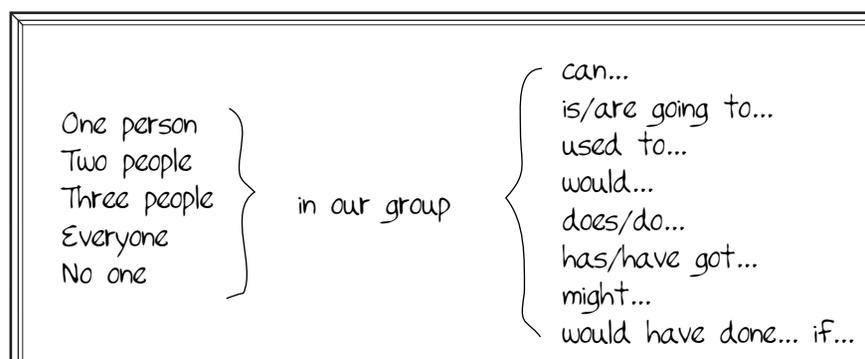


more meaning-focused: there is less emphasis on accuracy at this stage. The pressure to be accurate comes in Step 3, when students are reporting their group's sentences. (It would be a good idea, therefore, to select as spokes-people those students who might normally pay less attention to form.) Again, a focus on accuracy is provided in Step 4, where, by being asked to write sentences, students' attention is brought back to form, where previously it had been more concerned with the meaning. This stage also provides them with a useful record of the lesson, made more memorable through having been personalised.

Evaluation

The E-factor: The activity is extremely **easy** to set up: all that is needed is a board, and once students are familiar with the activity-type, not even that. Note also that the activity can be adapted to virtually any grammatical structure. For example:



Moreover, the activity rates highly in terms of **economy**, since the minimal setting up has excellent pay-off in terms of the volume of practice generated. Theoretically, there is no limit to the number of sentences the groups could produce.

As for **efficacy**, the activity meets a number of the conditions for effective fluency activities outlined above. The language is fairly formulaic and there is a high volume of repetition of the formulae; a secure scaffold is provided in the form of the table, but form is de-emphasised since learners' main concern is to create meaningful sentences. Moreover, the activity works just as well with classes of mixed ability, in that learners can contribute to the level of their ability.

Finally, in terms of forging a group dynamic, the activity has positive spin-off, since students are obliged to interact and find out things about each other they might not otherwise have known. Note that to do this they will need to be familiar with the question forms, such as *Have you ever ...?* and *Who has/hasn't ...?* It would pay to write these on the board in advance of the group work.

The A-factor: Some students – because of their educational or cultural background, or due to personality factors – might find personalisation tasks threatening or out of place in the language classroom. There is also the

problem that learners may feel such pressure to be ‘interesting’ that they become anxious, and lose sight of the linguistic purpose of the task. It may help if learners were given the option of ‘passing’ when topics come up that they do not wish to commit themselves to.

Sample lesson **Lesson 5: Practising the passive using a grammar interpretation activity (Elementary)**

Typically grammar practice involves language **production**, that is, either writing or speaking. This derives from the belief that the sooner learners start producing accurate language, the better. An alternative view is that learners first need to engage with new language **receptively** – that is through listening and reading. Advocates of this position argue for the importance of what is called **consciousness-raising** as a means of restructuring the learner’s grammar. Accordingly, a number of researchers have devised exercise types called either **grammar interpretation activities** or **structured-input tasks**. Such tasks require learners to process input which has been specially structured so as to help them understand the target item. There is no immediate need to produce the item. In fact, immediate production may be counterproductive, in that it may distract attention away from the brain work involved in understanding and restructuring.

In the following example, the teacher has chosen a grammar interpretation activity to sensitise a group of elementary students to the difference between active and passive verb forms.

Step 1

The teacher distributes the pictures (A–J) on the following page – or alternatively, displays them on the board using an overhead projector.

She then tells the class to listen to the sentences she is going to read, and to match each sentence with its picture. She reads each of the following sentences aloud – along with its number – repeating them if students seem confused.

- 1 The man hit the bus.
- 2 The man was hit by the bus.
- 3 The Queen was driven to the airport.
- 4 The old woman attacked a policeman.
- 5 The dog followed a cat.
- 6 The clown chased the lion.
- 7 The old woman was attacked by a policeman.
- 8 The dog was followed by a cat.
- 9 The Queen drove to the airport.
- 10 The clown was chased by a lion.

Step 2

After allowing students to compare their answers with a partner, the teacher then distributes the written sentences, or writes them on the board. Students check their answers again, before the teacher checks the task with the class.

Student text

Japanese and earthquake have got a quite long time relationship. More than 60 years ago the big one had occurred and it caused terrible damage, for example fire which had been used for cooking at lunch time. They were quite ignorant with what they should have done. So now on that day almost all the Japanese do the situation practice against the disaster since it is predicted that the big one will surely occur before long. So that most of them keep immergent food, drink, medicine etc. Of course we hope these things are not in need.

Reformulated teacher text

The Japanese and earthquakes have had a long-term relationship. More than 60 years ago the 'Big One' occurred and it caused terrible damage, such as fires, due to the fact that people used fire to cook their mid-day meal. They didn't really know what precautions to take. So now, on the anniversary of that day, almost everyone in Japan does an earthquake drill, since it is predicted that the next 'Big One' will definitely occur before long. This is why most people keep emergency food, drink and medicine at home. Of course, we hope these things will not be needed.

rather than one or two of the more forthcoming individuals. If this is likely to be a problem, or if the class is too large to make this feasible, an alternative strategy would be to organise the class into groups of about four or five, and have each group produce its own text, ideally onto an overhead projector transparency, or, if not, on paper. While it will be too much for the teacher to reformulate all these texts, one or two can be chosen for the Step 3 activity.

It is important, in Step 3, that the students are involved in the text reformulation process: the teacher can elicit ideas for improvements, can ask questions to check the class's intentions, and can keep the class informed by explaining his thought processes as he hunts for better ways of expressing these intentions. Before moving into Step 4, an alternative stage might be to erase or cover up the reformulated text and ask learners to work in groups to reconstruct it from memory, using their original text as a prompt. This will force attention on form, as well as encouraging greater attentiveness during the reformulation stage.

Evaluation

The E-factor: Reformulation requires no materials preparation since the texts are created entirely by the students. All that is necessary is some stimulus, in the form, for example, of visuals, or a situation (for example, a dialogue between two friends about their health concerns), or a task (such as, Write a letter to the newspaper complaining about a local problem.) The