
CC - THE COLLECT/COMBINE APPROACH

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Abstract

The paper presents the CC (Collect/Combine) Approach. It aims at enhancing speaking in language instruction. There is an emphasis on repetition of well-known linguistic material (texts, dialogues). This could be done in the form of chorus reading and individual "all-at-the-same-time" buzz reading to warming up at the beginning of language periods. This familiarity with well treated texts and dialogues makes it possible for the students to "collect" linguistic elements, "combine" them and re-use them for expressing a content of their own. Three concrete techniques are presented, that is, REMO (*Pupils Remodel Texts/Dialogues*): Remodelling means exchanging words and phrases, but the learners themselves choose what and how to change. CCM (*Collect-Combine to Make Monologues*) and CCD (*Collect-Combine to Make Dialogues*): Words, phrases, lines, sentences from well-known texts and dialogues are collected and re-used in new combinations.

Oral Practice

It is difficult to practice as well as test speaking in language instruction; neither is it easy to teach and persuade 25 to 30 students to speak a foreign language. However, there are various ways and means to enhance speaking in language instruction, such as the one presented here: "The Collect/Combine Approach", also jokingly called the 'Steal and Lie Approach'. When learning a foreign language, it is necessary both to "steal" (phrases, words, sentences) from texts and dialogues one has learned previously, and to "lie" (make up new statements and dialogues) in order to use the language orally.

The Collect/Combine Approach should be used right from the beginning since it is very important to students to have the opportunity to phrase statements and sentences from the textbook, and use them orally even from the very first lesson. The various ingredients in the CC Approach are not new, but their combination into a new consistent system is.

"Warming-Up" - "Repetition"

No sportsman ever dreams of entering a training session or a competition without warming

up. Yet in foreign language teaching, we often start a lesson rather abruptly. Rarely do we let the students listen to the target language (helping their ears to get used to the unfamiliar sounds), and we hardly ever let pupils read well-known texts and dialogues aloud for some minutes at the beginning of a language teaching period. Half a minute or one minute of listening plus two minutes of "buzz" reading (all students reading aloud at the same time at individual speeds) make an excellent start to a lesson. The students then much more easily make oral use of the target language (Ericsson, 1986).

Warming up like this at the beginning of a language lesson has many advantages. It means repetition of old text and dialogue units in the textbook, which leads to greater familiarity with "old" linguistic material. Muscles in and around the mouth are warmed up, and the students adjust to the articulation base of the new language. By regularly revising the textbook material, the students - when creating their own monologues and dialogues (CCM, CCD, and REMO, see below) - easily find the words, phrases, and sentences they require to re-use in creating a language of their own. Repetition of linguistic material is a base for communication, and repetition should occur as soon as possible after the first learning opportunity (Ebbinghaus, 1885).

Reproducing - Producing - Reconstructing

Student oral activities in foreign language teaching is very much characterized by the pupils reproducing only fragments of target language material. They imitate the teacher or taperecorder, they read aloud from the book, or they answer questions, often with only one word or a few words. Rarely do students produce their own language with many sentences in a row with a content of their own. However, the forming of meaning, "expressing personal meaning" (Rivers, 1981, 1983; Vygotsky, 1962), reconstructing (Katona, 1940) one's own sentences, and using and re-using linguistic material in the textbooks are important features in foreign language development. Creating personal meanings is a prerequisite for communication; you need something to communicate about. If each student has prepared some personal content, we have created natural information gaps. Thus, simulating or acting functional needs of expression could lead to the creation and development of language. These acted needs could, in turn, gradually become genuine needs, leading to genuine communication.

