

Why "MATSOL Forward"? An Interview with Johan Uvin

Tom Griffith: First, what's the point? MATSOL has muddled along nicely for 25 years. Why did it suddenly feel a need for some grand strategic plan?

Johan Uvin: The point is that the Executive Board's perception that MATSOL was muddling along nicely was inaccurate. When MATSOL surveyed its members in late 1998 to get a sense of the responsiveness and quality of its services, approximately half of the members responded and basically said what they thought and needed. The results of this survey clearly indicated the organization was not muddling along as nicely as the Executive Board thought it was. In fact, the results were quite overwhelming. The Education Reform Act of 1993, the increase in workplace ESOL programs, and accreditation issues in higher education altered the working lives and professional development needs of members considerably. MATSOL's offerings may have

been fine for 25 years but it was clear that the second quarter of MATSOL's history required a different orientation. Members pointed out which services were lacking in quality, which were fine, and which services they needed that MATSOL was not offering. The Board had a choice at that point: ignore the results of the survey and risk a drop in membership or try to respond as best as it could. The Board opted to respond but realized it needed to make MATSOL a stronger organization first. That is where the strategic planning process entered the picture. Board members agreed that it would be impossible to respond to the broad range of needs without some concerted effort to build the organizational capacity of MATSOL.

Tom: Whose ideas were these, and how did you make opportunity for member input?

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Commentary on Donald Freeman and Nancy Clair Plenary at Spring 2000 Conference

Learning Standards, Teacher Knowledge and Professional Development *Laura Bozarth*

Imagine yourself in your classroom with your students and your materials. Each of these elements — the teacher, the English Language Learner (ELL), and the content — exists in every ESL classroom. These three classroom essentials and the relationships between the three elements are the basis of the I-Thou-It relationship, the David Hawkins model of classroom learning, where *I* is the teacher, *Thou* is the ELL, and *It* is the standards for what students need to learn and know how to do. Picture a triangle, the three corners representing *I*, *thou*, and *it*. The legs of the triangle represent the relationships between teacher, ELL, and the standards, or content. As long as there is a balance between the three, effective learning goes on. Teaching and learning goes awry when one of the three relationships becomes too strong or too weak.

This triangle is the map on which Nancy Clair and Donald Freeman based their discussion of Professional Development (PD). The Saturday plenary speakers at the MATSOL 2000 Spring Conference alternated back and forth in a conversational and easily digestible tone, while slides

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MATSOL *Currents*

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Professional Development Continued from page 1

showing teachers and ELLs in action flashed on the big screen at the front of the auditorium. The speakers themselves spoke on the triangle's common sense appeal, saying it "passes the 'your parents can understand it' test. Being a more practical than theoretically minded teacher, I found its simplicity was very appealing. The model is simple, but not simplistic: each element brings its own values, history, and consequences. The speakers defined each of the elements in the I-Thou-It model, and then described the importance of the balance between the relationships among the three. For example, if the I-Thou link becomes too strong, the imbalance denies learners access to challenging materials. In other

Effective PD helps teachers to manage the balance by developing the skills they need in order to succeed in the complex tasks of understanding standards, interpreting them, and assessing the students' understanding

words, students may love their teachers, but they don't learn the content effectively. Effective teaching requires a balance in the relationships between the three. Other imbalances decrease the level of success students can achieve.

What does this have to do with Professional Development? As Mr. Freeman and Ms. Clair noted, PD is the number one most effective contributor to improving student achievement. That's right — the time you spend in workshops and reading your *MATSOL Currents* can do more for your students than lowering class size, raising your salary, increasing your number of years of teaching experience. The I-Thou-It model in its simplicity involves a delicate and complex balance; effective PD helps teachers to manage the balance by developing the skills they need in order to succeed in the complex tasks of understanding standards, interpreting them, and assessing the students' understanding. Seen another way, good PD helps teachers know how to balance the relationships between the three sides of the I-Thou-It triangle. It's not just showing teachers the steps of teaching a class; we all know it's not that easy. As Mr. Freeman and Ms. Clair stressed, PD should be about helping teachers to assess and break down the tasks teachers face, and to truly understand the I-Thou-It relationship.

As a teacher, I strive to improve my students' understanding of the various skills they will need as they enter their university careers. I always have room for improvement, and I am constantly changing the way I teach a certain grammar point, or the way in which I elicit, or correct. . . but I have still relied mostly on my own intuition for guidance to improve my own teaching skills. As a onetime skeptic of the usefulness of PD, I can see that the teachers who initiate and form the PD opportunities are the ones who are most likely to benefit from them. Maintaining and strengthening the balance between I, Thou, and It can and should be a clear goal for professional development, and more involvement in organizing PD opportunities will improve effectiveness in the classroom.

MATSOL is now on line!
www.MATSOL.org

Letter From The Editor

This issue is dominated by a lengthy interview about the strategic plan known as MATSOL Forward. By now all members should have received a summary of it, and some of you have responded in a survey (see excerpts on page 10). It's of such importance that we felt it should be presented in as readable form as possible; hence an interview.

It also may serve as an introduction to our new president, Johan Uvin. Customarily, a new president writes a letter to the members, but this interview does pretty well at catching the quality of his mind. I'll fill in a few gaps. When I came on the board three years ago, I took a shine to Johan, partly because he and I were the only males. Since then my affection and admiration have increased.

ESL teachers tend to have colorful backgrounds, but his exceeds the norm. First, he's from Belgium, one of the few officially trilingual countries in the world. As a Fleming, he had the experience both of being a linguistic minority, and of receiving a bilingual education. This gave him unique insights and strong convictions on its value. Second, before teacher training college (EFL, Dutch and history), he worked as a machine operator, which led to an

interest in vocational and literacy education. After studying to teach ESL in the US and leading several local, regional and provincial efforts in adult basic education and adult DSL (Dutch as a Second Language), he worked in West Africa for the United Nations, and married an American from Boston. He next worked at the Mass Department of Education for almost five years, directed the retraining of workers at Malden Mills, and is currently pursuing his doctorate at the Harvard Graduate School of Education.

Now we of all people should be wary of stereotype, but Johan seems to confirm one of them. Little Belgium has emerged as the administrative center of the united Europe. Johan partakes of this national flair for governance. He was a driving force behind the MATSOL Forward plan, including some changes in bookkeeping that I can't begin to understand. He thinks ahead, in detail, then argues for his

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Why "MATSOL Forward"? *Continued from page 1*

Johan: The membership survey reflected the ideas of the membership in 1998. I introduced the idea of strategic planning to the Board after informal discussions with Board members about the advantages and disadvantages. In addition to the wealth of information provided by the survey, the Board ensured membership input in the planning process in several ways. Regional focus groups were one way. In these focus groups, members discussed MATSOL's mission statement and helped the Board clarify a number of issues that had surfaced during a Board retreat. For most of these issues, consensus had not yet emerged at the Board level. The focus groups were the Board's mechanism to go back to the membership and help facilitate agreement on which direction the Board ought to take. A second way involved the mailing of the draft of MATSOL Forward to the membership and its publication in *Currents*. By this summer, member input in planning will transition into member involvement in the implementation of the plan.

Tom: In the section on Organization Development, what are the advantages of incorporation?

Johan: While I am not an expert on this matter, one important consideration was that the organization would qualify for a larger number of funding sources.

