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**LA THÈSE A ÉTÉ  
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Widdowson's Model of Language Use  
As a Basis for Course Design and Methodology:  
A Critical Examination

Bruce McCormack

A Thesis  
in  
The TESL Centre

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of Master of Arts at  
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March 1986

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## ABSTRACT

### Widdowson's Model of Language Use As a Basis for Course Design And Methodology: A Critical Examination

Bruce McCormack

Widdowson's (1983a) "Model of Language Use" is a characterization of the discourse process of the proficient language user. The purpose of this thesis is to examine Widdowson's model critically in order to determine its essential components. The essential components of the functioning model are then used as a point of reference in conducting an examination of a selection of ESP (English For Specific Purposes) materials. This task is undertaken because of the importance which Widdowson has placed on methodology in endeavouring to establish a theoretical framework for the teaching of language for specific purposes.

The functioning model is found to be reflected in some of the ESP materials examined. These include materials authored or initiated by Widdowson himself in addition to one of three other sets of materials examined. The two other sets of materials are found to account for only some of the model's components and do not, therefore, provide for language use as defined by the model. It is concluded that Widdowson's "model of language use" has important implications for language teaching.

## RESUME

Le Modèle de l'utilisation de la langue de Widdowson comme base pour la méthodologie et la planification de cours: un examen critique.

Bruce McCormack

"Le modèle de l'utilisation de la langue" (Model of Language Use) de Widdowson (1983a) caractérise le processus de discours de celui qui maîtrise bien sa langue. Cette thèse a pour but de faire l'examen critique du modèle de Widdowson afin de relever ses composantes essentielles. Celles du modèle 'fonctionnel' servent alors de point de repère dans l'analyse d'une sélection de matériaux pour le ESP (English For Specific Purposes - l'anglais pour fins spécifiques). Cette étude a été entreprise en raison de l'importance que Widdowson a accordée à la méthodologie dans le but d'établir un cadre théorique pour l'enseignement de la langue pour des fins spécifiques.

Le modèle fonctionnel est reflété dans certains des matériaux étudiés, notamment dans ceux écrits ou conçus par Widdowson lui-même, ainsi que dans un parmi trois autres ensembles de matériaux. Les deux autres ne comptaient que quelques unes des composantes du modèle et donc ne permettent pas l'utilisation de la langue défini par le modèle. On a conclu que le modèle fonctionnel de Widdowson fournit des préceptes important pour l'enseignement de la langue.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CHAPTER 1  
INTRODUCTION

Background

Since the 1970's, an increasing quantity and variety of course materials have been designed under the banner of ESP - English For Specific Purposes. Widdowson has, however, asserted that activity in ESP is being conducted without the benefit of a "theoretical framework" (Widdowson, 1983a, p. 1).

In the absence of a coherent theory to inform the choice of appropriate methodology and to serve as a basis for ESP course design, Widdowson contends that the field has evolved into "a busy area of basically 'ad hoc' operational activity without reference to any clear theoretical principles" (Widdowson, 1983a, p. 13).

Widdowson's assessment of the essentially unprincipled condition of ESP serves, in his analysis, as a prelude to and justification for his presentation of a theoretical model. This "model of language use" (Widdowson, 1983a) is intended to fill the theoretical void which Widdowson perceives to exist within the field of ESP.

To begin with, it is necessary to reflect on Widdowson's assessment of the condition of ESP. Within the context of this thesis, this will serve two purposes. Firstly, it will serve to introduce Widdowson's perspective on the central issues of ESP course content and methodology,

a perspective which appears to differ quite markedly from that of many ESP course designers.

Secondly, it will provide a general overview of some of the seminal ideas which have determined course design and content within the ESP movement. This will serve to outline the historical context within which Widdowson's "model of language use" may be placed. This establishment of historical context is germane to the goal of this study, which is to examine Widdowson's model critically and then to look at the relationship between theory and practice, by using the model as a reference in examining actual ESP materials.

#### The Field of ESP: An Overview of Its Assumptions

Widdowson (1983a), in outlining the need for a coherent theory, has stated that the recent proliferation of ESP materials has been based not on a theory but on "an assumption that ESP is simply a matter of describing a particular area of language and then using this description as a course specification" (p. 10).

This viewpoint, whether it is perceived as simply being an "assumption" or part of a more coherent theory, can certainly be observed in the expressed purposes of a number of course designers. Ewer and Latorre explain the "purpose" of A Course in Basic Scientific English as being that of teaching "the basic language of scientific English" (Ewer and Latorre, 1969, p. ix). The authors contend that there is

a basic language of science which crosses disciplines in addition to the special vocabularies characteristic of particular subject areas.

Ewer and Latorre (1967) undertook a frequency count from a sample of over three million words in order to determine what this basic language (lexis and syntax) of science is. They also sought to discover the "special vocabulary" of a number of specific scientific disciplines.

It might be imagined that this view of the central rôle of vocabulary selection in ESP course design has long since ceased to be dominant. But a remarkably similar statement of purpose can be found in the preface to the more recent Career English Series, published by MacMillan fifteen years later: "The books are designed to teach the special terminology students need in order to communicate in English within their career areas" (Meyers, 1984, Preface).

Another virtually identical statement of intent is provided in the Foreword to the Regents Series English For Careers wherein we read that the series is designed to introduce "the particular language of different professional and vocational fields" (Mohr, 1978, p. v).

Quite clearly, the idea that a specification of syntax and lexis provides an appropriate means by which to design language courses and determine language content, is a widely held view. There appear to be many proponents of this theory or "assumption" that linguistic description and vocabulary specification can serve as a basis for ESP

materials designed to meet the specific needs of learners.

We can place these statements of purpose into sharp relief by contrasting them with Widdowson's (1983a) concluding remarks in the argument presented in Learning Purpose and Language Use : "It does not actually matter very much, I think, what language the learners are presented with. What does matter is how they can put it to effective use" (p. 91). Widdowson questions the view that the language content of ESP courses can be adequately derived from the "discipline of linguistics" (p. 51).

What Widdowson (1981b, 1983a) has referred to as the "assumption" underlying the design of courses such as the aforementioned A Course in Basic Scientific English, appears to be reflected in formulations of "register analysis" (Halliday, McIntosh, and Strevens - 1964). Linguistic descriptions furnished by register analysis have serviced the linguist's and the grammarian's need to analyze and categorize the linguistic code; they have also, as shown above, served as a basis for course design and materials development, as in Ewer and Latorre (1969).

As Widdowson (1981b) points out, Halliday et al., in fact, seem to identify such an analysis as being the necessary prerequisite to the task of designing materials to meet "specialized needs." Such an analysis would entail "detailed studies of restricted languages and special registers carried out on the basis of large samples of the language used by the particular persons concerned" (cited in

Widdowson, 1981b).

This idea of a register analysis was eventually supplemented, or in some cases replaced by that of a needs analysis, most thoroughly articulated by Munby (1978). Such an analysis, rather than focussing on linguistic structures and lexis, attempts to determine the communicative purposes for which the learner requires the second language. The goal of a needs analysis is to meet the academic or occupational needs which the learner brings to the learning situation by designing courses whose language content is directly relevant to the perceived needs of the learner.

As has been demonstrated, much of the activity of ESP course design has been and continues to be based on the structural approach exemplified by "register analysis." Recently, however, as Widdowson (1981b) has shown, the concept of a needs analysis has been very influential in directing ESP activity. The design of an increasing number of ESP courses has been characterized by efforts to determine, systematically, the communicative needs of a target group of learners and then to use this specification of needs as a basis for decisions on the course content of a language program designed to fulfill them.

Ewer and Latorre (1969), as Widdowson has pointed out, conducted a needs analysis "as a straightforward register analysis, itemizing the occurrence of formal linguistic features" (Widdowson, 1983a, p. 29). They then used the



results of this analysis to determine language content.

More recently, needs analysis has focussed on notional and functional meanings. A typical needs analysis attempts to determine the functional (as opposed to the purely structural) nature of the language which will be required by the learner in successfully engaging in communicative activities of various kinds.

Mackay (1981) cites Selinker, Trimble and Vroman (1972) in expressing a common expectation underlying a needs analysis of this kind. The assumption is that course design will be maximally effective when it is based on the needs of the learners. That is to say, an ESP program should be "based on the identified uses" to which learners will put the language once the course is completed (Mackay, 1981, p. 134).

Widdowson has argued that "such an assumption is mistaken" (Widdowson, 1981b, p. 2). He suggests that orthodox needs analyses are too limiting because they are solely "goal-oriented," providing for ends but neglecting the means of achieving them.

Widdowson (1981b) has, by contrast, outlined a "process-oriented" approach, one which considers the determination of the language content of a syllabus to be less significant than decisions about how to facilitate the learning process, thus emphasizing the role of methodology in course implementation. In his subsequent publication, Learning Purpose and Language Use, Widdowson has extended

and further articulated this view, suggesting that ESP course design requires the implementation of a "procedurally based methodology" (Widdowson, 1983a, p. 90). It is within this context that he has developed his "model of language use."

### Widdowson's Model of Language Use

Widdowson has proposed a "model of language use" to provide a "theoretical basis for ESP" (Widdowson, 1983a, p. 34). A preliminary discussion of the model will serve to introduce some of its principal terms and definitions as well as the premises on which it is based.

### Systemic and Schematic (Language) Knowledge

Widdowson's model is based on several key premises. One of these premises is that there are "two basic levels of language knowledge" (Widdowson, 1983a, p. 57).

The first level is systemic and consists of a knowledge of grammar and phonology. A measure of a learner's systemic knowledge is, in Widdowson's terms, a determination of his or her linguistic competence (Widdowson, 1983a, p. 35).

The second level of language knowledge is what Widdowson calls the "schematic" level. He defines schemata as cognitive constructs which, among other defining features, are creations stemming from past experience (Widdowson, 1983a, p. 34). These cognitive structures are

the rudiments of language use. They are used as a kind of blueprint to make sense of and to organize experience. And they are used to interpret and predict the meaning of events. Communicative competence, in Widdowson's terms, is a reflection of this schematic level of language knowledge (Widdowson, 1983a, p. 38).

### The Key Executive Role of Schematic Knowledge

A second key premise of Widdowson's model is that in actual language use, only the schematic level is "directly" engaged. Schematic knowledge "serves as the main source of reference" in actual discourse (Widdowson, 1983a, p. 57).

### Communicative Competence, Capacity and Procedural Ability

In introducing Widdowson's important concept of capacity, it must be pointed out that what Widdowson means by communicative competence is qualitatively different from what many other writers who have used the term have taken it to mean. Widdowson uses the term communicative capacity to refer to capabilities which other writers may have subsumed under the term communicative competence (Wilkins 1976, Mackay and Mountford 1978).

As has been explained, Widdowson's use of the term communicative competence refers to the language user's store of schematic knowledge. It is communicative capacity which enables a learner to engage in necessary procedures which facilitate the exploitation of this

schematic knowledge. Communicative capacity, then, is the "procedural ability" to engage schematic knowledge and then to realize it in actual language use (Widdowson, 1983a, p. 41).

### The Focus of this Study

The goal of this study is to examine Widdowson's proposed theoretical framework for ESP critically in order to provide a clear explanation of the functioning of his "model of language use" in theory and an assessment of its realizability in practice.

If gaps are found to exist between theory and practice, these will be discussed. And if the model is seen to be deficient or limiting or to require modification, critical comment may be in order. The explicit notion of criticism, however, is not what is intended by the use of the term critical examination. What is intended is the idea of a discriminating assessment.

A critical examination of Widdowson's model is a significant task for two reasons:

Firstly, it will provide a clear and concise picture of the character of the model. Widdowson's own presentation takes 110 pages because of the need he sees to explore his sources.

Secondly, it will serve to highlight the model's essential features by distinguishing a concern with and an interest in its actual functioning as opposed to the

justification of the arguments which produced it.

Once the model's essential features have been distilled, two sets of ESP materials authored or initiated by Widdowson will be examined, using his model as a point of reference. The purpose of this examination will be to assess the extent to which Widdowson's functioning "model of language use" is found to be reflected in these materials.

Subsequently, three other sets of materials will be examined. The essential features of Widdowson's model will again be used as a point of reference in conducting this examination. Its purpose is to determine which of the essential features of the model are reflected and which fail to be reflected in these materials.

This latter task of examining a selection of ESP materials with reference to a model which was not used in developing them should, it is anticipated, serve to further expose the unique features of Widdowson's model and to determine the extent to which Widdowson's model reflects a separate theoretical view or merely a stylistic variation of the traditional assumptions. It should also provide some insight into the practical implications of a systemic/schematic distinction and a "procedurally based methodology" for course design and materials development.

To summarize, the specific questions I will address in this study are these:

(1) What are the essential features of Widdowson's theoretical framework as expressed in his "model of language use"?

(2) Has Widdowson himself put his theoretical framework into practice?

(3) Which of the essential features of the model are reflected or fail to be reflected in an examination of a selection of ESP materials?

## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

#### Introduction

Widdowson's ideas about communicative language teaching, by his own admission, have met with a lack of understanding by some commentators in the field (Widdowson, 1983a). The goal of teaching for communication has been interpreted by some to mean that language must necessarily and at all times be presented as communication. He regrets his own part in contributing to this misunderstanding: "No doubt the title of my own book (Widdowson 1978) has made its own contribution to this misconception and I wish now that I had chosen the more accurate and less misleading title 'Teaching language for communication' " (Widdowson, 1983a, p. 30).

In this chapter, the most important of Widdowson's ideas about communicative language teaching will be reviewed to determine the general outline of his viewpoint on the communicative approach to second language instruction. References to Widdowson's work by other course designers and theorists who have expressed agreement with his work will assist in this process.

Widdowson's concept of procedures, central to an understanding of his "model of language use," will then be discussed in relation to his use of the term schema (plural: schemata). As previously noted, Widdowson's "model

of language use" posits that there is a schematic level of language competence "which is alone operative in language use" (Widdowson, 1983a, p. 38). Since the model attaches such importance to this schematic level of knowledge, a brief review of schema as understood by two other theorists will lend perspective to Widdowson's use of the term.

Widdowson's (1983a) approach to ESP course design is based on theoretical principles which he presents with reference to his "model of language use." Widdowson emphasizes the holistic nature of the discourse process and advocates a "procedurally based methodology" to account for it, stressing the importance of "methods of implementation" while de-emphasizing the role of language content specification. His approach will be discussed, as will his viewpoint on the pedagogic shortcomings of the traditional ESP approaches (of register and needs analysis) to the determination of language content in ESP courses. These traditional approaches will be contrasted with his own.

Subsequently, the most conspicuous criticism of Widdowson's position will be reviewed. Michael Swan's quite vociferous disagreement with Widdowson's ideas will be examined as will criticism by Charnock.

The chapter concludes with a look at Widdowson's view of acquisition in relation to language use. His views will be compared with those of Krashen and McLaughlin.



### Widdowson's View of Communicative Language Teaching

Candlin, Kirkwood and Moore (1978) cite Widdowson (1973) as having articulated a "crucial distinction" between text and discourse (cited in Candlin et al., 1978, p. 195). For Widdowson, grammatical relations and the manner in which sentences are formed and interconnect constitute the findings of a text analysis. An analysis of discourse, on the other hand, reveals the way in which utterances occur in context to express communicative functions and thus impart meaning.

Widdowson (1978) examines this distinction further within the context of a discussion of the communicative approach to language teaching. His examination makes use of a number of other binary distinctions related to that of text and discourse.

For example, Widdowson's use of the terms sentences and utterances in his delineation of text and discourse is precise and purposeful. For Widdowson, language processing at the sentence level involves an appropriate understanding of grammatical knowledge. Language processing at the level of utterance involves the ability to use language in context for communicative purposes.

Widdowson acknowledges that part of a second language learner's task is to develop the ability to produce "correct" sentences. As he points out, many language teachers believe that the task of learning a second language essentially involves the application of grammar

and correct syntax in the production of correct sentences. Widdowson concedes that this view has contributed to the development of "a good deal of impressive language teaching material" (Widdowson, 1978, p. 1).

But he also believes that such an approach is inadequate to account for language processing in communication. Widdowson demonstrates that an understanding at the sentence level does not confer the ability to comprehend or produce meaning which is contextually-embedded and which occurs beyond the sentence level. In other words, a knowledge of a variety of sentence patterns, though necessary, is not sufficient to provide a knowledge of how language is used to achieve communicative purposes.

