

# MATSOL NEWSLETTER

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Massachusetts Association of Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages

FALL 1990

## AIDS and ESL: Confronting the Challenge

John R. Dreyer

The 1980s have brought rapid and profound changes to the world, making it necessary for us to modify the way we live and think. One such change is the new scourge of AIDS. With no cure available, the only protection is Education. In order to keep from getting this incurable disease, people must know just how it is (and is not) transmitted.

In the early years of the epidemic, when public health officials referred to "risk groups" (e.g., gays, Haitians, IV drug users), they lulled the general public into feeling safe from AIDS. We now know that it is not identity as a member of a group that puts a person at risk of infection from HIV (the Human Immunodeficiency Virus), which causes the disease. Rather, it is an event in a person's life that allows HIV to enter the bloodstream.

### Accepting the challenge of AIDS education in an ESL setting

A full decade into the epidemic, in a last-minute workshop in March 1990, ESL teachers and community representatives met for the first time at a TESOL convention to discuss methods of, and barriers to, getting vital, life-saving AIDS education to limited- or non- English speakers. It has become clear that we can no longer ignore

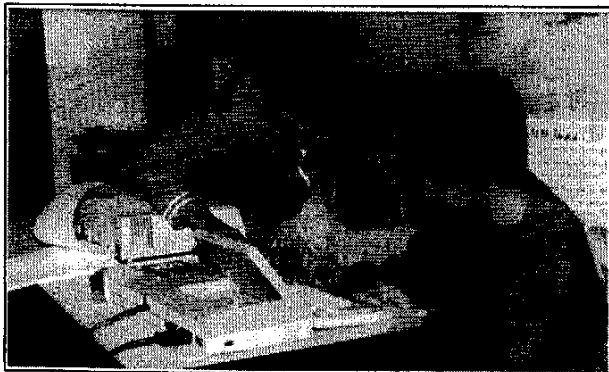
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## Who Says They Hate Writing? Publishing a Classroom Newspaper

Lydia Grave-Resendes

*"I hate writing." "I can't write." "This class is no fun."*

The above remarks came from my own experience as a student a number of years ago when I was learning to write in a second language. Now I know that there is no reason why learning to read or write in school should be a hardship, as long as students are provided an environment in which they are given the opportunity to write and read



as a natural process. It doesn't take a genius to figure out that what motivates students to write is the same thing that motivates them to communicate with one another: something to say and the need to say it.

A student's desire to write depends on a number of factors. These include (1) being surrounded by meaningful print (e.g., their own writing texts on the walls, labels, messages), (2) having the opportunity to tell others about experiences that have personal value and deserve to be shared, (3) having their writing accepted and valued by the teacher, and (4) receiving constant positive feedback during the process of writing along with reinforcement of the notion that writing is communication.

The idea of using a classroom newspaper to motivate students to write and to develop writing skills derives from Sergio Niza's pedagogi-

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The *MATSOL Newsletter* is published three times a year. It is available through membership in MATSOL. Articles, reviews, letters, and other contributions are welcome. A writer's request for final approval is honored whenever possible. Send material to:

Ruth Spack  
100 Salisbury Road  
Brookline, MA 02146

Articles should be typed and double-spaced. Please include bio-data and phone number.

*Next deadline: November 15, 1990.*

## From the President

In this issue of the *MATSOL Newsletter*, there is a call for nominations for several positions on the MATSOL Executive Board. I hope you will consider submitting your name.

Having avoided running for office myself for several years, I'd like to share with you some of the unexpected pleasures of being a member of the MATSOL Board. First, there is the very real pleasure of meeting with colleagues once a month. Second, there is an opportunity to use certain organizational and creative skills that you don't use in the classroom and that you may not even be aware you have. And, third, there are opportunities to effect small changes. In a profession in which working conditions are often beyond our control, these are welcome opportunities. One example of such an opportunity is this Board's recent decision to offer grants for classroom-based research and conference travel, particularly important at a time when budgets for such items are being cut by school systems and universities.

Let me invite you to attend a Board meeting at which you can raise issues that you think we could address. Perhaps you feel that we should attempt to organize teachers to fight for better working conditions and more clout. Perhaps you would like us to become more active in educating the public about the teaching of English as a second language. If you would like to contribute ideas to MATSOL, please call me at 437-2455 (w) or 731-0820 (h). I'll be happy to talk with you.

*Catherine Sadow*



1990-1991

**Boston University Conference  
on Language Development**

Dates: October 19-21

Place: Boston University

**MATSOL '90 FALL  
CONFERENCE**

Date: October 27

Place: Middlesex Community  
College, Lowell Campus

**NAFSA Bi-Regional Conference**

Dates: October 28-31

Place: Atlantic City, NJ

**MaFLA Fall Conference**

Dates: November 2-3

Place: Marriott, Burlington, MA

**NNETSOL Fall Conference**

Date: November 3

Place: New Hampshire College

**NTNW Conference on Language  
and Literacy Assessment**

Dates: November 9-11

Place: New York City

**MATSOL '91 SPRING  
CONFERENCE**

Dates: March 15-16, 1991

Place: Roxbury Community  
College, Boston

**College Composition and  
Communication Annual  
Convention**

Dates: March 20-23

Place: Boston Marriott, Copley Place

**TWENTY-FIFTH ANNUAL  
TESOL CONVENTION**

Date: March 24-28, 1991

Place: New York City

*Typesetting:* Bartleby Scriveners *Printing:* Sir Speedy, Brookline  
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# The MATSOL '90 Fall Conference

Saturday, October 27 • Middlesex Community College • Lowell Campus

## Plenary Speaker: Jean Berko Gleason

Jean Berko Gleason, professor in the department of psychology and faculty member of BU's Graduate Program in Applied Linguistics, will be the plenary speaker at the MATSOL '90 Fall Conference.



Courtesy of Boston University  
Photo Services

The incoming president of the International Association for the Study of Child Language, Dr. Berko Gleason is the author and editor of a leading textbook on language development. Since writing her doctoral dissertation on the child's learning of English morphology, she has continued to conduct research and publish in the areas of language development in children, aphasia, language attrition, lexical development, and developmental sociolinguistics.

Dr. Berko Gleason has been a visiting scholar at Stanford University and at the Linguistics Institute of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences in Budapest, and has lectured widely in North America, Europe, and Australia. Her work is frequently cited in the professional literature, and has been featured in the popular press and on television.

## — Historic Lowell: City of Spindles —

*Sharon Tsutsui*

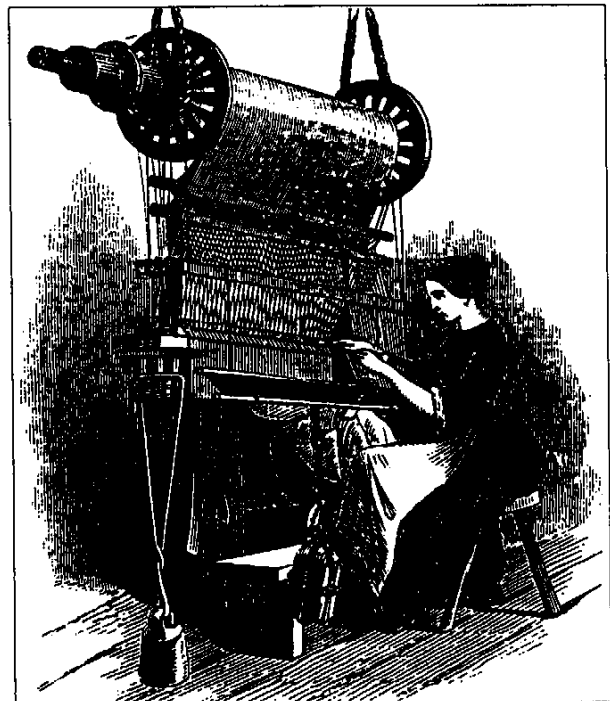
On Saturday, October 27, MATSOLers from across the state will come to Middlesex Community College in Lowell, Massachusetts for their annual fall conference. At Middlesex, a converted mill, they will walk on richly-oiled floors through hallways and rooms where once scores of young girls labored under hazardous conditions from dawn 'til dusk, working the spindles and operating the machines of America's new textile industry. The looms are silent now. But echoes of the past are felt as visitors experience through living history the sights, sounds, and smells of 19th century New England.

### Lowell then

"Our first visit to the spot was in the month of November, 1821 and a slight snow covered the ground. The party consisted of Patrick T. Jackson, Kirk Boott, Warren Dutton, Paul Moody and myself. We perambulated the grounds and the remark was made that some of us might live to see the place contain twenty thousand inhabitants. At the time there were, I think, less than a dozen houses on what now constitutes the city of Lowell."

The city of Lowell is itself a monument to history. The Concord and Merrimack Rivers provided the power; the Pawtucket and Middlesex Canals, the access; and Francis Cabot Lowell's power loom, the reason. By 1836 the new city, a model for the American Industrial Revolution, had a population of 17,000 inhabitants and eight major textile mills employing 7500 workers.