Tom: The projected annual budget in 2002—\$250,000—is about four times the present budget. Is that realistic? Where would the extra money come from?

Johan: The \$250,000 is a projection of what MATSOL would need on an annual basis if it were to respond to most of the professional development needs members articulated. While this amount is, indeed, slightly more than three times the current budget, it is important to keep in mind that the activities members requested represent a comparable increase in professional development activities. Is it realistic? Without careful planning, the answer is obviously no. We chose, however, to carefully link strategic and fiscal planning. The extra money would come from a variety of sources. One would be from increased membership.

Others will include a capital campaign scheduled for later this year and fundraising via the development and submission of grants and through the solicitation of sponsorships. Baby steps in this direction during the past fiscal year confirm that it is possible. We raised over \$50,000 via grant writing, membership drives, and solicitation of institutional and corporate contributions towards the conference and professional development series. By 2000, these efforts should enable MATSOL to hire staff who could support our professional development, legislative, and administrative work.

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Why "MATSOL Forward"?

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Tom: The plan calls for some full-time paid staff. How would that affect dues, and why would that be better than the current volunteer system?

Johan: It is not our intent to raise membership dues for the purpose of hiring staff. Nor do we believe the current volunteer system should not be the pulse of the organization. Responding to the broad array of needs, however, can be more easily accomplished if the volunteer Board can count on some professional staff to execute the growing number of tasks for which Board members may not necessarily have the time, interest, or qualifications.

Tom: Would the group health insurance be available to part-timers? Any ballpark figures on costs?

If we get it our way, part-timers would be able to access the health insurance and costs would be reasonable meaning as low as possible. We are currently in the process of getting a solid grip on the demand for health insurance and have begun exploratory discussions with providers. In addition, we have agreed to collaborate with the Massachusetts Coalition for

Adult Education. They have similar needs in this area. We hope that the result will be that premiums would become more reasonable. We'll know a lot more by the end of the summer.

Tom: In the section on Professional Development, what should we be doing beyond annual conferences?

More and different types of professional development. While workshops at conferences play an important role in informing practitioners of recent issues and best practices, they do not suffice. In fact, if the goal of professional development is to increase teachers' skills and knowledge in view of improved learner achievement, research has indicated that workshops have little impact. Teachers need time to work with each other over long periods of time, if they want to alter and improve their practice. MATSOL has chosen to engage in a number of partnerships to develop professional development models of this nature.

Later this spring, for instance, Donald Freeman from the Center for Teacher Education, Training, and Research, Nancy Clair from the LAB at Brown University, and representatives from the Center for Applied Linguistics and MATSOL will gather to design sustainable classroom- and school-based

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From The Editor

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points with force, lucidity and abounding optimism. Johan feels especially committed to improving the responsiveness of MATSOL services to member need, and engaging in collaborations with individuals and organizations to achieve this goal. I think the organization will be well served in his tenure.

Speaking of tenure, it's right to bid farewell to two former presidents. Paula Merchant steps down now to do her final third year as President Emeritus. She and Johan have collaborated closely — a dynamic duo — and she too astonished the board with the quality and quantity of her work. This, on top of a full-time job with the Dedham schools, and a young family! And she kept up the pace of MATSOL activity with unfailing sweetness and grace.

Last, a goodbye to Margot Friedman. Margot has served MATSOL in many capacities on and off for years. It was because of that long seasoning that she was willing to step in and play a crucial role. Members may not be aware of it, but at one point MATSOL lost two presidents within six weeks. Things looked bleak, when Margot offered to serve as interim head. She not only presided efficiently, she was so upbeat and encouraging that the board quickly regained its morale. Margot figures as one of life's adults - calm, responsible, devoid of pettiness, just getting on with the job. Best wishes.

The rest of the issue is a grab bag - reports on the Spring

Conference, held in a blizzard last January; acknowledgments of corporate sponsors of the Conference; updates on teacher certification; book reviews, including a long, reflective one by another of MATSOL's unsung heroes, Sterling Giles; news on our sister organization in Slovakia; and a

Last, a goodbye to Margot Friedman. Margot has served MATSOL in many capacities on and off for years. It was because of that long seasoning that she was willing to step in and play a crucial role.

profile of our typesetter, Bob Schecter. People often compliment the improved look of Currents, and I accept this praise guiltily. It's really Bob's doing, for his title as "typesetter" doesn't begin to suggest his artfulness in layout and design.

Let me conclude with the usual call for member input. You too can see your name in print. A good summer to all.

— Tom Griffith

Why “MATSOL Forward”? Continued from page 4

models of professional development. The intent is to make these opportunities available to MATSOL members in the places where they work.

Tom: In collaborating with other professional organizations like MABE, is there a risk of diluting our unique interests?

Johan: Not in my mind since these types of collaborations are not based on unique interests. Instead, they focus on common interests.

Tom: The section on Research, Policy and Practice touches on standards-based reform. What role should MATSOL have on the reform movement, with regard to ELL's?

Johan: Given the high failure rates of ELL's on recent MCAS tests, MATSOL — and MABE — must play a major role. The challenge is enormous. Recent work in this area gives us confidence, however, that we can and are beginning to influence policies. Much more needs to be done in this area. Policymakers take for granted that everyone knows how to teach to standards and that every program has the resources to do a good job. That is not the case. MATSOL was also not a player to reckon with until recently. It will take time to develop the required political muscle and credibility.

Tom: The plan seems to shift MATSOL strongly in the direction of advocacy. First, advocacy of what? Second, in light of the ESL profession's small numbers, uncertain status and history of marginality (compared to giants like the MTA), how can it hope to affect the political process?

Johan: Our advocacy efforts focus on teacher and learner issues. Working conditions and compensation have been identified as priorities in the teacher arena. Through increas-

ing our membership and through collaborations with MABE and MCAE we hope to generate a critical mass of advocates. In addition, we hope to maximize our developing relationships with several labor organizations, policy centers, and state agencies to further this agenda. Learner issues require ongoing advocacy. We have established a socio-political committee which will craft an advocacy mechanism for the organization. Last year we also became a member of the coalition for bilingual education.

Tom: Last, there's a new stress on the value of “diversity.” That's a popular buzzword now, but what exactly does it mean in this plan? And what practical difference would it make on who we are and how we teach?