### Usage and Use

Widdowson (1978) posits a distinction between usage and use to further clarify these different levels of language knowledge. On the one hand, there is the ability to generate grammatically correct sentences (expressing a knowledge of usage). On the other, there is the ability to employ language appropriately to achieve communicative purposes (demonstrating a capacity for language use).

In relation to Chomsky's distinction between competence and performance, usage reflects one aspect of performance, namely, a demonstration of a knowledge of linguistic rules, or of the "abstracted" language system. Language use reflects another aspect of performance, the ability to apply

linguistic knowledge in the actual communicative use of language for particular purposes (Widdowson, 1978, p. 3).

### Signification and Value

Directly related to this distinction between usage and use is Widdowson's distinction between signification and value (Widdowson, 1978, p. 11). Widdowson uses these terms to refer to the kinds of meaning conveyed by language. Signification refers to the meaning conveyed by examples of usage at the sentence level. In looking for this kind of meaning, one might ask, "What does 'usage' of this or that grammatical form or lexical item signify?"

Value refers to language use as it occurs in the context of actual discourse. In seeking for this kind of meaning, one might ask, "What is being said here?" Or, "What is the communicative effect or value of these utterances?"

Widdowson explains that he does not wish to convey the notion that these terms refer to unrelated aspects of meaning. The value of an utterance is determined by the relationship between the linguistic code through which it is expressed and the context in which it occurs.

In other words, an utterance can have no communicative value without making use of signification. Signification, however, in Widdowson's view, "is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for communication to take place" (Widdowson, 1978, p. 20). Therefore, it is not enough to simply teach the level of language meaning represented by

signification if one hopes to develop the communicative abilities of a group of learners.

### Symbolic Meaning and Indexical Meaning

In a later publication, Widdowson discusses the meaning which is conveyed by sentences and utterances through his own interpretation of Peirce's terms symbol and index (cited in Widdowson, 1983a, p. 52). His use of these terms appears to be similar to those of signification and value. He points out that the study of linguistics involves an "idealization of data" such that any examination of linguistic "symbols" must, by the very nature of the task, be undertaken in a decontextualized environment. The results of such examinations of symbolic meaning have often been used as a basis for decisions on language content in second language courses.

Widdowson, however, questions the efficacy of using this approach to entirely determine the content of language courses. In his view, the linguist's idealized data can effectively account for symbols of meaning abstracted from context for the purposes of linguistic analysis? But it cannot account for indices of meaning which are only to be found within the context of actual language use.

To restate this important point, linguistic items are abstracted and studied by the linguist as symbols. But within the context of actual discourse, they do not function as symbols but as indices of meaning, understandable only

in context. In Widdowson's terms: "Whereas the sentence has symbolic meaning by virtue of sense and denotation, the utterance has indexical meaning which has to be achieved by the language user by referring to the particular context of its occurrence" (Widdowson, 1983a, p. 52).

For Widdowson, therefore, the communicative approach to language teaching, concerned as it is with language use, cannot be exclusively based on decontextualized symbols such as those represented in idealized sentences. What is required is a presentation of language which provides learners with opportunities to understand and convey contextually-embedded indices of "pragmatic meaning" which are only operant in actual language use.

#### Language Use in Communicative Language Teaching

In Widdowson's estimation, therefore, Communicative Language Teaching should be oriented towards language use. A focus on usage will provide the learner with an understanding of aspects of symbolic meaning. It will impart a knowledge of language as system. But it will not ensure the development of the communicative skills and abilities necessary for the comprehension and expression of indexical meaning found only in language use. Whereas: "The teaching of use, however, does seem to guarantee the learning of usage since the latter is represented as a necessary part of the former" (Widdowson, 1978, p. 19).

It is possibly statements such as this one which have

led to much of the confusion surrounding Widdowson's ideas as noted at the beginning of this chapter. The implication of the above statement appears to be that it is probably unnecessary, perhaps even redundant, for language teachers to teach aspects of usage. One could readily infer from this statement that an orientation towards teaching language as communication is quite sufficient because such an approach will automatically generate appropriate usage within the chosen contexts of language use.

Widdowson (1983a) admits to having contributed to what he believes to be a prevalent "misconception" about communicative language teaching. He addresses this issue by firstly discussing the relationship between aims and objectives in the development of language programs. He acknowledges that the aim of language teaching has always been to produce a learner who can communicate. Structurally based courses have assumed that a concern with usage will ultimately result in communicative ability and actual language use.

Functionally-based courses have had the same aim as their predecessors, that of producing a learner who can use the language to effectively engage in communicative behaviour. What has changed, according to Widdowson, is that while the aim of language teaching has remained the same, the objectives selected as a means of achieving that aim have been reassessed and modified.

This "shift of emphasis" (Widdowson, 1983a), from a

concern with structures to a focus on notional and functional meanings, has had a direct impact on ESP course design. Since ESP students are learning the second language for specific communicative purposes, the aim of the enterprise, in many cases, has been directly equated with the objectives established to meet that aim in the minds of many course designers.

For Widdowson, this "conflation of objectives and aims" (Widdowson, 1983a, p. 12) does not provide a satisfactory approach to course design. It fails to deal (adequately if at all) with pedagogical concerns, specifically the vital role which Widdowson contends should be played by methodology.

Furthermore, according to Widdowson, the previously mentioned "misconception" about communicative language teaching has become widely accepted as a "result" of this unfortunate equating of aims and objectives. The "misconception" in question is the idea that a focus on language use (rather than usage) implies the need for "authenticity" in all language materials and activities.

This view holds that since the aim of language teaching is the communicative use of language, objectives established to meet that aim must always involve the use of authentic classroom processes and materials such that they are all an exemplification of language as it is used in communication. This will ensure that language is always taught as communication.

Widdowson clearly regrets his part in contributing to this "misconception." In expressing this regret, he admits that it is by no means clear that authentic activities "can or should always be given first priority" in communicative classroom settings. He acknowledges that in the teaching of languages, "lower level skills . . . must be taught in order to be disregarded" (Widdowson, 1983a, p. 30). By this one may be led to believe that in Widdowson's view, the explicit teaching of usage does have a place, at least in the early stages of a language teaching program. One may also infer that a teacher adopting Widdowson's approach to communicative language teaching need not view authenticity as a required feature of all classroom activities.

Nevertheless, Widdowson's "model of language use" (1983a) posits that the systemic level of language knowledge (realized as usage) "has no direct executive function" in language use (p. 38). Its function is to provide "resources for sustaining the schematic level when required" (p. 58). As such, the systemic level of language knowledge is not operative in language use. The schematic level is "alone operative in language use" (p. 38).

In the teaching of language for communication, a second language learner must be taught the lower level skills since they "have a crucial role to play" (Widdowson, 1983a, p. 31). But clearly, for Widdowson, the systemic level of language knowledge is supportive, or subordinate, and the



schematic level is primary, or "superordinate" (Widdowson, 1983a, p. 55) in his view of how language is processed and produced when a language user is engaged in actual discourse.

Widdowson's view of language use is fundamental to his position on Communicative Language Teaching as well as to his approach to course design and methodology. To understand what he means by the term language use, it is necessary to examine his work on the nature of discourse.

### Discourse Structure and Processing

For Widdowson, an examination of usage can take place at the level of the sentence. A consideration of language use, however, requires an examination of language which goes beyond the sentence level, at the level of discourse. When engaged in normal communicative behaviour, proficient language users do not produce sentences such as those which linguists abstract from natural language for the purpose of linguistic analysis and description. Rather, they make use of their linguistic knowledge (usage) in unique and extremely creative ways to produce utterances and to engage in discourse at the level of language use.

Widdowson (1978) has analyzed discourse with a view to understanding the nature of language as it is actually used for communicative purposes. He defines language use in relation to several concepts which are central to his thinking on discourse: "Language use has to do with

propositions and the acts (illocutionary) they are used to perform. But these do not occur in isolation: they combine to form discourse" (Widdowson, 1978, p. 52).

Widdowson discusses the ways in which propositions and illocutionary acts combine in the creation of discourse with reference to the terms cohesion and coherence. Cohesion refers to the "propositional development" of a piece of discourse as indicated by formal and "overt" linguistic markers. Formal presentations of text are normally characterized by the explicit linking of propositions, one with the next, to effect the careful and cohesive development of an argument or a formal explanation (to cite but a few examples of this process).

As Widdowson makes clear, however, discourse is often much less formal than this. In instances of language use where this is the case, many of the overt signals explicitly spelled out in formal presentations of cohesive text are not supplied. In such cases, the discourse will not be cohesive but it may nevertheless be coherent.

Interlocutors engaged in a dialogue, for example, will very often say only what is necessary for the expression of meaning to be effectively conveyed. In Widdowson's terms: "We inevitably rely on common knowledge: we make assumptions about what the person we are addressing can infer from what we say" (Widdowson, 1978, p. 31).

In such instances of use as these, propositional development cannot be traced with reference to syntactic and

semantic references. Many of the overt signals, explicitly spelled out in discourse which is cohesive, are not supplied in discourse of this kind. Instead, in processing the discourse, the language user must trace the "illocutionary development" which characterizes discourse which is coherent but not necessarily cohesive.

In Widdowson's terms, such a process requires the recognition of the "illocutionary value" of utterances. Language users are frequently called upon to find out what the language they are being exposed to is being used to "do." More formally stated, they are required to determine the "illocutionary acts which propositions, not always overtly linked, are being used to perform" (Widdowson, 1978, p. 28).

But whether the relations which hold between segments of actual discourse are the explicitly marked relations between propositions or the implicitly noted relations between illocutionary acts, the requirements of discourse processing are the same. Discourse relations must be traced and understood "by the reader or the listener" through the use of "rational procedures" (Widdowson, 1978, p. 32). When language is used to effect communicative purposes, intended meanings are often ambiguous or less than crystal-clear. For Widdowson, it is through engaging in these necessary procedures that the proficient language user is able to articulate and comprehend intended meaning. Procedures are central to the functioning of Widdowson's "Model of Language

Use."

### Procedures and Schemata

Widdowson initially uses the term "interpretative" procedures in describing the functioning of his "model of language use." He defines them as "interactive negotiating activities," stating that they "are needed to exploit schematic knowledge and bring it to bear on particular instances of use" (Widdowson, 1983a, p. 40).

In the comprehension of speech or written material, for example, "frame procedures" are required to engage appropriate schemata and then to determine the indexical value of the language under examination by relating items which are "indexical of the same schematic frame" (Widdowson, 1983a, p. 71).

Widdowson's use of the term schema is by no means unique to him. As Neisser has pointed out in investigating the role of schema in perception, the use of this term has a long history (Neisser, 1976, p. 76). Rumelhart traces its origins to Kant and adopts the term because of "historical precedence" (Rumelhart, 1980, p. 33).

Neisser (1976) defines schema in relation to his work on the perception of linguistic and non-linguistic information. For him, a schema "is that portion of the entire perceptual cycle which is internal to the perceiver, modifiable by experience, and somehow specific to what is being perceived" (Neisser, 1976, p. 54).

Rumelhart (1980), examining the concept of schema in relation to reading comprehension, presents a definition which he believes to be descriptive of what a long line of authors who have used the term schemata have intended it to mean. Schemata are "the building blocks of cognition. They are the fundamental elements upon which all information processing depends" (Rumelhart, 1980, p. 33).

Rumelhart goes on to describe schemata as "active processes" with a "very well-defined constituent structure." With respect to both of these characteristics, he suggests that "schemata resemble procedures or computer programs" (Rumelhart, 1980, p. 39).

Widdowson (1983a) has clearly defined what he intends by his use of the term schemata (these definitions will be presented in chapter 3). To arrive at his own definition, he has pieced together the ideas of numerous others who have written on schema theory and carefully juxtaposed them with his own. In setting out his views on schemata, he has adopted and defined several other terms as well, including the following: frame, script, scenario, and plan (Widdowson, 1983a, p. 55).

As Rumelhart (1980) and Widdowson (1983a) both point out, these related terms have often appeared in the literature on schema theory. Widdowson's assessment of their functioning in language use, however, is peripheral to his main presentation of his "model of language use." In the examination of his model, therefore, his term

schemata, which he uses repeatedly in describing the functioning of the model, will be referred to exclusively.

Rumelhart (1980) ties together the concept of schemata and the procedures required to engage them very succinctly, highlighting the nature of the work facing advocates of schema theory: "Obviously, the degree to which a schema theory of human information processing can work depends on the degree to which procedures can actually be constructed to carry out the tasks I have just assigned to them" (Rumelhart, 1980, p. 39). Both Rumelhart and Widdowson believe that such procedures can be developed.

A thorough explanation of the actual functioning of Widdowson's interpretative procedures will be undertaken in chapter 3 when his "model of language use" is critically examined. The activation of procedures to engage appropriate schemata is fundamental to Widdowson's view of how the proficient language user engages in actual discourse. The second language learner who wishes to become a proficient language user must develop the procedural abilities necessary for language use. Therefore, in Widdowson's view: "The central task of teaching is to activate these procedures" (Widdowson, 1983a, p. 107).

The high priority which Widdowson confers on the teaching of procedures is a reflection of his concern with involving the learner in the process of learning and with ensuring the development of learner capacity within contexts which provide for actual language use. He does not

believe that course design should be preoccupied with implanting "some kind of end product in the learner's mind.

As mentioned in chapter 1, Widdowson has advocated a process-oriented approach to course design, "one concerned with transitional behaviour and the means of learning" (Widdowson, 1981b, p. 5). In presenting his "model of language use," Widdowson has further articulated his pedagogical priorities in his advocacy of a "procedurally based methodology" as a basis for ESP course design (Widdowson, 1983a, p. 90).

#### A Procedurally Based Methodology in ESP Course Design

Widdowson has stated that ESP is generally understood to be a training operation. The goal of this training is the development of a "restricted competence" relevant to the anticipated future needs of the learners (Widdowson, 1983a, p. 7).

Widdowson, however, wishes to challenge this "orthodox view of ESP course design" (Widdowson, 1983a, p. 33). He seeks to do so without denying that in some circumstances, the development of a "restricted competence" may be most appropriate for a select group of learners.

From Widdowson's standpoint, however, this view of ESP as training is generally inadequate as a basis for course design. Such an approach equates the aims of learning, as

determined by a needs analysis, with the pedagogic objectives designed to attain them. In so doing, it tends to overlook the actual language learning process in its preoccupation with learning outcomes. In Widdowson's words: "In general, the belief appears to be that there is nothing specific about the learning 'process' of ESP students, but only about the 'product' of their learning" (Widdowson, 1983a, p. 83).

In contrast with ESP, courses in general purpose English (GPE), are understood to be "educational operations" (as opposed to "training operations"), whose goal is the development of a capacity to deal with unspecified future circumstances (Widdowson, 1983a, p. 7). Because the aims of such courses cannot be clearly identified, aims and objectives are not equated. Pedagogic objectives, therefore, are devised in accordance with principles of learning rather than on the basis of identified uses which learners will have for the language once the course is over.

For Widdowson, this distinction between aims and objectives evident in general purpose English, is "pedagogically necessary" (Widdowson, 1983a, p. 33). His approach to ESP course design requires that pedagogic objectives be established, not with reference to target aims or some form of linguistic product but with reference to "learning activities" which will assist in developing "a 'process' in the learner 'towards' his 'eventual aims'"



(Widdowson, 1983a, p. 83).

In Widdowson's view, these objectives must be established in accordance with principles derived from our understanding of how people learn and use language. His "model of language use" is his attempt to account for the processes of language use and to thereby provide a basis for determining the necessary objectives of an ESP course and the methodology required to implement them. In his own words, appropriate objectives must be based on "some description of learning, not what has to be learned. So in outlining objectives, we have to take methodological means into account" (Widdowson, 1983a, p. 83).

In fact, Widdowson's approach to ESP course design requires that considerations of appropriate methodology be primary and that course design be "directed at servicing its requirements and not the reverse" (Widdowson, 1983a, p. 107). First and foremost, attention should be directed towards the development of learning activities which enable learners to engage discourse procedures. What is required, therefore, is a methodology which is "procedurally based." The precise meaning which Widdowson intends by his use of the term methodology will be examined in chapter 3.

When considered in the context of the overall task of syllabus design, the approach which Widdowson is advocating calls for significant changes to the traditional goal-oriented approach. Widdowson's position is that a determination of language content through some form of

linguistic description should not serve as the basis for course design. Mackay (1985) provides tabular descriptions of Widdowson's framework and the more traditional view (see Tables 1 and 2) which illustrate their differences.

Table 1. Traditional Relationships in the stages of syllabus design and implementation (Mackay, 1985).

