

## The Importance of Memory for Foreign Students Returning Home: Japanese Students, Kinembi, and Me

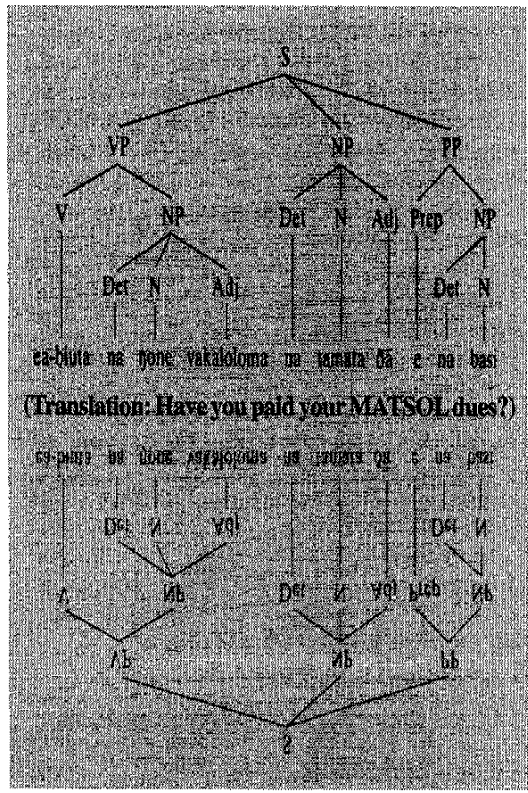
by Susan Butler

**O**n the occasion of a graduation ceremony, in the 10th year of my school, Showa, it fell to me to give the faculty "send off"; the students were returning to Japan. "Kinembi," anniversary, was the big word that year. Kinembi is a wonderful word. While "anniversary" means simply for the year to turn again, "Ki" means to remember, write down, share a story, and "Nen" is to keep in mind, and to pray. I too was celebrating "kinembi", anniversaries of living in Tunisia and Japan. As I held these experiences in mind, I found what I wanted to tell the students. Probably all of us who teach ESOL have these stories. . .

. . . 30 years ago I was a college student arriving in Tunisia, a small country on the coast of North Africa, encountering a foreign world for the first time. I went with very romantic expectations. To live in a beautiful and

exotic place, white houses shining in the sun, blue doors, camels, eating previously unimaginable foods, listening and dancing to wonderful music played on instru-

*Continued on page 10*



**INSIDE**

- From the President and the Editor 2
- MATSOL '98 Spring Conference 3
  - Friday Plenary, Carol Pincro 4
  - Saturday Plenary, Tom Griffin 6
  - Publishers Liaison Report, Mercy T. Cavallos 7
  - Rap Session on IRPS, Bobbie Lamont 8
- Johnny English: Diary of an ESL Teacher, John McCarthy 9
- Teacher Research
  - Using and Misusing Data to Draw Conclusions about Teaching, Jean Chandler 12
  - Is the Web Ready for TESL (and Vice Versa)? John de Szendeffy 14
  - A Report on ETS Information Sessions at BU, Carol Allen 16
- Language Lore
  - I'll Have Two . . . Robert Sautz 18
- A Message from the President of SAUA/SATE 20
- Book Reviews 22
- MATSOL Executive Board 27
- MATSOL Membership Application 27

## Linguists or Educators: Can We Be Both?

Julie Whitlow

**I**used to have no trouble defining my job when asked. I would simply say, "I am an ESL teacher" with a subtle feeling of pride when my interlocutors would make comments about how fascinating and rewarding my job must be. How many languages did I speak? How on earth did I teach English to Japanese students? Did I speak Japanese? How does anybody learn a second language? The impassioned conversation that would ensue always left me feeling sure that, yes, in spite of the drawbacks of low pay, low prestige, and lack of job security, my job was one that fulfilled me. I was an ESL teacher, an educator of minds young and old from around the globe.

*Continued on page 11*

## MATSOL Currents

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## From the President

As MATSOL's representative at the TESOL Convention in Seattle in March, I attended an affiliate leaders workshop and the official meeting of the Affiliate Council. Presently, TESOL has 90 affiliates (44 in the USA and 46 around the world), with a total membership of about 50,000. I found that we can learn a lot from our fellow-affiliates about such challenges as promoting organizational growth, serving members across the state, encouraging development of young members and graduate students, streamlining membership procedures, and keeping abreast of state standards, government initiatives, and TESOL projects. I learned that Massachusetts is a leader in defining professional development standards for our public school ESL teachers (and MATSOL is an official provider of professional development points, by the way).

Speaking of TESOL, next year's annual convention is set for March 9-13, 1999, in New York. I encourage MATSOL members to attend. Travel grants are available.

The 1998-99 MATSOL Board has already begun initiatives concerning closer cooperation with the Mass. Department of Education, increased numbers of Professional Development Opportunities, and expanded Job Bank services. We invite your suggestions about other issues which you believe MATSOL should address in the coming year.

Bea Mikulecky

## From the Editor

Sometimes editors set themes for an issue; other times, themes seem to set themselves. So it happened this time around. As usual, our main goal is to report on the Spring Conference, both the plenary sessions and any outstanding presentations that find their way into print. The conference theme Remembering the Past and Anticipating the Future was pretty comprehensive. What resulted were provocative projections of trends in teaching from speaker Fredricka Stoller, and fascinating memories by those involved in founding MATSOL 25 years ago (see plenary reports). As it happened, one of our lead articles covered the same time-span. Susan Butler's memoir, however, is not of organizational activity but of the passage from being a culture-shocked student abroad to being now the teacher of culture-shocked students in America.

Then there's the perennial issue of employment conditions. No hard news, but some good reflections by Julie Whitlow on the long quest for full-time work. A lighter view comes from John McCarthy in his *Diary of a Part-timer*. (Now he can joke, but it wasn't so funny at the time).

Third, and most substantive, we have two articles on technology and ESL. I know, the pairing of those words makes many of us queasy. If we had any feel for science, we wouldn't have become English teachers in the first place. Yet the world grows more cyberized daily. It's a professional responsibility to rise above technophobia and cope with these new techniques. Like the dinosaurs we must adapt or perish. To help us, Carol Allen explains the computerization of the TOEFL test. And John deSzendeffy discusses the potential of the Internet in language teaching. I mentioned last issue how much work is done by the MATSOL board, quite staggering to a newcomer. Several members have left but, at some risk, I want to single out two—Carol Pineiro and Linda Schulman. The Board has a curious cycle, whereby you are Vice-President one year, President the next, and President Emeritus the third (though you still have to work). Carol has just finished three arduous years, while simultaneously

Continued on page 7

Friday Plenary

## “Emerging Views on Language Teaching and Learning”

Fredricka Stoller

*Report by Carol Piñeiro*

**F**redricka Stoller, Associate Professor of English at Northern Arizona University, was the Friday plenary speaker at the MATSOL Spring Conference. She was invited to share her view on what the future holds for our profession. As founder and director of NAUS's intensive English program, researcher, teacher-trainer and author, she has been able to examine the field of TESL from a variety of vantage points. The following is a summary of her interpretation of emerging views on language teaching and learning as glimpsed in her crystal ball.

Because TESL is only a quarter of a century old, its leaders have paid careful attention to current trends that look at teaching and learning in ever-evolving ways. Stoller cited four recent trends in her plenary address that provide rich sources for investigation and possible application to the profession. They were a) teaching as progression from novice to expert, b) teaching as a flow experience, c) learning language through content, and d) managing learning environments through innovation diffusion.

The first view of teaching, and learning as well, arose from studies in fields as diverse as architecture and athletics, that compared novices to experts. Researchers analyzed the knowledge and skills of experts and tracked the growth of novices as they acquired various kinds of expertise. They discovered that the form of the progression from novice to expert is sometimes smooth, but often rough, sometimes slows to a plateau, but often grows by leaps and bounds. Because this trajectory differs between individuals and among groups, certain questions arise. How do books that teach verb tenses, vocabulary forms and outlining reflect this process? Is it possible to fail if learning is simply a progression? It seems that this view discards the notion of failure and assumes that success comes incrementally; the only limitation is time.

The second view, that of “flow,” is based on the psychology of optimal experience. When goals are clear and tasks are meaningful as well as challenging, individuals who set out to accomplish them can become lost in the experience. Whether in a teaching or learning situation, they become totally focused, expending quantities of energy and losing track of time. Examples from diverse fields were presented, such as a diva singing in an opera, a marathon runner nearing the finish line, a student immersed in a novel. Having experienced “flow” at one or another point in their lives, the audience could clearly understand what was meant by the experience.

The third view, that of content-based instruction as one of the few effective ways to teach language, has as its goal to generate interest in learning through stimulating resources and instruction, thereby developing intrinsic motivation in students. Instead of viewing content as a mere shell for presenting language, it should be at the core, so that readings, videos, software, field trips, lectures and writing on thematic units so stimulate students, that they are no longer aware that

**Examples from diverse fields were presented, such as a diva singing in an opera, a marathon runner nearing the finish line, a student immersed in a novel.**

they are in language classrooms. Sound teaching practices such as cooperative learning, alternative assessment, use of graphic representations, individual portfolios, and team projects should underlie the thematic units so that they are tied seamlessly together and presented in an effective manner.

The fourth view, that of managing learning environments through innovation diffusion, holds that openness toward new alternatives, experimentation and creativity allow innovative energies to spring to life in language programs. By recognizing the complexity of the innovative process and by being willing to entertain differences of opinion and even to experience failure, we are more likely to be successful in our attempts at innovation. The key to progress in this area is responsibility, leadership and acceptance of subjective, rather than objective, viewpoints when considering outcome of one or another aspect of innovation.

In conclusion, Stoller was optimistic about the future of the field of TESL and confident that the changes she sees in her crystal ball will make for a more exciting profession. Stemming from psychology, education and management, these emerging views are likely to have a profound effect on how we teach and how our students learn in the next quarter century.