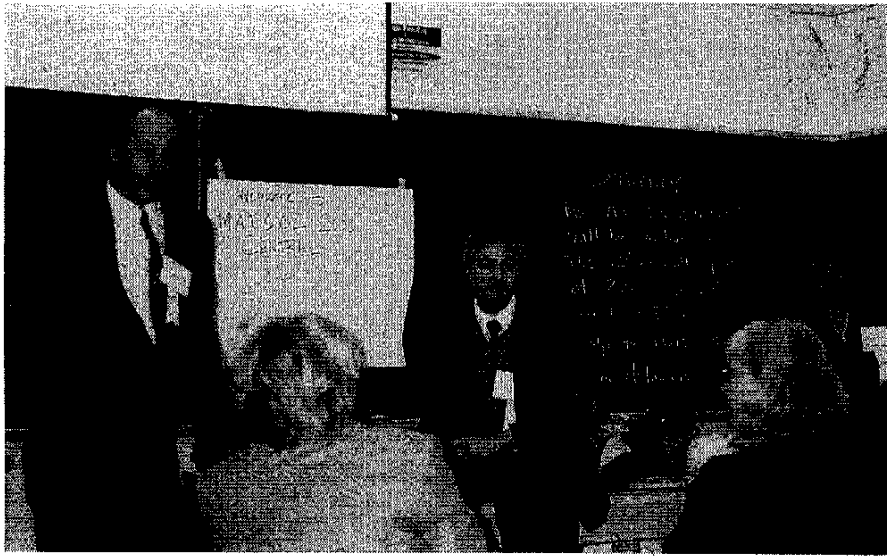
Johan: Diversity is more than a popular buzzword. MATSOL through MATSOL Forward established diversity as one of its core institutional values. This means that diversity is viewed as part of all the work MATSOL Forward hopes to accomplish. Specific diversity-related professional development activities respond directly to membership need. This need is two-fold. Teachers wanted to learn how to better address issues of diversity as they surface in their classrooms. This requires examination of one's individual values. At the institutional level, it also requires MATSOL to examine its values, policies, and practices to ensure they promote diversity along multiple dimensions, not just race, gender, and ethnicity. In terms of practical difference regarding who we are and how we teach, I believe that practicing diversity will deepen our understanding of ourselves, our students and our colleagues and will ensure respect and dignity. Examination of one's teaching and curricula and examination of MATSOL's professional development foci are necessary to ensure that they, indeed, promote respect. This may lead to substantial changes in what we teach and how. Ultimately, bias-free teaching, curricula, and professional development should lead to improved learner achievement and teacher effectiveness.

Write for **MATSOL Currents**

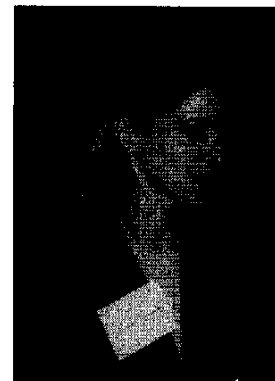
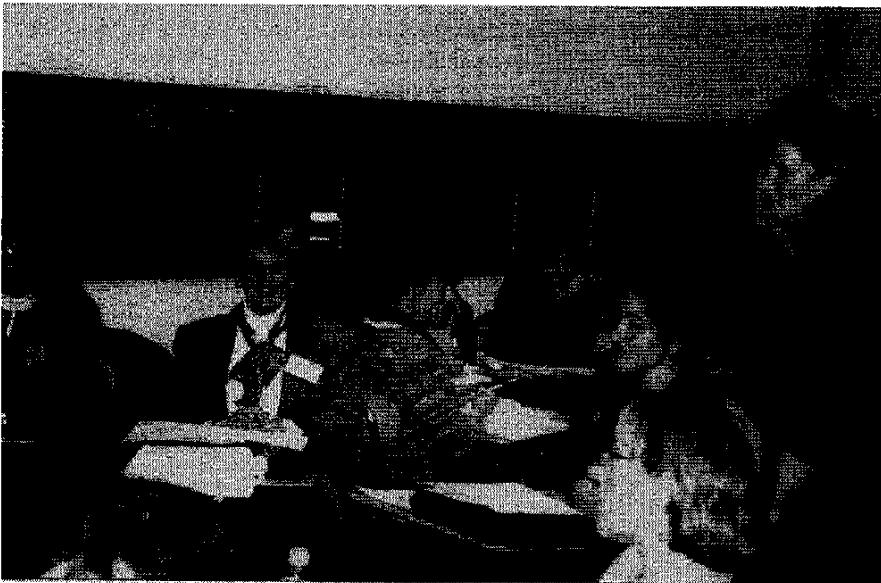
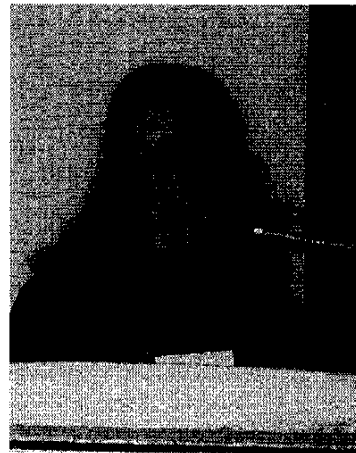
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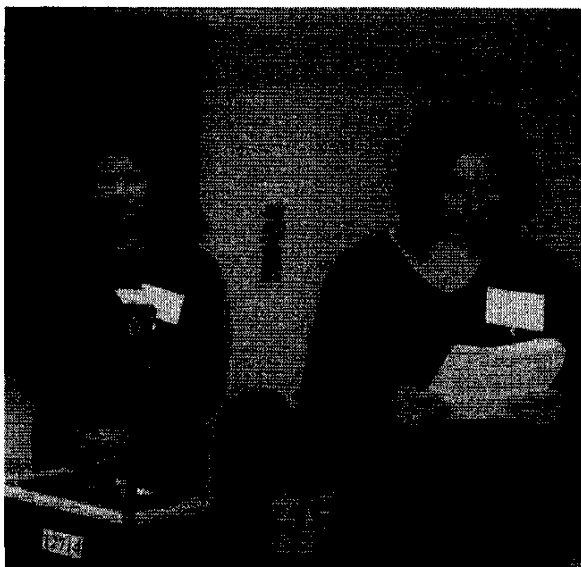
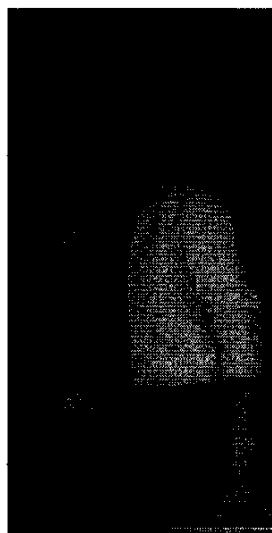
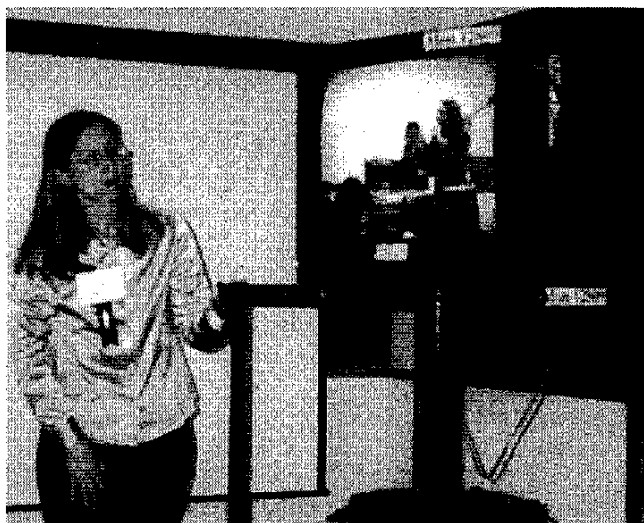
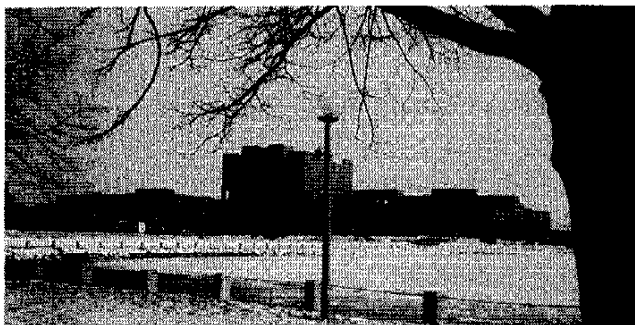
igriffith@showaboston.org