<u>CHRONOLOGY OF STAGES</u>	<u>ILLUSTRATIVE COMMENTARY</u>
1. Descriptive-Analytic Model of Language  provides	Such as Jespersen's <u>The Philosophy of Grammar</u> or Halliday's <u>Categories of the Theory of Grammar</u> .
2. Language Description  from which is selected	Such as Jespersen's <u>Essentials of English Grammar</u> or Thomson and Martinet's <u>A Practical English Grammar</u> .
3. Syllabus Content  which is treated pedagogically to provide	Such as Alexander et al.'s <u>English Grammatical Structure</u> or more specifically, the Contents pages of Ewer and Latorre's <u>A Course in Basic Scientific English</u> or Swales' <u>Writing Scientific English</u> or the results of Needs Analysis such as that generated by Munby's <u>Communicative Needs Processor</u> .
4. Course Materials and Exercises  whose classroom use is described in a statement about	Such as Ewer and Latorre's <u>A Course in Basic Scientific English</u> or Swales' <u>Writing Scientific English</u> . (The distinction between the examples for this category and the previous one is important).
5. Methodology	<u>Teacher's Notes to accompany Ewer and Latorre's A Course in Basic Scientific English.</u>

Table 2. The Relationships between the stages of syllabus design and implementation in Widdowson's (1983a) view (Mackay, 1985).

<u>CHRONOLOGY OF STAGES</u>	<u>ILLUSTRATIVE COMMENTARY</u>
1. Model of Language Use  gives rise directly to	As expressed, for example in Munby's Chapter <u>Communicative Competence and a Theoretical Framework</u> in his <u>Communicative Syllabus Design</u> or Swain and Canale's <u>Theoretical bases of communicative approaches to second language teaching and testing</u> .
2. Methodology which is realized in the character of congruent	As expressed, for example, in Chapters 1-3 of Widdowson's <u>Teaching Language as Communication</u> .
3. Course Materials and Exercises  an appropriate grouping of which constitutes	Such as the <u>prototype exercises</u> described in Allen and Widdowson's <u>Teaching the Communicative Use of English</u> or in chapter 4-6 of Widdowson's <u>Teaching Language as Communication</u> .
4. Syllabus Content	Such as Allen and Widdowson's <u>Focus</u> series or OUP's <u>Reading and Thinking in English</u> .

Widdowson admits that the traditional sequencing of course design activities as exemplified in Table 1 "seems to be the prevalent view." Nevertheless, he concludes that "sound ESP pedagogy requires that course design should service methodology" (Widdowson, 1983a, p. 91), whereas the reverse approach requires that a description of the target language to be acquired should take precedence over methodological considerations. A closer examination of the traditional approaches to the determination of language

content will help to clarify Widdowson's position.

### Contrasting Views on ESP Language Content

As mentioned in the introductory chapter, a register analysis such as that conducted by Ewer and Latorre (1969) is one means of generating linguistic descriptions (syntax and lexis) which can then be used as a basis for determining syllabus content. In Widdowson's terms, however, though a register analysis tells us which components of the linguistic code are most often required for particular activities, it does not suggest "how they are used as an intrinsic element of these activities" (Widdowson, 1983a, p. 32). It does not, in other words, confer a knowledge of "language use."

A needs analysis as outlined by Munby (1978) and Mackay and Mountford (1978) is another means of analyzing language in determining ESP language content. This approach also yields a linguistic description but one whose basic units are notions and functions, the intention being to focus on the communicative potential inherent in these units. In Widdowson's view, however, this approach, like register analysis, is "atomistic" (Widdowson, 1983a, p. 34). It breaks language down into its component parts but fails to account for the dynamic interplay of components inherent in actual discourse. Like a register analysis, it dissects the discourse into separate pieces but neglects to recreate the discourse process.

For Widdowson, therefore, neither of these approaches is a satisfactory means of entirely determining ESP language content. In addition to being "atomistic," both approaches are "goal-oriented." They attempt to determine the language forms which learners will need once their course of studies is over. Because of this emphasis, however, they tend to ignore the development of learning capabilities within the actual course itself.

Widdowson believes that the skills and abilities required for second language learning are closely related to the language needs which will arise once the course has been completed. As such, he contends that decisions on language content should stem from a concern with the enhancement of the learning process and the development of learner capacity. These decisions should not stem from an exclusive concern with the development of competence and the teaching of a target linguistic product. Widdowson describes his position as follows:

Hence the language content of the course is selected not because it is representative of what the learner will have to deal with after the course is over but because it is likely to activate strategies for learning while the course is in progress.

(Widdowson, 1981b, p. 5).

Bates (1978) makes reference to Widdowson's views in discussing the development of the ESP series Nucleus. He expresses agreement with Widdowson's viewpoint that the

language content of a course dealing with scientific English cannot be "solely" derived from a determination of "the frequency of language forms used to express it" (Bates, 1978, p. 86). In designing Nucleus, Bates and his colleagues acknowledged that frequency lists can serve some useful purposes (such as ensuring the development of a "specialized grammatical competence"). But they rejected the idea that frequency lists (a common feature of register analysis) can be used as the "basis" for the design of ESP courses.

Ewer and Boys (1981) also seem to find register analysis to be an inadequate means of determining ESP course content. Instead, they advocate a notional approach based on the incidence of microacts in formal discourse. Microacts, in Widdowson's estimation, are "notional/functional categories" (Widdowson, 1983a, p. 95).

As Widdowson points out, this is a shift in emphasis for Ewer from the structural approach (using frequency lists of lexical items) which informed the development of A Course in Scientific English (Ewer and Latorre, 1969). It is still an inadequate approach to the determination of language content, however, from Widdowson's point of view. Despite the changes in Ewer's position, Widdowson interprets Ewer and Boys as maintaining the orthodox view that "the central consideration in ESP course design is significant content." For Widdowson, the central consideration is that of determining "the objectives of appropriate methodology"

(Widdowson, 1983a, p. 98).

Swan (1985a, 1985b), meanwhile, has shown that he maintains a fundamental belief in many of the traditional approaches to the determination of language content including register analysis and structural grading. Swan quotes Johnson (cited in Swan 1985a) as noting that the imparting of structural knowledge, or rules of usage, is not enough, that there is a "something else" which needs to be taught in second language courses. For Johnson, this "something else" is a knowledge of appropriacy, a knowledge of the rules operant in language use. For Swan, however, it "is primarily vocabulary" (Swan, 1985a, p. 8).

Given the statements of purpose of the ESP texts cited in chapter 1, Swan's viewpoint is probably representative of the views of other practitioners in the field who adhere to a more traditional position. His criticism of Widdowson's ideas on communicative language teaching is quite severe and needs to be examined.

#### Criticism of Widdowson's Views

Swan has written several articles which severely criticize the Communicative Approach as well as some of Widdowson's ideas about it. He concedes that the influence of the Communicative Approach on language teaching has led to greatly improved syllabus design and methodology. Yet he stridently criticizes it for overgeneralizing its "limited insights" (Swan, 1985a, p. 2).

To begin with, Swan believes that the concept of a double level of meaning, expressed by Widdowson through such terms as usage and use, has "little relevance" to language teaching. As for the idea that "rules of use" can be specified for particular communicative situations and that these rules need to be taught to second language learners, he is skeptical in the extreme.

He accuses Widdowson and Wilkins of failing to clearly state "what form such rules of use might take" (Swan, 1985a, p. 4). Swan does not in fact believe that they can be "codified." Even if they could, he argues that second language learners already know these rules of use or "rules of communication." They know them because they possess a native language and have had experience in the world. As such, they already know how to communicate or how to use language in comprehending utterances or in saying what they mean.

Swan criticizes Widdowson for suggesting that a knowledge of sentence patterns does not confer a knowledge of "how they are put to communicative use" (Widdowson, 1978, cited in Swan, 1985a, p. 5). In this regard, he cites a personal example of his own experience in learning Russian. In so doing, he betrays a failure to appreciate or acknowledge the complexity of language in communication and the enormous gap which exists between drilled sentence patterns and actual communicative discourse.

Swan appeals to what might be described as universal



schemata, facts "about the world, and the things we way about the world" (Swan, 1985a, p. 5) to explain why, in his estimation, second language learners do not need to learn how to use language for communication. Referring to an example which Widdowson uses to illustrate the frequent lack of a one-to-one correspondence between form and function, he says: "The 'rules of use' that determine how we interpret utterances . . . are mostly non-language-specific, and amount to little more than the operation of experience and common sense" (Swan, 1985a, p. 5).

Swan also criticizes the communicative approach for overstating the case for the teaching of appropriacy. For him, the concepts of rules of use and appropriacy are "nebulous abstractions." The student who demonstrates a knowledge of structures and sentence patterns but who cannot communicate effectively, "has not been taught enough lexis" (Swan, 1985a, p. 7).

With respect to the teaching of skills and strategies, such as those of predicting, guessing and the negotiation of meaning, Swan harshly criticizes the communicative approach for assuming that second language learners need to be taught abilities which they already have and can transfer from their native language. In his view, second language learners "need lexical items, not skills" (Swan, 1985a, p. 9). As intelligent people and speakers of their own native language, they already possess these skills and strategies. What they don't possess is systemic

knowledge about the second language.

Aspects of Swan's argument might be somewhat more tenable if it were presented in a less vitriolic tone. Even if that were the case, however, he appears, as Widdowson (1985) points out in his reply to Swan, to fall into the same trap which he accuses proponents of the communicative approach of succumbing to, that of overgeneralization.

His criticism of the teaching of skills and strategies is a case in point. Swan appears intent on accusing communicative theorists of having collectively failed to see that second language learners bring many skills and communicative strategies with them to the second language classroom from their experience with their native language and with the world.

On the contrary, theorists such as Widdowson appear to have understood the importance of these skills and strategies and then to have recognized the need to provide actual practice in developing them in a second language context. It is one thing for a learner to be able to make intelligent guesses in his or her native language when all the linguistic input available is comprehensible. It is quite another situation for the same learner to make guesses on the basis of linguistic input which is only partially comprehensible.

As mentioned, Swan believes that such skills and strategies are readily transferrable from native to target language. When problems arise, it is probably the result of

"overload" and "the problem will go away with increased fluency" (Swan, 1985a, p. 10). For Swan, such "fluency" will apparently be attained primarily by attending to the teaching of vocabulary and idiomatic expressions. For him, the idea, carefully espoused by Widdowson and others, that the actual communicative practice of skills and strategies such as prediction and meaning negotiation could assist in developing this fluency, receives short shrift.

Swan admits to being confused and exasperated by the terms Widdowson employs to express key distinctions (Swan, 1985a, p. 8). As Widdowson himself admits (Widdowson, 1983a, p. 2), others besides Swan have criticized him for his use of binary distinctions. Widdowson's choice of language may, in part, explain why he has sometimes been misunderstood or misinterpreted.

Paradoxically, given the virulence of some of his criticism of the communicative approach, Swan praises it for its insights "into the language of interaction" (Swan, 1985a, p. 6), stating that "in some ways it has done us a lot of good" (Swan, 1985a, p. 11). But in the second of his two articles, Swan demonstrates a quite radical misunderstanding of the communicative approach as it is understood by Widdowson when he suggests that "This

1. V. Saue, president of ATESL (personal communication, November 23, 1985), commented that in examining Widdowson's work I should, "Look at the language he uses, at his binary distinctions." I understood her suggestion to mean that, in her view, Widdowson's use of language has served to perplex as well as to clarify. Swan's reaction to Widdowson appears to be a case in point.

stereotyped, idiomatic side of language . . . is the area with which the Communicative Approach is perhaps mainly concerned, investigating the meanings we most often express and tabulating . . . the ways in which we conventionally express them" (Swan, 1985b, p. 81).

Widdowson's concept of communicative capacity, by contrast, is fundamentally suggestive of the learner's ability to express things in "unconventional" and unpredictable ways in response to the unique circumstances of language use. The very essence of Widdowson's idea of capacity involves the ability to "exploit a knowledge of the conventions of a language and its use" not simply for the purposes of learning formulaic expressions but for the "creation of linguistic behaviour which does not conform to type" (Widdowson, 1983a, p. 11).

Swan's admittance that "most utterances are not conventional responses to familiar situations" (Swan, 1985b, p. 82) seems incongruous with most of what he has previously said. His recommended approach to ensuring the development of creative language, however, is in keeping with his other views. He believes that this can only be achieved through the use of structural/lexical syllabuses. Semantic syllabuses can be used to teach language which is "stereotyped."

Addressing the subject of methodology, Swan credits the communicative approach with making more progress in this area than in any other. Given, however, that methodology is

central to Widdowson's view of course design, it is important to note the divergence between his and Swan's views on this subject. For Swan, "Learning language is not the same as using language" (Swan, 1985b, p. 82). Widdowson, however, has suggested that "required ways of using language might be quite closely related to preferred ways of learning language" (Widdowson, 1983a, p. 33).

Widdowson (1985) takes Swan to task for offering simplistic solutions to an extremely complex set of problems. Widdowson accuses Swan of presenting an analysis which is riddled with contradictions and poorly considered suggestions.

In attempting to assess the significance of Swan's criticism of Widdowson's ideas, it is unfortunately evident that although Swan's two critical articles were written in 1985, he cites only one of Widdowson's publications, Teaching Language as Communication, published in 1978. His criticism of Widdowson's ideas lacks validity for this reason alone as he has apparently neglected to keep up to date with the evolution in Widdowson's thinking. Had he done so, as Widdowson (1985) points out, he would have discovered that many of the issues which Swan raises, such as that of authentic materials, have subsequently been dealt with at considerable length (e.g., Widdowson, 1979).

Swan, however, is not alone in his criticism of Widdowson. In reviewing Language Purpose and Learning Use (Widdowson 1983a) and Explorations in Applied Linguistics 2

(Widdowson 1984), Charnock (1985) is extremely critical of Widdowson's adaptation of Pierce's distinction between symbols and indices. He finds Widdowson's presentations of these ideas to be "downright misleading." Charnock also finds fault with Widdowson's binary distinction between sentences and utterances. In his view, this distinction prevents Widdowson from "recognizing that there are degrees of divergence between the semantic meaning of the sentence, and the pragmatic meaning of the utterance" (Charnock, 1985, p. 44). Charnock obviously has great difficulty with Widdowson's assertion that sentences "never occur in actual discourse" (Widdowson, 1983a, p. 38).

In Charnock's view, the teaching of certain types of language (e.g., technical and commercial) as a "means to an end" is a practical consequence of a correct understanding of the relationship between sentence and utterance.

In spite of his criticism, Charnock believes that Widdowson has raised "interesting and important points" and that Learning Purpose and Language Use was a necessary publication (Charnock appears to believe the opposite about Explorations 2). He does not, however, believe that Widdowson has yet found a "convincing solution" to the theoretical problem of justifying a communicative methodology for ESP.

#### Language Acquisition and Language Use

Widdowson has presented his concept of capacity as

being "a principle of both language use and language acquisition" (Widdowson, 1983a, p. 67). For Widdowson, capacity refers to the language user's ability to exploit linguistic resources for the creation of meaning. But it also refers to the language acquirer's developing ability to do the same. In distinguishing his use of the terms capacity and competence, Widdowson (1983a) has briefly compared his views on second language acquisition with those of Krashen (1981, 1982). In Widdowson's view, what Krashen intends by acquisition is "essentially the operation of capacity" (Widdowson, 1983a, p. 27). What Krashen means by learning refers, in Widdowson's view, to the linguistic norms and conventions represented by the term competence.

For Widdowson, however, the functioning of capacity and competence takes place on a developmental continuum. He sees no need, as Krashen does, to posit "the existence of two separate systems" (Widdowson, 1983a, p. 27). Nor does he concur with Krashen's view that "conscious learning" cannot normally lead to acquisition, or, in Widdowson's terms, that capacity cannot act on information which has been consciously assimilated. Additionally, for Widdowson, the whole issue of what constitutes conscious and subconscious learning is problematic.

McLaughlin (1978) has expressed very similar difficulties with Krashen's learning/acquisition distinction and the notion of conscious and subconscious processes which underlies it. As an alternative to Krashen's Monitor Model

(1977a), McLaughlin offers Schneider and Shiffrin's distinction between controlled and automatic processing (cited in McLaughlin, 1978). This paradigm is linked to a "general theory of human information processing" and bears many striking similarities with Widdowson's views (McLaughlin, 1978, p. 318).

