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**I. Introduction:** *what does it feel like to experience a sentence?*

*Plan for the Session:*

- i. Introduce the linguistic and cognitive science concept of **embodied simulation (ES)** as a *baseline* approach to *building engagement* with the work of crafting and comprehending sentences
- ii. Try a simulation exercise
- iii. Connect ES to Anderson’s “label-less grammar,” Harry Noden’s image grammar, and Patrick Hartwell’s “tacit power of unconscious [grammar] knowledge”

**II. A Grammar Challenge:** *engagement*

**Dunn:** “Good grammar instruction can occur only after the following question is taken seriously: “What is good writing instruction?” The best grammar instruction happens when students are so engaged in a writing project that they want to make it better.”

**Anderson:** “I ask students why. ‘What makes you say that? Where have you see this pattern before? Do you see this new pattern in this text?’ Students look for examples, not just a right answer; they evaluate why and what effect the concept or strategy has on the writer’s message and craft” (34)

- 1. *How can we maximally integrate grammar instruction into reading/writing tasks and build engagement?*
- 2. *How can we do grammar without leading with what I see as the central engagement-killer, labels and identification?*
- 3. *How can our grammar discovery and sentence-crafting build upon what students already know?*

**III. Embodied Simulation:** *a science of meaning*

**Bergen:** “Language matters to us because it is a vehicle for meaning—it allows us to take the desires, intentions, and experiences in our heads and transmit a signal through space that makes those thoughts pop up in someone else’s head . . . We don’t read fiction because the words look appealing on the page but **because of the transporting flood of sights, sounds, places and ideas that good writing evokes.** And yet, almost no one, from lay people to linguists, really knows how meaning works” (5)

“Meaning is a creative process in which people **construct virtual experiences—embodied simulations**—in their mind’s eye” (16)

*“Understanding language, in multimodal ways, is a lot like being there” (92)*

**III. Embodied Simulation:** *a science of meaning (CONT.)*

**Gibbs:** “processing linguistic meaning is not a matter of understanding what words mean, but **includes the perception of physical objects, physical events, the body, and other people in interaction.** The meaningful representation of language includes both a depiction of what has happened and potential perceptions and embodied actions that may take place in the future. **Linguistic meaning, therefore, is inherently embodied,** not only in the sense of what has happened, but in the sense of what is likely to occur next in a discourse situation” (13)

**IV. Sensing the Sentence:** *some classroom application*

(\*see reverse\*)

**V. Implications/Connections:** *ES and label-less methods, image grammar, “unconscious knowledge”*

**Hartwell:** we should “shuck off our hyperliterate perception of the value of formal rules, and to regain the confidence **in the tacit power of unconscious knowledge** that our theory of language give us”(121)

“any **involvement** with language is preferable to instruction in rules or definitions” (125)

**VI. Questions/Discussion**

ES METHODS connect reading and writing through the experience of meaning  
 ... deemphasize (even eliminate!) labels and naming and sentence dissection  
 ... encourage creativity, playfulness, and meaning rather than correctness  
 ... build upon students unconscious wealth of knowledge about language  
 ... can complement other instructional strategies; simulation is a place to *start*

SOME CLASSROOM APPLICATION

*SENSING THE SENTENCE: studying APPOSITIVES*

**1) The monster crawls across the kitchen table.**

*“Let’s try to imagine or picture this sentence—what do you experience? What do you picture? What do you focus on? What’s clear in our movie? What’s unclear or fuzzy?”*

→ START any sentence work by sharing a range of simulations, notice (based on what the sentence makes you experience and how) what the sentence architecture dictates strongly and ambiguously

**2) The monster—a shiny, ambling cockroach—crawls across the kitchen table.**

*“Now I’m going to make a change, and I want you to tell me after what happens in your mind’s eye: What happened? Why?”*

→ change the sentence—change the simulation; add the structure you want to discover (you can focus here on discovering new vocabulary, too—e.g., ambling)

**3) The monster—?????????—crawls across the kitchen table.**

*“Now you go in there and YOU change it”*

→read→write→share→simulate; emphasizes imagination & play; creativity steers “grammar work”

**4) The monster—a shiny, ambling cockroach—crawls across the kitchen table. Etc.**

*e.g., My computer, a modern-day dinosaur, chews floppy disks as noisily as my brother does peanut brittle.*

*“The hangman, a grey-haired convict in the white uniform of the prison, was waiting beside his machine.”*

*“[N]othing contributes so much to tranquilize the mind as a steady purpose—a point on which the soul may fix its intellectual eye.”*

*“Let’s focus in on the architecture of these sentences: the one we’ve been imagining is at the top.*

*What do you notice about the sentences? What might they share in common? We noticed in our COCKCROACH sentence we could take that phrase out and it was still a sentence. Is that the case with these other examples?*

→ DISCOVER PATTERNS, including punctuation options, in example set. Discuss the WORK of these phrases. Make up a name based on their job. AND/OR introduce their “official” grammatical name and define them.

**5) EXTEND: “We were waiting outside the condemned cells, a row of sheds fronted with double bars, like small animal cages.”** → Do sentence combining; look for structures in reading, e.g. Orwell’s “The Hanging”; have students add this structure somewhere in their own writing and write/talk about its effects, etc.

### Ideas to Help Set the Climate for Simulation

(+ other applications):

- **Use Discovery:** start as I did in our session: read a sentence (over and over), focus students on their *experience*. Use questioning to help students discover that they might be “picturing” most fully the action of the sentence, what it might look/feel/move like, what details come to mind, etc.
- **Consider modeling**—have students select a vivid sentence from a book they’re reading and simulate it for them—with theatrics and gesturing!
- Consider **sharing** with students a little about **embodied simulation research**—there are some interesting studies out there (see Bergen & the rest of Further Reading)
- **Simulate their Writing:** in conferences, demonstrate flow or vivid description or transitions (or lack thereof) by simulating your experience of their language
- Discuss students’ **simulations of main characters and settings**—explore movie characterizations to demonstrate similarities and differences
- **Subj/Verb as Sentence ENGINES**—use many examples to help students discover *action* as the engine of sentences. Connect to study/simulation of fragments and what they lack (and/or wordy verb phrases, passive voice, nominalizations, misplaced modifiers, etc.)

### Further Reading and Works Cited

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