CCD = Pupils Collect/Combine to Make Dialogues (Building Block Dialogues)

Students collect words, phrases and lines from well-known dialogues in the textbook and combine them - often in remodelled versions - into new combinations, thus forming their own dialogues. Such pupil-created dialogues are written, corrected, learned and performed, or they are improvised - skipping the written manuscript stage - and are created spontaneously in oral form. This technique offers a very practical suggestion as to how to increase pupil activity in foreign language teaching. Most modern language textbooks contain a large number of dialogues that always consist of many frequent idiomatic phrases and expressions. Unfortunately, there are often additional lines of peripheral value - lines that are not worth learning since they sometimes are too specific.

The reason for the occasional existence of these infrequent lines might be that the textbook authors are locked into the belief that the dialogue must necessarily fit into the artificial story of the textbook. Additionally, it is very common that the textbooks seek to give examples of grammatical structures in dialogues, which can also make the dialogues appear artificial and sometimes unreal.

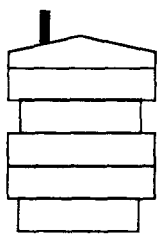
Ideally, the dialogue should be made up of lines which are:

- neutral
- usable in new situations
- general
- short
- Frequent
- idiomatic
- not impeded by the story line
- not impeded by grammatical structures

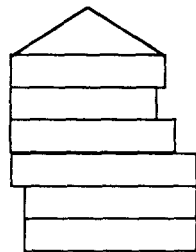
They ought to be usable in any order. Thus, the individual dialogues should be usable as "construction kits" with ready-made "building blocks" (=lines), which can be used primarily in new combinations. The construction (=dialogues) should not be learned in their final form. Rather, the "building blocks" should be learned and used in new contexts. It would be advantageous if every dialogue situation (e.g. ordering a taxi, asking the way, etc.) were presented in at least three, four, or more various versions. The versions are like "houses", made up of "building blocks" in finished combinations.

For example : Hotel situation (guest plus desk clerk) in four versions

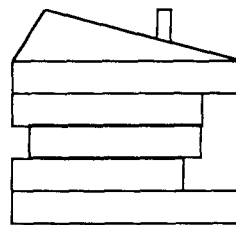
Dialogue A
(single room)



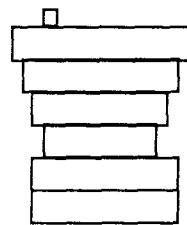
Dialogue B
(double room)



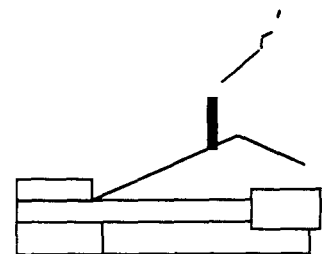
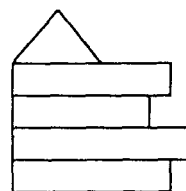
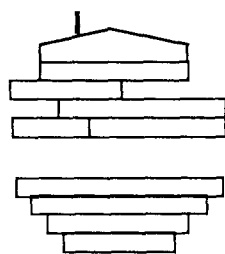
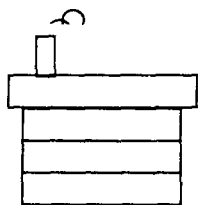
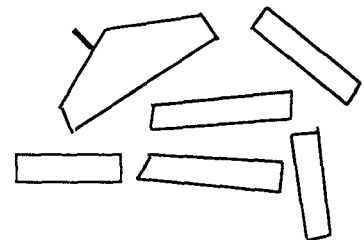
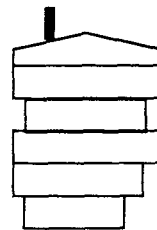
Dialogue C
(room for 1 night)



Dialogue D
(only double rooms available)