An example of the proximity of their positions is provided by Widdowson's discussion of the automatic skills required for communication: "In natural language use, lower level skills are pushed down into automatic dependency on higher level abilities" (Widdowson, 1983a, p. 30). Widdowson later explains that these "lower level automatic skills" must be learned and then pushed "below the level of consciousness" in order for higher level processing to be conducted (Widdowson, 1983a, p. 53).

McLaughlin uses the distinction between controlled and automatic processing to describe the process of acquisition and use in very similar terms. For him: "After automatic processes have been set up at one stage in the development of a complex information-processing skill, controlled processes are free to be allocated to higher levels of processing" (McLaughlin, 1978, p. 319).

It is interesting to note that McLaughlin then goes on to discuss first and second language learning, albeit in a more cursory manner than Widdowson, as involving the "development of schemata and the use of discovery procedures" (McLaughlin, 1978, p. 320). These similarities



between Widdowson's and McLaughlin's views of second language learning, however, cannot be further examined here.

In presenting his "model of language use," Widdowson (1983a) also presents his views on first language acquisition in conjunction with his explanation of language use.

Widdowson contends that the young child not only abstracts linguistic rules from available linguistic input but that he or she also "abstracts contextual outlines from the recurrent circumstances of language use" (Widdowson, 1983a, p. 39). These outlines of the contexts within which language use takes place are associated with the developing linguistic structure, resulting in the development of a "schematic level of linguistic organization" in the mind of the young child. The assumption of schematic development along these lines has, Widdowson claims, "ontogenetic plausibility" (Widdowson, 1983a, p. 39).

Widdowson's efforts to link his view of language use with a schematic interpretation of first language acquisition are intriguing, but as he himself would perhaps admit, they are highly speculative at this stage. As Rumelhart (1980) has pointed out, schemata are active in a great variety of information processing tasks. And yet:

Because our understanding of none of these tasks that schemata are supposed to carry out has reached maturity, it is little wonder a definitive explication of schemata does not yet exist and that sceptics view

theories based on them with some suspicion.

(Rumelhart, 1980, p. 34)

Rumelhart nevertheless goes on to present what he believes to be a "convincing case" for a "reasonable theory of human information processing" predicated on a schematic framework. In presenting his "model of language use," Widdowson has endeavoured to do much the same.

## CHAPTER 3

### A CRITICAL EXAMINATION: THE MODEL AND MATERIALS

#### Introduction

Widdowson's (1983a) "model of language use" can now be examined and the nature of its functioning explained. Once the model has been thoroughly analyzed and its principal features distilled, an examination of a selection of ESP materials will be undertaken. This examination will be conducted in order to see which of the model's features are reflected and which fail to be reflected in a selection of actual materials. This task, it is anticipated, will serve to clarify the functioning of the model's essential components. It is not intended as a means of passing judgement on the adequacy or otherwise of the materials under examination.

#### The Purpose of the Model

Widdowson's "model of language use" is a characterization of the discourse processing abilities of the proficient language user. Mackay (1985) describes Widdowson's model as follows: "Widdowson's model of language use is an attempt to make overt what a proficient user of English needs to know and to DO in order to engage in meaningful communication whatever the skill involved" (Mackay, 1985).

Though Widdowson does not say so explicitly, his framework is taken by this interpreter of his work to be a model of the proficient first language user. Such an interpretation is based on the fact that first language users are normally thought of as being optimal models of proficiency. It is understood, however, that the functioning of the "model of language use" is relevant to users and learners alike, to all who use languages, first or second, and who seek to develop the communicative capacity of the proficient language user.

As explained in chapter 2, Widdowson believes that the two forms of "idealization" of language normally employed in ESP, those of register and needs analysis, fail to account for language use. Register analysis yields a "specification of linguistic competence" and needs analysis a "specification of communicative competence" with respect to particular "areas of use" (Widdowson, 1983a, p. 10). But neither approach accounts for the language user's ability to engage in actual discourse.

In Widdowson's view, both of these approaches reduce the "dynamic process of communication to a static inventory of items" (Widdowson, 1983a, p. 34). In so doing, they neglect the development of the capacity required for the exploitation of language knowledge, components of which they have so carefully itemized. In spite of this omission, however, the linguistic and notional/functional descriptions of "areas of use" generated by register and

needs analysis have generally served as the basis for course design in ESP. For Widdowson, this has been a less than satisfactory state of affairs.

Widdowson has responded by presenting his "model of language use." He has created his model to account for the functioning of capacity, as it relates to competence in the proficient language user.

In creating his model, Widdowson's overall purpose is as follows: Widdowson holds that the "devices" of register and needs analysis "yield descriptions which have little explanatory value about the actual nature of communication in different circumstances of use" (Widdowson, 1983a, p. 10). By contrast, Widdowson claims that his "model of language use" exemplifies the actual skills and discourse processing abilities employed by the proficient language user in different circumstances of use. As such, he believes that the model can effectively serve as the basis for the design of ESP courses which provide for the development of communicative capacity in the second / language learner. Courses based on the model will assist second language learners in developing the same discourse processing abilities possessed by proficient language users, these being the necessary procedural abilities required for actual language use.

With reference to the concepts of training and education discussed in chapter 2, the model is also intended to provide the means of determining the proximity

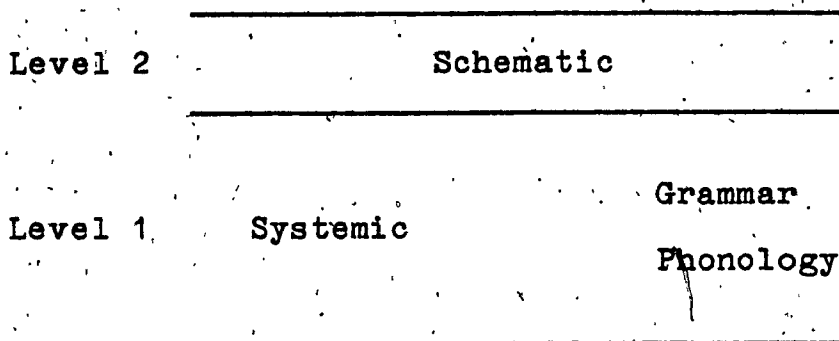
of aims to objectives for particular courses. Widdowson refers to this as the degree of specificity required for an ESP course. The more specifiable the aims of a course are, the more it will approximate training. The less specifiable the aims of a course, the more it will resemble "general purpose education" (GPE) and the greater will be the requirement for appropriate pedagogical objectives. These concepts are closely related to Widdowson's views on methodology which will be discussed later in the chapter.

#### The Model of Language Use

As noted previously, the "model of language use" is based, in part, on an important distinction between two perceived levels of language knowledge, the systemic and the schematic. It posits significantly different functions for these two levels of knowledge when they are operant in actual language use.

Widdowson believes that his model "accounts for the essential features of the discourse process", as evidenced in the actual circumstances of language use (Widdowson, 1983a, p. 34). The model accounts for the systemic level of language knowledge, describing its role in actual language use as being "crucial" (Widdowson, 1983a, p. 31), but "auxiliary" (Widdowson, 1983a, p. 35). It also accounts for the schematic level of language knowledge, positing that in actual language use, it is the schematic level which serves as the "main source of reference" (Widdowson,

1983a, p. 57). In Figure 1, we can glean a basic outline of this two-level view of language knowledge which Widdowson is proposing.



Levels of Language Knowledge

Figure 1

Widdowson simultaneously offers another view of language knowledge as a "three-layer organization" in which the systemic level is further subdivided. He does this, it would seem, in order to clearly establish that in his model, this "third level of linguistic organization" or "contextual level within the knowledge of language itself" is a distinct level of language knowledge in its own right (Widdowson, 1983a, p. 38). Figure 2 exemplifies this extended view of the levels of language knowledge represented in the model.

Language Knowledge  
(Three-layer Organization)

Level of  
Realization

Level 3	Schematic		utterances (actual discourse)
Level 2	Systemic	semantics	sentences
		syntax	
Level 1		phonology	phonemes

Levels of Language Knowledge (2)

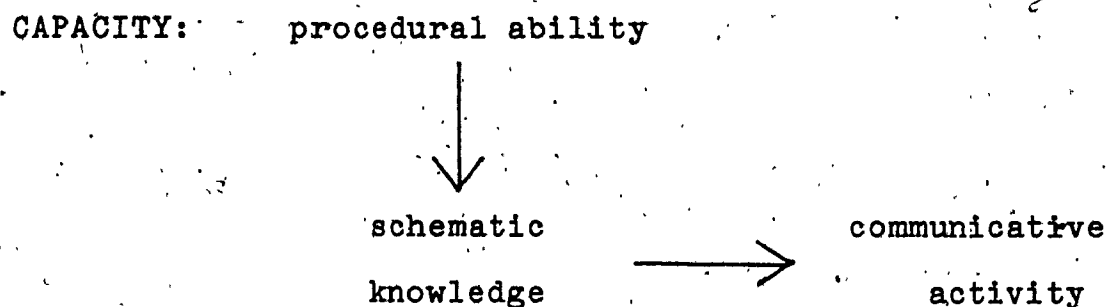
Figure 2

The schematic level, for Widdowson, is the only one of these three levels of knowledge which is directly engaged in language use. The components of the systemic levels have "no direct executive function" (Widdowson, 1983a, p. 38). In actual language use, their purpose is to facilitate the engagement of schematic knowledge by providing "resources for sustaining the schematic level when required" (Widdowson, 1983a, p. 58).

Central to an understanding of what Widdowson means by a schematic level of knowledge are his aforementioned (chapters 1 and 2), concepts of capacity and



interpretative procedures. Of the numerous definitions which Widdowson provides for his concept of capacity, (these are extensively listed in Table 3 to provide a complete picture of this key concept), the following definition in diagrammatic form (Widdowson, 1983a, p. 41) seems most appropriate in introducing his views on schematic knowledge:



Communicative Capacity

Figure 3

Figure 3 illustrates that capacity is the ability to engage in procedures which enable a language user to actualize stored schematic knowledge as communicative activity of one form or another. What, then, is schematic knowledge?

Widdowson's (1983a) uses of the term schemata are as multifarious as his descriptions of capacity (these, again, are listed in Table 4 to provide a thorough understanding of what Widdowson means by this term). The core concept, however, is provided by the following

definition: "Schemata . . . are cognitive structures which the individual uses to organize experience" (p. 46).

These cognitive structures provide for the interpretation and categorization of experience. Once created, they shape our experience of the world, though they may, as will be shown later, be modified through the use of procedures in the light of new information which we receive. According to Widdowson, language is organized in accordance with schematic knowledge. We, as perceivers of the world around us, have constructed these "stereotypic images which we map on to actuality in order to make sense of it" (Widdowson, 1983a, p. 34), and it is language which gives them form. One of Widdowson's formulations of the term schemata describes this link between language and cognitive structures: "There is a level of language competence which consists of stereotypic, skeletal structures of language use which I have called schemata" (Widdowson, 1983a, p. 49).

In Widdowson's model, this level of language competence, accounted for by schemata, constitutes communicative competence (Widdowson, 1983a, p. 40). At times, Widdowson refers to it as schematic competence (Widdowson, 1983a, p. 41). It is a pool of knowledge, patterned after experience, which can be accessed in order to make sense of new experience.

Table 3. A tabular view of Widdowson's (1983a) uses of the term Capacity.

Capacity is . . . .

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. . . .	"a principle of both language use and language acquisition" (p. 67).
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"the ability . . . .	to create meanings" (p. 8).
. . . .	to exploit a knowledge of the conventions of a language and its use" (p. 11).
. . . .	to realize and modify existing schemata" (p. 50).
. . . .	to solve problems and, equivalently, to make meanings" (p. 106).
. . . .	to use linguistic resources to carry out interaction [with an environment]" (p. 67).

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	whereby
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. . . .	"schematic knowledge is recurrently projected and modified" (p. 67).
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	by
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. . . .	"the use of (such) procedures" (p. 50).
. . . .	"exploiting the potential inherent in the language for continual modification in response to change" (p. 8).

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	( for
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. . . .	"the creation of linguistic behaviour which does not conform to type" (p. 11).
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Table 4. A tabular view of Widdowson's (1983a) uses of the term Schemata.

Schemata (are) . . .

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- . . . . "kinds of stereotypic images" (p. 34).
  - . . . . "a set of expectations" (p. 35).
  - . . . . "stereotypic, skeletal structures of language use" (p. 49).
  - . . . . "cognitive constructs or configurations of knowledge" (p. 54).
- 

which

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- . . . . "allow for the organization of information in long-term memory" (p. 34).
  - . . . . "provide a basis for prediction" (p. 34).
  - . . . . "are projected on to instances of actual language behaviour" (p. 35).
  - . . . . "serve as devices for categorizing and arranging information" (p. 54).
- 

and which we

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- . . . . "map on to actuality" (p. 35).
  - . . . . "place over events" (p. 54).
- 

so

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- . . . . "as to bring (events) into alignment with familiar patterns of experience and belief" (p. 54).
  - . . . . "that (information) can be interpreted and retained" (p. 54).
-

In Widdowson's terms then, communicative competence is schematic in nature whereas linguistic competence is "a knowledge of language systems" (Widdowson, 1983a, p. 35). Returning to the two-level view of language knowledge (Figure 1), Figure 4 codifies the distinctions which the "model of language use" posits between system and schema:

	Level of Linguistic Organization	Competence	Organizational Forms
Level 2	Schema	Communicative competence	Cognitive structures
Level 1	System	Linguistic competence	Linguistic code

System and Schema

Figure 4

Schematic knowledge, then, is a central feature of Widdowson's model because it is "alone operative in language use" (Widdowson, 1983a, p. 38). This means that in terms of the actual functioning of the model, the schematic level is the only level of language knowledge which is directly engaged. Systemic knowledge, represented by linguistic competence, plays a supportive and secondary role (Widdowson, 1983a, p. 38), serving a contributory function. In Widdowson's words: "In language use, the systemic level is not directly engaged" (Widdowson, 1983a, p. 58).

The nature of this relationship between the levels of system and schema will be discussed in more detail later. Firstly, however, we need to know how this schematic knowledge is actually made manifest in language use.

To answer this question, we must examine the interpretative procedures (often referred to by Widdowson simply as procedures), those "interactive negotiating activities" which account for the actual functioning of the "model of language use."

As with the term schemata, Widdowson's use of the term procedures is not unique to him. As mentioned in chapter 2, both Rumelhart (1980) and McLaughlin (1978), among others, have made use of this term in discussing language use and development. The meanings which Widdowson intends for interpretative procedures are listed in Table 5.

Procedures have already been briefly cited in this chapter in defining capacity. A learner, it was noted, must engage in procedures in order to actualize schematic knowledge as communicative activity. His capacity to do so will determine the extent of his capabilities as a language user. But why are procedures so essential in exploiting this schematic knowledge?

Schemata, in Widdowson's terms, account for communicative competence. But they do not, in and of themselves, account for language use. Schemata are "cognitive structures" which represent aspects of reality in the mind of the language user. But actual language use

requires that the schemata appropriate to a given situation be "engaged." Otherwise, the knowledge which they represent will remain abstract and will fail to be realized as actual communicative behaviour. These "abstract schemata" must be, and can only be engaged or actualized in the discourse process through the use of interpretative procedures.

Table 5. A tabular view of Widdowson's (1983a) Interpretative Procedures.

Interpretative Procedures are. . .

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. . . . "interactive negotiating activities" (p. 40).

. . . . "problem solving activities" (p. 102).

---

which

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. . . . "interpret the directions provided, and enable us to alter our expectations in the light of new evidence as the discourse proceeds" (p. 41).

. . . . "engage schematic knowledge and seek to establish the indexical value of the language items concerned" (p. 69).

---

They are

. . . . "used to match up and adjust schemata in the discourse process" (p. 40).

. . . . "needed to exploit schematic knowledge and bring it to bear on particular instances of use" (p. 40).

---

In Widdowson's model, it is through the operation of these necessary procedures that the schemata appropriate to

a particular communicative situation can be engaged or "projected." The communicative capacity to make effective use of procedures directs the engagement of the required schemata. This process provides for instances of actual language use.

In the "model of language use" then, communicative (or schematic) competence refers to the language user's store of schematic knowledge. Communicative (or procedural) capacity refers to the ability to engage in the procedures necessary for the actualization of some part of this store of schematic knowledge in actual discourse. Widdowson cautions, however, that these concepts are best viewed as existing on a "continuum of established convention" rather than as being entirely distinct forms of knowledge and ability (Widdowson, 1983a, p. 41).