*Carol Piñeiro — [HYPERLINK "mailto:chp-bu@bu.edu"](mailto:chp-bu@bu.edu) hp-bu@bu.edu — has written on teachers' progression from novice to expert and the theories that underlie this process. She teaches at Boston University.*

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# MATSOL Spring

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*Friday plenary speaker  
Fredrika Stoller*



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**Various Presenters**

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*MATSOL board members at lunch*



*Conference Committee (l to r)  
Bobbie Lemontt,  
Brenda Sloane, Bea Mikulicky*

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# 1998 Conference

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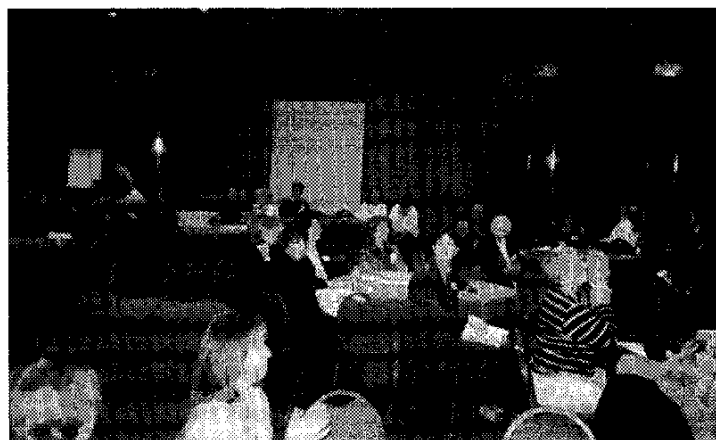
*MATSOL founders (standing, l to r): John Schumann, Ernest Mazzone, Richard Newman, Ann Hilferty; (sitting, l to r): John Corcoran, Francine Steiglitz, Juan Ridriguez, Bob Saitz*



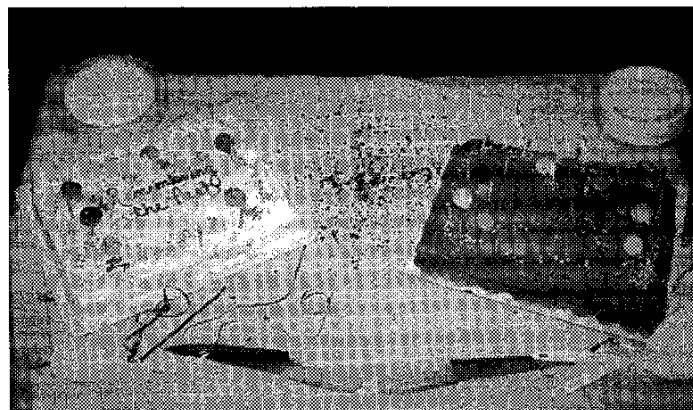
*Founders reminiscing*



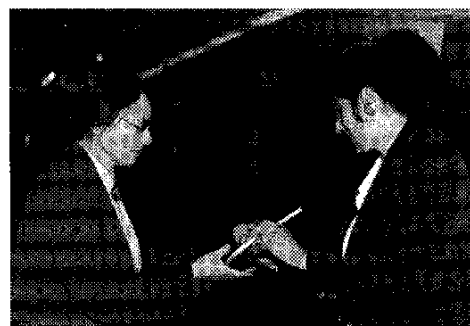
*More reminiscing*



*The Lantana ballroom*



*Happy 25th, MATSOL!*



*Glad winner of door prize  
donated by publishers*

Saturday Plenary

## The Way We Were

Tom Griffith

**T**he Spring Conference marked the 25th anniversary of the formation of MATSOL. For that reason, the Saturday plenary was given over to honoring and hearing from eight of the original founders. Brenda Sloane of the Conference Committee did some remarkable detective work in locating and contacting them, and organizing the panel.

The plenary session was a change of pace — relaxed, informal, discursive — as the founders reviewed their careers and told how they got into the ESL profession. Their routes were highly varied — after all, when they got into it, the profession didn't really exist as such. Teaching English was a job people did without much in common, aside from knowing how to speak it.

Leading off was *eminence grise* Bob Saitz, first MATSOL president, *Currents* columnist, and teacher of grammar in the BU graduate program. His preparation included the study of Old English, Old Norse and Old Provencal, and a few academic sojourns in Asia. Two issues in the late Sixties involved him in curriculum development — the boom in foreign students (BU has the highest percentage in the US), and the recognition that children of immigrants were faring badly in public schools. From the latter came legislation for both ESL and bilingual instruction. He made the point that for all the goofiness of the Sixties, that decade brought about a laudable increase in sensitivities.

It was commitment to public education that launched MATSOL's first vice-president, John Corcoran. He taught social studies and foreign languages in Worcester and became aware of the special needs of Spanish and Greek speakers. As the city's immigrant population grew, he managed Title I programs for 15 years. Of the current controversy over bilingual education he said, "The more things change, the more they stay the same."

Three others on the panel came from the public school side of things: Ernest Mazzone, a pioneer professor of ESL methodology and bilingualism at Boston State College, the predecessor to Umass/Boston. He got off a good Italian joke: the hardworking immigrant's son becomes a scholar and signs his letters Ph.D. So the father answers back mysteriously, Guiseppe, FUF, finally explaining it as "From-a You Fatha."

Another link back to Boston State was Richard Newman; he was once chairman there of the Department of Foreign Languages. At that time, ESL sought clues in methodology from those experienced in teaching foreign language (although "foreign" has now yielded to world languages — it's that Sixties sensitivity, lest foreign be taken as pejorative).

Bridging the public school and immigrant communities

was Juan Rodriguez, now director of the ESL/Bilingual program at Umass/Lowell. Among his memories were that in the early Seventies, non-native speakers in the profession were rare ("then minorities were really minorities..."), that parking in Boston was easy and cheap, and for 29 cents you could get coffee AND a muffin.

Representing the other major stream of ESL, higher education, was Ann Hilferty. After Peace Corps service in Nigeria, she taught at numerous local colleges, founded the English Language Center at Northeastern and got a Ph.D in reading at Harvard. This was interspersed, typically, with a stint in China.

**Teaching English was a job people did without much in common, aside from knowing how to speak it.**

John Schumann also started off in the Peace Corps, in Iran. He likewise passed through Harvard enroute to chairing the UCLA Department of Applied Linguistics and TESL, where he studies the neurobiology of affect in language. This included some famous research on (I am not making this up, as Dave Barry would say) how alcohol consumption influences language learning. Not much, sad to say; you only THINK you're speaking more fluently.

Last, Francine Steiglitz recalled the early days of BU's Center for English Language and Orientation Program. CELOP is the powerhouse of college ESL around here, through whose frenzied halls many of us have passed. Francine directed it from 1978-84. Her career reflected another growing field of ESL — international business — when she coordinated CELOP students involved in Venezuelan oil.

It's good to know your roots, especially in a culture so negligent of the past that one idiom for worthlessness is, "He's history." I enjoyed the panel and noted two things: first, six of the eight founders were men. Now, the profession is 70% female, and women increasingly are in charge (at MATSOL Board meetings, males can feel kind of lonely). Second, we've all benefited by the groundwork laid by veterans such as the honorees. Their effort to forge a new field from disparate academic streams has succeeded. Now there's a real profession to enter, with real graduate programs that impart a common base of knowledge. So thanks to our founders, and thanks for the memories.



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## Report from Publisher's Liaison

*Mercy T. Cevallos*

**Dear Members,**

We have had a wonderfully successful Spring Conference due, in good part, to the support of our exhibitors. As you go through the list of those who participated, please remember that they bring us the latest products in theory and practice, all full of helpful ideas and activities.

This year, the exhibitors not only participated as they usually do, but also contributed a total of 60 books, videos, T-shirts and a CD-ROM for the raffle during our anniversary

celebration. The items were raffled on both days of the Conference. The grand prize winner, Susan L. Shwartz of Newton, received the CD-ROM *Mastering Pronunciation Suite*, a very generous contribution from CALI.

The seventeen prizes that were not given out at the Conference will be used as door prizes at our various activities throughout the academic year, reminding us of the exhibitors generosity. I have enjoyed working with all the representatives, who have done their best to meet the needs of our membership.

### Publishers' Liaison List of Exhibitors

Alta Book Center	Louis Karger
Applied Visual Technology	McGraw-Hill
Book Lab Publishers	The University of Michigan Press
Booklink	Newsweek Education Programs
CALI	NTC/Contemporary Publishing Group
Cambridge University Press	Oxford University Press
Celebration/Mondo Storyteller	Pem Press
Charlesbridge Publishing	Prentice Hall Regents
Contemporary Books	Pro Speech International
Fernandez U.S.A. Publishing	Scholastic Lectorum
Hampton-Brown	Scott Foresman-Addison Wesley
Heinle & Heinle	St. Martin's Press
Houghton Mifflin Company	TESOL, Inc.
Houghton Mifflin School Division	Townsend Press

### Thanks Spring Conference Committee!

Bea Mikulecky, Chair    Bobbie Lemontt  
Mercy T. Cevallos      Brenda Sloane

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### From the Editor *Continued from page 2*

completing her doctorate at BU; and she still came through with a plenary report. There aren't many people both that smart and that nice. As for Linda, president this last year, she calls to mind a saying of St. Irenaeus in the 2nd century: The glory of God is a human being fully alive. Her aliveness lit up every meeting, and her steady kindness made working with her a pleasure. You get the impression that her classes must be a lot of fun.

Last, one of an editor's worse fears is that his publication will not be read. To that end, I'm hoping that *Currents* will be not just informative but provocative. I was frankly hoping

the last issue might stir up some controversy and inspire angry letters. But there was nothing, so I'll try again. This month California voters may eliminate bilingual education, a goal which polls say is supported even by a majority of Hispanics. Either supporters have failed to make a persuasive case for it, or there is no case to make.

Is this just Left Coast madness, or the wave of the future? Are the needs of Massachusetts immigrants really being met by the current system? Please weigh in, and whatever you say I'll argue the opposite.

*Tom Griffith*

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## Conference Rap Session on IEPS

*Bobbie Lemontt*

**I**ntensive English Programs (IEPs) are a significant and growing constituency within the United States and especially in Massachusetts. Over 60 programs are listed in the Boston Yellow Pages under language schools. Although IEPs vary in many respects, generally their programs are designed for international students who have come to the US for the purpose of studying English. Proprietary IEPs are self-supporting and must cover expenses with the tuition they charge the students; other IEPs may be operated by a parent post-secondary institution as an extension or auxiliary unit. In many programs in Massachusetts, the average enrollment is 100 full-time students per 4-week term, with class size averaging around 15 students. Thus, there may be well over 100 ESL/EFL teachers working at IEPs in the state.