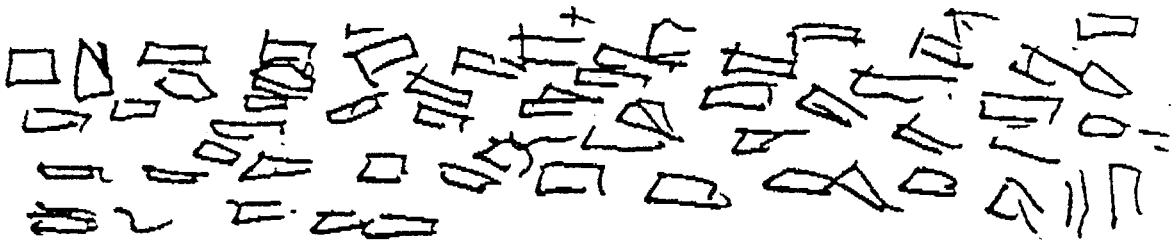


The students can obviously tear down a "house" and rebuild it in exactly the same way: i.e., learn the dialogues by heart, as in the textbooks. However, it is important that the students in learning a language learn to transfer knowledge (words, lines, phrases) from one situation to another by developing their creativity. In this exercise, the students assemble the "building blocks" (lines) in new combinations, using their creativity to build their own "houses":

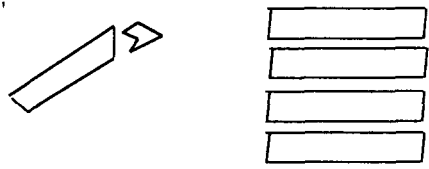


The students are always thrilled by their own dialogues and by what their friends have created (Ericsson, 1986).

Very few modern language textbooks contain dialogues of the kind described above. They do, however, contain dialogues, and in these dialogues are many neutral transferable phrases and lines. Teachers and students can together eliminate parts of the textbook dialogues, come up with suitable phrases, collect new ones from other text-books, and produce a collection of dialogues on a ditto sheet that can make a number of 'construction kits". These kits can be used when the students create dialogues of their own.



Most "blocks" in a "construction kit" are usable in several new combinations, although some of them may have to be made to fit and some additional ones may have to be manufactured : e.g., "What's the English for...?" "Do we have a dictionary?"



The four current "building block" dialogues from the hotel situation do not necessarily have to be studied intensively- that is to say, given as homework. They are just raw material. They are "construction kits". The pronunciation and the translation of the "blocks" are practiced. Then the "blocks" (chunks) could be used.

Examples of Collect-Combine Dialogues

Let us assume that the textbook offers four short dialogues in the same situation. Here are the four basic dialogues (source dialogues):

1. - Coffee or tea? - Certainly.	- Could I have lemonade instead? - Thank you!
a coke a glass of milk	a glass of orange juice a glass of water

2. - Coffee or tea? - White or black? - Sugar?	- Coffee, please. - White, please - No, thank you!
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- | | | |
|----|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| 3. | - What will you have? | - Tea, please! |
| | - Milk or lemon? | - Milk, please. |
| | - Sugar? | - Yes, please. |
| | - Two lumps? | - No, just one, please. |

- | | | |
|----|----------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 4. | - Could I have the salt, please? | - Of course! Here you are! |
| | - Thank you! | - You're welcome! |

pepper	ketchup	mustard	sugar	creme
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(Ericsson, Ericsson, Corwin, 1991)

Now the following procedure is possible:

1. Dialogue 1

- The teacher reads and translates after each statement.
- Chorus reading.
- Individual repetition, statement by statement.
- Checking that the dialogue is understood.
- Buzz-reading.
- The teacher remodels the dialogue.

2. The other three basic dialogues

- These are treated in the same or similar manner.

3. Example of collect/combine dialogue

- The teacher gives an example of a dialogue orally, combined from remodelled statements from all the four basic dialogues.

4. The students make up their own collect/combine dialogues

- The students work in pairs. They make up statements and write one keyword for each line.

5. Student dialogues

- Students have a final rehearsal in pairs all at the same time. They practise buzzing, trying to learn their lines by heart and possibly using keywords. The students act out their dialogues, ideally in front of the class, with teacher functioning as a prompter.