Widdowson describes procedures by discussing them in terms of two "dimensions" of activity. The first of these dimensions pertains to the type of schemata which is being engaged through the use of procedures. The second takes the nature of the communicative situation into account. Figure 5 summarizes this two dimensional view of procedures.

From Figure 5, it is evident that dimension 1 describes two types of schemata: those relating to frames of reference (ideational schemata) and those relating to rhetorical routines (interpersonal schemata). These two types of schemata correspond to two types of procedures required for their realization as communicative behaviour.



	1		2
	Kinds of Schemata		Kinds of Communicative Situations
P r o c e d u r e s	Frames of Reference <u>ideational schemata</u>		Co-operative (accessibility)
	Rhetorical Routines <u>interpersonal schemata</u>		Protective (acceptability)

Widdowson's Two Dimensional View  
of Procedures

Figure 5

The "procedural abilities" associated with Dimension 1 will now be discussed.

Widdowson describes the first of these types of procedure as serving to "establish and maintain frames of reference" (Widdowson, 1983a, p. 42). Procedural abilities of this kind are required in order to make sense of propositional content. They are called for in endeavouring to grasp the cohesion of text. And they are required when interlocutors do not have a shared frame of reference and must engage in procedural negotiation in order to bring their schematic worlds into closer correspondence.

A stock market analyst who comes late to a meeting needs to discover, by one procedural means or another, that the shared frame of reference for the discussion is, for example, the stock at Noranda mines. Until that frame of reference has been established in the analyst's mind, the data and information being exchanged will be largely meaningless.

The first of these types of procedure, then, enables a language user to "make sense" of "propositional information" by "relating it to schemata which define frames of reference". (Widdowson, 1983a, p. 43).

The second type of procedure is needed to "realize rhetorical routines" (Widdowson, 1983a, p. 43). Widdowson has, at one point, described his use of the term routine in the following rather round about manner: "I shall use the term 'routine' to refer to interpersonal schemata corresponding to mood at the level of system in a Hallidaian grammar". (Widdowson, 1983a, p. 57). He provides a more readily understandable explanation of what he means by rhetorical routines when he cites specific examples, such as the writing of a business letter (Widdowson, 1983a, p. 37).

This second type of procedure is needed to activate the schemata required for particular rhetorical routines. Interlocutors may or may not share a knowledge of the same routines. A knowledge of routines, however, is necessary in understanding the illocutionary intent of particular instances of language use, that is to say, the actions which are being performed through the medium of the language.

An example will serve to illustrate the importance of recognizing the illocutionary value of an utterance in successfully carrying out a rhetorical routine. This example is one which is provided by many proficient language users when they make long distance telephone calls during peak

hours. Here is the scenario: A language user makes a long distance call from Montreal to a business in San Francisco in the middle of the day. He or she prefaces the conversation with the statement, "Hello, I'm calling from Montreal."

The significance of this opening statement is in the illocutionary intent which inspired it. The caller is not merely being polite in naming his or her home city. The language chosen is intended to convey additional information which it might be uncomfortable to convey directly (the decision to be indirect in conducting the routine entails the use of an acceptability procedure; this relates to the second "dimension" of procedures and will be discussed later). The caller wishes to say, "This is not a local call. It's costing me a good deal of money. Please don't put me 'on hold.' Please give me special attention so that I can find out what I want to know in the shortest possible time."

If the recipient of the call is familiar with this routine, he or she will respond accordingly, by acting without delay. If, however, the recipient of the call were unfamiliar with this routine, (as might well be the case with a second language learner or someone new to the job) the propositional content of the statement might be understood but not its illocutionary intent. In such a case, the caller might well receive a response such as, "Oh, Montreal, what a great city you have! Can you hold the line, I'll be with you in a moment."

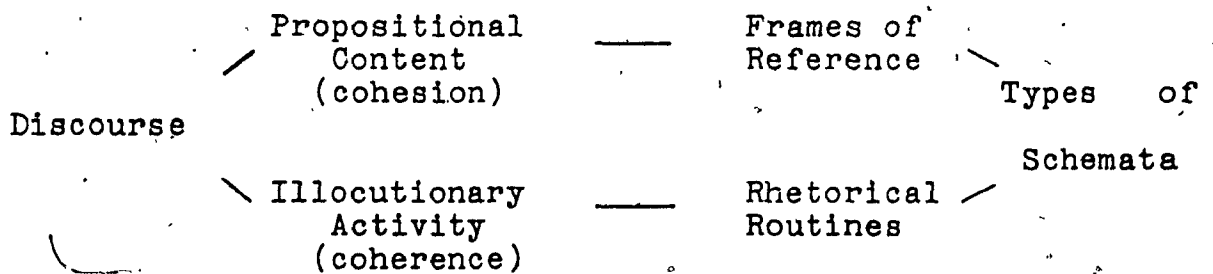
More than likely, the illocutionary intent of the

remark would be understood by a proficient language user, as this is a familiar rhetorical routine among business people who handle long distance calls on a daily basis. A second language learner making a similar call, however, one who did not know how to employ this routine, might well be put on hold for several minutes if he or she chose an opening statement such as, "Yes, I was wondering if you still have . . ." or something similar which failed to give an immediate indication that the call was long distance.

This second type of procedure, then, enables a language user to "make sense" of illocutionary information by activating schemata which pertain to rhetorical routines.

The first type of procedure, it may be recalled, enables a language user to "make sense" of propositional information by activating schemata which pertain to frames of reference (Widdowson, 1983a, p. 40).

With respect to the first dimension of procedural description just discussed, that of the "kinds of schema being realized," Figure 6 summarizes the two kinds of schemata which are engaged in actual discourse.



Schemata in Discourse

Figure 6

Widdowson discusses two additional procedures required in lengthy or extended discourse which are also related to the first dimension of procedural activity. He refers to these procedures as formulations.

In lengthy discourse involving a great deal of "procedural negotiation," it is often necessary, at certain points, to review what has been said as a means of summarizing or tying everything together before going on. Interlocutors may negotiate so intently to establish a frame of reference or perform a routine that they lose sight of the "objective of the negotiation" (Widdowson, 1983a, p.46).

In such cases, there is a need for procedures which facilitate the "formulation" of the central focus of an interaction. Widdowson describes these two types of procedures as the formulations of gist and upshot.

If one seeks to know or express the gist of an argument or discussion, he or she is looking for a "recapitulation" of propositional content. A formulation of this kind will serve the purpose of making clear the "frame of reference" which has been established.

If, on the other hand, one wants a recapitulation of the routine which has been negotiated, what is required is a formulation of illocutionary intent. This is the formulation of upshot.

One need look no further than the writings of H.G. Widdowson himself for an example of the formulation of gist. In concluding his presentation of his "model of language

use" in Learning Purpose and Language Use, Widdowson formulates the gist of the chapter by summarizing his presentation. (Widdowson, 1983a, p. 49).

An example illustrating the formulation of upshot is provided by the employer who finds it necessary to lay off a good worker because of economic cutbacks but who is reluctant to say so directly and with few words. The employer may, therefore, perform a routine (using acceptability procedures) intended to break the bad news slowly. The worker in question may sense that something out of the ordinary is going on but not know for sure. At some point, he or she may demand, however, to know the upshot of the routine, to be given a formulation of its illocutionary intent. He or she may ask, "What are you getting at? Are you saying that you have to let me go?"

The Formulation Procedures of gist and upshot are summarized in Figure 7.

Schematic Type	Type of Formulation	Focus of Formulation
1) Frames of Reference	gist	propositional content
2) Rhetorical Routines	upshot	illocutionary intent

Formulation Procedures

Figure 7

The second dimension of procedural activity can now be examined. The first dimension just discussed (return to Figure 5 for a summary), pertained to the kinds of schemata engaged through the use of procedures. Widdowson describes the second dimension as referring to "the kind of communicative situation that has to be negotiated, and in particular with the way in which the relationship between the schemata of the interlocutors is to be managed" (Widdowson, 1983a, p. 41).

Specifically, Widdowson is referring to the co-operative and territorial imperatives which shape human communication. Understanding in communication requires that each interlocutor engage his "personal construct of reality" as encoded in schemata (Widdowson, 1983a, p. 47). Rumelhart has discussed schemata in similar terms: "The total set of schemata we have available for interpreting our world in a sense constitutes our private theory of the nature of reality" (Rumelhart, 1980, p. 37). The activation of an individual's schemata, however, is dependent on his willingness to engage his private schematic constructs and to participate in procedural negotiation.

There are "two opposing forces" operant in this regard and procedures available to service both. The co-operative imperative "impels people to put their schemata into contact with others" (Widdowson, 1983a, p. 47). Thus, co-operative procedures serve to facilitate the exchange of ideas and the meeting of minds. They serve to clarify and extend frames of

reference and to make clear which routines are being performed. They operate to make information "accessible" and to promote understanding.

Protective or acceptability procedures may also serve to facilitate communication but in quite a different way. Their function is to ensure that information is conveyed in a manner which is "acceptable." These procedures can be used as a means of respecting the schematic "life space" of other interlocutors. But they may also be used to protect one's own schematic "life space" such that their use may result in a communication breakdown.

In citing examples to illustrate routines and the formulation of upshot, mention was made of these acceptability procedures. The long distance caller may use such a procedure to avoid sounding stingy with his money. The employer who has to lay off a good worker may be trying to protect himself from a negative reaction on the part of his employee. Or he may be endeavouring to make it easier for his employee to accept the bad news by breaking it to him slowly, by making it somehow more "acceptable."

These, then, are the types of procedures which Widdowson discusses in presenting his "model of language use." Procedural negotiation between interlocutors is an essential component of the functioning model. It is through the use of procedures that interlocutors with divergent "schematic worlds" (a common feature of cross-cultural interaction) can begin to bridge the gaps in understanding



which exist between them. In fact, in Widdowson's view:

All communication depends on the alignment and adjustment of each interlocutor's schemata so that they are brought into sufficient correspondence for the interlocutors to feel satisfied that they have reached an understanding. (Widdowson, 1983a, p. 40)

Figure 8 illustrates that in the functioning "model of language use," the amount of interactive procedural negotiation required of interlocutors is a function of the convergence or divergence of their schematic worlds.

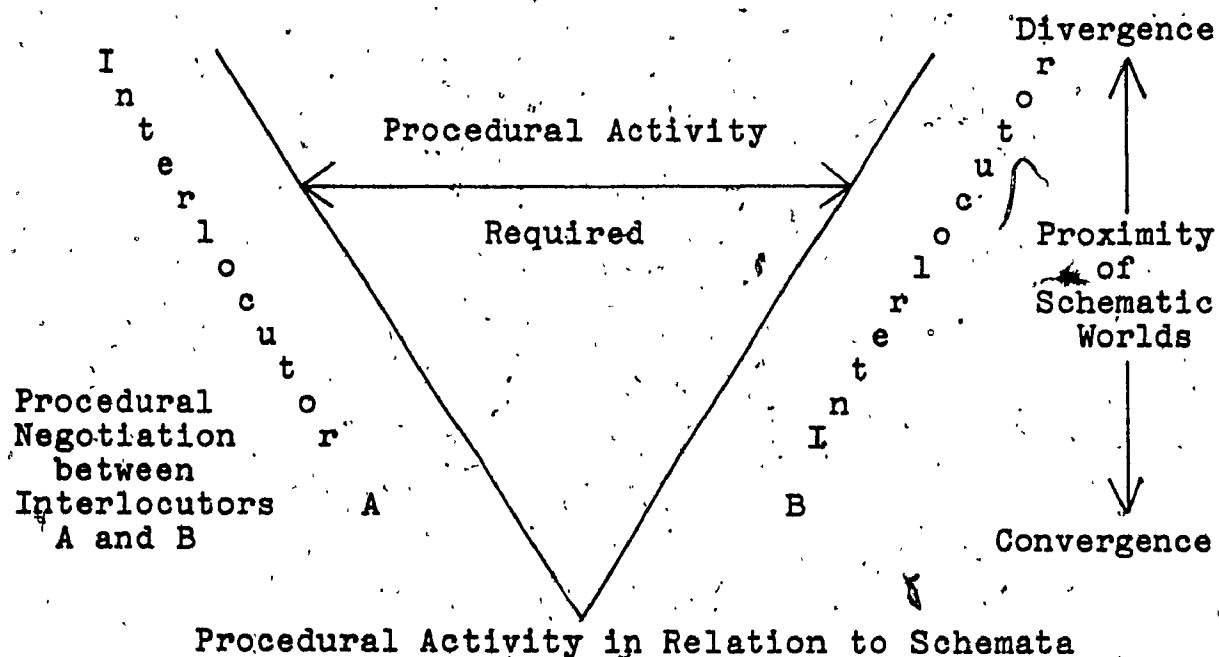


Figure 8.

Varonis and Gass (1985a) provide a fascinating transcript of a telephone conversation between a native speaker and a second language learner which illustrates this process of meaning negotiation. The learner in the

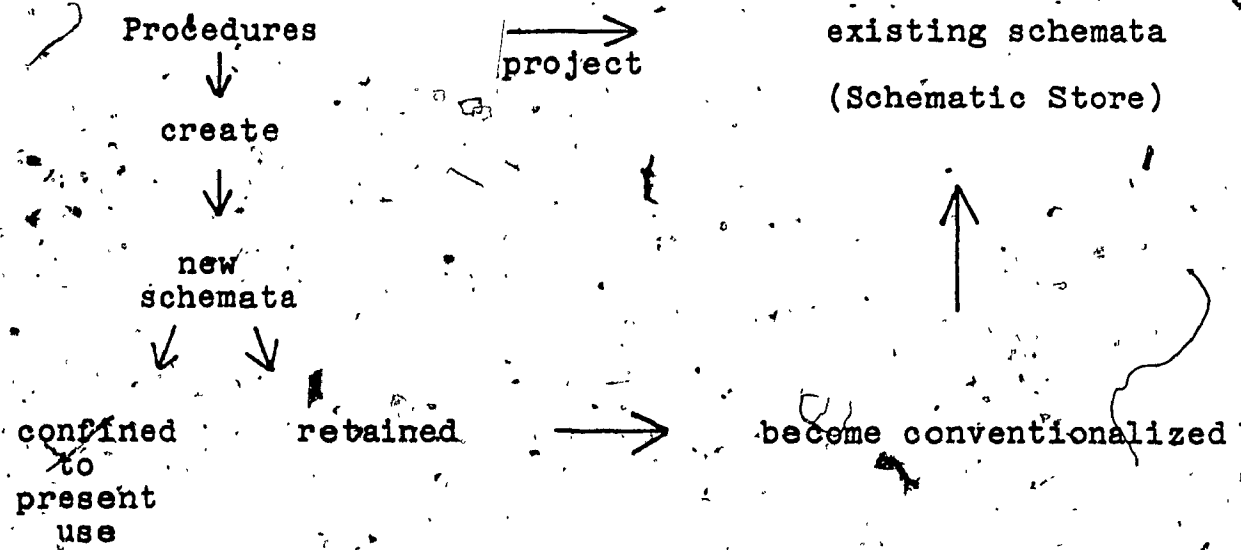
conversation wants to inquire about buying a television. By accident, he calls a television repair store. In terms of Widdowson's functioning model, the learner's schematic frame of reference is that he wants to buy and he thinks he has phoned a store which will sell. On the other end of the phone, the repair person's frame of reference is that she works in a store that repairs televisions and believes that the caller wants to have his television repaired.

The dialogue which ensues demonstrates the importance of schematic alignment to effective communication. The two interlocutors muddle around at the systemic level for most of the conversation. Because of the divergence of their schematic frames of reference, they endeavour to negotiate but there is a complete failure to communicate right through to the end of the conversation.

As mentioned earlier in the chapter, procedures may be used to "project" schemata which already exist. Or they may be used to create new schemata. Widdowson discusses the fact that procedures may be used to generate original instances of language use which then become so commonplace that they become part of an "established schema." He gives the example of "metaphorical expressions" (Widdowson, 1983a, p. 41). The following example is perhaps illustrative of what he means.

The 1984 election campaign in the United States produced such an expression. One of the candidates, commenting on the lack of substance in his opponent's

program, asked, "Where's the Beef?" The expression caught on and was, at least for some months, pervasive in the media. It became a conventionalized form of commenting on a lack of substance or content. Figure 9 demonstrates Widdowson's view of the functioning of procedures in projecting established schemata and creating new schemata (Widdowson, 1983a, p. 41).