In their search for model workers and a reliable labor source, the early mill owners recruited the daughters of New England's farmers. The mills were considered a respectable



*Courtesy of the Museum of American Textile History*

income source and the girls considered city living an opportunity for self-improvement. Some young women came to the mills to help support their families and earn money for their dowries; others came to gain independence from the farm.

*Continued on page 14*

## Aids and ESL *continued from page 1*

the fact that ESL teachers face a special challenge in the age of AIDS, since we may be the primary or only source of information about AIDS for our students. Students who come from East-bloc countries such as Rumania and the USSR, where injection or intravenous feeding with unsterilized needles is common, may already be infected with HIV. Those from third-world countries such as Brazil, Haiti, and Zaire (to name just three) may have been infected heterosexually, the primary means of transmission in these areas. Other students may be at high risk for infection here in the USA because they come from communities where the infection rate is much higher than in the mainstream, white, well-informed, English-speaking American middle class. In fact, although blacks, Haitians, and hispanics make up less than 8% of the population of Massachusetts, these groups constitute 30% of the state's AIDS cases. Nationwide, in 1987, though the incidence of AIDS among whites was only 10 per 100 thousand, among Latinos it had reached 65 per 100 thousand and, among blacks and Haitians, 77 per 100 thousand.<sup>1</sup>

### Eliminating ignorance and discrimination

Understanding our students' risk and their need for information is the easy part of the AIDS challenge we face as ESL teachers. As an AIDS educator for the Speakers Bureau of the AIDS Action Committee of Massachusetts,<sup>2</sup> I still find an appalling amount of misunderstanding, prejudice, and ignorance on the subject among audiences of all ages, professions, and educational levels. But before we can teach others about AIDS, we ourselves must be properly informed, free of prejudice and at ease when talking about some subjects still considered taboo, including sex, homosexuality, and intravenous drug use. We must confront value systems in ourselves and among our students that may cause us and/or them to look down on or to deny the existence of behavior that can transmit AIDS. Although we as ESL teachers take pride in our ability to communicate across cultural, ethnic, and racial barriers, we almost never address homophobia, the last frontier of misunderstanding and discrimination, a prejudice that is still rampant, even in our profession. This prejudice exists in spite of the fact that many of us in the profession are gay and/or are directly affected by AIDS. In fact, a past president of TESOL died of AIDS, with no public acknowledgment of the tragic cause of death.

### Teaching about AIDS

What is it that we ESL teachers need to know about AIDS, and how do we teach it to students whose fluency in English is limited and whose understanding of basic biology and science may also be very limited? Many aspects of the AIDS epidemic merit examination: psychosocial issues, treatment, epidemiology, immunology, health maintenance, and immigration, employment, insurance, and discrimination; but for the purposes of this brief article, I will stick to the two most essential components of AIDS education: transmission and prevention. In simple language, from the point of view of a limited-English speaking student, with important vocabulary words under-

lined, here are the facts:

### THE FACTS ABOUT AIDS

AIDS is a disease. AIDS kills. There is no cure. AIDS is caused by a virus. The name of the virus is HIV. The virus is found mostly in blood and semen.<sup>3</sup>

How do you get AIDS? The HIV virus must get into your blood. If it gets into your blood, you are infected. How can it do this? It can get into your blood when you have sex if infected semen or blood gets into your body. You can also get it if you use a needle that someone else has used, one which isn't clean. A pregnant woman who has the HIV virus can give it to her unborn baby.

What are some ways you can't get AIDS? You can't get AIDS from a mosquito bite. You don't get AIDS from hugging, kissing, shaking hands, talking with, or being bitten by or sneezed on by someone with AIDS. This is why it's OK for children to be in school with someone who has AIDS.

How can you tell if someone has AIDS? You can't tell by looking. Some people with AIDS or with HIV in their blood look very healthy.

What can you do to keep from getting AIDS?

Always use a condom when having sex, unless you are trying to get pregnant (even then, make sure that you and your partner have been tested for AIDS). Always use a sterile needle. You can clean needles with bleach.

### Notes

1. Multicultural AIDS Coalition, James D. Williams, Ex. Dir., Hortensia Amarao, Ph.D., or Eustace Jean-Louis, MPH. Telephone (617) 536-8610.
2. Speakers are available, free of charge, by calling 617/437-6200, ext 286. Allow at least 5 weeks advance notice.
3. It must be noted that other bodily fluids, such as saliva, sweat, tears, mucous, and so on, are not effective transmitters of the disease.

### Resources

- Massachusetts AIDS Action Line: (617) 536-7733 or 1-800-235-2331.
- Anonymous Blood Testing Information: (617) 522-4090.
- Portuguese AIDS Hotline: (617) 628-6065 or 1-800-232-SPAL.
- En espanol: (617) 262-7248.
- Haitian Line: (617) 436-2848.

*John Dreyer is an AIDS educator and an ESL teacher.*

The *MATSOL Newsletter* invites commentary on current trends or practices in the ESL profession. It also welcomes responses or rebuttals to any articles or remarks published in the Newsletter. Permission to reprint must be obtained from the editors or individual authors.

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## Who Says They Hate Writing?

continued from page 1

cal model.<sup>1</sup> For Niza, a Portuguese educator working in Portugal, writing is communication and therefore is meaningful and functional, involving an interactive relationship between the writer and someone else. Producing newspapers connected to their real life experiences allows students to recognize the social usefulness of their writing.

### Making decisions democratically

My ESL reading students — grades six to eight, mixed heterogeneously — agreed to publish a classroom newspaper after I showed them a Portuguese student newspaper (produced by students in Portugal while I was conducting research there for my dissertation).

Titles for the newspaper started pouring in from class members, and the class voted for the most appropriate one: *Portuguese-American Teen Voice*. Once the title was accepted by the whole class, they brainstormed about the content in order to establish goals. As with the title, all of the students were encouraged to express their opinions; they recorded suggestions on a large sheet of paper and reached the final decision democratically, all the while showing respect toward each other's ideas. The newspaper would include an interview with the new principal, articles on topics that were being studied in school, and original puzzles and poems written by the students themselves.

### Gathering material and working cooperatively

The next step was assessing what they already knew or what they needed to know. Following that was the division of work: each student was fully responsible for a particular activity or piece of work. Some of the work was done individually, some in pairs, and some in groups.

Cooperatively, the students gathered data, helped each other to understand the English, and translated some writings from Portuguese into English, with the more proficient students helping the less proficient. During this time the classroom seemed like a factory; all of the students were involved with their own work. I must share with you, though, that the students did not remain in their seats, and they did not carry on their work quietly! After some of the writing was completed, they started sharing what they had and giving feedback to one

another. After all, they needed to communicate — and communicating is how learners develop their language skills. I found it to be a pleasant noise.

### Revising and editing

The next step was revising and editing. I must stress here that the students themselves did all the editing, under my guidance. I wanted them to know they could do it; and if it didn't come out "perfect," there would be a next time. At the very end, the writing was put on the computer I had brought from home, with the students patiently taking turns with the typing.

### Sharing the life of the classroom

The writings consisted of texts done by the students about their real life experiences, reports on field trips, news, recipes, and plenty of riddles and poems. The newspaper became an archive of the life in the classroom. Students had the freedom to write about whatever was meaningful for them to share with each other, their parents, and the community.

An added bonus: Through our newspaper, students were able to raise money to fund the class field trip to Martha's Vineyard at the end of the year!

### Assuming responsibility for the classroom

When students become authors and publishers of their own writing, they assume responsibility for it. Not only do they develop a positive attitude toward writing, they also develop decision-making and cooperative skills. Through the process of deciding what they are going to include in the newspaper and who is going to write, edit, design, and produce the final copy, they learn that their ideas are valued and respected; and they become an active part of what is accomplished in their classroom.

1. For further information on this model, please ask to see "Niza's Pedagogical Model: A Real Life Experience-based Approach to Literacy." Doctoral Dissertation by L. Grave-Resendes, 1989.

*Lydia Grave-Resendes teaches at the Umana-Barnes School, Boston, and in the Bilingual Education Department at Boston University.*

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**SAVE THE DATE**  
**MATSOL '91 SPRING CONFERENCE**  
**March 15-16, 1991**  
**Roxbury Community College, Boston**

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# Developing Oral Activities for Asian Students

Carol Allen

It is not news to teachers of Intensive English Programs that the composition of our classes is changing. Across the U.S., Japanese students now account for 31.8% of our students. The number of Korean students is also up, and many of us find ourselves in classrooms that are 50-60% Asian. With this change comes a different classroom environment. Teachers' lounges and faculty meetings echo with concerns about non-talkative students whose behavior challenges us to confront our teaching styles. Such students want to learn how to communicate but have trouble doing so. How can we make their adjustment easier, and how can we elicit the desired response of productive, spontaneous, audible speaking? I would like to offer some general suggestions.