The largest professional organization for IEPs in the US is the American Association of Intensive English Programs (AAIEP) with 236 member programs, 12 of which are in Massachusetts. Some IEP staff are members of NAFSA: Association of International Educators and participate in a professional section for administrators and teachers in English as a second language (ATESL). IEPs are not served by a special interest group in MATSOL.

The majority of IEP students are not preparing for entry into a college or university. The students are usually of university age (18 to 25), but they also may be older or younger. IEPs generally test their students upon arrival into the program and place them into levels of instruction based

on their English proficiency. Students receive between 20-30 weekly instructional hours in all language skills and academic preparation (such as study skills, TOEFL preparation, or practical compute application). Often IEP students also participate in cultural and social activities as well as evening or weekend excursions.

Most IEP instructors do not work with college or university students, and most instructors who teach at colleges and universities are not teaching at IEPs. To serve the needs of this constituency, MATSOL offered a rap session at the Spring Conference, "The Business of Teaching EFL." A small group of instructors and administrators in IEPs within the MATSOL membership participated. Several topics were discussed including: existing opportunities for professional development; the teaching challenges posed by multi-ages in level classrooms; ways to give EFL students access to native English speakers; enrollment cycles; and working conditions. Although most IEPs are highly competitive today, participants agreed that there is a need for a forum for issues specific to teaching in an IEP. An informal e-mail chat group was formed to continue the dialogue and encourage future MATSOL presentations based upon these discussions. To join the group, send your address and an introductory message to writest@aol.com

*Bobbie Lemontt is General Representative at MATSOL and works in downtown Boston at the American Language Academy.*

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### Membership Alert: Important Survey Arriving Soon

Let your voice be heard! On May 15, 1998, MATSOL will mail a survey requesting the participation of every member. We hope to receive 100% of the surveys back. Take a role in influencing the direction that our organization will take as we approach the 21st century! Take this opportunity to share your opinions, concerns and ideas for making MATSOL a better organization.

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### Action Alert: Protect Affirmative Action In Higher Education

Information on the forthcoming Riggs Amendment concerning Affirmative Action in Higher Education, and other legislative information, is available from the Sociopolitical Representative Janet R. Hose, (617) 244-6566, or e-mail [HYPERLINKmailto:jrhose1@ix.netcom.com](mailto:HYPERLINKmailto:jrhose1@ix.netcom.com) [jrhose1@ix.netcom.com](mailto:jrhose1@ix.netcom.com)

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### Series of Workshops to Replace Fall Conference

The newly-elected MATSOL Executive Board continues the spirit initiated at the 1998 Spring Conference, Remembering the Past and Anticipating the Future, with some exciting new plans. Sharing TESOL's theme for their 1999 conference in NYC, we plan to journey down a new avenue in the fall. Instead of holding our traditional Fall Conference, we will be offering a series of professional development opportunities, seminars, workshops and networking events. The MATSOL Fall Steering Committee will provide members with details soon. Watch your mailboxes for important announcements!



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# Johnny English: Diary of an ESL Teacher

*John McCarthy*

## **Tuesday**

8:45 AM: After a godforsaken subway ride, arrived at the college to teach my 9:00 reading class. Needed to xerox handouts, but was blocked by idiot teachers who had waited till the last minute to make their copies.

8:50 AM: Ran to the business school. Frantically made copies before being chased out by the dean, who had spotted the Sierra Club newsletter sticking out of my bag.

9:00 AM: On time for class, but was experiencing slight cardiac arrhythmia. Room was empty.

9:05 AM: My pulse started returning to normal. Room was still empty. Latin American students are fun, but no concept of time.

9:10 AM: Suddenly realized it was Tuesday. Supposed to be teaching conversation at the Vietnamese Cultural Center.

9:30 AM: Arrived wild eyed and sweating profusely. Students still sitting at their desks, discussing the day's topic, Ways I Relax.

10:30 AM: Had a long discussion with Chi about her upcoming oral presentation. Suggested she pick a topic other than Wheat Gluten: It's Meatlike.

## **Wednesday**

9:00 AM: This time I was prepared. Gave students the reading packets xeroxed yesterday, plus a writing exercise recycled from my files. Good planning makes life so much easier.

1:00 PM: Looked over the writing exercise. Not too good. (Note: In the future, must remember to edit out all references to President Carter and Dorothy Hamill.)

## **Thursday**

10:30 AM: Hong asked me to read her application essay for a summer ESL program. The title, Plagiarism: A Longitudinal Study of its Prevalence and Implications, seemed a little suspect.

5:00 PM: Taped Ricki Lake for conversation class. (Note: Must research meanings of phat, jiggy, and Why you buggin'?.)

## **Friday**

9:00 AM: Students complained that the reading packets were too difficult. I sternly lectured them about their responsibilities. No pain, no gain.

12:00 PM: Realized I had given the students copies of MATSOL's bylaws instead of the correct readings.

2:00 PM: Learned that the media lab is being completely modernized. Finally, those manual typewriters will be replaced with electric ones.

4:00 PM: Interviewed to record dialogues for high school students overseas. Failed the interview when asked to define phat, jiggy and Why you buggin'?.

## **Saturday**

1:00 PM: Went out for lunch with some of the Vietnamese students. Chi eloquently defended the case for wheat gluten. Unfortunately, now everyone wants to do that topic.

## **Sunday**

10:00 AM: Listening to Spanish tape when upstairs neighbor, Mrs. Krampwatter, called. Apparently, the sound of Spanish was confusing the ghost of Ponce de Leon, whom she must consult before purchasing a condo in Florida.

10:01 AM: Lowered the volume and continued listening to the tape.

10:05 AM: Phone rang again. Practiced my Spanish by cursing all the caller's relatives, living and dead. It was Maria inviting me to church with her parents, visiting from Mexico.

## **Monday**

6:59 AM: Finally got a full-time job teaching ESL at a nearby college. For once, I'll have health insurance.

7:00 AM: Woke up.

1:00 PM: Called in to the director's office because half my students complained about the bylaws assignment. On the brighter side, the other half joined MATSOL.

*John McCarthy, who finally achieved the elusive status of full-time employment, teaches ESL and Computer Skills at Showa Boston. His e-mail address is HYPERLINK mailto:johnm@showaboston.org johnm@showaboston.org.*

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## The Importance of Memory Continued from page 1

ments I had never before seen. I lived all this, yet it was a difficult time for me. Although I could express myself fairly well, I found I didn't understand much of what people said to me. I felt left out and insecure. I worried if letters from friends and family would reach me; I felt cut off and not always safe. What I experienced was culture shock. When I left that beautiful country after one semester we students all agreed that Tunisia was a beautiful, backward, irritating country.

**M**y memories, I thought, were collected, and preserved for the future, in photos, and in the long long letters I wrote to my family and friends. But in the years to follow those memories changed. Imagine my shock when I met my fellow students the next summer (as they returned from their two semesters abroad) and they expressed their love for this country and talked about missing friends and "family" there. I couldn't understand what had happened to them. They said they "got used to it," I thought they were crazy. The next year I took a class on Arabic culture, a surprisingly painful experience. Suddenly things I had not understood in the language made sense. And things that I had done, in asserting my American right of women's freedom, looked shocking and embarrassing from the Arabic point of view. In other words, I started to see my own mind and actions from a foreign point of view, to see myself as a foreigner might see me. I remembered things that had happened to me that were not part of my "memories." I learned, I remembered, things I had never photographed or written about in letters.

You too are full of experiences which you don't now know about. They are hidden but very present in your mind and body. In the years to come some small thing will happen and suddenly something very insignificant right now will take on a new and important meaning and form, become a new part of your memory. One of my students heard a guest speaker tell about being called *gaijin* in Japan, and she remembered herself calling *gaijin* in a new way. It's as if all your experiences, conscious and unconscious, are stored in you, the way trees store their sap though the winter, and then unexpectedly they are called into remembrance, changed from sap into leaves, making new meanings.

Ten years ago, I was living in Japan (for the second time) and something new happened. From a distance of 5,000 miles, I saw American culture as strange and foreign for the first time, and saw Japanese culture as comfortable and right. I returned to Boston excited by a new sense of neighborhood that I had learned through seeing the same women daily at the local grocery store, learning to enjoy garbage cleanup day, gathering with the neighborhood children for 6 a.m. *radjio taiso* (group exercise), dancing at the local *Obon* festival. Back in Brookline, I couldn't find anyone at home in the daytime, the lines at Star Market were too long to stand in

every evening. But I did find new community groups in my neighborhood. Many of you have also enjoyed some new experience while in America. You will find that some new learnings will take root in your heart and change the ways you live as a student, volunteer, daughter, wife, career woman. Others will clash with the Japanese way of doing things, and you will reaffirm your Japanese culture in a new way, with new appreciation.

For me, returning to America was not as easy as I had thought it would be. A lot of things had happened that everyone else knew about but me. Many people looked at my photos, and listened to stories of mountain temples, the speed of the bullet train, or people actually waiting for the walk sign. No one wanted to know my new wonderful insights on improving American life, how buses could come on time, how elementary schools could teach through play, how smaller deeper bathtubs could improve family and societal relationships. My friends wanted me back with them, and they didn't expect me to be different. But I was, and am now, different. I looked for new things to do, and ended up here today talking to you, working at Showa because what you teach me about Japan, the way you provoke me to learn from my memories, is so exciting. As you return it is a little like those time travel stories, where suddenly things are not exactly as you expect them. You are returning from a far distance, from a parallel universe. Expect surprises; and enjoy them. And pay attention: your return has great potential to teach.

**A** final point—what I learned from my experiences abroad did not depend on whether the experience was good or bad. So many of my "good" experiences in Tunisia, became embarrassing when I learned more. So many of my "bad" experiences in Japan gave me much more "food for thought," so much life-giving sap, that I can't regret them. Even those things which I didn't do, from shyness or hesitation, have taught me about myself and how I react to various situations. I think the same is true for you. All your happy, exciting, sad, and embarrassing, moments here in Boston will combine to teach you. What you have done or not done here has made you more aware of yourself. When do you need a friend? When do you have courage? When do you hang back? All of this is you. Each of you has a unique and special taste that you bring to flavor any group that you are part of. It is this that will make you important to others. It is in this way that your American experience will make you a light to others, a bridge between cultures.

So this experience that you have had here in Boston is both ending and beginning. Be faithful in remembering, in sharing, in keeping in mind, and in bringing back to mind. I wish you happy *kinembi* next year and every year.