The Projection and Creation of Schemata

Figure 9

Another perspective on this subject appears to be warranted, however. Rumelhart is more cautious than Widdowson in addressing this issue of the creation of new schemata:

One of the central problems of a schema theory is a specification of the process (or processes) whereby new schemata are developed. Even if it is granted that set of "hand-crafted" procedures could carry out the

tasks assigned to them by schema theories, it remains to be shown that there are plausible learning procedures that could result in such a set of schemata. (Rumelhart, 1980, p. 52)

To conclude the critical examination of Widdowson's model, Figure 10 provides an illustration of how the "model of language use" might now be viewed in considering the roles played by the different forms of language knowledge in actual language use. Figure 10 demonstrates that procedural activity is essential to the functioning of the model. Without such activity, "no communication takes place, no discourse occurs" (Widdowson, 1983a, p. 97). Figure 10 also shows that in Widdowson's model, the use of linguistic rules is "mediated through schemata" (Widdowson, 1983a, p. 39).

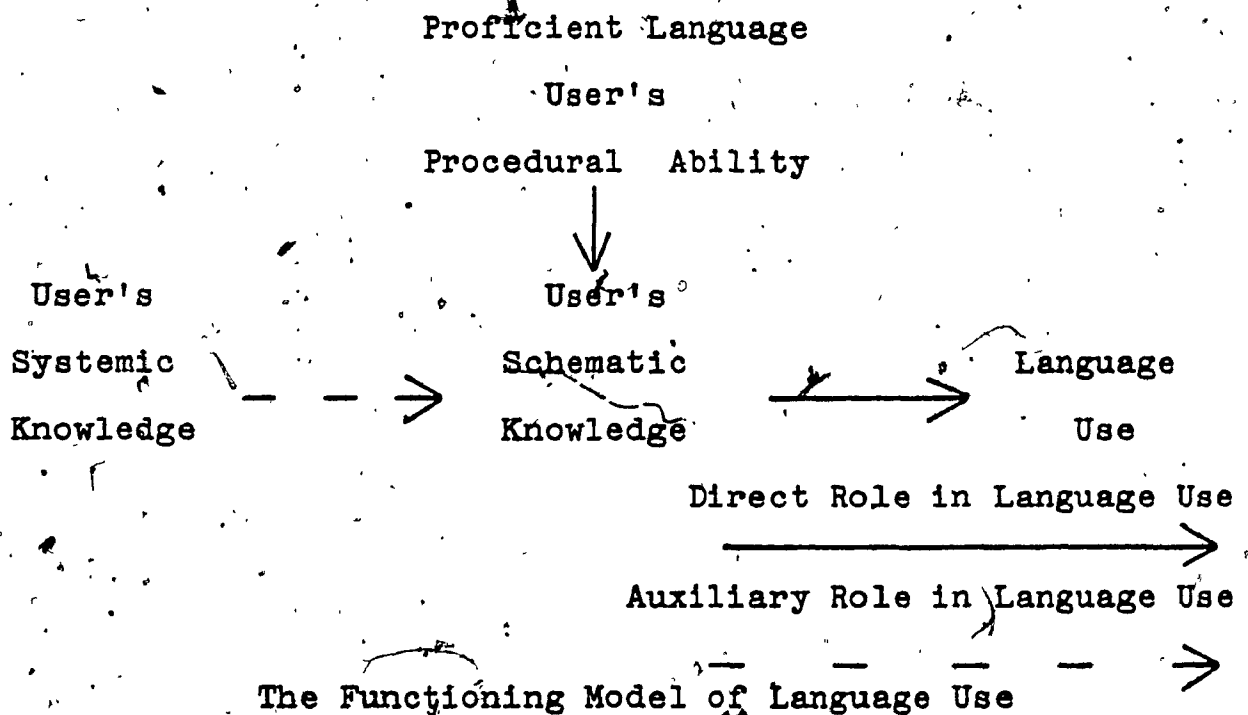


Table 10

### The Essential Features of the Model

Returning briefly to Widdowson's two-level view of language knowledge, it is now clear why this is only a partial picture of the components of his "model of language use."

Level 2	Schematic
Level 1	Systemic

Levels of Language Knowledge (3)

Figure 11

Systemic or schematic "coverage," in his view, will not provide an adequate basis for course design. The actual functioning of the model is dependent on "procedural activity." Schematic features, in conjunction with the systemic resources of language, may be used to activate procedures, but in and of itself, systemic and schematic knowledge will not provide for language use.

In outlining his views on course design, Widdowson makes reference to the "three levels of language knowledge and ability" represented by his "model of language use" (Widdowson, 1983a, p. 82).

Figure 12, therefore, would appear to provide a complete picture of the essential components of Widdowson's model, coupling forms of language knowledge with procedural ability.

	Knowledge and Ability	Form of Proficiency
Level 3	Procedural (ability)	communicative capacity
Level 2	Schematic (knowledge)	communicative competence
Level 1	Systemic (knowledge)	linguistic competence

The Model of Language Use:

Levels of Language Knowledge and Ability

Figure 12

It is because of the importance of procedural<sup>2</sup> ability to the actual functioning of the model that Widdowson places such an emphasis on methodology in his approach to course design. According to Widdowson, with the goal-oriented approach to course design, the intended ends of the learning process serve as a justification for whatever means might be available. In his estimation, such an approach has often led to the following state of affairs in ESP course implementation:

The assumption . . . is that what learners need is a knowledge of the systemic and schematic features of the English of their speciality, and that this can be conveyed to them by conventional means of a very general sort, which need have no connection at all with the activities for which they need to use English. Any methodology will do so long as it gets the information across. (Widdowson, 1983a, p. 88)

In Widdowson's view, then, this concern with the "systemic and schematic features" of language often leads to a partial or complete neglect of procedural activities. Such activities are required, however, for the development of the capacity to use language for communication.

Widdowson discusses the fact that communicative courses often present language in situational contexts which can be viewed as being schematic in character. The "scenarios" adopted often involve the use of dialogues and they indicate frames of reference and employ rhetorical routines related to the given context (Widdowson, 1983a, p. 81).

The problem is that many such presentations are employed in order to provide examples of linguistic (systemic) structures as they might be used in a given situation. No provision is made for providing the learner with the opportunity to solve problems through the use of procedures. According to Widdowson's model, it is only through the use of such procedures that learners will be provided with opportunities to engage appropriate schemata and obtain practice at actual language use.

In a similar vein, Widdowson believes that the main purpose of many ESP course-designers (he cites Ewer and Latorre in making this point) is to provide "schematic coverage" (Widdowson, 1983a, p. 98) of a particular area of use. Such an approach is inadequate, in Widdowson's view, because schematic knowledge is not sufficient in itself to provide for language use. In the design of ESP courses, the

choice of schematic features must be made for the purpose of generating procedural activity.

In Widdowson's estimation, both register and needs analysis "abstract" language forms of a systemic and schematic nature out of the contexts of discourse in which they are actually employed for communicative purposes. As such, neither of them accounts for actual language use. Nor do they confer a meaningful role on methodology, the effective use of which provides the means by which the learning of procedural skills and abilities can be developed. In understanding the implications of Widdowson's proposal for a "procedurally based methodology" in ESP course design, therefore, it is necessary at this point to see precisely what he means by his use of the term methodology.

Table 6 demonstrates that Widdowson is quite explicit about what he means by methodology. He does not, however, provide any kind of list of the types of activities which he intends to be incorporated into a "procedurally based methodology" for ESP course design. To have done so would perhaps have been a contradiction of much of his criticism of register and needs analysis. Widdowson has accused these two approaches of analyzing "language use into component parts" and of reducing it to a "static inventory of items" (Widdowson, 1983a, p. 34). And he has criticized Munby's needs processing device of generating "an atomistic analysis of procedures which reduces them to a set of static



features (Widdowson, 1983a, p. 86).

Table 6. A tabular view of Widdowson's (1983a) uses of the term Methodology.

Methodology . . .
"is understood to be . . .
. . . . a set of activities designed to develop the procedural problem solving capacity of learners" (p. 107).
"is concerned with . . .
. . . . appropriate procedural activity" (p.87).
. . . . the kind of activity that promotes the learning of language, with <u>how</u> students <u>learn</u> " (p. 94).
"has been generally neglected in ESP" (p. 87).

Although, as mentioned, Widdowson has not provided any kind of extensive list of procedures, what he has done is to give examples of the types of procedural activities he is referring to and to discuss the form such activities can take within contexts which provide for language use. He introduces the idea of procedural ability with reference to the following activities:

- inference
- practical reasoning
- computing cross reference

negotiation of meaning  
problem solving

(Widdowson, 1983a, p. 41)

In his discussion of ESP course design, Widdowson explores the distinction between schematic and procedural vocabulary, explaining that procedural vocabulary consists of those "common-core" lexical items which are not bound to a particular schematic context. In discussing comprehension questions, he briefly examines the difference between procedural and schematic questions and the specific function of each type of question in assisting the learner to process written discourse. (These terms will be used in the examination of materials and will be explained in more detail later.)

Widdowson's discussion of these issues is largely explanatory, however, and cannot be construed as yielding any kind of systematic approach to ESP course design as suggested by a "procedurally based methodology." His purpose, at this stage, was not to articulate the step by step requirements of implementing such a design. His intention was to generate a theoretical framework for ESP by producing a functioning model of language use.

Mackay (1985) has reacted favourably to Widdowson's approach to language instruction. He has pointed out, however, that Widdowson's advocacy of "organized instruction" as a means of developing procedural abilities requires a more detailed specification of the elements of

course design.

Widdowson has to accept both the possibility of and the responsibility for an exhaustive listing/description of user behaviour and the language (systemic and schematic) knowledge upon which it depends and the incorporation of all these elements into a consciously designed pedagogy. (Mackay 1985)

Issues related to the application of Widdowson's "model of language use" to ESP course design and methodology will be discussed further in chapter five.

#### Method For the Examination of Materials

The following ESP materials, authored or initiated by H.G. Widdowson, will now be examined, using the essential features of Widdowson's "model of language use" as a point of reference:

#### Reading and Thinking in English

Concepts in Use

Exploring Functions

Discovering Discourse

Discourse in Action

#### English in Focus Series

English In Physical Science

In addition, the following selection of ESP materials will also be examined, again using the essential features of Widdowson's model as a point of reference:

#### The Structure of Technical English

A Course in Basic Scientific English

Developing Reading Skills in English

Telecommunications

Listed below are a number of Widdowson's terms (with brief explanations) which will be used in the analysis of materials:

1) Schematic vocabulary

- "defines and makes distinctive particular frames of reference in different areas of use" (Widdowson, 1983a, p. 94)

- schematic terms have a narrow "indexical range."

2) Procedural vocabulary

- serves to establish or clarify schematic vocabulary

- procedural terms have a broad "indexical range."

3) Schematic (comprehension) questions

- serve to summarize

- aimed at formulations of gist and upshot

- placed at the end of reading passages

4) Procedural (comprehension) questions

- prompting devices

- facilitate interpretation during the act of reading (guide the establishment of frames and routines)

- placed in the margins beside a text

The examination of materials will take the following form:

(1) Materials will be assessed through a 'hands on' experiencing of the actual course readings, activities and exercises exactly as given to the learner. In the case of Reading and Thinking in English, this will involve a complete working through of all exercises and activities in the first three of the four books in the series in an effort to determine if Widdowson has realized his model in actual course materials. Several selected chapters will be completed in their entirety in the final book in this series; additional contents will be perused for general features. This will also be the procedure with the other ESP materials examined.

A brief assessment will then be given of each of these materials from the perspective of a proficient language user and 'simulated learner.'

(2) Pertinent comments will be made with respect to the relative emphases afforded the essential features of Widdowson's model by each set of materials. Comments will be recorded under three headings:

Systemic coverage

Schematic coverage

Procedural activities

(3) Findings will be discussed with reference to the specific questions posed in chapter 1 of this study.

## CHAPTER 4

### FINDINGS OF MATERIALS EXAMINATION

Overview of Materials: Widdowson, H. G. (Ass. Ed.) (1980).  
Concepts in use. Reading and Thinking in English. Oxford  
University Press.

Reading and Thinking in English is a four book series.  
It is a course in Reading Comprehension, designed for  
students who need to develop the capacity to access  
information in English. This series is located on the  
Education end of Widdowson's scale of specificity. It is  
English for Academic Purposes. The organization of units  
in the first book in the series, Concepts in Use, follows  
this pattern:

- 1) Presentation
- 2) Language Study
- 3) Discourse Study
- 4) Extension

#### Assessment of A Simulated Learner

- a fascinating range of topics for those with a broad,  
general scientific base or a keen general interest in  
science
- potentially much less appealing to someone with a well  
developed scientific focus and specific well-defined goals  
in that area
- engaging and stimulating to work through the activities
- a great variety of tasks
- recurrence (and further development) of topics and

reinforcement of structures previously introduced

- carefully graded (gradually more challenging).

### Systemic Coverage

- stated concern with grammar and vocabulary is exemplified by the use of scientific lexicon and the presentation of structural alternatives. For example: "Plants prevent the wind from eroding soil = Plants prevent erosion" (p. 65).
- the focus is on the use of these resources to express concepts, and the combining of these concepts in the development of reading passages.

### Schematic Coverage

- extremely diversified
- topics in biology, chemistry, physics and popular science
- examples of topics are:
  - the solar system
  - the circulatory system
  - electroplating
  - nutrition
  - condensation cycle.
- schematic representation frequently diagrammatic
- abundant use of tables, graphs, charts and drawings in conjunction with readings, which are short and concise in the first five or six units, longer and more detailed in the last half of the book.

### Procedural Activities

- the learner is required to engage in a large number of procedural activities
- activities could seldom be construed as being mechanical
- the following procedural tasks are required of the learner who works through the activities in Concepts in Use:

paraphrasing  
 completing and making statements by supplying information (using tables)  
 correction of false statements  
 part/function (matching)  
 completing summaries (from information in diagrams)  
 completing tables (transfer from reading passages)  
 ordering events in a process  
 matching action/stage in process  
 establishing causal relations  
 cause - consequences  
 cause - effects  
 paragraph writing

- primary emphasis has been placed on the development of these and other procedural abilities.

Overview of Materials: Widdowson, H. G. (Ass. Ed.) (1979).  
Exploring functions. Reading and Thinking in English. Oxford University Press.

Exploring Functions exemplifies the use of concepts in performing the communicative functions required in academic writing. The emphasis is on understanding how information is communicated in written English. The organization of units in Exploring Functions follows this pattern:

- 1) Presentation
- 2) Language Study
  - structure and function
  - writing exercises
- 3) Development



- comprehension exercises

### Assessment of a Simulated Learner

- as with Concepts in Use, Exploring Functions contains a broad range of topics
- this is again appropriate for students whose scientific interest is stimulated by such diversity
- it might not prove to be at all motivating for learners who seek specialized language instruction in a specific discipline (e.g., microbiology)
- excellent summaries of how language is used to express similarities, differences and causality.

### Systemic Coverage

- grammatical emphasis: the functions which grammar performs (e.g., Describing how Things Work: Expressing Structure in Whole/Part Relationships, p. 41)
- focus is also on the concepts (e.g., purpose, cause/effect) expressed by particular structures
- examines grammatical time expressions (e.g., expressing past time: Timeline of the Aztec civilization, p. 56).

### Schematic Coverage

- units are organized according to language function (e.g., following instructions, describing, generalizing, making comparisons, giving explanations)
- ways of expressing: purpose, structure, function, method

- as with Concepts in Use, extensive use of diagrammatic representations (maps, diagrams, charts, drawings, etc.)
- many schematic (comprehension) questions (e.g., p. 51) and summary tables aimed at formulations (e.g., p. 63).

#### Procedural Activities

- procedural comprehension questions (e.g., Reading: Hero of Alexandria's Device for Opening Temple Doors, p. 69)
- creating diagrammatic representations of anaphoric reference for specific reading passages (e.g., Equatorial climates, p. 15)
- sentence completion requiring information transfer (e.g., Birth and Death Rates, transfer from a graph, p. 61)
- using textual connectors (e.g., p. 16/17)
- identification of logical structure within a reading passage
- inferencing (from observations and results)
- expressing similarity/differences
- connecting similar statements
- connecting contrasting statements
- expressing causality.

Overview of Materials: Widdowson, H. G. (Ass. Ed.) (1979). Discovering discourse. Reading and Thinking in English. Oxford University Press.

The aim of Discovering Discourse is to develop reading skills (reading strategies and associated writing

skills) needed for the academic use of English. The course focusses on various ways of using the resources of language to organize and present information.