## **Making classroom expectations known**

First, we should make our classroom expectations known from the first day, and thereafter as often as necessary. Orientation sessions should include cultural questions and should raise such issues as eye contact, nonverbal feedback, and audibility. If possible, we can provide someone who can translate the situation so that the new students fully grasp the message being taught. All teachers in a program should expect certain agreed-upon standards of attendance and participation.

## **Emphasizing the Importance of Communication**

The curriculum should reflect and reinforce the message that communication is an important part of language learning. For example, Oral Skills could be given grades and equal time in the weekly schedule. One simple (and not new) suggestion is to arrange the chairs in a circle, especially in listening and speaking class, and to close books, to stress the importance of students' talking to each other directly. Whenever possible, we should choose texts that deal with cultural communication issues, such as *Communication and Culture* (Gregg), *Face to Face* (Zanger), *Beyond Language* (Levine and Adelman), and *Culture Puzzle* (Levine, Baker, & McNulty).

## **Using a holistic approach to language**

We can use texts and techniques that use a holistic approach to language. Some grammar texts that fit this description admirably are *Grammar Plus* (DeFilippo and Mackey), *Frontiers* (Schmidt and Simon), and *Making Sense in English* (Pierson and Vik). During grammar and vocabulary lessons, we can ask *how* and *why* questions rather than those that elicit only yes and no answers. We can discourage the notion of the One Right Answer. For example, when asking students to describe a picture from a magazine or book, we can get them to provide more than concrete, present-tense information by asking them to speculate on what the characters in the picture did before, what they will do later, what they are thinking, where they live, what they had for breakfast, what season or time of day it is, and so on. Obviously answers will vary; they're supposed to. Tapes

can be used as a starting point, and then the class can repeat the patterns or retell the story to each other instead of doing a pen and pencil exercise. In retelling the story, they can go around in a circle and add one sentence at a time until the recounting is finished. We should try to help students bring their aural/oral vocabulary up to the level of their reading vocabulary.

## **Developing culturally-sensitive teaching methods**

There are several ways our teaching methods can be more sensitive to cultural differences.

We can be more visual, using the board, the overhead, handouts, our hands and our bodies to make our explanations clear.

We should be more direct, asking not "Who knows...?" or "Can anyone tell me...?" As one of my Japanese ELI graduates said, "The teacher must point at us and make us answer." We should think carefully before asking such personal opinion questions as, "What did you think of the article?" since such questions may seem meaningless and inappropriate to Asian students: It is not their place to evaluate a text chosen by a teacher.

We should expect instant feedback. If we get no response to a question as to whether or not they understand, we can give a pop quiz, not as punishment, but as a way to find out objectively and sincerely what they really do understand.

We should be more directive, explaining new activities clearly, writing out instructions if necessary. We should also teach the necessary vocabulary to ask questions, to express confusion, to request louder volume. We should take the focus away from ourselves as the center of the communication process. We can praise students for asking questions as well as for answering them. If students have the courage to say they don't understand, we can make it a positive experience. We can ask someone else to clarify the question and reinforce that other student's answer by using the blackboard or some other appropriate visual or verbal technique.

One suggestion to help students deal with the shock of spontaneous talk is to give them a chance to prepare in writing what they will have to talk about the next day. We can also give students more time to formulate their answers in ordinary class conversations. An interesting cultural observation is that the Japanese normally have more silence between responses in their conversational patterns than do other culture groups. Although some of their pauses are used to decode and formulate a response, some of this hesitation is simply a cultural variation.

## **Establishing our own cultural standards**

We need to let all students (not just the Asians) have the opportunity to learn to use new techniques by building on skills and methods with which they are already familiar. Since

*Continued on the next page*

## Down the Up Staircase: ESL Teachers and Universities

Fred Turner

With their green lawns, clock towers, and chalk-striped playing fields, Massachusetts' universities can look as benign as your favorite aunt. Unlike the sleek glass boxes that line Route 128, they seem built not for scrambles after profit but for the leisurely pursuit of knowledge. They have no visible cubicles, no tense executives striding to the next meeting. Instead, they offer classrooms and private offices, and images of teenagers curled up with books. To a burned-out accountant or a frazzled financier they must look like heaven itself.

But to those of us who teach ESL on their campuses, universities often show quite a different face. Despite their appearance, most universities maintain an altogether corporate hierarchy among their employees. There are top executives (presidents, overseers, and the like), middle managers (deans and tenured faculty), and laborers (visiting lecturers, graduate teaching assistants and, lately, long term, non-tenured instructors). The trouble is that few ESL teachers, unlike those who teach in other fields, are allowed to get a grip on even the bottom rung of that corporate ladder. And of those who do, almost none manages to climb higher. At all but a few universities (most notably those with active unions), ESL teachers eke out a living on the academic factory floor as virtual day laborers.

The key to keeping us down is keeping us part-time. As those who've tried know, it is more than a little difficult to find a full-time teaching position in ESL at a Massachusetts university. Given a Master's Degree and some experience, though, it's not hard to pick up one course here and another there. Pretty soon, you start going from school to school collecting part-time, semester-by-semester contracts until you actually have full-time work. Then, after you've hustled from campus to campus for a while, you notice that others are doing it too, that in fact, you have all created "full-time jobs" by keeping part-time jobs at several universities.

The benefits for the universities of this system are enormous. They don't have to pay for their teachers' health insurance, or even grant sick days. They can effectively dismiss a regular teacher without cause — all they have to do is wait until the semester's up. Because a teacher will have to come back and ask for a job each semester and because that

teacher is unlikely to find a full-time position in the meantime, universities can ask their teachers to perform extra duties such as testing and committee work without pay. (What teacher is going to refuse a few hours unpaid labor if it means having a job the next semester?) In short, by keeping their ESL faculties part-time, universities can minimize costs, maximize profits, and mistreat their teachers.



For some teachers, of course, part-time teaching is not such a bad deal. Many ESL teachers have other interests, and even if the salary is a little low, the flexible schedules the universities offer can give them the time they need to pursue those interests. But for those teachers who want more, the current system is a trap. Year after year, they find themselves teaching four or five classes at different universities, all the while waiting for one of those schools to grant them a single, full-time slot. They seldom complain — at least, not to anyone but fellow teachers. They do their work. But only rarely do they get the job they want and when they do, it usually comes with limited benefits: an annual contract and a salary that would make a janitor laugh.

Ultimately, there is no reason this system has to exist. There is no reason that our state's universities — universities that make a substantial profit from our work — should continue to treat us like migrant laborers. There is no reason that, as highly-trained and experienced professionals, we shouldn't be granted an appropriate salary, solid benefits, and job security.

But there is one hitch: no corporate university is going to allow its labor costs to increase without a fight. And it is up to us to provide that fight. It is up to us to stop waiting around for that full-time slot and go out and create it. It is time for us, as a group and even perhaps as a union, to claim our rightful place on the academic corporate ladder.

*Fred Turner teaches ESL in the Extension School at Harvard University.*

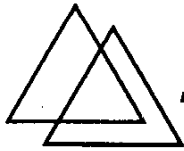
### **Developing Oral Activities** *continued from page 6*

creative and spontaneous activities can sometimes be viewed with trepidation by students suffering from academic and social culture shock, we should consider the timeliness and the appropriateness of new class activities. But this does not mean that we have to offer the same classroom experience that students are used to. We do not have to remold our classes to fit their cultural expectations. One former Japanese student told me that it is much easier to participate orally in class in the States because all students are facing the same new situation

and it is a kind of levelling process. Our programs should establish standards of participation in an American classroom, and we should — and can — expect all students to meet the challenge of that experience.

*This article is based on a presentation given at the MATSOL '90 Spring Conference. Carol Allen teaches at Bradford College.*





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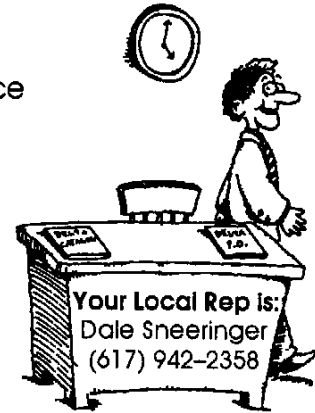
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## Why can't Juan read?

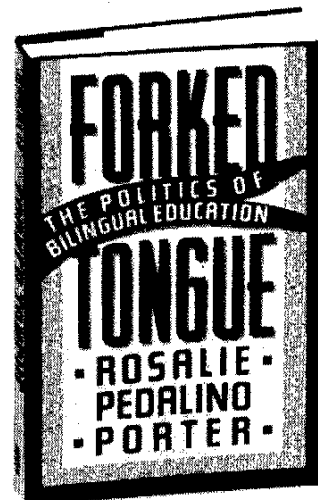
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# MATSOL GRANTS



In May, 1990, the MATSOL Executive Board voted to provide grants for MATSOL members to attend conferences and to conduct classroom-based research. The MATSOL Awards Committee was formed with the purpose of selecting grant recipients and distributing grant money. Members of the MATSOL Executive Board and members of the MATSOL Awards Committee are not eligible to receive grants. The Awards Committee encourages all eligible members to apply.