6. Improvised classroom conversation

- The teacher asks questions (lines from dialogues), giving the students an opportunity to answer either by using the lines they have learned from their dialogues, or by improvising. The important thing is that the students answer something, and react with a new question or instruction.

Here is an example of a dialogue, produced by two students:

Keywords:

- or
- milk
- cert...
- thank
- lemon
- here

Dialogue :

- Coffee or tea?
- Could I have a glass of milk instead?
- Certainly.
- Thank you.
- And could I have a lemon, please?
- Of course. Here you are!

Here is another authentic example:

Keywords:

- tea
- coffee
- or
- please
- two
- fifteen
- you are
- thank
- welcome

Dialogue :

- Tea or coffee?
- Coffee, please.
- White or black?
- White, please.
- Two lumps?
- No, fifteen, please.
- Of course! Here you are.
- Thank you!
- You're welcome!

Study the lines in the collect/combine dialogues, looking for the origin of each line. Notice how they have been remodelled.

CCM = Pupils Collect/Combine to Make Texts/Monologues (Building Block Monologues)

Students **collect** words, phrases, lines or sentences from any well-known **text**, which has been treated earlier, and **combine** them, sometimes in remodelled versions, into new combinations, thus forming their own texts. This can be done in written form. The new CC-texts are checked by the teacher, learned by the students, turned into keywords and then performed as monologues.

The texts should preferably be performed orally straight away: after some practice the pupils become skilled and can produce keywords from the very beginning and then perform orally, improvising to an increasing extent. In this way students gradually practise **speaking** the target language.

To make the pupils "feel at home" and more easily find their ways back to earlier treated texts, all material has to be kept current by means of repetition. There is direct connection between CCM/CCD and warming up exercises at the beginning of language teaching periods. To use the first few minutes of every lesson to brush up old texts (chorus reading, individual "all-at-the-same-time" buzz reading) is a good habit. The learners soon develop expert knowledge of **where** to find in the textbook various wordfields, idiomatic phrases, expressions and other items needed for creating their own language.

As the learners' creativity is stimulated and as they look for words and phrases needed to form their own content, questions may often be put to the teacher. To some educationalists this constitutes a threat because the teacher might not know the answer. This situation calls for confident teachers who are delighted by the question from a pupil: "What's that in (target language)?"

Example of a Collect / Combine Monologue

Here are three basic source texts about Herbie, "the best ghost in the world":

Herbie is a ghost. He can do a lot of tricks.

He can look different. Look at him today:

1. In the morning Herbie is very tall.
He has got a long beard, a hooked nose
and red eyes. He has very long grey hair.
He is very cute.

2. At noon Herbie looks different.
He is very short and fat, has big round eyes,
a red nose and short hair. He looks very smart.

3. In the evening Herbie is a different person.
He is very big, has long arms and very short
legs. He looks like a huge monkey.
He is very ugly with a big nose, small green
eyes and long red hair. He looks like a monster
but we know he is a nice ghost.

Now you can do it your way!

Draw your picture of Herbie. He can also be a woman.

Look at the three texts, collect words, phrases and sentences, and combine them into your own story. Then write down the key words and tell your own story in English!

(Ericsson, Ericsson, Corwin, 1991)

The following procedure is possible:

1. First basic text:

- The teacher reads the first basic text in English, translating after each sentence.
- The teacher reads the text in English once again.
- Chorus reading.
- Individual repetition, sentence by sentence, after the teacher.
A different student for each sentence.
- The teacher checks that the students understand everything in the text.
- Buzz-reading.
- The teacher remodels a few sentences.
- The students remodel one sentence each.

2. The rest of the three basic texts:

- These are treated in the same manner or in a similar manner as No. 1 above.

3. Example of collect/combine monologue:

- The teacher gives an oral example of a monologue, combining, remodelling sentences from the four basic texts, so that we get a new story.