#### Assessment of a Simulated Learner

- very clear and systematic presentation of predictive reading strategies (contextual and non-linguistic cues)
- presents very useful organizational patterns and principles
- information learned is consistently recycled at higher levels of complexity
- level of proficiency required for this text, however, is significantly higher than the previous two books in the series
- learners who are not highly motivated by schematically diverse scientific material will probably not have the patience to work through this text
- some learners at this level of proficiency might want a text which is closer to the training end of the scale of specificity.

#### Systemic Coverage

- extensive coverage of schematic vocabulary representing distinct frames of reference (e.g., Chordates, p. 73)
- as with the other books in the series, procedural vocabulary is given equal importance in stimulating learner process (e.g., Activity 1, p. 54)

- language structures are always examined in the context of language function (e.g., Real and nominal definition: Concept/class and characteristics, p. 57).

### Schematic Coverage

- fewer subjects are explored but coverage is more comprehensive
- schematic diversity is still the rule however. Examples of subjects addressed are:
  - chemistry
  - systems (e.g., solar, computer)
  - music
  - crime
  - cultural patterns of change
  - coffee processing
- units are organized according to organizational functions:
  - generalizing/specifying
  - describing
  - defining
  - classifying
  - hypothesizing
- wide variety of maps, tables, advertisements, flow charts, cartoons and diagrams.

### Procedural Activities

- the procedural activities in Discovering Discourse involve the learner in:

- predicting
- writing summaries/paragraphs
- using tables to record information expressing various levels of generality
- ordering information (general to the specific)
- accessing tables
- identifying themes
- using definitions in discourse in conjunction with generalizations/descriptions/classifications
- problem solving: using hypotheses to reach conclusions.

Overview of Materials: Widdowson, H. G. (Ass. Ed.) (1980). Discourse in action. Reading and Thinking in English. Oxford University Press.

Discourse in Action presupposes a superior command of grammar and vocabulary. It is only appropriate for students whose capabilities in reading and writing academic English approach that of the proficient language user with highly developed academic skills.

Assessment of a Simulated Learner

- for advanced second language learners
- this text could be used beneficially by native speakers
- potentially helpful to university students who are called upon to read extensively and to write cohesive and well-crafted essays.

### Systemic Coverage

- very advanced schematic and procedural vocabulary.

### Schematic Coverage

- extensive reading passages on such topics as:
  - nuclear energy
  - intermediate technology
  - paranormal phenomena
- numerous instances of published materials (e.g., The Daily Telegraph, 1979, p. 98)
- fewer visuals than in previous books in the series
  - line and bar graphs, tables, maps and highly detailed diagrams
- schematic comprehension questions (e.g., page 30)
- 'preparations' and 'abstracts' of reading passages provide introductions to schematic frames (e.g., p. 49 and 52).

### Procedural Activities

- practice at distinguishing and reading three forms of discourse: exposition, enquiry and argument
- development of critical reading skills
- practice at accessing genuine academic discourse
- development of research skills
- procedural comprehension questions (e.g., p. 57-60).

The primary emphasis in Reading and Thinking in English is the presentation of schematic features representative of a diversity of scientific disciplines for the purpose of

activating procedural ability.

Overview of Materials: Allen, J. P. B. , & Widdowson, H. G. (1974). English in physical science. English in Focus. Oxford University Press.

Widdowson states that this first book in the Focus series "was used deliberately by its authors to explore the possibility of appropriate methodology," namely, methodology which emphasizes procedural activity (Widdowson, 1983a, p. 97). This particular book in the series is intended to develop the reading and writing skills of physics and chemistry students.

#### Assessment of a Simulated Learner (Unit 1)

- a technique involving carefully planned true/false questions is used for developing reading ability
- this technique probably prevents a learner from reading mechanically (although constant referencing becomes a bit of a nuisance)
- learner is taught how to "account for" a true/false choice rather than to simply respond
- careful grading; movement from controlled to free practice is gradual and carefully developed
- the grammar exercises are fairly familiar matching and sentence joining tasks although meaningful contexts are always provided (the same is true of the section on 'writing definition').

### Systemic Coverage

- grammatical structures are introduced in a manner which illustrates their function rather than simply demonstrating the structure.
- there are many presentations with a familiar format but they are presented in meaningful (subject-related) contexts
- schematic vocabulary (relating to physics and chemistry) is introduced contextually.

### Schematic Coverage

- schematic frames are related to physics and chemistry
- some diagrams, tables, and flowcharts but considerably fewer than in Reading and Thinking in English.

### Procedural Activities

- contextual reference (anaphora).
- rephrasing (drawing on texts for alternate expressions)
- determining logical relationships
- following directions in conducting actual experiments
- reconstructing paragraphs.

### Other Activities (not 'procedural')

- sentence building (see Discussion at the end of chapter)
- fill in the blank
- matching
- sentence joining.

English in Physical Science provides procedural



activities in developing capacity and non-procedural activities in developing schematic competence.

Overview of Materials: Ewer, J. R. & Latorre, G. (1969). A course in basic scientific English. London: Longman.

This course is structurally graded; units are organized according to grammatical structures. The authors view scientific disciplines as sharing a common vocabulary and as each possessing "special vocabularies." These latter vocabularies, however, present "very little difficulty, since they are mainly international words" (Ewer and Latorre, 1969, p. ix). The materials have been written to incorporate the results of frequency counts.

Assessment of a Simulated Learner (Unit 2)

- the chapter reading is well written
- there are, however, no procedural questions to assist the learner in reading this passage or any others
- the schematic questions are clear and straightforward (line references would be helpful with such a long text)
- the word study section requires extremely mechanical work. Students might end up scanning the passage for words with a certain number and pattern of letters (as suggested by the exercise) without the slightest notion of meaning
- overall, the exercises provided are quite boring (exemplifying structure but failing to provide context) and mechanical (requiring little or no thought)

- structure study provides explanations 'about' rather than exemplifications 'of' grammar.

### Systemic Coverage

- familiar grammatical categories
- Dictionary of Basic Scientific English
  - Part 1: largely procedural vocabulary
  - Part 2: structural words and phrases (grouped according to grammatical function)
- the Index of Structures is a reference of structures as and where they occur in the course; includes lists of suffixes/prefixes/verbs.

### Schematic Coverage

- schematic comprehension questions
- a few diagrams, one bar chart, several line graphs; generally very few visual schematic representations.

### Procedural Activities

- one set of line graphs (p. 11) provides the learner with potentially excellent procedural work
- discussion and criticism sections, however, from which this example was taken, rely on learners to have already developed procedures; learners get no help in developing their procedural ability from the questions themselves
- Procedural work has not been systematically provided for
- there are very few problem solving activities.

### Other Activities (not 'procedural')

- synonyms exercise
- word building (suffixes)
- substitution tables
- changing sentences from active to passive.

The primary emphasis in this course appears to be on the systemic level of language knowledge.

Overview of Materials; Herbert, A. J. (1965). The structure of technical English. London: Longman.

This course is intended for intermediate learners with "about six years of learning English" behind them. It is designed for students of engineering and is located towards the training end of Widdowson's scale of specificity.

### Assessment of a Simulated Learner (Unit 1)

- a very technical and schematically specific reading
- illustrations and diagrams somewhat more in evidence than in A Course in Scientific English
- there are no schematic or procedural questions accompanying the reading (schematic questions appear later, as part of an exercise)
- exercises are not especially inspiring and tasks quickly become quite repetitive.

### Systemic Coverage

- emphasis on "semi-scientific or semi-technical words"

(Herbert, 1965, Preface, p. v)

- an index of words complete with page references is largely an index of procedural vocabulary given that technical words (indexical of schematic frames pertinent to engineering) are excluded from the list. Examples of items are:

adequate/assemble/breakdown/horizontal/vary/necessitate

- structural exemplification and structural patterns.

### Schematic Coverage

- Twenty-eight units are organized according to schematic frames of reference relevant to engineering (e.g., Welding, Steam Boilers, Electrolysis)

- illustrations are helpful in understanding content but fail to engage the learner in procedural activities.

### Procedural Activities

- methodology has not been devised with the development of procedural ability in mind

- illustrations and diagrams do not provide the learner with any procedural work to do (e.g., There are no information transfer exercises connected with these illustrations).

### Other Activities (not 'procedural')

- substitution tables to work with synonyms

- variable use of same lexical items

- fill in the blank

- sentence completion (largely using procedural vocabulary)
- reading of statements.

This course is concerned with systemic and schematic coverage.

Overview of Materials: Davies, D. (1985).  
Telecommunications. Developing Reading Skills in English.  
 Great Britain: Pergamon Press.

Telecommunications is a more recent ESP course located midway along Widdowson's scale of specificity between training and education. Its stated purpose is to help the learner to develop "techniques" for accessing information.

Assessment of a Simulated Learner (Units 1 through 4)

- readings are highly specialized and technical (indexical of specific frames of reference)
- there are no procedural questions
- schematic questions come in a variety of forms though there is never an exhaustive list covering an entire reading
- activities often require an application of knowledge (e.g., mathematical) learned in the readings
- some activities are far more familiar and less innovative than others (e.g., true/false with no accounting for choice)
- a mixture of procedural and non-procedural activities.

Systemic Coverage

- no index of structures or dictionary of procedural

vocabulary as with Herbert (1965) and Ewer and Latorre (1969.)

- systemic knowledge is interwoven with descriptions of process and examined in the context of topics discussed.

#### Schematic Coverage

- a "cross-section of the major themes" (Davies, 1985) in Telecommunications (topics from physics and electrotechnology)
- genuine texts (see Widdowson, 1979, Chapter 12)
- frequent use of illustrations, diagrams, flow charts, modulation graphs, and other forms of schematic representation
- some schematic comprehension questions.

#### Procedural Activities

- diagram labelling (information transfer)
- applying technical information in reading graphs (e.g., frequency curves, p. 2)
- finding contextual references (lexical)
- locating anaphoric references (e.g., p. 8).

#### Other Activities (not 'procedural')

- fill in the blanks
- true/false
- sentence completion

This course emphasizes schematic coverage and

procedural activity. It stresses the former more than Reading and Thinking in English as it is located more towards the training end of the scale of specificity. Procedural activities are often 'short-lived' and fail to allow for in-depth problem solving. Nevertheless, schematic frames are always relevant to the task at hand. Structures are never presented simply to illustrate usage.

### Summary of Results

Assuming that Widdowson's model accurately describes the role of systemic and schematic knowledge in language use, then his "model of language use" has been realized in many of the procedural activities found in Reading and Thinking in English.

Focus also contains procedural activities which reflect the functioning model. In Focus, however, some such activities are conducted at what Widdowson (1983a) has referred to as the "sentence level." Examples of this are to be found in Grammar exercises such as those examining conditional sentences (English In Physical Science, p. 6). It is not that the purpose of these exercises has been to show how such sentences are formally manifested. The subject-related context always gives them a communicative focus. The problem is that Widdowson has herein demonstrated a use of basic interpretative procedures at what he himself would deem to be the "sentence level," unaccounted for by the model. Other examples of this can be found in

the exercises entitled "sentence building." This point will be examined further in the discussion in chapter 5.

The examination of a selection of three other sets of ESP materials has exposed a varying emphasis. Herbert (1965) and Ewer and Latorre (1969) were found to reflect systemic and schematic coverage although the latter course placed more emphasis on the systemic component. Herbert's materials reflected schematic coverage to a greater extent. His twenty-eight readings were all indexical of schematic frames related to the discipline of engineering.

The materials written by Herbert (1965) and Ewer and Latorre (1969) were not found to reflect the procedural component except in isolated instances (see the examination of Ewer and Latorre: procedural activities). It was evident that procedural activity had not been a targeted concern of course design.

It must be noted, however, that both of these sets of materials demonstrated an awareness of the importance of procedural vocabulary. Widdowson has spoken of the importance of procedural vocabulary when the focus of instruction is on the "process of learning" (Widdowson, 1983a, p. 94). Herbert's "Index of Words," and Ewer and Latorre's "Dictionary of Basic Scientific English" both focus on non-technical words which are procedural in nature. The problem with respect to Widdowson's model is that this procedural vocabulary has been "itemized," but provision has not been made for its incorporation into procedural



activities.

It can be concluded, therefore, in considering these two sets of materials with reference to Widdowson's functioning model, that the learning activities which they provide do not reflect actual language use.

The systemic, schematic and procedural components of Widdowson's model were all found to be reflected in Davies' course on Telecommunications. As with Herbert (1965), units are organized according to schematic frames relevant to a particular area of use, in this case telecommunications. Also like Herbert (1965), this course seeks to develop competence with specific schematic concepts and in this way it resembles training.

Unlike Herbert (1965), however, Davies' course also seeks to develop learner capacity; this is a stated purpose of the course and it is reflected in exercises whose function is to engage learners in procedural activity. To effect this 'educational' purpose, extensive use is made of illustrations and diagrams which require the learner's procedural participation in assimilating schematic content.

Because of its concern with training, however, Telecommunications seeks to develop schematic competence in addition to procedural capacity. There appears to be an inevitable trade-off here. On the one hand, the procedural activities in Telecommunications are generally less involving than those in Reading and Thinking in English. They tend to take less time and to require less discourse.

processing to complete; as such, they provide less comprehensively for the development of capacity. On the other hand, Reading and Thinking in English, which provides extensively for the growth of capacity, fails to develop in-depth schematic competence in specific disciplines and areas of use such as that represented by Telecommunications.

In concluding this discussion of the examination of materials, one other significant observation can be made. Those ESP materials which reflected all of the essential features of Widdowson's model made use of a large and stimulating variety of schematic representations of knowledge in visual form. (This was less true of Focus than of more recent materials.) These visual aids (maps, diagrams, charts, graphs, tables, flow charts etc.) were presented in ways which required procedural activity on the part of the learner in understanding or transferring schematic content from one context or frame to another. They appear to have a significant role to play in facilitating the development of procedural ability.

CHAPTER 5  
DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The Model in Relation to Materials

Widdowson's "model of language use" has been examined critically in order to isolate its essential features and to generate a description of the functioning model. It was determined that the model provides for the engagement of:

- systemic knowledge
- schematic knowledge
- procedural activity

An examination of materials co-authored or supervised by Widdowson was conducted using the essential features of his model as a point of reference. The results of this examination suggest that Widdowson 'has' put his theoretical framework into practice; at least insofar as developing pedagogic materials which provide for actual language use. In Reading and Thinking in English, grammar and vocabulary are generally presented in schematic frames within the context of carefully devised learning activities. These activities provide learners with a variety of opportunities to develop procedural ability as required by the model.

The results of the examination of a selection of ESP materials with reference to a model which was 'not' used in developing them, revealed differences in the emphasis which these materials placed on the model's three components. Some failed to provide for actual language use as defined by the

model by failing to engage the student in procedural activity. Ewer and Latorre (1969) stressed the systemic component. Herbert (1965) placed somewhat greater emphasis on the schematic component while also stressing systemic coverage. Davies (1985), in writing Telecommunications, provided for the procedural component but placed more emphasis on schematic competence than the authors of Reading and Thinking in English (1979, 1980), who consistently emphasized procedural ability.

This examination of materials has raised important questions, however, about Widdowson's model itself, the breadth of his theoretical framework and the efficacy of a "model of language use" to provide for the many and varied requirements of ESP course design and methodology.

#### Possible Limitations of the Model

The role of systemic knowledge in actual language use has been the source of some confusion in the mind of this interpreter of Widdowson's model. Widdowson has said, in referring to conventional linguistic rules, that "capacity depends upon, even if it is not determined by, a knowledge of the rules" (Widdowson, 1983a, p. 11). He has also, as previously explained, stated that systemic knowledge "is not directly engaged" in language use (Widdowson, 1983a, p. 58). The picture which emerges is a sometimes paradoxical one in which language use is portrayed as being contingent upon but not bound by linguistic competence.

Perhaps Widdowson has downplayed the importance of systemic knowledge in order to emphasize the role of schemata in language use. Statements such as the following serve to convey this impression: "Language itself does not convey information: what it does is to provide a set of directions for which a schema in the user's mind is to be engaged" (Widdowson, 1983a, p. 36).

A schematic model may ultimately prove to provide the most accurate picture of how discourse is processed. But although language may be understood as being 'incapable', in and of itself, of 'conveying' information (in the sense that such a process requires the involvement of a human mind), it certainly 'contains' information linguistically encoded within it. And it would seem to follow that the information which language 'contains' can activate schemata when it is presented to the language user. In other words, systemic knowledge can serve to initiate the discourse process.