## Travel Grants

Grants totalling \$2100 (up to \$350 for an individual applicant) will be awarded to enable MATSOL members to attend professional meetings such as the Annual TESOL Convention, a regional TESOL Affiliate conference, or any workshop or meeting that can demonstrably enhance a MATSOL member's ESL teaching experience and benefit the MATSOL community.

## Research Grants

Two \$500 grants will be awarded to support classroom-based research conducted individually or collaboratively by MATSOL members. Classroom research enables teachers to become researchers by observing closely what is occurring in their classrooms and then theorizing from their own experience. Teacher-Researchers formulate their own questions, collect and describe their own data, and share their results with other teachers. The principle underlying such research is that teachers can and should play a central role in the creation of new knowledge about teaching and learning.

## MEMBERS OF THE AWARDS COMMITTEE

*Paul Abraham*  
Bradford College

*Bambi Good*  
Driscoll School, Brookline

*Mary Doolin*  
Newton North High School

*Kay Polga*  
Brookline High School

*Anne Dow*  
Harvard University

*Barbara Swartz*  
Northeastern University

*Virginia Zanger, Consultant*

## Grant Proposal Workshop

A workshop on conducting classroom-based research and writing a grant proposal will be led by Kathryn Riley at the MATSOL '90 FALL CONFERENCE, October 27, 1990, Middlesex Community College, Lowell Campus.

# MATSOL Travel Grant Application

- (1) Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
Telephone (work) \_\_\_\_\_ (home) \_\_\_\_\_  
Affiliation(s)[workplace/place of study] \_\_\_\_\_  
Position \_\_\_\_\_
- (2) Which conference/workshop/meeting do you wish to attend? \_\_\_\_\_  
location \_\_\_\_\_ date(s) \_\_\_\_\_
- (3) Have you previously attended this conference/workshop/meeting? yes \_\_\_ no \_\_\_ If yes, when? \_\_\_\_\_
- (4) Estimated expenses: Registration \_\_\_\_\_ Travel \_\_\_\_\_  
Accommodations \_\_\_\_\_
- (5) Have you applied for funding from another source? no \_\_\_ yes \_\_\_ If yes, amount requested \_\_\_\_\_ received \_\_\_\_\_
- (6) Amount of request from MATSOL (maximum \$350) \_\_\_\_\_
- (7) Personal statement (250 words maximum, typewritten, double-spaced. Attach separate sheet with your name at the top.):

Describe your reasons for wishing to attend the conference/workshop/meeting, noting especially the ways in which it will enhance your teaching or learning on return to the classroom. Please include a brief statement describing your background and professional goals.

## MATSOL TRAVEL GRANTS

**Purpose:** To support a MATSOL member who wishes to attend a conference, workshop, or meeting that will promote professional development.

**Amount:** Up to \$350

**Eligibility:** Any MATSOL member in good standing as of October 27, 1990. You may apply for this grant even if you are receiving partial support from other sources.

**Criteria:** Applications will be evaluated on the basis of (1) your reasons for wishing to attend and (2) the benefits that your participation will bring to you and to your institution.

**Stipulation:** Grant recipients will write a brief report for the *MATSOL Newsletter*. They will receive editorial support for this endeavor.

*Applications must be postmarked on or before November 15, 1990. Recipients will be notified by December 15, 1990. Awards will be announced in the MATSOL Newsletter.*

Send applications to:  
Catherine Sadow  
President, MATSOL  
109 Tappan Street  
Brookline, MA 02146

# MATSOL Research Grant Application

(1) Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone (work) \_\_\_\_\_ (home) \_\_\_\_\_

Affiliation(s) [workplace/place of study] \_\_\_\_\_

Position(s) \_\_\_\_\_

(2) Research Question(s):

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

(3) Research Proposal (500 words maximum, typewritten, double-spaced. Attach separate sheets with your name at the top of each sheet.):

How do you propose to answer the question(s) noted above? Please present a research plan, including relevant dates.

## MATSOL RESEARCH GRANTS

**Purpose:** To support classroom-based research

**Amount:** Two \$500 grants to be awarded

**Eligibility:** Any MATSOL member(s) in good standing as of October 27, 1990. Research may be conducted individually or collaboratively (several individuals or a program or an institution).

**Criteria:** Applications will be evaluated on the basis of (1) the clarity of the research question and (2) the feasibility of the research plan.

**Stipulations:** (1) Research must be completed within 12 months of acceptance of the grant.  
(2) Award recipients will report on their research findings at the MATSOL conference following the completion of the project.

*Applications must be postmarked on or before November 15, 1990. Recipients will be notified by December 15, 1990. Awards will be announced in the MATSOL Newsletter.*

**Send application to:**  
Catherine Sadow  
President, MATSOL  
109 Tappan Street  
Brookline, MA 02146

## Call for Nominations to MATSOL Executive Board

The positions of Vice-President, Secretary, Adult Education Representative, and Elementary/Secondary Representative on the MATSOL Executive Board will become vacant in the Spring of 1991. The positions are briefly described below. If you wish to have someone considered for nomination, please obtain that person's consent and forward the name and biographical data to:

Catherine Sadow  
MATSOL President  
109 Tappan Street  
Brookline, MA 02146

Each of the members of the Executive Board is expected to attend monthly meetings and to help with ongoing projects of the Board.

In addition, some of the specific duties are as follows:

The **Vice-President** (a one-year term) is responsible for the Spring Conference and assumes the presidency upon completion of this term.

The **Secretary** is responsible for recording minutes at each meeting and disseminating the minutes to the Executive Board prior to the next meeting. This is a two-year term.

The **Adult Education Representative** is a co-chair of the Fall Conference and helps recruit workshop leaders for the Spring Conference. This is a two-year term.

The **Elementary/Secondary Representative** is a co-chair of the Fall Conference. This is a two-year term.

## MATSOL JOB BANK

The MATSOL Job Bank serves as a clearinghouse for directors of ESL and Bilingual programs seeking teaching, counseling, and other relevant professional staff and for MATSOL members looking for such positions.

Directors looking for staff may call in pertinent information to the Job Bank Coordinator.

MATSOL members who are looking for jobs can call the Job Bank Coordinator to get up-to-date listings and the names of contact people.

MATSOL members who wish to be considered for job bank openings (including last minute and substitute openings) may send a resumé to the Coordinator indicating at what times they are available and what type of assignment interests them. Directors who need staff immediately will be given the names and phone numbers of individuals who are available.

For further information about the Job Bank, call the Job Bank Coordinator: Margo Downey, 1220 Adams St. #207, Dorchester, MA 02124. (617) 296-8348.

## MATSOL MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Last Name		First Name	
Mailing Address		Street	
City	State	Zip Code	
Phone	Home	Work	
Affiliation (Employer/Institution)			

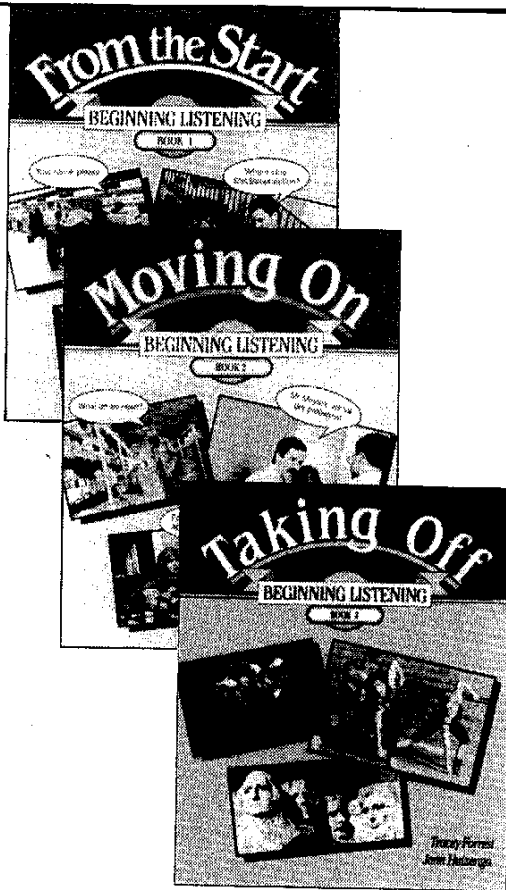
Dues for one year: \$8.00 full time student \_\_\_ \$15.00 full-time professional \_\_\_

\$1.00 optional contribution to *Rick Smith Memorial Fund* \_\_\_

Special Interest Group: Elementary, Secondary, Higher Ed, Adult (Circle 1 or 2)

*Make check payable to MATSOL. Your cancelled check is your receipt. Send this form and your check to:*

Dianne Ruggiero  
MATSOL Treasurer  
50 Harvard Avenue #5 Brookline, MA 02146



# The Latest in Listening . . . From Longman



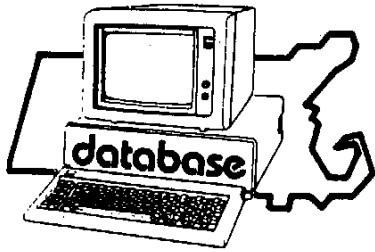
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**914-476-3134**



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## ESL IBM Software Under \$4

Alicia Russell

After reviewing \$4,000 software in the last column, I hope this time to recommend software so cheap that anyone can afford it. Shareware, also called supported software, is distributed by a number of low-budget software companies for little more than the cost of the disks and postage and handling charges — about \$4 a disk. Once you've purchased it, you're free to make copies and share them. The only additional charge is voluntary. When you boot up a program, you'll see a notice on the opening screen asking you to send a small registration fee (usually \$7-\$25) to the developers if you plan to use the product.