*Originally from California, Susan Butler lived twice in Japan and has taught at Showa Boston since 1991.*

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## *Educators or Linguists: Can We Be Both?* Continued from page 1

I was making a difference. Then, I did the unconscionable. I did something about my lack of job security, my lack of a proper title, my lack of health insurance. I got a Ph.D.

**I**n May of 1997, I put on my regalia and was crowned with my terminal degree in Applied Linguistics from BU. I had made the decision because I had a reserve of stamina, and a healthy sense of the absurd, both of which would come in handy. I was intrigued with the process of language acquisition and linguistics and knew that in order to attempt to understand what might be going on inside the heads of my students, there were questions that I had to answer. I also had motivational secondary incentives of wanting a job with enough security to know that I wouldn't have to scan the Help Wanted section every Sunday and subscribe to every Job Bank from Boston to Nova Scotia. Nor was I opposed to the peace of mind that comes with knowing that if I ingested e-coli from a bad burger, not only would my hospital stay be paid for, but my job would still be there upon my recovery. Travel money and paid vacations sounded pretty nifty, too. The risks seemed worth it.

So, I spend four years in pursuit of my trophy and, as good fortune would have it, I got a job as an assistant professor at a state college along the way. I had done it. I am now on a "tenure track" which means that, instead of looking for new work every semester, I am choosing a retirement plan. My colleagues preface comments with phrases like, "When you get tenure . . ." or "After you've been here for 20 years . . ." In other words, I've gotten what I asked for. I've done dissertation research in second-language acquisition, I've answered a lot of questions that I had about linguistics and am able to now ask many, many more. I teach ESL writing course for which students are actually awarded academic credit. I teach graduate students. My name is engraved in a plastic plaque which has been placed on the door of a permanent office. I have the real job that I used to dream about when I was on the T from one ESL gig to the next for all of those years. My problem came in not knowing what I was anymore.

The question all started when I was sitting at dinner with a group of prestigious linguists, an audience granted because I was a student organizer of the BU Conference on Language Development. The question came from one of the elders in the field. Professor of Linguistics at Chomsky's alma mater. Respected pioneer of critical age research. Prestigious author and researcher of child language acquisition. She heard me talking about teaching ESL and she turned to me with an air of academic authority and interest and asked, point blank, "Well, what are you? A linguist or an educator?"

The question stymied me. I had never thought about it. I no longer knew. Having studied linguistics for four years and having taken discourse analysis, I knew everything there was to know about intonation. In the split second before I answered, I knew by her prosodic cues that being an educator was somehow less than being a linguist in her eyes. But, what

the right answer was, I no longer knew. And, being the surefooted Libra that I am, and not having enough time to weigh all of the implications of my response, I hedged.

"I guess I'm both," I offered meekly, at which point the most famous linguist that I had ever had the pleasure of accompanying to dinner turned away and struck up another conversation with someone else. What had happened? Had not being a 100% certified linguist branded me as an outcast? Was my whole academic career a farce? What on earth was I? Would I ever be sure again?

The simple question, "Are you a linguist or an educator?" began to haunt me. Yes, of course I was a linguist. According to David Crystal in *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Language*, a linguist is a student or practitioner of the subject of linguistics. That was me. I was studying linguistics. But, what did that really mean? Did it mean that I was a card-carrying member of some esoteric academic club that made jokes about syntactic trees? Was I losing touch with what drew me to ESL in the first place? I had a momentary sense of fright about turning into a stereotype, when, fortunately, my strong sense of reason and purpose found its way home. I didn't have to choose.

**I** teach language. I am, therefore, an educator. Linguistics is the study of language. I study language. I am, therefore, a linguist. I am both and I am proud to be both. It began to make sense to me. I had always been both. Everyone who ever teaches any one student any one thing about language is both. We all study language by listening and responding to our students' use and misuse of English. We analyze and interpret our students' speaking and writing and we provide them with insights and lead them toward improvement. We develop ways to help them listen, speak, write, read, sing, joke, laugh. We teach them things about the many mysterious aspects of language. Some days, our activities work just right and our classes are like a dream. On other days, the students just don't seem to be appreciating the frustrations of trying to communicate in a second or third language.

So, we revise and we rethink what we have done. We think of ways to impart our knowledge and inspire our students to move forward. We are doing research about ways to teach and best allow our students to approximate the knowledge that we possess about our language. That makes us all researchers of language. That makes us all experts of the study of language. That makes us all linguists. That makes us all educators.

Now, when anyone asks me what I do, I say that I teach at Salem State College. But, secretly, I laugh because not all of the pretense in the world can make me believe again that I actually have to choose. I am a linguist. I am an educator.

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## Using and Misusing Data to Draw Conclusions about Teaching

### The Efficacy of Error Correction for Improving the Accuracy of L2 Student Writing

Jean Chandler

**A**lthough response to student writing is certainly a central element in teaching ESL, there seems to be little agreement in the research on how a teacher should approach it. There is widespread agreement among teachers and researchers that practice in writing helps student writers even without any response from teachers. However, there is also widespread agreement among students that they want teachers to respond. There is also agreement among all three groups—teachers, researchers, and students—that content-related feedback can improve the content of student writing. There is much less agreement, however, about whether or how teachers should respond to grammatical and lexical errors in student writing.

In a review article in the June 1996 issue of *Language Learning*, John Truscott argued that grammar correction in L2 writing classes is not only ineffective but harmful and should be abandoned. He cited many studies, but unfortunately, misrepresented some of their findings or drew unsupported conclusions from them. Moreover, he ignored or all too quickly dismissed limitations of the research and discounted other factors which could have affected the results.

There are some studies which seem to show error correction not to be effective for improving accuracy in L2 student writing (e.g., Kepner, 1991; Semke, 1984). Let's look at them more carefully. Kepner (1991) found that American college students in intermediate Spanish classes who received surface-level error correction did not make significantly fewer errors in their journals than those who received message-related comments. But in Kepner's study, students were apparently not required to do anything with the corrections. Semke (1984) found that first-year German students who were required to correct their own errors or who received error corrections by the teacher over 10 weeks did not display greater accuracy by the end of the semester than did those who received content-focused comments on their journals. However, this may not have been due entirely to the different treatment methods but also to the differences in the quantity of writing practice by the groups. To receive grades of A, the group receiving content-focused comments.

On the other hand, there are other studies (e.g., Fathman and Whalley, 1990; Robb *et al.*, 1986) whose findings do not fit Truscott's sweeping argument and which were reported by him in a misleading way. Fathman and Whalley (1990) randomly assigned 72 intermediate ESL students in college composition classes to one of four teacher response groups: One got no feedback on their in-class narrative, one got all their grammar errors underlined, one got general comments

about content and suggestions for improvement, and the fourth got both the grammar and the content feedback. Both student rewrites and original compositions were rated for content, and grammar errors were counted. Results showed

#### Students receiving *only* feedback on content were the only group which actually made more grammatical errors on their rewrites.

that students improved in content and grammatical accuracy in their rewrites even when they got no feedback, but the greatest improvement in each area came when they got feedback on that area, and the greatest improvement in both areas taken together (content and grammatical accuracy) came when they got both kinds of feedback at the same time. Students receiving *only* feedback on content were the only group which actually made more grammatical errors on their rewrites. Truscott was right to point out that this study dealt only with rewrites and that it remains an open question whether the students will be better writers in the future because of this help. But he jumped to the unsupported conclusion (p. 339) that "Nothing in this study suggests a positive answer."

**I**n 1986 Robb *et al.* studied the effect of four different types of feedback (explicit correction, a code showing type and location of errors, location alone, and indication of number of errors) on the writing of Japanese EFL students. They found gradual increases in the accuracy, syntactic complexity, and fluency of the writing of all four groups over the year. Because there were no statistically significant differences *between* the groups, Truscott concludes (p. 331), "Grammar correction's futility... showed..." On the contrary, even though Robb *et al.*'s study did not contain a control group receiving no feedback, the data show student writing improving after all four types of attention to form.

I did a study very similar to Robb *et al.*'s 1986 study and found essentially the same thing with college ESL students: The writing of students in all correction groups improved significantly from the beginning to the end of the semester in both accuracy and fluency. All students were required to rewrite after feedback, and when they received explicit corrections from the teacher, they reduced their error rate on rewrites from 10 to 1 per hundred words. More importantly,

*Continued on page 13*

## Teacher Research *Continued from page 12*

on a new assignment of the same type (autobiographical writing), students in my study reduced their error rate from 10 to 8 errors per hundred words over 10 weeks; that is not a very long time period in which to measure change in language use so the fact that the difference was statistically significant was encouraging. It represented an average reduction of 50 errors on a 2500 word essay from the first to the fifth assignment.

How do students feel about error correction? Before my study, 89% of incoming international students at my university (n=116) had said that they wanted the teacher to either mark or correct every error they made in writing. Truscott admitted that study after study (e.g., Chenoweth *et al.*, 1983; Gaies, 1983; Leki, 1991) has showed that L2 students want error correction and believe it is helpful, but he calls this the "most disturbing" (p. 359) argument for continuing the practice.

Like Robb *et al.*'s, my study did not have a control group which received no correction because I could not justify it to myself or my students. But after reading Truscott's review, I was stimulated to analyze data I collected from two other classes of advanced ESL students. One of them wrote summaries of chapters of a difficult book, got corrective feedback from the teacher on both form and content, and revised them accordingly. The other class took essay tests on the same content after having had the opportunity to ask questions. The essay tests were not marked for grammatical accuracy but only for content. Both classes wrote summaries of the first and penultimate chapters of the book. Comparing the rough drafts of the first and final summaries of the students in the class which received grammar correction all semester, I found that the average number of such errors on the first summary was

**Before my study, 89% of incoming international students at my university (n=116) had said that they wanted the teacher to either mark or correct every error they made in writing.**

40 and the average number on the final summary was 23, a 44% reduction. When the rough drafts of the first and final summaries of the students who received no error correction were compared, however, the average number of surface errors on the first summary was 23, and the average number on the final summary was 27, a 15% increase. Regression toward the mean may explain some of this difference. However, I conclude from my research that students not only want error correction but benefit from it.