An example may serve to make this point clearer: When a proficient language user who is driving a car suddenly sees a STOP sign, it is the information which is linguistically encoded in the word STOP which triggers the process whereby appropriate schemata are engaged. The main point to be made here is that it is difficult to understand how the systemic knowledge of the user in this situation fails to be "directly" engaged in the discourse process (Widdowson, 1983a, p. 58).

In stressing the importance of the schematic component

in the functioning model of language use, Widdowson has perhaps, on several occasions, overstated the case. It is conceivable that what he intended by saying that systemic knowledge has "no direct executive function" in language use is not that its function is indirect but that it does not control or direct the discourse process (Widdowson, 1983a, p. 38). That "executive function" is performed by schematic knowledge. The relationship which Widdowson understands to exist between systemic and schematic knowledge is not entirely clear, however, and some clarification is called for.

There appear to be problems with Widdowson's definition of sentences and his insistence that they do not occur in actual discourse and are therefore not represented by the model of language use. Exercises entitled 'sentence building' (English in Physical Science, p. 78) in Allan and Widdowson's Focus series reflect the "sentence level" which Widdowson has described as "never" occurring in actual discourse (Widdowson, 1983a, p. 38). It is unclear, therefore, whether tasks of this kind constitute actual language use as described by the functioning model.

On the one hand, since the model posits that sentences do not occur in actual discourse, it can be concluded that the sentences generated in these exercises do not constitute instances of language use. On the other hand, these 'sentence building' exercises are quite innovative, require contextualized thought to complete, appear to be procedural

in nature and seem to provide a sensible basis for the task of paragraph writing to which they eventually lead. This confusion appears to lend legitimacy to Charnock's complaint (1985) that Widdowson's sentence/utterance distinction is too definitive.

In the materials examination conducted for this study, reference was frequently made to a scale of specificity, as this concept is an integral part of Widdowson's theoretical framework. It quickly became evident in attempting to discuss materials in terms of this scale of specificity that there is no way to be precise in determining where an ESP course is, or should be located on this scale. If what is intended by a "scale" is something which permits measurement, this scale must be further articulated.

One final point must be made with respect to the model's possible limitations. Models of linguistic description have traditionally served as the basis for ESP course design. Widdowson has endeavoured to generate a model of how language is actually used to serve this same purpose.

Though Widdowson has objected to the "inventories" of structures and functions generated by linguistic description, criticizing Munby (Widdowson 1983a) quite severely in this process, it is as yet unclear whether his alternative solution is an entirely practical or necessary one. As Mackay (1985) has tried to show through his comparative tables of syllabus design and implementation

(see chapter 2), Widdowson's views are not simply stylistic variations of traditional assumptions. His approach requires a radically different sequencing of the tasks necessary for course design.

Inventories of structures and functions, however, though "static" in nature, have proven to be reliable in providing course designers with a tangible framework on which to build. Exploring Functions, in fact, a book in a series which exemplifies Widdowson's methodological principles, used language functions (e.g., describing, generalizing), as a unit-by-unit organizing principle.

If Widdowson intends that his "model of language use" be adopted as the basis for an alternative ESP framework (in addition to providing insight into methodology), then course designers will require idealized procedural inventories of some kind in attempting to design courses which provide for the development of procedural ability. These will need to be as practical to work with as models of linguistic description have been. If theoretical decisions can be made more readily on the basis of existing models, it is doubtful whether course designers will generally be prepared to adopt a model whose components are less precisely defined.

#### LSP: The Role of Methodology

The most consequential aspect of Widdowson's theoretical framework is his viewpoint on methodology, on the necessity of learning activities which activate the



learning process. Mackay has characterized the importance which Widdowson attaches to methodology as follows: "In his view methodology is the very embodiment of the interpretative procedures without which the schematic level of knowledge is not engaged" (Mackay 1985). For Widdowson, the teaching of LSP (Languages For Specific Purposes) calls for a methodology which assists in developing learner capacity in addition to providing, as ESP courses have typically done, for competence. Widdowson wants to invest specific purpose language courses with "pedagogic significance" (Widdowson, 1983a, p. 83).

Activities whose purpose is to develop learner capacity should allow for learners to gradually assume more and more control over their own learning. Cumming (1985) has conducted a case study investigating the ability of ESP students to improve their writing skills by adopting preferred learning strategies, setting personal goals and developing the procedural ability to meet these goals.

As Allwright has mentioned (1985), Cumming's study provides an important example of the direction which future research can take. Widdowson has provided a broad theoretical framework for ESP; what is required now is the investigation of specific skills such as academic writing and the procedural abilities required for these particular skills. What is also required is the development of materials which adopt the "model of language use" as a basis for their construction. (Appendix 1 provides an example of

materials devised by this author using Widdowson's principles as a guide.)

Though the "model of language use" describes the activation of both ideational and interpersonal schemata in language use (see chapter 3), it became evident in the examination of materials conducted for this study that ideational schemata were the predominant schematic types being realized in language use generated by these materials. This is attributable, it would seem, to the fact that all of the materials examined in this study fall within the domain of EAP (English For Academic Purposes).

Other ESP courses, however, focussing on non-academic forms of language use, no doubt require a greater emphasis on rhetorical routines and the procedures required for the realization of interpersonal schemata. An example of this would be a course in English for hotel employees. An example of a course requiring both ideational and interpersonal schemata is provided by a program entitled ESP for the MBA undertaken at the University of Western Ontario for visiting Chinese students (Dawson, Goldstein & Johnson, 1985). In preparing this program, course designers 'sat in' on MBA classes which they knew the Chinese students would be required to attend. By doing this, they were able to discover a number of subtle routines adopted by various professors as communicative techniques, routines which they then sought to include in course material.

It is interesting to note that in developing this ESP

program, the course designers also went to the MBA department and asked students and staff to make a list of phrases and idiomatic expressions in everyday use around the department and in their wider business circle. They were hoping to uncover some kind of business parlance. The results of their inquiry (some items of which are listed in Appendix 2), suggest the appropriateness of utilizing a systemic list of this kind in ESP programs which require the development of interpersonal schemata. Such a list can be viewed as being "static," to use Widdowson's term, but many are the language instructors and learners who would find such a list to be helpful.

One final issue which Widdowson addresses in his discussion of methodology is the necessity of securing the "interest" of the learner (Widdowson, 1983a, p. 91). The procedural activities devised for Reading and Thinking in English are intended to develop learner capacity. But as was pointed out in the examination of these materials (chapter 4), a student who is seeking schematic competence in a specific area of use such as microbiology might be completely disinterested by such a course. In such a case, efforts to emphasize the development of capacity would not be appropriate.

Materials such as Allan and Howard's (1981) subject-related ESL modules suggest one possible alternative for situations of this kind. These materials, focussing as they do on particular subject areas such as geography, provide

for schematic competence in a specific area of use without neglecting the development of capacity. As such, they would seem to be located somewhere in the middle of Widdowson's scale of specificity. The decision to create such materials, however, might be contingent upon funding, given the inevitable questions of marketability and fiscal viability pertinent to specialized materials.

### Implications for the Classroom

Charnock, in reviewing Widdowson's recent publications, concluded that his theoretical work in "Linguistic Pragmatics" demonstrates that this field of inquiry "is directly relevant for language teaching" (Charnock 1985). This study comes to the same conclusion. Widdowson's efforts to account for the relationship between the words which we use and the meanings which we intend have important implications for the classroom.

The learning activities in the language classroom can be conceived of in restricted and strictly functional (utilitarian) terms. Or they can be understood as existing within a broad social context encompassing an incredible cultural diversity. Though Widdowson and Swan fundamentally disagree on a number of key issues central to communicative language teaching, they have expressed a similar view on one point. Cross-cultural communication, or "inter-ethnic interaction," to use Widdowson's phrase, often results in misunderstanding (Widdowson, 1983a, p. 45; Swan,

1985a, p. 5). In this regard, Kaplan (1972) has demonstrated the possible dissimilarity of the thought patterns of divergent cultural groups as represented in written compositions.

Widdowson's "model of language use" addresses the issue of divergent schematic world views and the procedural negotiation required for bridging the gap between them. The model examines how schematic frames of reference are operant in shaping and determining attitudes and behaviour in conjunction with language. In the language classroom of the 1980's and beyond, such considerations are not going to diminish in importance. In Canada, metropolitan centers such as Montreal and Toronto have become culturally heterogeneous in recent years. "Inter-ethnic interaction" is an increasingly commonplace occurrence in such cities.

These developments suggest the need for a broadening of perspective on the role of the language teacher. Cross-cultural harmony and understanding have become more than pleasantries in the modern world; they are essential to our survival. Viewing the role of the language teacher in its broadest conceivable context, he or she is in a position to encourage and facilitate the negotiation of meaning between people from radically diverse cultural backgrounds. In a Montreal ESL or ESP classroom, this might take the form of a dialogue between people of Haitian, Iranian, Vietnamese, Nicaraguan and French Canadian origin. The social importance of this kind of activity should not be

underestimated.

Widdowson's model suggests that such interactive negotiation, be it "inter-ethnic" or otherwise, is essential to mutual understanding, to the task of narrowing the gap between our frequently divergent frames of reference (Widdowson, 1983a, p. 40). In this regard, a group known as 'Beyond War' (Swopes, 1985) has, since 1984, organized an annual satellite link up between Moscow and the United States. The proponents of this project suggest that we learn to venture beyond "our private and limiting frames of reference," the blind adherence to which potentially threatens the extinction of the human race. Language teachers, working on a daily basis with students of diverse cultural origin, have a significant part to play in furthering this process. In fact, the responsibility of language teachers for the enhancement of cross-cultural communication and understanding assumes greater importance the more the world comes to resemble McLuhan's "global village."

Widdowson's model provides some insight into the kinds of activities which can be used to stimulate procedural negotiation and to develop mutual understanding.

One final point needs to be made to conclude this discussion. Although Widdowson's model examines the nature of language use and the methodology required to activate it in providing for the needs of second language learners, there is one component of learning and communication which

such a model will never provide but which is essential to its functioning. Sauvé (1985), in her work with immigrants to Canada, has aptly described it as the "curriculum-as-lived-experience." To "facilitate meaningful experience," the language teacher must be willing to participate fully in the learning process. To use Littlewood's choice phrase, the language teacher must, above all else, be "a human among humans" (Littlewood, 1981).

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## APPENDIX 1

This is a sample unit from a learning package called Join Up which was designed for use on a computer. Its pedagogical focus is the development of the procedural ability to join pieces of discourse with appropriate cohesive devices. Such devices are sometimes known as sentence connectors. Widdowson, however, contests the use of this term, maintaining that these devices are "schematic phenomena" (Widdowson, 1983a, p. 73). The term sentence connectors conveys, in his view, the false impression that cohesive devices are systemic in nature.

In Widdowson's terms, cohesive devices "can be entirely accounted for at the schematic level" (Widdowson, 1983a, p. 73). They possess no "symbolic" value, unlike elements operating at the systemic level. Rather, they perform an "indexical function," serving as "indices of schematic structure" (Widdowson, 1983a, p. 73).

This learning package engages learners in procedural activity which requires the selection of cohesive devices performing required indexical functions. Learners are first taught how the package works. Short discourse passages must be completed by choosing appropriate cohesive devices. These are immediately added to the text if the correct choice is made. If an incorrect choice is made, feedback on indexical function is provided and the learner makes another choice.

The learner is presented with strategies intended to foster development of this procedural ability (e.g., starting off with a global perusal to get the gist of the discourse rather than reading a line at a time).

The learner has a menu and can choose from a series of topics. If a learner chose the unit entitled Perseverance, this is what he or she would be presented with:

So, you've decided to read about perseverance! Of course, being a computer, I don't need any of that stuff. So long as you humans have the perseverance to program me, I do just fine without it. Then again, if you ever lost your perseverance, where would that leave me? Hmm, maybe there's something to be said for this stuff after all.

An attempt has been made to produce an interesting and colourful exploration of topic areas. As Higgins and Johns have pointed out, provided that the computer is envisaged as a "supplement" and not as a "replacement" for teachers, its creative potential in the hands of imaginative designers is extensive, offering a broad range of possibilities (Higgins and Johns, 1984, p. 9). The computer, however, must be harnessed as a learning "supplement" for our use without our being harnessed to it in the process.

Following this brief introduction to the topic of Perseverance, the exercise would proceed as follows:

An old maxim says that perseverance in the face of all obstacles is the only true road to success. \_\_\_\_\_ 1 \_\_\_\_\_, the person who hopes for success had better be prepared to work for \_\_\_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_\_\_.

1.
  - a. On the other hand
  - b. However
  - c. To put it more simply
  - d. Meanwhile
  
2.
  - a. this
  - b. it
  - c. these
  - d. instance

3, the one who would succeed must keep working no matter what the difficulties.

4, there is simply no guarantee of success.

3.
  - a. On top of that
  - b. On the whole
  - c. If not
  - d. Rather
  
4.
  - a. In that case
  - b. Consequently
  - c. Otherwise
  - d. Afterwards

\_\_\_\_\_ 5 \_\_\_\_\_ for those who persevere in  
whatever it is they have undertaken, success is likely  
\_\_\_\_\_ 6 \_\_\_\_\_ the rewards are sweet.

5. a. And  
b. At last  
c. Rather  
d. But
6. a. and  
b. then  
c. besides  
d. for example



\_\_\_\_\_, there is the good feeling that comes from reaching a goal. \_\_\_\_\_, there are the new opportunities which usually open up for a successful person. Thirdly, and \_\_\_\_\_, there is the quiet sense of confidence which comes from knowing you did it all yourself.

7. a. Finally  
b. Firstly  
c. Before that time  
d. In other words

8. a. In the end  
b. Secondly  
c. At last  
d. For that reason

9. a. alternatively  
b. of course  
c. most importantly  
d. next

Once students have worked through to the end of a discourse passage (such as that on Perseverance), they can choose to read the completed passage without interruption. This provides them with the opportunity to enjoy the reading passage they have slowly pieced together and to appreciate its continuity.

It also allows the student to have a second look at the functions performed by the required cohesive devices without focussing on them directly. Having just been examined as component parts of discourse segments, these cohesive devices can now be regarded in context, within the natural and uninterrupted flow of discourse.

Widdowson's model posits that a process requiring an analysis of component parts be followed up with a process of this kind, one which provides for genuine language use. In his terms: "This means that at some point in learning the process has somehow to be recreated, and the items connected up with each other and recharged with dynamic life so as to become elements of language use" (Widdowson, 1983, p. 34).

In the case of the example just provided, the completed version, providing the learner with this "recreated process," would be presented as follows:

## Perseverance

An old maxim says that perseverance, in the face of all obstacles is the only true road to success. To put it more simply, the person who hopes for success had better be prepared to work for it. On top of that, the one who would succeed must keep working no matter what the difficulties. Otherwise, there is simply no guarantee of success.

But for those who persevere in whatever it is they have undertaken, success is likely and the rewards are sweet.

Firstly, there is the good feeling that comes from reaching a goal. Secondly, there are the new opportunities which usually open up for a successful person. Thirdly, and most importantly, there is the quiet sense of confidence which comes from knowing you did it all yourself.

Weizenbaum (Long, 1985) has warned in very strong terms against viewing the computer as "a substitute for teachers" in the classroom (Long, p. 76). He counsels that there is a danger in the pervasive use of machines to mediate human communication, reminding us that the human touch and human responsiveness are communicative qualities which the computer can never provide. Genuine "sharing" within the act of communication is not one of its capabilities. This package is presented with Weizenbaum's cautionary insight very much in mind.

APPENDIX 2

From: Judy Knight, China Project Assistant Director  
Subject: Business School Jargon, E.S.L. Preparation

The following is a list (partial) of commonly-used phrases at the School (M.B.A. program, University of Western Ontario):

to touch bases

short-term pain, long-term gain

number crunching

up to your ass in alligators

to put your cards on the table

drop it faster than a hot potato

touchy feely

too hot to handle

basket case

slack week

to bail out the company

out to lunch

flaky

hustler

upwardly mobile

yippie

all-nighter

workaholic

to be locked into a situation, agreement

lines of authority  
specificity  
pie in the sky  
vertical/horizontal integration  
to go over like a lead balloon  
to lay it on the line  
space case  
belly up  
interpersonal skills  
cashflow  
buzz words  
to break the ice  
bottom line (approach)  
won't go near it with a ten-foot pole  
to go under  
contingency plan  
will the plan wash?  
corporate environment  
lose your shirt  
hard act to follow  
upside and downside risk  
rubber stamping  
to get a foot in the door  
stew in his own juices  
to do an about face  
get to the point