For books you might review, see “Over The Transom,” page 24



Spring Conference at UMass Boston





Photographs by Tom Griffith

Thanks to Corporate Sponsors of MATSOL 2000 Conference

Rob Vitello

In this section, MATSOL is profiling the companies that stepped forward as corporate sponsors for the MATSOL 2000 conference held January 21-22 at UMass Boston. MATSOL thanks them for their support and acknowledges their leadership for promoting workplace education and lifelong learning

Haartz Corporation

87 Haywood Rd.
Acton, MA 01720

The Haartz Corp. was first started in 1907 when the family-run business began producing coated fabric to support the newly emerging automotive industry. The company now employs over 330 workers specializing in the manufacturing of automotive soft-trim materials used for convertible tops, door panels and instrument panels. Haartz Corp. is QS 9000 certified and over the past decade has developed a company culture supportive of lifelong learning offering GED, basic math, communication, writing and ESOL for the workplace. According to Eric Haartz the company president, "our company's prosperity depends on pleasing our customers and continuing to earn their business. Doing this takes a skilled, effective, cared-for workforce. Workplace education does a lot to help nurture the best from all of us. It helps 'our' people maximize their potential as individuals, and it helps us to collectively achieve our company's maximum potential. We endeavor to provide appropriate workplace education, built upon a foundation of mutual respect. In doing so, we see positive impacts in many areas of our company's functioning, and it helps us to continue to please our customers."

Draka USA

9 Forge Park
Franklin, MA 02038

Draka USA is a leading producer of cable material for the specialty uses in the industrial, medical and scientific industries. The company has made workplace education and training a major priority in achieving quality operations. The company partnered with the Continuing Education Institute (CEI) in 1998 to operate a three-year workplace basic skills program. This work was governed by an employee involvement team or planning committee that included supervisors, quality assurance managers, learners, and the CEI providers. Classes are offered in Workplace ESOL and Writing with Computers. Deb Shell from the Corporate Training Department at Draka USA notes, "through our workplace education program workers are given the tools needed to feel more comfortable with their changing jobs. There is a value placed

on lifelong learning which translates into greater employee confidence. Workers participating in the classes feel more comfortable voicing their opinions and better plugged into the continuous improvement efforts of the company."

Acushnet Rubber Company Inc.

744 Belleville Avenue
New Bedford, MA 02742

Acushnet Rubber Company Inc. was formed in 1910 and has been a major employer in the New Bedford area ever since, producing specialty elastomeric (rubber) components for the automotive, safety, electrical, office products, and golf industries. Acushnet Rubber currently employs over 1,000 workers and is QS 9000 and ISO 14001 certified. Training and workplace education has been a focal point in the company's continuous improvement efforts. Acushnet Rubber has participated in the New Bedford Manufacturers Workplace Education Consortium of companies coordinated by the Bristol Community College Workplace Education Program. This program which offers GED and work-focused ESOL is entering its final year of a three-year DOE grant. According to Bob Andreoni, HR Director, "there is a great need in our community for basic skills support. Our company participates in this consortium in order to open doors for workers to succeed and grow in their work but also in their home lives. This is a critical area for Acushnet Rubber going forward since workers are being asked to do more to improve quality and meet customer satisfaction. We hope to be able to expand opportunities to more employees in the future if resources allow."

Chadwick's of Boston

35 United Drive
West Bridgewater, MA 02379

Chadwick's of Boston was started in 1983 as one of the first catalogue shopping operations for women's fine apparel. Chadwick's of Boston now employs more than 2,000 workers in their West Bridgewater and Taunton fulfillment centers who are represented by the Union of Needletrade, Industrial and Textile Employees (UNITE) Local 2001. Many of these

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“MATSOL Forward” Review Sheet

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In Spring 1998 MATSOL conducted its first large-scale membership survey. The findings of the survey led to the development of the enclosed draft strategic plan called MATSOL Forward. Using survey results, regional focus groups, and guided discussions at MATSOL 2000, the Executive Board developed the attached sum-

mary of the draft plan for member comment and eventual approval. The final version of the plan should be in place mid-spring. The plan will guide MATSOL's activities for the next three years.

We want and need your feedback now. Please take a few minutes to review the draft plan and respond to the statements/questions below.

1. My general reaction to MATSOL Forward is: _____

2. I have the following suggestions for improving the proposed mission statement:

3. I have the following suggestions for improving the proposed core values:

4. I have the following suggestions for improving the proposed strategic goal of making MATSOL a stronger organization: _____

5. I have the following suggestions for improving the proposed strategic goal of strengthening MATSOL's ability to advocate for teacher and learner issues:

6. I have the following suggestions for improving the proposed strategic goal of understanding and promoting diversity: _____

7. I have the following suggestions for improving the proposed strategic goal of intensifying and diversifying teacher preparation and support: _____

* Reprinted

Continued on page 10

8. I have the following suggestions for improving the proposed strategic goal of linking member practice with research, policy, and theory: _____

9. At this time, I can:

- endorse MATSOL Forward as is.
- endorse MATSOL Forward given my suggestions above for improving it
- not endorse MATSOL Forward at this time because

10. I have these additional comments: _____

Thank you for your feedback! Your time and views will make a difference!

Send this form to:

MATSOL
c/o Lisa Soricone
121 Highland Ave.
Arlington, MA 02476

Feedback on "Forward" Statement

1. My general reaction to MATSOL Forward is

- Positive
- Excellent
- Neutral

"Generally positive. It is succinct and well-conceived overall. Emphasize more collaboration with MCAL, MABE, etc."

"It sounds very ambitious, but I approve/agree with the statement."

2. My suggestions for improving the proposed mission statement are:

"I have serious concerns about the way you have used the 'English language learners'. As we know, ELLs, particularly in K-12 settings, are learning all the things that other children are. The term, ELL, defines bilingual children too narrowly and is used by some to portray these children through the lens of 'deficit'. And I honestly don't think that most of us THINK of our students this way."

3. My suggestions for improving the core values are:

- "Irrelevant, but academic success for student #1."*
- "1 — Collaboration is a goal, not a value. 2 — Add 'Inhibition'."*
- "3 — Add 'equity'."*

"None — but I don't understand the diversity part. I understand the goal of diversifying teacher preparation and support, but understanding and promoting diversity seems vague to me. Our students are by definition diverse, do we need to work to shape our class composition? Diversifying the board and the organization's mission in terms of teacher/learner populations makes sense, but I don't really care about the ethnicity of teachers."