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*(Ed. note – In last issue's Teacher Research column, the following italicized sentences were left out of a concluding paragraph. We regret the error)*

Truscott, in the June 1996 issue of *Language Learning*, published a review article on this topic which, in my opinion, seriously misrepresented the findings of some previous research. However, unlike most other journals, *Language Learning* does not publish responses to its articles. The editor rejected the study I submitted which showed contrary results, even before sending it to reviewers. He did so reportedly because of 1) lack of information about the comparability of the writing tasks and conditions for writing, 2) lack of a reasoned basis for sequencing assignments, and 3) lack of information to confirm that the characteristics of the groups were equivalent. Since I had clearly stated in the article that the writing tasks had all been identical and written under identical circumstances, the first two criticisms didn't make any sense to me; the third too could probably be dealt with easily if he had explained why the groups might not be seen as equivalent. (The reaction of my Harvard mentor, herself a journal editor, was that the editor of *Language Learning* had misread my article, but there seemed to be no recourse to his decision.)

To learn more about the Online Action Research project, contact Ingrid Greenberg or Linda Taylor at 1-800-255-1036

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# Is the Web Ready for TESL (and Vice Versa)?

John de Szendeffy

**N**o matter what you think of the World Wide Web<sup>1</sup> as a teaching resource, it *will* play a grand role in the education of your students. While most college courses find a need for the Web in research or production—some perhaps having students publishing “soft papers” to the class site instead of handing hard copies in — the question remains: Is the Web an effective tool for ESL teachers, or is it merely pedagogically hip, or used simply because it’s there?

As the Web struggles through its awkward adolescence, users become more savvy, and content gravitates toward substance and ease-of-use. Techno-skeptics (at their worst masking techno-phobia behind a pretense of sagacity) have derided the Web as the purview of those who, without a connection, would be playing Pong or Doom. Not only do they no longer have a case, but I don’t need to elaborate on that fact here. The Web *is* relevant and central to learning today and will be more so tomorrow.

Web use creates an environment for engaging, relevant, and collaborative work *in*—and not merely *about*—English. Specifically, it

- provides language practice
- sets up genuine, not contrived, verbal interaction
- teaches computer and Internet skills and promotes keyboard skills
- teaches critical thinking skills
- teaches research skills
- provides access to a vast amount and variety of English material
- introduces students to pedantic resources (TOEFL, references, etc.)
- introduces students to resources for practical purposes (tourism, news, product and company information, colleges, etc.)
- provides for a class Web site to post syllabi, schedules, assignments, and other messages
- provides a means of presentation and publishing (for advanced users)

How state-of-the-art does your computer lab (or cluster of computers in the corner) need to be to get all this from the Web? Not very. In fact, the hardware is the least of your worries. Any computer will do as long as it has a color

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1. “Internet” and “Web” are often used synonymously. Technically, the Web refers only to the network of graphical documents coded in HTML (or other markup language) and accessed with a browser, such as Netscape Navigator. Non-Web (i.e., text-based) Internet resources for TESL include the Nexis database and on-line library catalogs.

monitor, a 28.8Kbs modem (minimum), and the ability to run either the Navigator 2.0 or later browser (3.0 preferred) or Internet Explorer 3.0 or later. (Lynx or other text or limited-graphics browsers will prevent you from seeing Web pages as they were designed to be seen, or at all.) To hear sound and view video, you’ll also need a sound card (built into Macs), a bit more RAM, and some free browser plug-ins (proprietary helper applications launched from the browser, particularly QuickTime, RealPlayer, and ShockWave).

Integrating the Web into a curriculum takes more than getting on-line. The requirements fall into four categories:

### Access

- reliable Internet access via modem or a campus backbone (LAN)
- sufficient access to computers (two students at a machine even works)

### Teacher training

- skills and experience with the Internet, a browser, and advanced searching techniques

### Student orientation

- written orientation, training, and quizzing materials for Web browser, plug-ins, etc.
- demonstration of browser and logical searching techniques
- instruction on Web epistemology

### Materials/projects

- guided, hands-on Web searching activities (e.g., scavenger hunts)
- research-based projects (papers or presentations)
- production-oriented projects (Web authoring for advanced users)

The most critical of these are often the ones overlooked at first.

### Teacher training

Why is it acceptable for teachers to “teach” with the Web with little understanding of it, and unacceptable for someone to teach, say, pronunciation, with similarly limited knowledge in that area? Perhaps because most ESL teachers today completed their TESOL studies before the Web boom or before schools of education *could* offer Internet training (which doesn’t explain why many of those programs still don’t offer it). Or perhaps the Web still lacks the respect it deserves as a rich and complex resource requiring a fundamental understanding of its workings and an awareness of its developments. Nonetheless, a teacher cannot expect to teach

*Continued on page 15*



## **Is the Web Ready for TESL** *Continued from page 14*

others to use a tool that he or she has not yet mastered, be that a language, a library, or the Internet. The Internet was made for teachers. It's only fitting that they should be its biggest fans and gurus.

### **Student orientation**

The intuitive nature of browsing the Web works against acquiring a formal understanding of it. Though practically anyone can browse and find a few things, with good training a great deal more content could be found efficiently. Students need teacher-developed primers explaining functions and features of software they wouldn't be likely to figure out on their own. Demonstrating the features of a Web browser on screen — understanding the Go menu, the Stop and Reload buttons, the status line, or the difference between using the Open location button and a search string in a search engine (Yahoo, etc.) — will get students into contact with the desired content sooner.

The Web isn't always helpful in providing reliable information effectively when a likely source isn't known to begin with. Web searches need to be preceded by planning and not merely launched into by typing. Consider first *where* the information would be found *without* a computer. The birthplace of Ernest Hemingway, for example. Since this is a static fact, we could go to an encyclopedia and feel confident in the accuracy of the information. Using the Web, then, we should seek an on-line encyclopedia, such as Encyclopedia Britannica. Doing a search in Yahoo for Papa's birthplace, on the other hand, would yield tens of thousands of Hemingway links, mostly fan pages — the reliability of which students often cannot assess. Following these links may be time consuming and fruitless. How about the price of gold? What source might

**No matter what you think of the World Wide Web as a teaching resource, it will play a grand role in the education of your students.**

we look to for that? The business section of a newspaper. So, using the Web, we could go directly to the local (major) on-line newspaper.

A search engine often throws its net too wide in a general Web-wide search to be useful for ESL students. Though students appear to take easily to Web use, they don't understand where to look for something or how to access what they find without structured searching activities where their techniques can be refined by class discussion.

Having extolled its virtues, I should emphasize that the Web only *complements* — at best — other language resources and activities; it does not replace them. Those leading the charge into using the Web in class may be taken to hyping the extent of its usefulness for the specific objective of language learning. These evangelists are as dangerous as the dabblers,

the curious but rank amateurs (see "Teacher training" above). I do believe that the Web, as a conduit for a rush of authentic English content, demonstrates one of the few, but important, instances in which computers provide a better language environment than traditional means.

**The Internet was made for teachers. It's only fitting that they should be its biggest fans and gurus.**

Many of the orientation materials discussed above are available on the MLL Web site. Click on "Student Resources" and look under my mug shot for "Effective Web Searching." Be sure to take the Quiz and review the Answers.

### **Resources**

Boswood, T. (Ed.). (1997) *New ways of using computers in language teaching*. Alexandria, VA: TESOL.

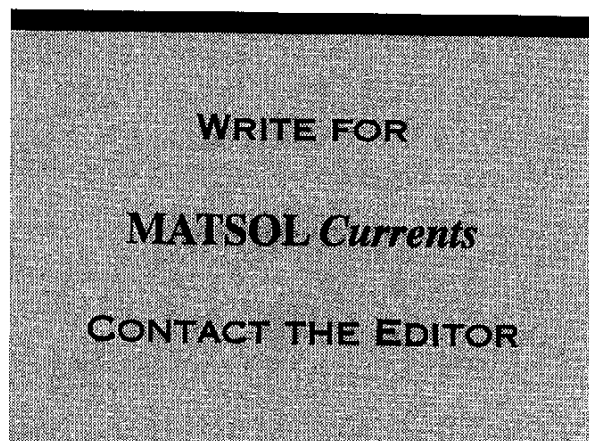
*The Netscape Navigator on-line handbook*  
<http://home.netscape.com/eng/mozilla/3.0/handbook/docs/before.html#C0>

*The World Wide Web Consortium: About the WWW*  
<http://www.w3.org/WWW/>

*The Multimedia Language Lab at CELOP*  
<http://www.bu.edu/CELOP/MLL/>

*A Web Projects Course* (conference presentation)  
<http://www.bu.edu/CELOP/MLL/NEALL98/>

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*Web: [www.bu.edu/CELOP/MLL](http://www.bu.edu/CELOP/MLL)*



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# A Report on ETS Information Sessions at BU

Carol Allen

**O**n Friday March 6, 1998, ESL teachers and program directors, international admissions personnel, and university administrators all converged on Boston University to learn about the imminent change of the pencil-and-paper TOEFL test to a new and improved computer-based version. Starting in July 1998, all students in the US and many students around the world will have to take their all-important TOEFL exam by computer at designated test centers. Once the computer-based test (CBT) becomes operational in a region, the paper-based test is no longer available. International educators need to know what changes are being made in the exam itself and how these changes will affect student enrollment, test score interpretation, TOEFL preparation classes, and ESL instruction in general.

The mini-conference was sponsored in part by a MATSOL Professional Development Opportunity Grant which encourages MATSOL members to offer informational workshops and other professional development opportunities to ESL faculty and administrators. Melinda Lee, Academic Advisor at CELOP, and I organized the event which drew 170 people to three separate informational workshops presented by ETS staff. Two ETS professionals, Phil Everson from the office of Test Development and Rodney Ballard, Associate Program Director, talked about changes in the test content and administration as well as the short and long-term plans that ETS has for the exam.

The main difference in the new TOEFL is the use of computers and the addition of a writing section to the existing three sections of Listening Comprehension, Structure and Reading. Test takers will be able to take the new exam seated at computers with individual headphones to assure good sound quality and volume. Although the Reading Section will be virtually unchanged and will continue to be written and scored as it is on the current TOEFL, the Listening and Structure Sections will be computer adaptive. Computer adaptive means that the computer determines the general level of the test taker and then selects the range of questions that is appropriate for his or her ability. Students won't waste time on questions that are too easy, but on the other hand, they are not penalized for not answering questions that are too difficult. More points are given for correctly answering the more difficult questions than for correctly answering an easy question. For this reason, computer adaptive tests (CATs) are usually shorter in length than full-length paper tests, although ETS insists on the fairness of the new system because all test takers have the same content, question types and amount of time (if they need it).