Since shareware is so cheap and plentiful, I hoped to find some useful programs even though not designed for ESL. But most of what I have seen does so little, or is so user unfriendly, that it really isn't worth purchasing.

REASONABLE SOLUTIONS' "Spreadsheet," for example, is just a clock on a computer. It tells you to read a book and keeps time while you're reading.

This company also offers "Crossword puzzler," which first must be "unsquashed" (the program is compressed to fit on one disk). When you unsquash it, it expands onto another disk, or into a more hard drive space. The program itself is well designed, but so complicated that learning to use it takes more time than most teachers have for extracurricular learning tools.

I had high hopes for the text-based "Adventure Games." The games are simple to use, but after the opening screens, there isn't enough text to justify students' playing time to improve their reading. The student sees a line of text, then chooses a direction (N, S, E or W) by striking a directional key. Another line of text appears and the student chooses again.

Software offered by SOFSOURCE is somewhat better. With "PC Fastype," students practice by matching their key-strokes to flashing letters on a keyboard that appears on the screen. Exercises for beginning, intermediate, and advanced

would-be typists include typing words, phrases, and paragraphs (you can use the text provided or enter your own) that appear on the screen. Beeps tell you if you've mistyped. It's not bad for the \$25 registration fee they request.

"Test Master" allows you to store all your test questions in a single database and retrieve and modify them when you'd like to print an exam. It provides a template for typing in test questions and distracters. If you give a lot of multiple choice tests, this could be very useful. Registration is \$25.

"Spelling Games" is a sound and color graphic game that makes students contestants at the Olympic Spelling games. Students select a flag to represent their team and one for their opponents' team. They choose a level of difficulty and speed, then try to type words they see flashed on the screen. Teachers can use the spelling lists provided or type in their own lists. It could motivate poor spellers to practice. \$25 registration.

"Balloon Speller" is another spelling game. If you pay the \$25 registration fee you get a disk containing spelling lists. Otherwise, you type in your own lists. Students see words flashed, then move a balloon around the screen to pick up the correct letters. Other games feature scrambled letters and a word guessing game. The balloon is cute, but cumbersome to move around the screen. I like "Spelling Games" better.

Another way to get Shareware that you don't have to "repurpose" for ESL, says Jeff Magoto, associate chair of TESOL's Computer Aided Language Learning interest group (CALL), is to go to the Spring TESOL conference. Bring blank floppy disks and you can copy software ESL teachers have developed and brought along to share.

Addresses for two shareware companies:

REASONABLE SOLUTIONS  
2101 West Main St.  
Medford, OR 97501  
1-800-876-3475

SOFSOURCE  
P.O. Box 1092  
East Lansing, MI 48826  
1-800-338-2118

### Lowell *continued from page 3*

Their workday was long and their lives were carefully controlled, but the early mill girls found enrichment in the city's churches, libraries, concerts, and lyceums.

By the mid 19th century, however, increased workloads, reduced wages, and hazardous conditions made life intolerable in the mills. Many girls, disillusioned, left their looms. Those who remained competed with a new work force: immigrant labor. The new workers came from Ireland, from French-Canada, Greece, Portugal, Africa, and from Eastern Europe. The supply of workers was nearly inexhaustible and, thus,

efforts to improve conditions largely failed. In fact, the wretchedness of mill life continued into the 20th century until the Lowell mills became unprofitable and were shut down.

#### Lowell today

In recent years, downtown Lowell has undergone a remarkable restoration. In 1978, the National Park Service, working in cooperation with the state, the city, and the local community, became responsible for the preservation of Lowell's historic structures and the interpretation of Lowell's history. Today thousands of visitors from around the world begin their explo-

*continued on the next page*

# American Scenes

Carol Houser Pineiro

*AMERICAN SCENES* (Crossroads Video) is a videotape series written and produced by Elliot Glass and Paul Acario of Queensborough Community College that highlights aspects of everyday life in the United States through realistic and often amusing vignettes. Aimed at intermediate level students, it is designed to familiarize them with four areas of language learning: practical settings of American life, grammatical structures, functions, and colloquial language. The seven programs, each with a different grammar focus, are grouped around the topics of travel, housing, food, university life, emergency situations, everyday living, and social settings.

The six and one-half hour series is accompanied by a Teacher's Manual, which explains in detail how the tapes are to be used and contains the answers to the exercises found in the *American Scenes Workbook* (Avery Publishing Group). Each of the thirty-three units contains a short skit (two to five minutes) designed to be shown four times; after each viewing, students complete a different task. The units have a common format: after the first viewing, which is usually silent, students are asked to answer comprehension or prediction questions. After successive viewings, they are asked to complete exercises like true/false and multiple choice, check the expression heard, or listen for the function. A flashback technique, in which a segment of the tape is replayed after the comprehension questions, eliminates the need for rewinding and searching for answers.

The grammar focus and function of each unit are well matched to the story line of the skit. Professor Smart, for example, has misplaced his plane tickets, so the dialogue between him and the ticket agent contains embedded questions and requests for information. Among other structures covered are tense contrasts, comparative and superlative forms, conditionals, post modals, gerunds, infinitives, participles, and the passive voice. The functions, set in everyday situations, show clearly the body language as well as the spoken language that accompanies them. Some of the functions illustrated are apologies, complaints, condolences, greetings, in-



roductions, invitations, permission, promises, and requests. The follow-up exercises encourage lively language practice through dialogue-completion, practice of colloquial expressions, acting out role-plays, and discussion or composition topics.

Although the quality of this modestly-produced video series is not as high as in some commercial packages on the market, its pedagogical value outshines its lack of glitz. Students find the realistic settings and use of humor helpful in understanding and acquiring new language, and the thorough practice as outlined in the student's workbook and teacher's manual reinforce the impact of the tape. A useful classroom tool in academic as well as vocational settings, *AMERICAN SCENES* can also be viewed at home or in the language lab as an individual tutorial. (It is presently being used with great success in the People's Republic of China.)

*Speak Freely*, an intermediate grammar/conversation text written by the same authors and published by Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, is also recommended for use in conjunction with the tape because the settings, grammatical structures, and idioms parallel each other. For those who do not wish to buy the complete seven-tape series, individual programs are available. A new item on the market is the two-hour *AMERICAN SCENES* mini-series, containing eleven episodes. Whichever option an ESL teacher or language center chooses, students are sure to find learning more enjoyable with this fast-paced, entertaining series.

*This article was originally published in TESOL VIDEO NEWS.*

Articles on video or film may be sent to Carol Pineiro, Video Views Editor, CELOP, Boston University, 730 Commonwealth Avenue, Boston, MA 02215.

## Lowell *continued from previous page*

ration of Lowell at the National and State Park Visitor Center, where they can view exhibits and an award-winning multi-image slide show, "Lowell: the Industrial Revelation." The Center's museum store includes a large selection of books and pamphlets on the Industrial Revolution in general and on Lowell's contribution to that era. In addition, there is "The Working People Exhibit" at 40 French Street. This exhibit, located in the historic Boot Mills boarding house, explores the human side of the Industrial Revolution through the lives of the

mill girls and the immigrants who worked the mills. There are also walking tours of the area, including views of the city's historic buildings and restored mills, and walks along the canals. Tours and exhibits are free of charge. The National and State Parks Visitor Center at 246 Market Street is open from 8:30 a.m. until 5:00 p.m.

"From *Introduction of the Power Loom and Origins of Lowell*, Nathan Appleton, Lowell, 1858. The author was a member of the "Boston Associates," investors recruited by Francis Lowell into textile manufacturing.





## Don't You Hate It When . . .

Robert Saitz

You've just taught the frequency adverbs, including never, and you notice that your up-to-date textbook has included a scene from everyday life with a little boy saying to his mother, "Mom, you never made your bed this morning."

You've been brave and noted the parameters of the form *can*, telling the students that it can/may mean ability, possibility, and permission and a student says that he or she heard on TV, "You can go to bed without supper tonight, young man!"