4. The students write "steal and lie" compositions:

- The students work individually or in pairs. They use words and phrases from all four basic texts.
- The teacher walks around correcting their work.
- Possibly the teacher collects their composition for correction.
- The students write down keywords from their own texts. They learn their monologues, do them in pairs for each other - one student having access to keywords, while his classmate has the text. Then they change places.

5. Student monologues:

- The students go up to the front of the class, one by one, doing their monologues with the assistance of their keywords.
- Nobody is forced to go up to the front of the class. The class can work silently and the student does his monologue for the teacher alone.
- The teacher corrects sparingly and carefully when the student is talking.

6. Improvised conversations in the class:

- The teacher conducts the conversation, asks questions, and gives instructions so that the students have an opportunity to say something, at which time it is possible for them to use parts of their monologues, or to improvise or use remodelled versions.

7. A booklet produced by the students:

- Sometimes the students produce a final copy of their texts with illustrations. These are duplicated, stapled together and distributed to all students.
- These booklets are then used during classroom instruction. One student text may be given as extra homework for the week. The "author" plays a major part during preparation and examination. Possibly the students just read through the booklet, which is later displayed on the bulletin board.

Here is an example of a monologue performed by a student:

Keywords:

- morning, monster
- huge, smart
- beard, hair,
nose, eyes
- arms, legs, fat
- nice, cute

Dialogue :

In the morning Herbie looks like a monster.

He is huge but he looks very smart.

He has a short beard, long hair, a green nose and big round eyes.

Herbie has long arms, short legs and he is very fat.

He is not very nice today but I think he is cute.

REMO = Pupils Remodel (paraphrase/change) Texts/Dialogues

In this activity, students remodel texts and dialogues which has not been done very much in language teaching. That pupils exchange certain words or phrases in a text or dialogue is a well-known technique. Mostly then the students exchange certain, marked items, and they exchange them for special, listed words or phrases, the intention often being to provide practice in some current morphologic or semantic phenomenon. However, while remodelling a text or a dialogue also means exchanging words or phrases, the learners **themselves** choose **which** words, names, phrases, lines or sentences are to be changed, and **how** these items are altered. They also decide **how much** of the source text or dialogue is to be dealt with; they might skip some passages, and use others. The intention is not training in grammar, but **creation of a new content**, a content shaped by the students themselves. Remodelling means an activity which is **not** reading aloud, and it is **not** speaking freely. Rather it is something in-between, an intermediate stage. Thus - after a text has been intensively treated - the pupils prepare themselves for a few minutes, marking a few words, underlining others, noting a few keywords in the margin. Then they remodel the text individually, preferably in front of only the teacher or just a small group of pupils. In doing so they each give a different monologue, with often completely different contents although they all have the same source text as a starting point.

Examples of REMO-monologues

Here is a basic source text:

This is Prince Valiant's singing sword. It looks exactly like the sword of a knight at the time of the Vikings.

The artist, Harold Foster, is very skilled. All the details in the pictures are exactly right. They are so historically correct that the comic strip Prince Valiant is even used in the classrooms during history lessons in the U.S.A.

Prince Valiant is a noble knight who is trying to do good by fighting against evil forces in the world.

The satirical comic book MAD looks at Prince Valiant differently though. They suggest that he likes to fight, and they call him Prince Violent.

(Bilen-Ericsson, 1972-1974)

The following procedure is possible:

- The teacher helps the students to pronounce and understand the basic textbook text.
- The teacher gives a personal version of the text, remodelling to give an example. (Not given here.)
- Students prepare individually (or in pairs).
- The students give their monologues; perhaps it would sound something like this:

Keywords:

- *singing*
- *Viking*
- *knight*
- *violent*

- *evil forces*

- *artist*
- *historically*

Monologue:

*This is Flintstone's singing dog.
It looks exactly like an old Viking.
Flintstone is a noble knight.
He likes to fight and is very
violent.
He tries to do good by fighting
against evil forces in the class
room.
Now he is an artist.
This is historically correct.*