Scoring presents some challenges, one of which is that the new range of scores will be 0 to 300, as opposed to the current range of 200 to 677. A concordance study is being

done now, and the results are promised shortly. During the transition period, admissions officers may need to deal with a range of acceptable scores instead of the exact cutoff points of 550 or 600 that they are used to.

The required essay will be evaluated by trained readers and scored on a range of 0 to 6, just as the Test of Written English (TWE) is now. The second section, currently called Structure and Written Expression, will now in fact have about one half of the score derived from the 1 to 6 score that the essay will receive. The other half of the score, of course, will be the actual grammar score as it is calculated by the computer. Obviously, all students will have to write the essay; otherwise, their structure grade will suffer considerably. Schools and colleges will have to decide how much weight to put on the writing score and also whether to change the cutoff points since the new TOEFL will now incorporate a writing component within the structure score.

**Starting in July 1998, all students in the US and many students around the world will have to take their all-important TOEFL exam by computer.**

The participants at the workshop brought up several concerns in addition to the difficulties of adapting to the new scoring. Educators are worried about the increase in cost of taking the International TOEFL in the US from \$55 to \$100, and overseas from \$75 to \$125. Another concern is that the need to use modern technology that may not be available everywhere (along with the added cost) may prohibit certain students from trying to take the test and/or from studying abroad. Lack of familiarity with computers and with the new test may present problems both for students and for teachers teaching TOEFL prep classes.

Each participant at the workshop received a free copy of the TOEFL Sampler, a disk that introduces the user both to the computer and to the new TOEFL questions. The thoroughness of the computer tutorial should reassure people who are concerned about the actual computer skills. The sampler teaches how to use a mouse, how to scroll and how to click. One doesn't have to know how to go back to a previous question because that is not allowed. The sample questions, for example in the Listening Section, show some interesting new changes. Pictures show the context, giving a more natural learning situation. The questions are written out, eliminating a potential source of error for the student. Colors and fonts are not offensive or distracting.

*Continued on page 17*

## ETS Information Sessions at BU *Continued from page 16*

However, this sampler is available only for PC computers, a fact which points to another source of worry, the lack of preparation materials. Teachers who have to teach test preparation classes this spring or this summer will be on their own for a while. On the other hand, preparing for the paper-and-pencil Institutional TOEFL given by many IEPs will be less troublesome since this form of the TOEFL is not expected to change for some years.

On the positive side, students will be able to take the test year round at their convenience, although they cannot take it more than once a month. It is reported that the Massachusetts test sites will be in Boston (near South Station), Waltham, Worcester and East Longmeadow. The test will be more performance-based and will focus on the academic content, question types and activities that ESL teachers regularly use with their students. Teachers should also benefit from the added emphasis on writing because students might now more clearly see the connection between ESL classroom instruction and requirements of the test.

Participants at the MATSOL workshop were able to receive Professional Development Points, thanks to the advance planning of Carol Pineiro and Paula Merchant. Al-

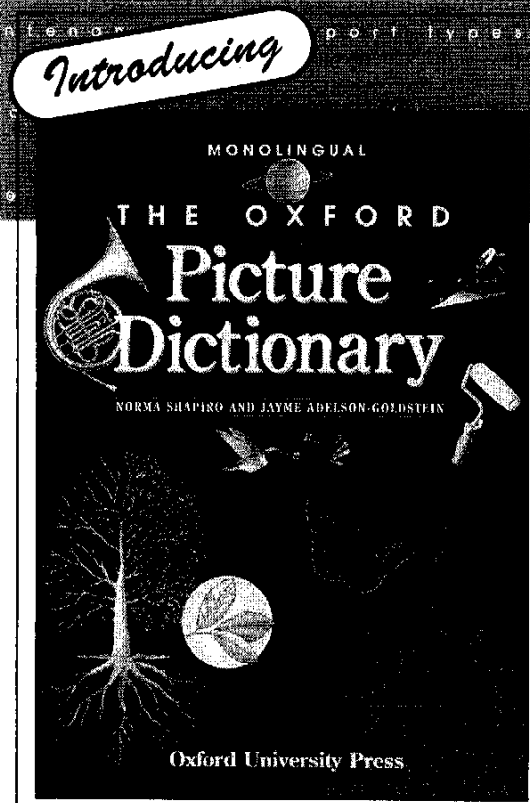
though all who attended received a lot of information as well as detailed, courteous answers to the various questions raised, there will be many more questions as we enter the transitional implementation period this summer. National

**On the positive side, students will be able to take the test year round at their convenience, although they cannot take it more than once a month.**

and regional meetings of NAFSA will be dealing with this subject in May and November. MATSOL members will also want to keep abreast of this positive, but potentially rocky situation.

For more information on the new computer-based TOEFL, check out the TOEFL web site at HYPERLINK <http://www.toefl.org>.

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## I'll Have Two . . .

Robert Saitz



**W**e're all familiar with newcomer difficulties in restaurant and market food ordering. Confronted by rococo menus, intimidating servers, and endlessly-aisled food warehouses, new arrivals have been known to have lived on a diet of hamburgers for periods as long as six months. But even for long-time residents and native speakers of English, the ordering and purchasing of food is not always an easy affair. This challenge of everyday life came once more to my attention during a recent TESOL conference where the presenter gave us a sample reading passage having to do with krill, a crustacean delicacy for some species of whales.

The next session was a plenary and as my mind and imagination turned inward, two contentious young whales materialized. One was saying, It's all right that you gave me one krill. But I wanted two . . . The last word was muffled (the passage through water didn't help the acoustics) and the images disappeared. But was the whale going to say two krill or two krills? Is krill a mass noun or a count noun or a O plural noun? The American Heritage Dictionary (AHD) says the noun plural of krill is krill. That means, at least, that the plural is not krills. But since the dictionary doesn't label beyond singular and plural forms, we are not that sure whether we are dealing with a O, as with fish, or a mass noun.

My concern with krill however, which is not in the diet of most humans, led to thoughts of other creatures of the sea, especially those found in restaurants and fish markets. If I order an entrée of shrimp and the waitperson brings a dish with a meager portion thereupon, do I ask for two or three more shrimp or shrimps? If I am in the fish market, shopping for a fisherman's feast, and I observe the fish lineup in the case, the clerk may ask, What would you like? Do I point and ask for those two haddock in front or those two haddocks in front? Back to the AHD. For some ichthyoids, the AHD gives a single noun form, which means that the noun forms a regular plural (-s as in sardines). For others, it provides the same form for the singular and the plural (as in krill) and for yet others it provides two plural forms (a singular and an s as in salmon, salmons). The dictionary records forms but information on use is lacking; we can't predict what kind of a plural we might use for different types of fish nor as noted above can we tell whether a mass noun form is available.

Although the AHD does not categorize types, by looking at individual entries we may surmise that we have: regular count nouns, with their regular s plural, for a little fishes-anchovies, sardines, minnows, etc. b) crawlies lobsters, crabs, snails . . . c) shellfish—clams, mussels, scallops,

conchs/conches d) larger fish not often used for food in English speaking societies—dolphins, sharks, whales . . . the majority of familiar members of the fish class that are listed with both an s and a O plural in the AHD. These include snapper, grouper, cod, herring, salmon, bluefish (though it's two blues for the nickname), eel and shrimp, etc. Finding shrimp in class 2 is a bit unsettling as it seems more like a crawly or shellfish, but maybe the difficulty of deciding what it is is solved by assigning it to the large class.

But since the dictionary records only forms, I am not sure what it is telling me. Do those items in class 2 really have two possible plurals (There are two haddock/haddocks in my living room ), one a regular plural and the other a O plural

**If I order an entrée of shrimp and the waitperson brings a dish with a meager portion thereupon, do I ask for two or three more shrimp or shrimps?**

(common since Old English times in words like deer)? That would mean that since the Old English period all those fish moved into the deer class (we know that the word fish so moved; in Old English it had a regular count plural ending as). Or maybe the O dictionary marking refers to a mass noun possibility (I like haddock) which we use when referring to the fish as food rather than as animal. Yet if that were the case, the crawlies and the larger fish but not the little fishes and the shellfish would have a O form too since we can say I like lobster and tuna but not I like sardine and scallop.

How about ESL dictionaries? At least they'll provide count/mass noun information. They do. But their information differs not only from the AHD but among themselves. Thus in the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (and here British usage may be involved, cod, salmon, mackerel, etc. are given as count nouns and the plural form unchanged (O) but shrimp is given only as a count noun, meaning the plural can be shrimps but not shrimp. In the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, which makes the fullest labeling attempt, salmon, cod, mackerel, etc. are labeled as usually O plural items and with a mass noun possibility; however, shrimp and tuna are labeled similarly but without the mass noun possibility. I then innocently decided to do a rapid survey of native speakers (the first seven people I met). The typical response was a puzzled face and indication of avoid-

*Continued on page 19*

## *I'll Have Two . . . Continued from page 18*

ance behavior (When I want fish, I point.) A logical resolution for speakers of a language with too many fish forms.