4. My suggestions for improving the proposed strategic goals of making a MATSOL a stronger organization are:

- "I would want to be very strict on HOW to expand funding base — so as not to compromise values and flexibility."*
- "Is it necessary to HIRE legislative staff? How about working more closely with MCAL's public policy committee?"*

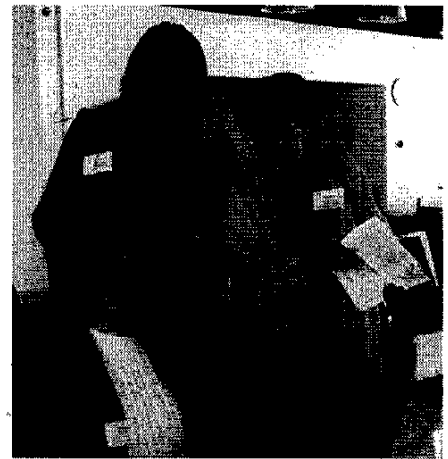
MATSOL / SAUA-SATE (Slovakia) Reciprocal Teacher Exchange

(Editor's note: As part of MATSOL's sister exchange with Slovakia, we reprint items from their newsletter, as well as comments by coordinator Marjorie Soriano on upcoming exchanges, and on the international affiliates' session at TESOL 2000)

Calling for teachers interested in participating in a November 2000 exchange, at the time of SAUA-SATE's 5th English Language Teacher's Conference. It is anticipated that it will be an interesting event, attended by British and American teacher trainers in addition to the memberships. The keynote speakers will be Simon Grenall, past IATEFL president from England, and MaryLou

McCloskey and Lydia Stack from the USA. It provides MATSOLers with an opportunity to 'present.' MATSOL teachers will be hosted in Slovak homes, observe English programs and classes, and be treated to cultural and social activities.

Check MATSOL website: www.MATSOL.org for periodic updated information. For details, contact Marjorie Soriano, 978 927-2077 marjorie.s@juno.com



Slovakian Visitors

(above right, left to right)

Zoltan Brezina, Viera Bavova, Milena Bobanova



Do We, as Teachers, Realize Children's Potential?

This was the topic of an international conference of teachers, educators, school managers and inspectors in April, 1999 in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, England. I was given the opportunity to participate at the conference together with my colleague B. Kasacova from the Department of Elementary Pedagogy, University of Matej Bel in Banská Bystrica. We were asked to present the perspectives from the Slovak Republic. The topic of our presentation was "Ideas of the Child in Early Childhood Teachers' Training."

One-hundred-fifty participants from one Asian and six European countries gathered together during these three conference days. The presenters shared ideas about educating the whole pupil, not just the "pupil-side" of him/her. The sessions on "Integrating Early Childhood Provision" and

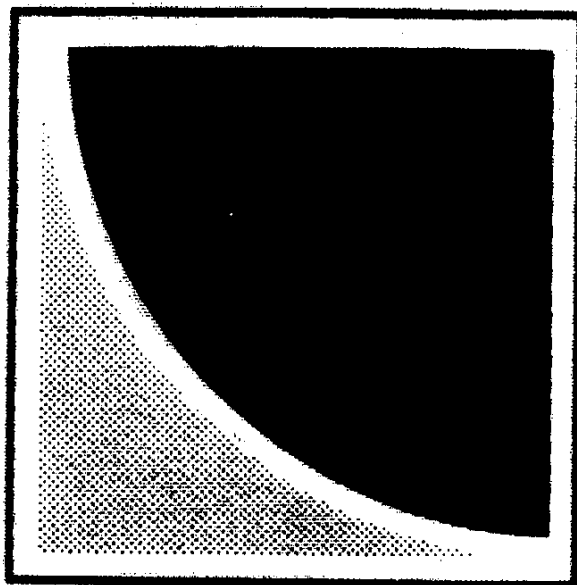
"Excellence in Research with Young Children" consisted of reports from various educational institutions and of research reports. Some reported on their action research, others on researches with huge data collections. The hot issue of assessment of children's development was the main focus of the last session.

This conference experience as well as opportunities for informal interaction with the teachers from other countries was for me, as an English teacher, researcher and syllabus designer at the Pedagogical Faculty, a great encouragement and reinforcement. We had the opportunity for starting new contacts and possible future cooperation.

— Dana Hanesoved
PF UMB Banská Bystrica

SLOVENSKÁ ASOCIÁCIA UČITEĽOV ANGLIČTINY

S A U A



S A T E

SLOVAK ASSOCIATION
OF TEACHERS OF ENGLISH

First Steps with Drama

It happened on one of the weekends before Christmas when most people were doing Christmas shopping. It was freezing hard outside. Nevertheless, more than seventy wandering students with their enthusiastic teachers, both full of expectations, came to Banská Bystrica to Obchodná Akadémia, Skuteckeho Street, to see and to experience something they hadn't tried before, Drama through English or English Through Drama.

It was organized and run by Michael Houten, from the Faculty of Humanities, Banská Bystrica, Tim Philips and other students from different faculties of the Comenius University who were interested and involved in Drama SIG, or they were just keen on drama as a means of teaching and learning English.

Although the students were from different secondary

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TESOL 2000 and International Affiliate Partnerships

There was an all-day TESOL affiliate session with representatives from the attending affiliates. Among the outbreak sessions was one for international affiliate partnerships/sibling relationships, such as that of MATSOL and SAUA-SATE.

From SAUA-SATE Journal *Continued from page 12*

and basic schools and their acquisition of English was of different levels too, they were able to use the language and to communicate in English what, in fact, was the purpose of the event.

What does drama in terms of schools really mean? A very simple definition of a drama is: it is just "an activity" or "something which is done." Many teachers are familiar with the proverb: *What I hear I forget, what I see I remember, what I do I understand.* This is the value of drama which is closest to language teaching. It provides vicarious experiences closest to real life that can be offered in the classroom.

Meanwhile, drama is an untried method of expression rarely used in education although extremely familiar through radio, television, and theater. It is a new style of experience, strong on oral and listening skills. It provides an atmosphere of experiment. It allows the behavior of the world to come inside the classroom. It makes the language relevant and learning fun. (T. Butterfield, A. Sieveking)

What to say in conclusion: the teachers participating and observing came to the agreement that this might be a new way to teach English at schools, to build a positive motivation or to deal with mixed-ability levels classes in the future.

Drama SIG

The Drama SIG events organized as Drama Days have been very popular (we had about 90 participants on average). We have managed to have meetings in Trnava, Dunajská, Streda, Banská Bystrica and Nitra. The Drama SIG coordinator has cooperated with the regional SAUA/SATE representatives and has given a seminar for teachers in Piest'any and Sterusy (Vrbové). We also hope there will be closer cooperation with the teachers from the eastern Slovak regions as we know there are a number of people keen on drama and actually using it as their teaching method.

Forthcoming Events

May 14-15 — 1st National Drama SIG Conference in Nitra. (Deadline for the confirmation of the participation at the conference: 16 April; for more information contact Daniela Bacová.) The participants of the conference will decide about the future events and activities of the Drama SIG.

July 4th-10th — Five-day International Workshop in drama for English Language Teaching in Modrová, near Piest'any.

Autumn 1999 — planned: Drama Days — intensive drama workshops for teachers and piloting drama teaching materials.

"Drama Day" in Nitra

Some unenthusiastic teenagers were slowly moving towards Gymnázium Párovská in Nitra. It was Saturday, February 26th. I found them a good challenge for the teachers who were going to work with them during the one-day workshop "Drama Day." Klára Sándorová trained young learners to improve their pronunciation and intonation. Even Katka Vidová's deaf students were involved and enjoyed the activities. Mária Vargová from Presov University greatly encouraged some adolescents. They discovered they are able to play short adapted scenes from *Romeo and Juliet*.

Conrad Toff's group concentrated on roles and characteristics. The drama SIG coordinator Daniela Bacová's topic was intolerance. You would be surprised by the angry words, hateful and violent gestures there. A tiny girl whispered: "Isn't this . . . West Side Story?"

In the afternoon everybody saw everybody else's results. Each group had a short performance. It must have been a happy moment for each English teacher to see their students working eagerly together, expressing different emotions, using

proper expressions, making us laugh and . . . even cry. It really was a very strong moment, when Daniela Bacová made us sit deeper in our seats by the soft and impressive finish in their sketch.

