explanations/examples herself only if the students cannot do so.

#### **[Pronunciation Practice with the "Human Computer"]**

8. The teacher invites the students to practice the pronunciation of the group list chorally and explains the procedure for doing so. Each word is read out loud by the students and then repeated by the teacher only once. They read the words in the order they are on the board.
9. The teacher invites the students to practice the pronunciation individually and explains the procedure for doing this which is known as the "Human Computer." A student raises his hand to indicate he has selected a word to practice. He then says the word out loud. The teacher repeats it. The student can say the word (and thus have the teacher repeat it) as many times as he wishes. The students "turn off" the computer by remaining silent. The teacher is always the last one to repeat the word.

#### **[Writing Practice with the "Human Computer"]**

10. The teacher asks the students to individually write one sentence describing their house using words from the group list and/or from the individual lists in their notebooks. Some students may choose to/be able to write more than one sentence in the time given.
11. The teacher invites the students to read their sentences aloud and explains that the "Human Computer" will work in the same way as it did for the vocabulary, but this time with sentences. The teacher will repeat the sentences after the students, making any necessary corrections but will not draw any direct attention to such changes. She has explained that she will be doing this while giving the directions for the activity. Students volunteer to read their sentences by raising their hands. They can read it as many times as they wish and the teacher will repeat it each time.
12. The teacher invites the students to comment on how they felt during the class after explaining that she will collect their lists of vocabulary words and sentences in order to use them as material for the next day's class. Students can make any comments they wish. The teacher shows she has understood how they are feeling by summarizing/paraphrasing what they have said.

### **TEACHER-TRAINING DISCUSSION QUESTIONS BASED ON THE VIDEO**

1. List the strengths you perceive in it as well as the concerns you have about the approach. What are your reasons for each?

2. Identify/list two specific ways in which the teacher put into practice each of the four basic learning assumptions of CLL:
  - Students are whole persons.
  - People learn best when they feel secure.
  - Students should have the opportunity to generate the language they wish to learn.
  - The teacher should “understand” what the students are feeling.
3. Recall the sequence/steps of the lesson. For each step, list what the teacher did and what the students did. Compare your list with the lesson steps in Video Lesson I. After compiling and then comparing the lesson steps, look at each step and see if you can say why the teacher did what she did. If you were going to teach this lesson to your students what, if any, changes would you make in the lesson steps? Why?
4. How and when did the teacher correct the students? Try to recall specific examples from the lesson. Do you feel students can learn from this type of correction? Why? / Why not? How do you correct students in your classroom?
5. When did students work in pairs? Individually? What were they doing at these times? Do you feel these are productive ways for students to work? Why? / Why not? What types of individual and pair work activities do you do in your classroom?
6. The teacher did not call on students. Students were free to volunteer. Why do you think that this was done? What do you do in your classroom? Why?
7. Watch the section of the demonstration lesson in which the students are commenting on how they felt during the lesson. Do you feel the teacher’s words captured what each student was saying/feeling? Why didn’t the teacher “answer” the question asked about grammar? What do you feel is the purpose for this last step in the lesson?
8. The students generated the material (vocabulary) to be worked on in this lesson. How have you worked with student-generated material in your classroom? Brainstorm ways in which you can work with your textbooks that allow students to generate/select the material you need to cover.

## **TEACHER-TRAINING ACTIVITIES BASED ON THE VIDEO**

### **[Peer Teaching]**

Using the list of lesson steps generated in Video Lesson II (or the lesson steps in Video Lesson I), teach the same lesson to a group of your fellow teachers, or to a volunteer class of EFL students. Take time to follow the steps carefully. (The full lesson takes one-half hour to forty-five minutes.)

Select a list of voluntary words you are required to teach in one of your classes. Use this list to teach a lesson that will allow you to practice the "Human Computer" as follows:

### **["Human Computer"]**

1. Write the list of words on the board. Begin the lesson by explaining what you will be doing as a class. Work with the group as was done in the demonstration lesson, making sure to clarify meanings first, then having the students practice the words chorally and individually with the "Human Computer."
2. Do the same activity again, but generate a list of words on a topic selected by the class as the first step in the lesson.
3. Using a vocabulary list generated in the activities above, teach a lesson in which your students write sentences using the words. Follow the steps in the video demonstration lesson, giving the students time to write, then inviting volunteers to read, then repeating their sentences (and making corrections where needed). Note that students can say their sentence again if they want the teacher to repeat it again.

If the class is small (10 - 15 students), give everyone who volunteers a chance to read their sentence. If the group is larger, limit the time to five to seven minutes and work with as many sentences as this time allows. Give a one-minute notice to the class.