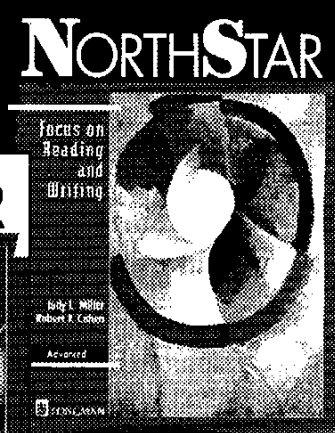
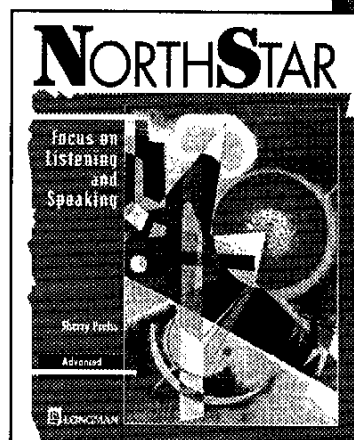
Yet this problem may never occur for you (e.g. you hate fish or you're a vegetarian.) Wait. Do you like pasta? Say you're with a sloppy friend in a spaghetti restaurant and one long, thin, white representative of the spaghetti class — watchers of the old Saturday Night Live are advised to recall Rosannadana — gets caught in his beard. Do you say, You have a spaghetti in your beard? How do we refer to just one of the things (a strand of spaghetti elevates the level of discourse beyond the setting)? On the other hand, you might order ravioli and be pleasantly surprised at their size. You call home to report on your luck. The ravioli were/was delicious and each ravioli was huge. So ravioli can be a mass noun (The ravioli was . . .) or a count plural (The ravioli were . . .) or a count singular (Each ravioli was . . .). All is well, unless you read a report of a Boston Globe food critic

describing lobster ravioli at an Italian restaurant: ". . . there was no skimping on the lobster as each raviola was chock full of the delicacy." Did he reach back for an Italian form? Not likely, as the original Italian singular was raviolo (hence the plural). Back to the English speakers. A little uncomfortable with ravioli as a plural count noun, they create raviolis, with a standard s plural, and use it enough for its attestation in the AHD. But the other I plurals (spaghetthis, tortellinis, zitis, etc.), which are probably being used as well, have not made it into the AHD. Fortunately, lasagna is such a mass, it's unlikely to need frequent countability (For a big party though, you might need two or three; would it be lasagna, lasagnas, or as the AHD throws in, lasagne!?) But that's another declension.

*Robert Saitz teaches English at Boston University.*

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## A Message from the President of SAUA/SATE

(Ed. note These remarks refer to the spring conference but were received too late for publication in the last MATSOL Currents)

**T**his time it is not possible to send somebody to your conference because it would be too difficult to attend twice in a year. But 27-28 February we will be with you in our minds. I'm sending you a letter to greet all the participants and also to invite them to our conference.

I'm still thinking of my fantastic stay with you all. Now only my pictures are my memories. I hope some of my friends from Dedham, Westwood, Boston, and Springfield will plan to come and stay in Slovakia in September and attend our 4th national conference.

**Dear Friends,**

In a few days you will meet at your annual conference. We, members of SAUA/SATE (Slovak Association of Teachers of English), your sibling association, would like to greet all participants of this significant event.

Reading the paper about your Spring Conference which will be your 26th, I have to say we are only at the beginning of building up our association, compared to yours. This, with

many years experience of running MATSOL, is a big advantage for us to have a sibling association which is so far ahead of us with its experience.

The title of your conference "Remembering the Past . . ." gives me a reason to remember our not long lasting partnership. Although it has only been existing for 4 years, I feel responsibility to mention your former president Esther Iwanaga and MATSOL *Currents* editor Ron Clark who agreed and supported our cooperation. In 1996, I was the lucky person to meet your past president Carol Pineiro. We immediately became friends and we promised to extend our friendship among our members. The first official MATSOL representative was Bea Mikulecky who could personally experience the work of the SAUA/SATE board and outline some common projects. At your Fall Conference last year, some of you were given a chance to meet our first representative Jana Pramukova, who tried to promote SAUA/SATE and Slovakia in her presentation.

These were the first contacts between the board members and now we would like to offer other contacts to all of you, members of MATSOL. This year 18-20th September 1998, we will have our 4th national conference, "Teaching to Learn Learning to Teach," and Slovak teachers would like

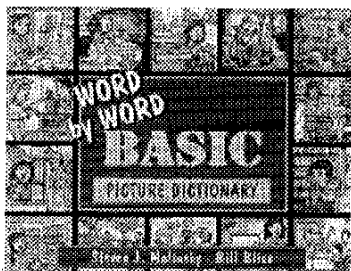
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## Message from SAUA/SATE *Continued from page 20*

to open their homes to welcome teachers from MATSOL at our 4th national conference. We are very proud to say that our plenary speakers and guests will be a present-day TESOL president Mary Ann Christison and Mario Rinvolucri, an English author of many ELT materials.

So if you are able to, please don't hesitate to come. You can participate in our conference and establish relations with Slovak teachers. You are all warmly welcome.

We know how much effort it takes to organize a conference, and therefore we wish yours to be successful and for it to raise a lot of good ideas to be used in your professional work. We would be pleased to hear how the conference goes.

On behalf of members of SAUA/SATE,

Gabriela Domakova, President  
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81107 Bratislava  
Slovak Republic  
Phone: +421 7 397296  
Fax: +421 7 397296  
E-mail: HYPERLINK

mailto:postmast@gvaz.sanet.sk — postmast@gvaz.sanet.sk

### Information Concerning the Reciprocal Visit of Teachers

- Suggested length of stay is one week, 10 days, two weeks
- Travel costs from America to Slovakia will be paid by MATSOL teachers
- The stay in Slovakia will be covered by a Slovak teacher
- Conference fee will be paid by SAUA/SATE
- Aside from the conference in Zilina, the teachers will also visit schools they are interested in
- When the group of MATSOL teachers is fixed, their Slovak partners will prepare a complete program for them
- We would appreciate the MATSOL teachers giving presentations at the conference
- All other details will be set with the chosen group

Slovak teachers would like to open their homes to welcome teachers from MATSOL at our 4th national conference.



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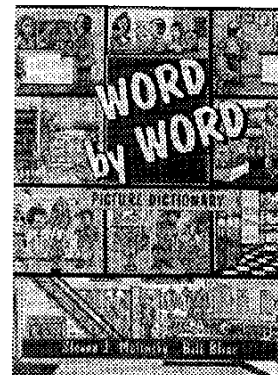
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## REVIEWS



*The Cambridge Encyclopedia of the English Language*. David Crystal. Cambridge University Press, 1995. 489 pages. ISBN 0-521-40179-8

Reviewed by Gregg Singer

What is *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of the English Language*? Its title and scope suggest that it is a reference book, but its copious illustrations and the size of the articles hint that it is meant for browsing. I shall review its suitability for both purposes.

The *Encyclopedia* is a wonderful coffee table book to spend one's hours with. Its twenty-four chapters are grouped in six sections covering history, lexicon, grammar, phonological and graphological systems, sociology, and acquisition. The topically arranged chapters address the full range of

what is known about English. Within each chapter there are facing-page "spreads" on individual topics. Each spread has sidebars, boxes, charts, and illustrations.

For example, the spread on Prescriptive Grammar offers a brief description of prescriptivism followed by three sidebars. The first describes the top ten no-no's of grammar. It also gives some background information about each of the "rules." The next box discusses the general injunction against splitting infinitives and explains its history. The third box contains the views of famous people — Shaw, Fowler, and Jespersen among them — who have opposed the rule against splitting infinitives. The whole spread, like most of the *Encyclopedia*, is informative and highly amusing.

Although each topic is usually given only two pages, some topics are treated more extensively. For example, there is a six-page entry on personal names which deals with the history of English surnames, the changing popularity of

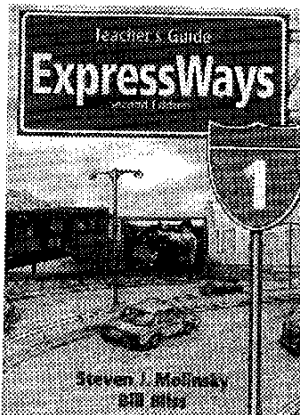
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## The Cambridge Encyclopedia *Continued from page 22*

given names, and the differing phonology of male and female names. Another long article is devoted to a letter-by-letter look at the history of the alphabet.

This format makes the book delightful to browse for several reasons. First, the articles are short, crisply written, and assume no previous knowledge of linguistics. Second, the book is so densely packed with knowledge that even the confirmed language maven can learn something on every page. Finally, though the book is topically arranged, it is heavily cross-referenced, so a reader wishing to follow a topic in more depth can follow it throughout the book. Generally, I found the *Encyclopedia* a complete joy to browse through.

But, is it a reference book? Its style seems a little too jocular, its illustrations too profuse, and its treatments of many topics too brief. It is difficult to find answers to specific questions. Because it is topically, rather than alphabetically arranged, the reader's only guide to specific facts is an alphabetical index.

In order to test the *Encyclopedia* as a reference book, I decided to seek the answers to four questions:

1. What is the story of thee, thou, thy, thine?
2. In Shakespeare's English, capitalization is more or less the same as in modern English. When we get to Dryden

and Pope almost every noun is capitalized, as in German. A century later, in Dickens, we note that capitalization has returned to "normal." What happened?

3. The "natural grammar" of English, the language of children and uneducated adults, uses the pronoun I only for first person singular nominative. That is, kids have to be taught not to say: "Bobby and me are going to the mall." Yet no one has to teach them not to say: "Me am going to the mall." Why?

4. Until the eighteenth century, principal verbs as well as auxiliary verbs could be moved to form questions and negatives. For example, Shakespeare could say "...loved I not honor more." In modern English, only the auxiliary can move and, if there is no auxiliary, it must be supported by do. How and why did this change?

With each question, I timed my search and observed my level of exasperation. I report below.

Question 1 went pretty well. I didn't find thou in the index so I looked up pronoun and found fifteen entries. Knowing the first part of the book covered history, I started at the beginning. On my third attempt I found a whole page devoted to you/thou, and I was able to answer all of my questions. Search time: 12 minutes. Exasperation level: very low.

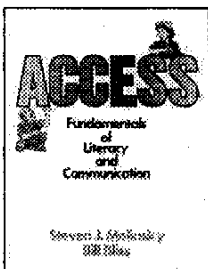
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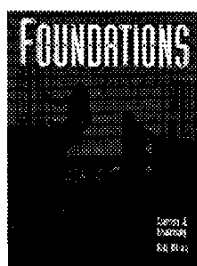
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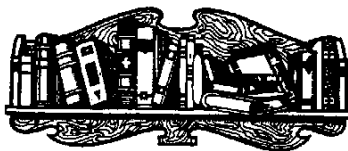


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## REVIEWS



*The Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English. Third Edition.* Longman, 1995. 668 pages. ISBN 0-582-28862-2

*Reviewed by Hava Levitan*

This dictionary is indeed a complete guide to both written and spoken English, as used not only by Americans, but also by the British, South Africans, etc. Students who were first exposed to one model of English will particularly appreciate this means of access to the appropriate forms for a new environment. The audience includes teachers as well as intermediate and advanced students. The book provides a wealth of meanings and considerable nuance through clear, contemporary explanations with excellent visual and verbal support. Its ominous size belies its usability. The selective use of boldface and various type sizes helps make it quite readable.