### What makes it correct department

One of the most opprobrious terms a prescriptivist can bring to bear on a suspect usage is the word "redundant." Double negatives have been called redundant, among other names; *have got*, as in *I've got a cold*, has been labelled redundant, as having two "haves." But redundancy is a tricky devil to invoke. A certain amount of redundancy in language is inevitable and at times necessary; we find it in our rules of agreement and never complain: in *She swallows marshmallows* the *she* indicates singularity plus third person and the *-s* also includes those components of meaning; in *They left yesterday*, *yesterday* indicates pastness and the choice of *left over leave* also indicates pastness. We are barely aware of the redundancy. And we can't live without it. Would we remove the *down* from *fall down*? Would we X out a *red* from the *red, red rose*? The matter of redundancy is not a yes or no question. It may be a how much and under what circumstances affair. I was glad to see this perspective poking through one of the arbiter William Safire's language disquisitions recently. The combination of *both* and *as well as*, as in *It had both a secular as well as a religious meaning* bothered him; why, he asked, do we need *as well as* if we have *both*? A clear case of redundancy. Yet he realized that was an unsatisfactory reaction since in sentences like *Both John and Mary left* or *It had both a secular and a religious meaning* the word *both* is redundant, and omitting the *both* in those sentences, of course, leaves them cold and bare. He solved his problem by admitting the relativity of redundancy, blessing the use of *both* with two nouns but applying the term "overkill" to the use of *both* together with *as well as*, thus proscribing that usage. But it's a judgement call, and as we all know (redundant all?), the beauty of a judgement call is that none of the judges need feel guilty.

### Homonymics

From the days of the Anglo-Saxon baker Haflof, with his ready-whip, to Shakespeare's "Tis a grave matter" cemetery humor to Dave Barry's advice to exercisers, "You need the right shoe...of course, you need the left shoe, too," practitioners

of humor in English have taken advantage of the multitude of homonyms in the lexicon and the syntax. ESOL students may regret having chosen a language in which they will see advertisements such as "We overlook everything but overlook nothing" (not a great ad: I recall the slogan but can't remember the product — maybe a detective agency situated on a hill?) or in which "he could laugh" can refer both to an event completed in the past and one that's possible in the future or in which the word "cleave" may mean to split or separate or it may mean to adhere or stick to. But our humorists rejoice. They are happy with a language, one with many multi-meaning monosyllables, in which so much of the linguistic play and pleasure comes from the yoking of disparates. This is true, for example, of one of the first jokes learned by native English-speaking toddlers — What's black and white and [rEd] all over? — as well as the puns of lifelong collectors such as Bennett Cerf, who noted that near one of the nuclear plants there's a new restaurant called The Fission Chips.

As teachers of English to speakers of other languages, we are particularly aware of the layers of our language not only on the lexical level but at the morphological and syntactic as well. The suffix *-ish*, for example, is homonymic: it may mean "origin" as in *Spanish*, "characteristics of" as in *Waspish* or in *Son-of-Samish sicko*, and "approximately" as in *"Come around sixish."* Jonathan Miller, a "Beyond the Fringe" writer, take advantage of the situation when he says in an interview, "I'm not a Jew. I'm Jew-ish. I don't go the whole hog." George Burns loves our multi-functional simple past. A visitor entering George's stage office says to him, "It was nice of you to see me, George." George replies, "When did I see you?" Or George, making acknowledgements at the end of the show, says: "I'd like to thank all the people who helped me with this act — but I can't. They're all dead," where "would like" may mean either the present polite "want" or a genuine conditional. In the comic strip *Shoe*, a cigar-smoking bird announces that "The annual meeting will come to order," using the command meaning of "will" and the goggled bird, interpreting it as a prediction, asks, "It will?" Our homonymic personal pronouns inspired the Marx brothers. In *Horse Feathers*, pointing to a poster of a chorus girl, Groucho asks Chico, "Is this your picture?" Chico replies, "No, it doesn't even look like me."

Though they may have trouble getting much of the morphological and syntactic humor, our students cannot escape the world of homonyms. On the playground they'll hear, "Ice skate, you skate." When they are mainstreamed, they may run

*continued on page 20*

# Making Group Activities More Effective

Stephen A. Sadow

Before speaking, show the class a large unusual doll or an interesting stuffed animal and then say:

*This is Tillie Betin who has just arrived at this school from his country, Contursia. He needs a lot of help in getting settled. Could you tell him where to find a place to live; where to buy used furniture, blue jeans, and other clothes; where to get the best pizza; and especially, what is considered rude around here? In groups of four, make up a list of suggestions for Tillie Betin.*

Small group activities can foster intense interaction among students, or they can bog down with frustrated students speaking at cross-purposes or not at all. Fortunately, to a great degree, the effectiveness of these activities can be assured by the careful structuring of the problem or task that is proposed. Simply put, group activities are more effective when they entail completing or elaborating upon a familiar situation or experience. The best employ problems that are tightly structured yet sufficiently ambiguous to allow for a variety of responses. Discussion is directed from the known and recognizable by the need for new combinations. Creative and critical thinking when introduced promotes an enormous increase in language use.

Unusual problems -- in which reality is mildly distorted -- work best. A strange purchase is made; the buyer needs help in figuring out what was bought. A very boring candidate needs a fiery campaign speech. A new restaurant is having difficulty making its menu enticing. Newly-merged companies cannot agree on a new name and a new logo. Students are trying to graduate from a fortune-telling school; they must learn to read the cards properly.

Activities can be done in pairs, small groups, or with individual students speaking to the whole class; the format is not all that important. What does seem to matter is that the parameters of the problem be well defined, clearly stated, and within the student's experience and linguistic abilities in the target language. Students must comprehend exactly what the task is and have the words to deal with it. Also, whenever possible, the affective aspects of the situation should be included to make students want to participate and to make participating in the exercise seem important to them.

The difficulty level of these activities ranges from simple to highly complex. Some can be used in the first weeks of language training, while others require sophisticated skills. Beginning students can be asked to plan a meal for a visiting dignitary, design a resort for students to escape from stress, prepare a missing persons report, and predict weather for a fictitious country. They can make a toast to a former teacher or counsellor who is about to retire.

## Creating conflict

Simple activities can be developed from pairs of people who are at cross-purposes. These figures should be recognizable if slightly exaggerated. Bill is a health food nut, while Vivian will eat almost anything. Each tries to convince the other to change the "extreme" behavior. Harold is intent on visiting a "haunted" house; Wilfred, horrified, tries to talk him out of it. A journalist asks hard questions; a politician tries to dodge them without appearing rude.

## Inventing reality

Small group activities are prompted by any situation that can be clearly delineated and in which reality is slightly skewed. Town, cities, and even countries can be "invented" according to predetermined requirements. Tourist guides to the new places are then composed. New holidays are conceived. A neon sign is designed for a fledgling video store. A catalog of gifts "for students only" must be compiled. The furniture in the classroom must be sold at once. Even methods for distributing food in a famine-ridden country can be devised.

## Building on literary forms

Literary genre, mythical archetypes, and popular literary forms such as soap operas, postcards, and ads give students commonly-known forms upon which to build their own productions. They can be told that the last part of a myth has been lost and must be rewritten. Or, they can base a children's story on some newly-discovered illustrations. Two or three lines from a story can lead to a challenging activity. Students learn that "Gerard was convinced that for that reason, and that reason alone, Sybil did not love him any more. He was determined to rectify the situation." The students must finish the ambiguous story.

## Dramatizing in stages

With more advanced groups, activities can be done in stages. As members of the Playwrights' Guild, students can invent characters, devise a plot, write dialog, and even perform their show. In another multi-part activity, the teacher gives students new identities such as wealthy industrialists, Nobel prize winners, diamond merchants, fashion designers, and racing car drivers. Overnight, they must develop these identities. The next class, in character, they find themselves on the Love Boat, a cruise ship where, in small groups, they gossip about other passengers, tell hidden secrets about themselves, and plan get-togethers for after the trip. In a later class, the whole group holds a reunion of the cruise members. At a party, they discuss their memories of the cruise and their lives since it occurred. Properly structured, activities become truly "teacher-friendly." They become guides, letting students think creatively and converse intensively.

*continued on the next page*

## Highlights of the Twelfth Annual Language Testing Research Colloquium

San Francisco • March 1-4 • 1990

Eleanor Lander

The Language Testing Research Colloquium (LTRC) participants are an international group of evaluators—teachers, program directors, state and federal administrators—representing several countries, including England, Canada, and Israel, as well as federal language training operations such as Defense Language Institute and the Interagency Language Roundtable. At each annual Colloquium, Educational Testing Service researchers present new TOEFL-related studies. The core group is open to and supportive of neophyte efforts and concerns.

Since 1987, the group has made a formal effort to reach teachers who, like myself, may be hampered by a non-statistical background. Participants regularly present at TESOL and ACTFL with this goal in mind. At TESOL '89, in San Antonio, for example, the group sponsored a panel discussion for all interested persons titled, "Ask the Experts Your Test Questions."