I was walking home with an overjoyed adolescent par-

Many teachers are familiar with the proverb: *What I hear I forget, what I see I remember, what I do I understand.* This is the value of drama which is closest to language teaching.

ticipant who enthused all the way how worthwhile it was for her and her friends to come. What nice music for the teacher's ears. Who knows, in a couple of years we might see "Shakespeare WITH Love."

— Iveta Raskovicová

ZIP Code Alert

If your zip code has changed, PLEASE e-mail Lisa Soricone, Membership Secretary. All she needs is your name and new zip code. E-mail address: soricoli@gse.harvard.edu

Researching American Colleges Online

John McCarthy

For ESL students hoping to enter degree programs in the United States, information gathering is the first step. There are several websites designed to facilitate this task. However, ESL students may have trouble finding such sites on their own, or using the sites once they have been located.

Below are a few websites that I have found helpful for ESL students researching American colleges. In particular, I have recommended sites that are fairly easy to understand and navigate, and require no registration. In each case, I include some explanation of how the site operates. I hope you find this information useful.

Collegenet.com

This website allows users to search for colleges that match very specific criteria. To begin making a search profile, the user should pick the "College Search" option and choose "Four Year Colleges" or "Two Year Colleges." Then the user can specify a school's enrollment, available majors, tuition range, a region of the country or individual states, and even how close the school should be to a particular city. A user looking for information on a particular college can type in the school's name and bypass the rest of the criteria. Once the user has completed the college profile, Collegenet.com conducts a search and displays a list of matches. To see a list of all the colleges in a state and skip making a search profile, the user should start by choosing the "College Search" option and then pick "Four Year Colleges by State Map" or "Two Year Colleges by State Map." The geographical list is extensive, showing 140 schools in New York, for example.

Both the search profile and the state map options generate the same type of list, which can be reordered according to categories such as enrollment, SAT scores, and percentage of Asian students. The name of each school appears with an address, phone number, enrollment figure and tuition cost. Clicking on the school's name takes the user to the college's website. The user can also click on "Admission/Financial Aid," "Campus Life" or "Academics" for more information about those topics. The information appears in chart form and is very easy to understand.

Overview.com

Like Collegenet.com, this site has a searchable database. The process of selecting criteria for the search is easy to understand, but could be more flexible. For example, the user can choose a field (Education), or a more specific subfield (Teaching English as a Second Language), but it is not possible to choose more than one subfield in a single search. The same problem arises when the user chooses a location. The choice is limited to one state or the entire country.

Once the user has selected the criteria, a list of hits appears. The list is very easy to read and includes each school's address,

phone number, enrollment, and cost. For some of the hits, clicking on the school's name takes the user to that school's website.

The site provides some useful definitions, accessed by clicking "Definitions" at the bottom of the main page. There is also a "Search Tips" option. This option does not explain which operators are used in a search. Instead, the "Search Tips" menu explains why a prospective college student might choose certain criteria. For example, the menu describes the advantages of choosing a large university over a small one. These tips can be helpful for ESL students interested in learning more about the process of picking a school.

College Choice

HYPERLINK <http://www.gseis.ucla.edu/mm/cc/home.html>
www.gseis.ucla.edu/mm/cc/home.html

Choosing a degree program can seem overwhelming for ESL students, and these sites should simplify the process. Getting into one's first choice, however, is as difficult as ever.

The College Choice website offers some great background information on selecting a school and the application process. The site also includes a timeline showing the steps American students should complete as they prepare for college. The articles on this site are clearly written, with a fairly easy level of vocabulary.

This site does not allow users to search for colleges matching a specific profile, but it does provide an extensive list of links to other college related websites. The links direct users to searchable databases, testing information, and areas of special interest, including ESL. The links to ESL resources are especially useful.

CollegeProfiles.com

This site has very good information on specific schools. Unfortunately, the number of schools is limited. The alphabetical list of colleges, for example, shows only one school (Iowa Wesleyan) under "I." No colleges appear under "Y." The geographic directory lists no schools for Alaska or Arizona. New York has the most, with 38. From one of these lists, clicking on a school's name takes the user to an entry about the college. Each entry has a picture of the campus and a detailed description about the school's history, academic atmosphere, and student life activities. Statistics about the school are displayed along the margin. The entries also contain links to the colleges' websites. CollegeProfiles.com has another list of schools under the head-

Continued on page 24

And The Winner Is . . .

Here are the results of last issue's quiz, called Ichthyological Conundra. We were bowled over by the response — a tribute either to MATSOL members' great learning, or their interest in a free lunch. First, thanks to all the runners-up: John Kopec, Linda Butler, Carol Piñero, Barbara McCarthy.

All submissions were pretty close, but the one who was firstest with the mostest, whose answer is printed below, and who



may now contact the editor for the fish lunch at Doyle's, is —Lillian Cochran.

1. ghoti — GH in the word "laugh" sounds like F. O in the word "women" sounds like a short I. TI in the word nation sound like SH.

2. The logo is the cod which is the Sacred Cod, the symbol of the Massachusetts Bay Colony. It currently resides in a place of prominence in the Massachusetts State House designed by the native-born architect, Charles Bulfinch.

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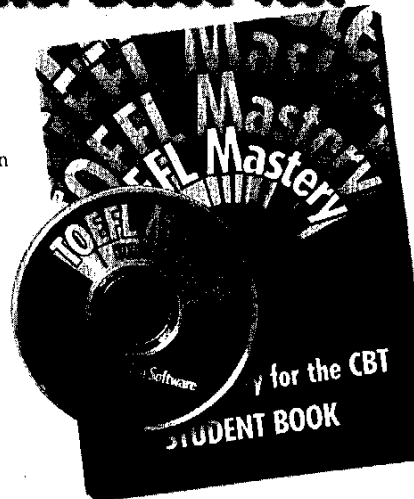
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Quantitative Methods in Educational Research

Jean Chandler

Three quantitative methods are commonly used in educational research. They are 1) descriptive, 2) correlational, and 3) group comparison methods. Two major types of descriptive research are surveys and observational reports. Both of these can be reported either qualitatively or quantitatively. Surveys are used to collect data about the views of respondents, be they students, teachers, or administrators. For example, students could be interviewed about their attitudes toward reading; teachers could fill out a questionnaire about their opinions toward portfolio assessment. The results could be described either in terms of general patterns (qualitatively) or in terms of averages, percentages, ranges. (quantitatively), or both. Similarly, observations can be done in an unstructured way and described ethnographically, using low-inference, behavioral descriptions. For example, rather than describe a student simply as disruptive, in field notes one should detail the student's behavior in terms of kinds of disruptive behavior. Or observations can be structured to focus on one or two aspects and described numerically (for example, how many times the student called out without permission or interfered physically with another student within a certain time period).

To calculate averages and standard deviations, which are the two most common quantitative measures cited, use the Excel menu running at the top of the page horizontally, click on the function key (fx) and under that, "Statistical." Both are listed there; click on "Next" to tell Excel the location of the data, and then "Finish."