This is a dictionary with a mission, striving to present the richest range of meanings using a core of only 2,000 words in its explanations, for ease of student understanding. Definitions reaching beyond the 2,000 word core are marked as such. Words are easy to locate and understand. For example, strike has eleven meanings, all using the core language. The sample sentences are also limited to the core 2,000 words.

For the reader to be able to understand and use English words colloquially, four areas have been targeted in the design of the book.

1. Fast Access: signposts (triangular symbols) are used to distinguish the most common uses of a word.
2. Spoken vs. Written English: bar graphs show how

certain words are spoken more frequently than they are written, or vice versa.

3. Frequency: bar graphs also tell us how frequently a word is used relative to other possible words. (e.g., let vs. allow vs. permit) The 3000 most frequently used words are marked.
4. Words in Combination: phrases, idioms, and collocations are all explained within the entries. (E.g., run has 14 definitions plus other meanings; run around is the 23rd item in this series.)

Illustrations, graphs, and line drawings help make the language come alive; in some cases words are presented in context, much like a picture dictionary. The prepositions of place are presented in this manner. Onomatopoeic words are grouped together, with illustrations that truly elucidate, as are types of walks, to name but a few examples. To some extent we have here a visual thesaurus.

This book includes a number of helpful tables: pronunciation, numbers, weights and measures, word formation, affixes, irregular verbs, and a guide to parts of speech for the Longman Defining Vocabulary. There is a most complete Guide to the Dictionary, and the Contents offers a list of full-page illustrations for fast access to the visual learner.

This book is too bulky to carry around, but it makes an excellent desk or classroom reference. Students often say they cannot use an English-to-English dictionary because they do not understand the explanations. I welcome this dictionary because it addresses that issue. It deserves a place in every personal library.

*Hava Levitan has taught at Roxbury Community College and Newbury College. She currently lives and teaches in Tel Aviv, Israel.*

*Pronouncing American English: Sounds, Stress and Intonation,* by Gertrude F. Orion. Second Edition. Heinle and Heinle, 1997. 337 pages. ISBN 0-8384-6332-8. Instructor's Manual, Cassette Tapes.

*Reviewed by Christine Parkhurst*

This is a new edition of Gertrude Orion's pronunciation textbook. The second edition is correlated with the *Newbury House Dictionary of American English and Adventures in Pronunciation* (an educational game on CD-ROM available in 1998). The intended audience is high-beginning through advanced students who want to learn or

improve their stress, intonation and pronunciation of American English phonemes. Comparable texts include Rebecca Dauer's *Accurate English: A Complete Course in Pronunciation* at the higher levels, and Carolyn Graham's *Jazz Chants* books at the lower end. The book may be used either individually or in class. The second edition includes more class exercises than the first, especially pair work. The new edition also includes more definitions of vocabulary, and clearer charts and explanations of articulation.

All the exercises are written out in the textbook, so classroom teachers can read the exercises rather than use the tapes if they wish. Individuals using the book on their own would certainly want to get the cassette tapes which accom-

*Continued on page 25*

## **Pronouncing American English** *Continued from page 24*

pany the text, and possibly the CD-ROM when it comes out. Students could use the book and tapes in a language lab class.

**O** Orion believes students should work on word and sentence stress and intonation first, and then work on individual phonemes and groups of phonemes. The book is organized to reflect this. After a brief introduction and a fifteen-page overview of spelling and sound and of the speech mechanism, the next fifty pages are devoted to a very thorough treatment of "syllable stress" — which syllable is stressed within a word — and "word stress" — which words are stressed within a sentence — as well as vowel and consonant length, vowel reductions, juncture, linking, and intonation. This section ends with dictionary pronunciation exercises keyed to the *Newbury House Dictionary*. The last two sections of the book cover the vowels and consonants. The vowel units treat each vowel individually, except for see/sit, pay/met, and do/book, which are covered in pairs. The consonant units consist of voiced and voiceless pairs and single units for consonants (such as nasals) which are only voiced. Each phoneme unit includes an explanation of how the sound is articulated, repetition practice, listening discrimination between two vowels or consonants in individual words and in sentences, and stress and intonation practice covering the phoneme(s). Some units include additional contrasts with other phonemes which sound similar, additional work on spelling, or specific topics such as doubled consonants or consonant clusters. The last twelve pages are an appendix of homophones with phonetic transcriptions and example sentences. ("Will you be there?" "A bee is an insect that makes honey.")

The strong point of Orion's book is the second section, on stress and intonation. Her treatment of these areas is

detailed and accurate. Intermediate to advanced students would benefit from the parts of the book which focus on stress and intonation. This book would be especially useful for students who are fluent in a variety of English which has different stress and intonation patterns than American English. Students originally from India, Pakistan, and English-speaking African or Caribbean countries, for example, often have trouble communicating with speakers of American English because of differences in stress and intonation patterns. Although the units on vowels and consonants are accurate, some units are more useful than others. Most students can hear and say the difference between boy and buy or bite and bat more easily than the difference between beat and bit or bought and boat. Within units, some exercises are more useful than others. (To/do is less crucial for most students than bat/bad.) Teachers should of course focus on parts of the book which are most useful for their students, and on those phonemes which are still difficult for them.

Speaking anecdotally, the exercises in the first edition of this book were not as well received by my intermediate and advanced students as those in Dauer's *Accurate English*, but the exercises in the second edition may be more appropriate for this level. As with any pronunciation textbook, exercises should be a starting point; students should also have plenty of opportunity to practice speaking and self-monitoring in class, so the skills they acquire through the use of the textbook will carry over into their spoken English.

*As an Associate Professor of English and Humanities at Mass. College of Pharmacy, Christine Parkhurst teaches ESL composition, interpersonal communication, film, and Irish literature.*

### **Writing in a Second Language: Insights from First and Second Language Teaching and Research.**

Bruce Leeds, Editor. Longman, 1996. 218 pages. ISBN 0-201-82589-

#### **Reviewed by Pamela Couch**

**W**riting is one of the most complex mental activities that students are asked to perform. Not only is writing the hallmark of rigorous thinking, but it is also an essential tool for exploring new ideas and acquiring knowledge. In an effort to uncover the characteristics of good writers, composition researchers have examined the composing processes of first language (L1) and second language (L2) writers. *Writing in a Second Language: Insights from First and Second Language Teaching and Research* is a new collection of

landmark articles that provide L2 writing teachers with the theoretical background and practical guidance necessary for informed teaching.

The book is divided into seven chapters, each of which discusses a different aspect of the composing process or composition teaching. With contributions from such influential researchers as Ann Raimes, Iona Leki, Patricia Carrell, Ann Johns, Ruth Spack, Peter Elbow, and Vivian Zamel, the book presents an overview of issues that concern second language writing instructors. Among the topics covered are the history of second language writing instruction, the similarities and differences between L1 and L2 composing, the relationship between reading comprehension and writing, the impact of reader awareness, the revising process, responding to student writing, and writing assessment. Each chapter includes pre-reading and follow-up questions that help the reader relate his or her experience to the theories

*Continued on page 26*

## Writing in a Second Language Continued from page 25

described in the articles, as well as follow-up activities that build on the concepts presented.

This book is an excellent resource for both the novice and the experienced writing instructor. The book does not try to reduce the teaching of writing to a simple formula, nor does it imply that there are easy answers to the questions the authors pose. On the contrary, it suggests that teachers must carefully examine the composing process and their own teaching practice if they wish to guide their students to better writing. Writing in a Second Language helps writing teachers and researchers gain a deeper understanding of the skills, strategies, and creativity that constitute both good writing and good teaching.

*Pamela Couch is a Senior Lecturer at the Center for English*

*Language and Orientation Programs at Boston University and is currently conducting research on the planning strategies of second language writers. [pcouch@bu.edu](mailto:pcouch@bu.edu)*

***Writing in a Second Language: Insights from First and Second Language Teaching and Research* is a new collection of landmark articles that provide L2 writing teachers with the theoretical background and practical guidance necessary for informed teaching.**

## The Cambridge Encyclopedia Continued from page 23

Question 2 went less smoothly, but I was successful. Capitalization in the index referred me to letter symbols, where I found twenty-four entries. With no idea where to begin I read entries at random. On my 14th entry I hit paydirt. Search time: 24 minutes. Exasperation level: fairly high.

Question 3 was a bust. This is not to say that the answer is not in the book; rather that I couldn't find it. Despite

**Overall, I did not find the Encyclopedia to be a satisfactory reference book. Finding specific information was arduous, a bit random, and rather time-consuming.**

occasional allusions to the phenomenon there was no significant information. Search time: 40 minutes. Exasperation level: Very high.

Question 4 yielded an answer, but mostly through serendipity. After twenty minutes searching through entries on question and word order I realized that the answers to the previous questions might have this information as well. I thus retraced my steps and found, on the page facing the entries on you and thou, a box called "Say you so?" There was an explanation of what had happened, but I did not learn why or how this phenomenon occurred. At least I got something for my search.

Overall, I did not find the *Encyclopedia* to be a satisfactory reference book. Finding specific information was arduous, a bit random, and rather time-consuming. Moreover, because the thrust of the book is descriptive, not theoretical, I rarely found out why a phenomenon existed in the form it did. However, the book is full of information. Any reader will find it increasingly easier to use because the more one has searched through the book, the greater the chance of


already having seen what one wants.

On balance I highly recommend *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of the English Language*. It is a wonderful book to have around the house in some conspicuous place. Children pick it up; guests pick it up. And lively discussions often follow. The book has the virtue of making an enormous array of complex scholarship accessible and interesting to a general reader. Its deficiencies as a reference work are far overwhelmed by its sheer entertainment value.

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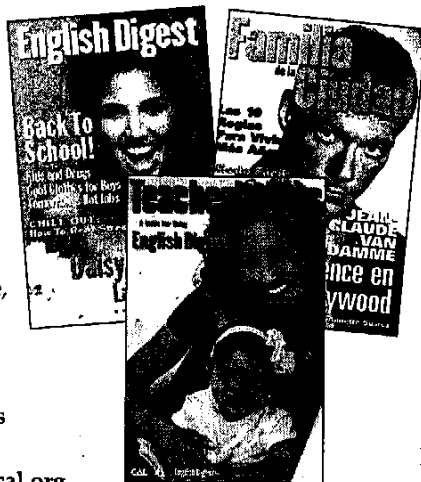
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