The goal of test researchers is to expand test validity (appropriateness) and test reliability (consistency). Thus their two main concerns are: 1) to develop new test designs and formats, and compare them to traditionally-accepted measures, and 2) to compare statistical methods and software, and identify corresponding problems.

### A SAMPLING OF PRESENTATIONS

#### Reading comprehension tests

A presentation titled "Construct Validation of a Reading Comprehension Test: Combining Sources of Data" (Anderson, Perkins, Cohen, and Bachman) is an example of the thoroughness of the researchers' approach. A reading test was validated through the use of traditional test performance analyses, which included item difficulty and item discrimination. Additionally, there was a content analysis of each test item using four additional tests: (1) Bart and Read's (1984) statistical test of prerequisite relationships among test questions, (2) Pearson and Johnson's (1978) test of question-and-answer relationships, (3) Schlesinger and Weiser's (1970) test to analyze the source of the information required in answering the test item, and (4) Mayer's (1975) analysis of the relationship of items to the structure of the text. A think-aloud protocol

followed, and the procedure was described in detail.

What impressed me most was the time taken to explain the purpose of each statistical procedure. The same effort was made in a presentation comparing multiple-choice and open-ended computerized assessment of ESL reading comprehension. Such efforts are rare but must be made if test researchers are truly serious about getting their important work understood by test users.

#### The TOEFL

In one of the last presentations, Bernard Spolsky, of Bar Ilan University, talked about the pre-history of TOEFL, and a study he is undertaking of the first conference organized to develop the TOEFL in May 1961. He is seeking to answer such questions as why the recommendations did not include the direct testing of writing and speaking when "integrative testing" was the major issue of the '61 conference. He is questioning whether practical and institutional considerations became more important than theoretical ones. He is asking how much the demand for language testing efficiency outweighed our desire to find appropriate measures of language proficiency.

### CRITICISM OF TESTING

Throughout the conference, the statistical software available came under criticism for not scaling test results accurately; participants are eagerly awaiting improvements in statistical analysis programs. Discrete-point tests were also criticized, yet various forms of item-banking continue to be used and are often useful. Spolsky spoke for many when he commented that we need to examine "the great divide between supporters and opponents of objective tests. Empirical evidence is needed to relieve tension."

If we are not to accept criterion-reference testing with its multitude of performance objectives, then we, as teachers, must try to work with test researchers in expanding norm-referenced and standardized tests in ways that assess individual proficiency more accurately. Hopefully, this sampling of research efforts will encourage teachers to continue asking questions about their own program evaluation.

*Eleanor Lander teaches in the English Language Center at Northeastern University.*

### Group Activities continued from page 17

*This article is based on a demonstration given at the MATSOL '90 Spring Conference. Stephen Sadow teaches in the Department of Modern Languages at Northeastern University.*

#### Background

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# TOEFL 550 – Now What?

Casey Kopec

In the past, while teaching in intensive English programs at the pre-college level, I felt certain I could predict the success or degree of difficulty an ESL student would have at an American university by virtue of the student's performance in the language class and the student's TOEFL score. Then, five years ago, when I became the director of a study skills center at a highly competitive college for women, student academic success became my business. As I crossed over to the credit-bearing, degree-bound side of education, my assessment began to change.

I have come to realize that academic success is not solely a function of linguistic preparedness but depends largely on the willingness of individual students to adapt to the academic demands of college level work. Successful students develop cognitive skills such as critical reading and analytical writing. They also learn to make cultural adjustments to the university. In this article, I want to focus on ways to help students to develop strategies to make these cultural adjustments.

## Adjusting to the Culture of the University

### Creating a presence in the classroom

Often students tell me they are too shy to participate in class. I have stopped trying to change their personalities. Instead, I counsel them to:

- Establish eye contact with their professors during lectures.
- Smile and nod to indicate understanding or agreement.
- Sit in the first or second row of the class.
- Be on time to every class.
- Ask the professor a question just before\* or after class.

*\*Note: Some professors don't allow questions before class.*

- Write out questions and bring the paper on which they are written to class. Ask the questions in class, or hand them to the professor after class and ask for an appointment during office hours.
- Get the telephone numbers of at least three other students in the class with whom to discuss the assignments, exchange notes, guess at exam questions, and review or even split the outside reading.

### Taking advantage of office hours

For many students, office hours are the equivalent in their imaginations of prostrating themselves before the Supreme Court. I like to appeal to the student as a consumer: "Your tuition pays for office hours. Enrolling in class gives you permission if not an obligation to spend time with the instructor."

Students can practice through role playing what will happen when they get to the professor's office. We work together on appropriate things to say during office hours when an

assignment is very difficult for a student. For example,

"Professor Green, last night I was reading Smith's analysis of the role of the railroad in the post-Civil War economy. Can you help me see the relationship between the farmers and the railroad magnates?"

We also discuss what not to say:

"The reading you assign is too hard for me. There's too much reading. I'll never get it done."

The question in the first scenario can be answered. The complaint in the second, however, may sound threatening or turn the professor off.

### Managing time

Time management skills may seem self-evident, too personal, and not academic enough. Yet different cultures have different attitudes toward time, which creates a frustrating situation for foreigners. I teach time management through a variety of "insider's tricks." I show students that I maintain a daily calendar for hourly appointments, but that I keep a month-at-a-glance calendar with major deadlines in it. I recommend that students carry a pocket calendar to all classes. I often ask a student to bring all class syllabi, all family birthdays and personal plans; then I supply the important dates from the college. Together we fill in the plan for the semester.

At the outset, I was not quite successful. When I first began working on time management, I took too much control. The students and I planned out weekly calendars with hourly time slots assigned. I now realize that this led to too much student frustration when the plan wasn't followed. Instead, I ask students to keep track of their time for one week and to show me what changes they are willing to make.

### Becoming familiar with the academy

ESL students, like all students, need the appropriate language and cultural skills to be successful, independent, degree-bound students at an American university. They need information about the variety of resources available on most campuses including tutoring services, study skills and writing centers, psychological services, religious organizations, and student-run support groups. Kathleen McWhorter in *Study and Thinking Skills in College* offers a self-check list that students can use or modify for their own use.

Students also need a relevant vocabulary. Words such as *pre-requisite*, *co-requisite*, *seminar*, and *lab practical* are simply not high frequency words outside of the college campus. Notions such as *drop-add*, *pass/fail*, *audit*, *take-home*

*continued on the next page*

## TOEFL 550 – Now What?

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exam, open-book exam, and blue book are not as self-explanatory as we might think.

The college catalogue is a useful text. Students can discuss the registration process, examine distribution and major requirements, study course abbreviations, and write out hypothetical four-year plans. In this way, they begin to grasp the need both for a long-term plan and the need to be flexible as course offerings change and enrollments fluctuate.

### CONCLUSION

I feel strongly that it is wrong to predict or evaluate a student's academic success by linguistic measures alone. Once students are admitted to the university there are many factors other than pronunciation and control of grammar that play a role in student retention and student success. Students' willingness to make changes in study habits and their openness to adapting to the culture of the university figure largely in their academic success or failure.

### Resources

- McWhorter, K. (1988). *Study and Thinking Skills in College*. Glenview, IL: Scott, Foresman and Co.
- Pauk, W. (1984). *How to Study in College*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

This article is based on a paper presented at the Twenty-Fourth Annual TESOL Convention, March 1990. Casey Kopeck is director of academic assistance at Wellesley College and teaches first year composition.

## Don't You Hate It?

continued from page 16

into an old-fashioned teacher who will say, "Hey is for horses." If they are learning English in the United States but outside of eastern New England, some sharp scholar will respond to "You shouldn't squish ants," with "or uncles, either." At higher levels, a teacher may introduce a text titled *Write it Right* and in an advanced Spanish-English bilingual class, the class comic will inevitably begin fracturing: *a la ciudad* as "so long, Pop." And finally in college they'll hear the archaeologist described as an academic whose career lies in ruins.... You say you hear Haflof turning gravely to his [bir]?

Comments on or contributions to the Recreational Grammar column may be sent to Robert Saitz, Department of English, Boston University, 236 Bay State Road, Boston, MA 02215.

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# A Reader's Perspective of the TWE: Am I Blue?

Roberta Steinberg

Whenever a MATSOLer learns I'm a TWE (Test of Written English) reader, I'm asked, "What's it really like?" After having been whisked away twice to California for reading sessions, I've decided that being a TWE reader is like childbirth. Scoring 1500 essays in three days and bearing children share a common denominator... pain. After each of my three children's births and after each reading session I've proclaimed, "I'll never do that again!" But time does dim the recollection of distress. Six months from now you might find me in California scoring the TWE.

## The test

In 1986, Educational Testing Service (ETS) decided to add another component to the TOEFL exam, the TWE. Administered only four times a year, the TWE is a 30-minute essay. The TWE score is reported separately from the TOEFL score on a scale of 1-6, 6 being the highest. Most frequently the essay prompt appears in a comparison/contrast made with a choose-one-side-or-the-other direction.