A second method of quantitative research, correlation, is used to explore the degree of relationship between two variables. For example, one might want to see if quiz scores are correlated with grades on journals or with attendance records. If as quiz scores rise, grades on journals also go up, the two variables are positively correlated. If as quiz scores rise, the number of classes missed tends to fall, the two variables are negatively correlated. If there is little or no relationship between them, they are not highly correlated. Correlation does not tell anything about causality. For example, one might measure the relationship of achievement and self-esteem. Even if they are highly correlated, one does not know if high achievement causes high self-esteem or if high self-esteem causes high achievement or if a third factor causes both. If two factors are highly correlated, one might explore them further using some other methods if that is possible. (However, correlation is often used when the variables, such as age, cannot be manipulated.) For example, one could try to raise

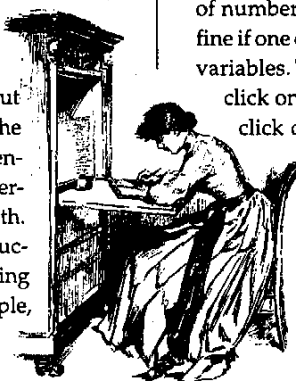
the self-esteem of students and then see if their achievement also increases. This is the only way one can investigate whether one variable causes changes in another: to manipulate one variable and measure its effect on the other in the context of an experiment or quasi-experiment where all other variables are held constant.

One disadvantage of Excel is that it can only compare sets of numbers that are physically next to each other, but that is fine if one only wants to explore the relationship between two variables. To compute a correlation in Excel 5.0 for Windows, click on the "Tools" menu at the top. Under that, click on the last item, "Data Analysis," and under that, "Correlation" can be found. Again, it is necessary to list the location of the data, for example, a1:a9, and b1:b9, as well as where to put the results.

Experiments are the ideal kind of group comparison research, but in teacher research, experiments can rarely be done because the teacher usually is unable to randomly assign students to groups. For example, one might want to test the difference in the correctness of students' subsequent writing if the students are required to correct their own mistakes versus if the teacher corrects their mistakes for them. If the teacher gets to randomly assign the students to one group or another and if each group is 30 students or more (30 is roughly the minimum number to do statistics on), the teacher can conduct a true experiment. Assuming all the other factors are controlled (i.e., kept the same) for the two groups, one can conclude that whatever difference there was between the two groups in correctness of their subsequent writing was caused by their different treatments. Usually a teacher has to work with whatever group of students he or she is given and is unable to assign them randomly. In that case, the group comparison is called a quasi-experiment if everything but the treatment is held constant. Since my classes have fewer than 30 students, I usually have to do the same quasi experiment for several years to get enough students to compare statistically.

What a statistical test will reveal, in this case, a t-test comparing the mean number of errors per 100 words on subsequent writing between the two groups, is whether the difference occurs by chance or not. If the p value (probability) is less than .05, it means there is at least a 95% probability that the result did not occur by chance. (Now it becomes clear why there must be a minimum number of cases (or students) in order to achieve results that are statistically significant, i.e., with a p value of less than .05.) To do this analysis, first one has to calculate the number of errors per word by dividing the

Continued on page 20



How I Got into ESL

Nancy Centers
Job Bank Coordinator

As the MATSOL Job Bank Coordinator, I am often asked to give ESL teachers all kinds of advice on career development. Over the phone and at conferences, the most frequently asked question is, "How do we find jobs in ESL?" We find them through connections with all the people in our life! Often those discussions allow me to reflect on my own career path, and to marvel at how I got to where I am today.

I have always had an interest in all kinds of diversity. My childhood neighborhood in Brooklyn, NY exposed me to the sounds of different languages and the smells of all kinds of ethnic cooking, and the faces of the kids I played with outside my house and at school, P.S. 197. On trips to museums and the United Nations, concerts, and even shopping trips with my parents I was fascinated by people. My immediate playmates were Italian, Russian, Syrian, Israeli, Chinese, Korean and Greek. Of course, even back then, I eagerly played "teacher" helping them with homework and making friends. From that enrichment and the encouragement of my parents, I studied both Spanish and French in

high school in upstate NY and as a senior, I participated in an exchange program between my high school music department and one in a little city in Germany. I knew by the end of that year that I wanted to become a language teacher and off I went to college.

As an undergraduate, I lived in an international residences hall at SUNY New Palz, and was employed as an English and French tutor in the Learning Resource Center where I began to also tutor ESL students. Although I was a French and communications major my work in ESL was very fulfilling and I ended up teaching in the Intensive English Program on campus through my senior year and then three summers after graduation. Then, the ESL "bug" really took me! I completed a NY State Challenger Scholarship application for graduate school at SUBT Albany, where I earned my M.A. in TESOL in 1989. I relocated to Athens, Ohio, where I earned my Ph.D. in Educational Administration while employed as an adjunct ESL lecturer at Ohio University. I also lived for two years in Columbus, Ohio worked at the Ohio

Continued on page 25

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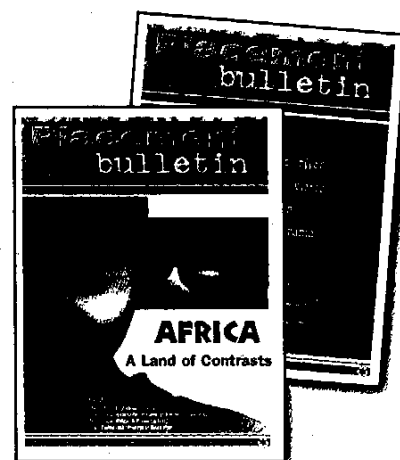
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New Teacher Regulations Revisited

David Tolson

As reported in the last issue of *Currents*, the Commonwealth Department of Education is proposing new regulations for the training and licensing of teachers. A draft concept paper was presented to the state Board of Education in November which outlined sweeping changes in teacher training and preparation. In the initial draft, the D.O.E. proposed significant changes for licensing ESL teachers. Most notable in the initial draft concept paper was the proposal that required candidates first to receive a license in another teaching area before being able to obtain an ESL license.

Following the presentation of the draft concept paper, the D.O.E. opened the regulations for public comment. In December, 1999, a revised draft concept paper was published.

In this most recent proposed regulations draft there has been a significant reversal from the regulations presented at the November board meeting in regards to the new ESL licensing proposal. As proposed in the current draft, ESL will continue to be an area in which candidates can earn an initial teaching license. The current ESL certification route will remain intact. ESL candidates will only need to follow new general regulations involving preparation and testing.

Dr. Sandra Stotsky, Deputy Commissioner at the D.O.E., and author of the recently published book, *Losing our Language: How Multicultural Classroom Instruction Is Undermining our Children's Ability to Read, Write, and Reason*, has been preparing the new draft regulations. The timetable for adoption by the Board is set for the June 2000 meeting with implementation schedule for September 2001. In a response to questions regarding the proposed regulations and ESL, Stotsky's office replied, "We are keeping the license as it exists

in the current regulations and in the regular, not specialist category." When questioned about the impact of public comment, a representative of Stotsky's office again replied, "We have only received one response to date and it is a positive one, i.e. the educator who has written to us is supportive of what is included in the certificate."

The return of initial ESL licensing in the most recent proposed regulations may be seen as good news for the current status quo in ESL teacher preparation. Graduate

The return of initial ESL licensing in the most recent proposed regulations may be seen as good news for the current status quo in ESL teacher preparation.

students in M.A./M.Ed. TESL programs will be able to continue to work on initial teacher licensing and a degree program at the same time without having to have earned a previous teaching license in another field first. Testing will also be simplified. Candidates for ESL licensing must pass the Massachusetts Educator Certification Tests in the general areas of communication and literacy as well as the ESL subject area test. There will be no need to test in an additional teaching area.