### **[Interactive Feedback on Teaching]**

1. Structure a session where your fellow teachers or volunteer EFL students are invited to comment on how they feel about a practice lesson you have just taught. (This can be done after Activities 1, 2, or 3 above.)
2. Paraphrase what they say; this will help you and your students see that you have understood how they feel. Limit this to five minutes. Then take ten minutes to discuss first how you felt understanding your students, and how they felt being understood. What do you see as the benefits and/or challenges of working in this way?

## **EXTENSIONS OF THE DEMONSTRATION LESSON: INTERACTIVE/COMMUNICATIVE ACTIVITIES**

### **[Copying and Correcting]**

1. Type up a corrected list of all the words and sentences which the students generated in class and handed in from their notebooks at the end of the first class on The house. Give each student a copy of the list. (This list can also be written on a large sheet of paper, posted on the wall and used during classes.)
2. Give the students time to copy this list into their notebooks. If they are at the stage in their learning where they prefer to correct their own work, type the list of sentences (or write on the board or a large sheet of paper) as actually written by the students.

3. Have the students work in small groups to correct their written work. They can then finalize their corrections in the large group, with your support. (This list can be used in the activities which follow.)

### [Categorizing]

1. Ask the students to categorize the vocabulary list in a way that makes sense to them, and then label the categories or groups of words. For example:

#### Things outside the House

fence  
hedge  
(etc.)

#### Feelings

peaceful  
cozy

#### Rooms in the House

kitchen  
bedroom

This can be done as a whole class or in small groups. If it is done in small groups, the groups can compare lists. Each group can also report on its categories to the whole class. If the class is large, instruct the groups to report on only one category — the one with the most or least words, the most unusual, etc. If the categorizing is done in the whole class, invite students to add new words to the categories as a final activity.

2. Write 10 to 15 sentences on the blackboard that contain function words/ structures useful in describing the house. If possible, the sentences should be from the ones written by the students in the previous class. The class practices these sentences using the "Human Computer." Working on whole sentences allows work on intonation.

### [Pronunciation and Intonation Practice]

1. Ask the students to work in pairs, using their individual copies of the vocabulary and sentences from the previous class. One student reads a word or sentence of his/her choice while the other listens and tries to repeat it exactly without looking at the list.
2. If the words/sentences are on the board or posted on a large sheet of paper, one student sits facing the board/paper while the other sits with his/her back to it. The students take turns until the allotted time is over.

### [Concentration]

Each group of four students makes a set of Concentration cards. [Notebook or other stiff paper can be cut up and used if index cards are not available.] Students can make sets of items in different categories:

- Vocabulary words and their illustrations:

_____	_____
chair	
_____	_____

- Vocabulary words and translation:

chair	<i>silla</i>
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- Divided Sentence:

There are	six rooms in my house.
I live	in the country

1. Ask the students to make ten matching sets (20 cards) of items from the category they have chosen.
2. They shuffle the cards, lay them face down, and play a game of Concentration. (See a description of this game in the Suggestopedia Lesson in Video Two.)
3. When they finish one game, they can exchange their sets with another group and continue playing.

### [Grammar Practice]

Present a mini-grammar lesson on a special structure that needs working on.

1. Use examples generated by the students. Ask the students to write five sentences describing their house or the classroom, using the special structure in their sentences.
2. Working in groups, they can share/correct their sentences, and then volunteer to read the sentences to the whole class.

### [Floor Plans]

1. Present a floor plan of your house with rooms and objects labeled, and then describe it to the class — including how you feel about being at home, the people who live there, etc.
2. Ask your students to draw and label floor plans of their homes (which may be a room/apartment/dormitory, etc.). Next, in pairs or groups of three, they take turns describing their home. After this group work, invite the students to add any new words to the vocabulary list from the previous lesson.
3. Invite one or two students to volunteer to present their floor plans to the whole group (in the way you did at the beginning of the class).



### **[Written Composition]**

1. As follow-up activity, ask the students to write a paragraph or short composition describing their home (which may be real or imagined), using the vocabulary generated by the class.
2. Have the students draw a picture and/or floor plan showing what they have described in words. Post their creative work on the walls. Invite them to circulate and read each others' descriptions. (They should work in pairs to correct their work before posting and reading.)
3. If the class is large and wall posting is not possible, the students can form groups of four to share and read in this way.
4. After everyone has had time to read the compositions, lead a brief discussion on what the students have learned about each others' homes and about the vocabulary needed to describe them.

### **[End of Lesson Materials]**