## The testers

ETS has determined that the San Francisco Bay Area contains the highest concentration of holistic scorers, so the reading sessions are held in California, and the 100,000 essays are flown to the West Coast before being sent to New Jersey. For each session, approximately 15% of the readers are recruited from states outside of California and from Canada. About half of the Californians are ESL teachers and the other half teach native-speaker English; virtually all of the out-of-state readers are ESL teachers. The added expense of airfares, hotel accommodations, and meals has a two-fold purpose: we out-of-staters spread the TWE word and supposedly bring a different perspective to the proceedings.

## The process

My first reading was held in Walnut Creek, California in November 1989. I joined approximately 300 readers for two and a half days of reading -- Friday from 1-5 and Saturday and Sunday from 8:30-5:00. In these sessions, readers are assigned to a ballroom and the papers are separated by topics. Each reader reads a batch of 25 essays at one time. A second reader scores the same batch without knowing the first reader's scores. If a 2-point discrepancy is found by a checker, a third experienced reader determines the score.

The whole operation functions like an assembly line. Each ballroom has runners to distribute and collect batches, checkers to compare scores, high school students to tally the number of batches each reader completes, and a room leader/foreman to coordinate the activities within each room. All twelve tables of eight readers each have a table leader who serves as a combination cheerleader, candy distributor, and scoring helper.

To keep our stamina and morale high we're wined and dined from 7:00 in the morning. Dieting is not the concern of ETS. At nearly hourly intervals we break for lavish fruit platters, warm cookies, natural juices, and coffee. (The four-course lunches contrasted dramatically with my usual tuna sandwiches.) In addition we receive a generous stipend for evening dining anywhere we choose.

Nor is exercise neglected. My second reading was held at the San Ramon Marriott, which has an indoor-outdoor pool,

## Scoring 1500 essays in three days and bearing children share a common denominator ... pain

exercise room, sauna, and steam room. Unfortunately, the first night I was too tired to leave my room!

## The proverbial product

Developing rapport with one's tablemates seems to be the norm. My colleagues soon learned that I have a soft spot for proverbs, so at each break we would share quotations we had scribbled from the essays. At the May, 1990 reading our essay prompt was:

Some people think the family is the most important influence on young adults. Other people think that friends are the most important. Which view do you agree with? Use examples to support your position.

This topic produced a number of proverbs that were mostly baffling in English, but the most mysterious involved some colorful references:

- "Always bear in mind this maxim, you'll be red when you get close to red."
- "A silk that is dyed in red turns red, dyed in black turns black."
- "Those who stand next to black will be black."
- "Black is close to blue."

Fortunately, before I left for Boston, one considerate Chinese student explained: In Chinese proverbs, red means good people and black means bad people.

Unfortunately, I'm still confused about blue.

*Roberta (Robby) Steinberg teaches ESL at Mount Ida College and tutors at the Winsor School.*

## Diana Lam Speaks

# Report on the Rick Smith Memorial Lecture

Lydia Grave-Resendes

MATSOL's Fourth Annual Rick Smith Memorial Lecture took place on May 9, 1990, in the library of the Devotion elementary school in Brookline. The guest speaker, Diana Lam, superintendent of the Chelsea Schools, addressed elementary, secondary, and mainstream teachers who work with ESL students. During the course of her stimulating talk, she proved to the audience that Jim Walsh, superintendent of the Brookline Schools, was correct when he introduced her as a professional who shows great concern for the education of children.

Lam began by describing the educational system she has inherited: a system consisting of 3600 students, with a high rate of pregnancy and a dropout rate of 50 percent. From the very beginning of her appointment, she knew that she was going to be working in a heated situation.

An advocate of bilingual education and English as a second language, Lam believes that one cannot view the two separately; they must be integrated. When bilingual programs are totally isolated, the students are psychologically separated. Bilingual programs must be seen not as compensatory but as enrichment programs. In a system where 70 percent of the students come from non-English-speaking homes, Lam be-

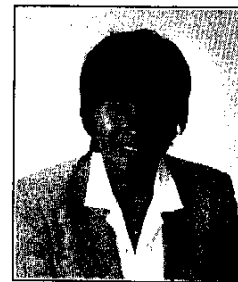
lieves that training in multiculturalism and second language acquisition is necessary not only for the bilingual and ESL teacher, but for every teacher. This spring, five teachers will be part of a multicultural institute sponsored by the Children's Museum.

The Chelsea school system publishes a monthly newsletter for parents in all the languages that the students speak. To reach out to hispanic families who cannot read, Lam uses cable TV, in Spanish, to share with them the good things that are happening in the school community.

In order to keep in touch with the classroom, Lam teaches once a week. In this way she energizes herself and models what she wants teachers to do. As a part of her teaching she assigns and reads student journals in order to connect with the students in a more personal way.

Well aware that teacher burnout and lack of appreciation affect performance, Lam has developed a Teacher Appreciation Week, during which a banquet is prepared for the teachers

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## Spotlight An English Course

## Prism

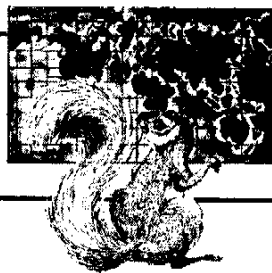
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## Another View From Expository Writing

John DeCuevas

There was a knock at the door.

"Come in," I said.

Joe's head appeared first, then the rest of him. He shuffled slowly toward the chair I pointed to and sat down, looking tired.

"What can I do for you?" I asked.

Joe is one of my best students (I teach expository writing) even though he came to this country only three months ago.

"I took you at your word," said Joe. "I took down what you said in class the other day about looking words and expressions up in the dictionary when you weren't sure of what they meant. When I got home I took the dictionary down from the shelf, the one I took over from my brother when he took off for college. I didn't think I was undertaking anything difficult, but now that I've taken to consulting it, I'm not sure I can take it all in."

"Why not?" I queried.

"Well," said Joe in a weary tone, "take take."

"Take what?" I asked.

"Take," repeated Joe, "the word take."

"What about it?"

"It takes the cake," he said.

"How come?"

"It takes so many different prepositions or adverbs or other words that change its meaning, I get all confused. I can't take it."

"You seem to be doing fine," I said.

"I take it," said Joe.

He paused. I waited a minute for him to go on, but he just sat there looking at me with a sad expression.

"What is it you take?" I asked gently.

"Everything," he said.

"What do you mean?" I asked. "You're limited to four courses a semester."

"Look," he said irritably, "I mean I take all this stuff from everybody, teachers whose courses I take, other students I take up with, people I take part in things with. I feel I get taken in by them because I'm not quick on the uptake, if you know what I mean. They take me for a fool."

"Don't take it so hard," I said soothingly.

"How else should I take it?" he whined. "Read this," he said, handing me a paper. It was a draft for an assignment on family relationships, and it began:

I take after my mother. She took care of me when I was young. Even though my father took it out on her, she took care not to take it out on me. When he left with the undertakers, I took over as head of the house, but that didn't take, it seems because my uncle was always taking me to task. I didn't take kindly to that, so I took to the hills, but I had to take my lumps before I was taken in by this school. Even here I'm taking it on the chin."

"Take it easy," I said. "It takes time to adjust. In time you'll take back what you said. Take it from me."

"There you are," cried Joe, "I even have to take it from you."

"You mistake me," I protested. "Let's take ten. We can always take it up later."

"I'm not taken with the idea," said Joe, "nor will I take this lying down. In fact, I think I will take my leave."

I was about to say, "You can't take it with you, but I thought better of it and said instead, "It takes two to tango."

In a sudden rage, Joe took a swing at me. "Take that," he yelled, and took to his heels. I was taken aback. I had always taken to this fellow, but now I felt taken in. And yet he has what it takes, I thought, and I take my hat off to him. Even so, it takes a lot out of me, being his teacher.

Just then, Miriam, another of my students (she's from Manhattan) popped through the door.

"Got a minute?" she asked.

"Sure," I said. "What's up?"

"Get this," she said, sprawling in the chair. "I got your message in class the other day about getting words right, so when I got home I got down the dictionary, the one I got from my sister when she got over getting mad at me for getting her goat; I mean, I finally got around to getting at words I thought I could get away with not looking up because I was getting nowhere and thought I'd better get with it and get it over with, especially when I got wind of your quiz and all, so I got to it and here's my paper."

Suddenly something got to me and I heard myself yelling "Get out!" Miriam took the hint and got lost.

I have been thinking it over ever since. I guess when it comes to teaching expos, I haven't got what it takes. Maybe I'll switch to math.

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### Memorial Lecture *continued from page 22*

— and served by the administrators! During this week, teachers take time to reflect on their profession. Lam has also established mini-grants for those teachers who want to implement innovative ideas in their classes.

Because she emphasizes an eclectic, primarily hands-on approach, advocates teaching to students' strengths rather than to their weaknesses, and holds high expectations for the students, there is no doubt that Diana Lam is a positive force in the Chelsea school system.

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