Here is another authentic example:

<p>Keywords:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - violent - computer - evil forces - skilled - noble knight - mad - details - correct 	<p>Monologue:</p> <p><i>The artist Rooster Harold is very violent.</i></p> <p><i>He has a singing computer.</i></p> <p><i>With his computer he fights evil forces in the U.S.A.</i></p> <p><i>He likes to fight and he is very skilled.</i></p> <p><i>He says that he is a noble knight.</i></p> <p><i>People say that he is mad.</i></p> <p><i>All details in his computer are exactly right.</i></p> <p><i>What I have said now is completely correct.</i></p>
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Learning a Language "by Reading Music" and "by Ear"

Supported by the curriculum, authors of textbooks have always had the ambition that students should learn to speak the target language. The textbooks consequently contain a great number of dialogues. However, there is the inhibition that the dialogues also must practice grammar. Sometimes the dialogues are conceived in a very skillful way: natural and idiomatic despite the fact that they are intended to give examples of a certain grammatical point in a rather exaggerated way, but sometimes they are very unnatural and impossible. The ambition of the author is to teach both speech and grammar, which can be illustrated with a very simple diagram. The block (see fig 1.) is to be filled with knowledge and skills in the target language. The right-hand shaded half is covered very well in our language textbooks. The grammatical shading also overlaps into the speech half since dialogues and material for speech training (mini-dialogues, structured speech patterns, chain questions) are constructed with grammar in mind. However, the upper left hand corner of the block often remains empty. It represents free spontaneous speech which is necessary in a variety of situations in which the students may find themselves now or later, in their home country or abroad.

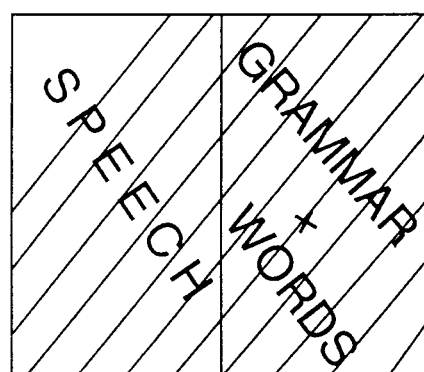


fig 1.

To demonstrate the effect of this space, take the analogy of learning to play an instrument, for example, a piano, which can be done in many ways. One common way is to take piano lessons, learning to read music and play by reading music. The music played is made up, theoretically, by reading music on paper which is comparable with the learning of a language and grammar (Krashen and Terell, 1983). Certain piano students cannot play a tune without having music in front

of them. They are completely dependent on them. Similarly there are language students who cannot say a sentence in the target language without thinking through paradigms, structures and rules for a long time, sometimes too long a time. Then, there are those piano students who just sit down at the piano and play - by ear - having a God - given gift and apparently learning completely on their own. Further, there is, of course, the whole spectrum between these extremes. Most students need to learn both by reading music and by using their ear to get the best results. Likewise, formal language skills need to develop the individual differences among language students. The prerequisites vary and learners use a great variety of different strategies to develop a language (Vester, 1975; Wenden and Rubin, 1987; Skehan, 1989).

As for language instruction, it is possible that teachers traditionally prefer learning by reading music - by learning grammar - when students should be given a chance to play by ear. Teachers should be filling in the upper left hand corner in the block for their students but traditionally practice language instruction by ear to a very small degree (McArthur, 1983).

The CC Approach is one obvious alternative. It points the way to how to bring about the learning of language by ear. Hopefully, it is clear from the above that - in school settings - language cannot be taught only by ear; grammar must play a part, but equally not the only part. By using the CC Approach from the very initial stage, advantage is taken of the natural language aptitude of the students. Concurrent with the CC Approach, grammar is later practiced separately, however, with active creative students who take part in the preparation of the material and by teaching each other. It is obvious that the students must learn forms, declensions and paradigms. Above all they must learn to **use** them.

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