A memorandum dated December 16, 1999, sent from David Driscoll, Massachusetts Commissioner of Education

Continued on page 20

Eastern Nazarene College Initiates New M. Ed. in TESL

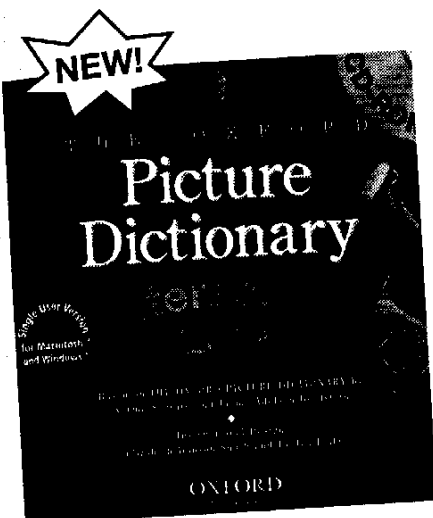
Eastern Nazarene College in Quincy, Massachusetts, has initiated a new Masters of Education (M.Ed.) program in Teaching English as a Second Language. This 36 credit M.Ed. in TESL degree complements ENC's existing State certification program in ESL. Classes are offered in the evenings and on weekends.

Eastern Nazarene College is fully accredited by NEASC and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Dr. Lorne Ransstrom, Chair of the Division of Teacher Education at ENC, states that, "We are expanding our existing ESL certification program to meet the needs of not just public schools, but also to provide quality teachers for worldwide programs." For further infor-

mation on the M.Ed. in TESL program or ESL certification in Massachusetts please contact Cleo Cakridas in the Graduate Enrollment Office at (617) 745-3870 (cakridac@enc.edu).

Since its inception in 1900, Eastern Nazarene College has pursued a mission of excellence in education, and offers resources and opportunities for participation, advancement, and services to all students regardless of race, color, national origin, age, gender or physical challenge.

David E. Tolson, Ph.D. is Coordinator of Graduate Education Programs and TESL Program Advisor at Eastern Nazarene College.



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New Teacher Regulations Revisited Continued from page 18

and Deputy Commissioner Stotsky to school superintendents, principals, education deans, and other education professionals outlined the significant general changes in the new proposed regulations.

According to this memo, the new regulations will streamline teacher licensing and create multiple routes to licensure. A Masters degree will no longer be required for the final stage of professional license. The impact of these general changes on ESL teaching is uncertain. There may be easier avenues for ESL professionals with non-public school experience to gain a teachers license. Enrollment in graduate TESL programs may drop as the current Masters degree requirement will be removed.

The new regulations also propose strengthening subject matter for each license. Elementary and liberal arts majors wishing to earn a license must have a major in an academic content area. While this issue was discussed by the State Board at the November meeting, there was a lack of clarity as to what would constitute an academic major. For example, several board members felt that a psychology degree would not be an appropriate academic major. This may possibly create problems for ESL teacher preparation programs that grant undergraduate certification in Pre K-9 ESL, as those students typically have a major similar to elementary educa-

tion candidates. In regards to the academic preparation required of ESL teachers, Stotsky's office commented that, "We expect a rigorous academic preparation to apply to all programs."

Other new proposed regulations that may impact ESL licensing include increasing the role of mentoring and creating induction programs at the district level. All districts will

According to this memo, the new regulations will streamline teacher licensing and create multiple routes to licensure. A Masters degree will no longer be required for the final stage of Professional License.

be required to provide induction programs for beginning teachers. In ESL, particularly in non-urban areas and in smaller districts, the size of a program staff may make effective induction somewhat problematic.

David E. Tolson, Ph.D. is Coordinator of Graduate Education Programs and TESL Program Advisor at Eastern Nazarene College.

Quantitative Methods in Educational Research Continued from page 16

number of errors in one student's writing by the number of words in that text. (If the student has written the text with a word processor, most computers will report how many words are in the text. For example, under the Tools menu in Microsoft Word, there is a Word Count option.) Then one can easily do this calculation using a spreadsheet such as Excel. First one writes down the number of errors per word of each student in one group in one column, and the number of errors per word of students in the other group in the adjoining column. Then in Excel, under the Tools menu and then under Data Analysis, one clicks on "t-test assuming unequal variance." Then one must tell Excel the location of those two columns and where one wants the results displayed. The results will contain a mean and a variance (the standard deviation is the square root of the variance) for each group, indicating how the values are distributed. Results will also show p values for a two-tailed test and for a one-tailed test. The two-tailed test is to be used if you don't have any theory about which treatment is better; a one-tailed test is to confirm or disconfirm a hypothesis.

To be sure that the two groups were equivalent at the beginning, one should measure the number of errors per word on a pre-test, and compare the two groups on the pre-test. If a t-test shows the means of the two groups on the pre-test not to

be statistically significantly different ($p > .05$), then a t-test of the means of the two groups on the post-test will reveal whether or not the treatment has made a significant difference. If the means of the two groups are significantly different on the pre-test, then covariance should be used instead of a t-test.

F*T-tests are only used for continuous variables such as test scores; categorical variables, such as sex, should be tested with chi-square, which I will not describe because it is not simple to do on Excel.handler.

Jean Chandler, in addition to her position as Teacher Research Editor for Currents, teaches ESL at The New England Conservatory of Music.

Review A Book

Currents receives so many new books for review purposes that it's impossible to review them all. Here are a few of the titles that have arrived recently. If you are interested in writing a review of one, see details on page 25.

REVIEWS



English for New Americans

by Carol Piñero, Ed.D. Living Language, Random House, Inc., 1999. 122-128 pages/text. Workbooks (with answer keys), Videos, Audio Cassettes, Audio Cassette Scripts. ISBN #0-609-80620-3.

Reviewed by Kira Porter, M.Ed.

This textbook and video series is designed as a self-study program for non-English speakers learning English, though this review also considers classroom use. Using an immersion (rather than bilingual) approach, with a variety of native and non-native English speakers, the series exposes the advanced beginner student to many different accents and speech patterns. Based on the survival content, the series seems to be intended for new immigrants in the United States. However, most of the content is relevant for international adult students as well, addressing as it does a variety of real life scenarios. The series is well organized and presented and can be adapted by teachers for use in the young adult and adult beginner classroom. It may be more appropriate for complete beginners when used in the classroom.

The series includes three workbooks, each with accompanying materials: *Everyday Life*, *Work & School*, and *Health & Safety*. I will focus on the workbooks and video in this review. The audio cassettes were too basic for my students in an intensive course; they really are best used by students on their own, being simply listen and repeat sentences. Each title has the same level of difficulty. Each workbook includes an introduction in five languages, and seven units, each dealing with a practical situation. The workbook and the video are to be used together. The student is instructed to watch a unit on the video, then watch the same unit again while using the workbook. There are clear symbols on the video that instruct the student (or teacher) when to stop the video and do exercises in the workbook, and the workbook has symbols identifying when to begin the video again.

Each unit is divided into the following sections. First, See It, Hear It, Say It. This is a very basic introduction to key vocabulary used in the unit. The words appear on the video, accompanied by a photographic image of the noun or verb. This is a bit too slow and simplistic for advanced beginners.

Second, Watch and Listen. This section introduces a simulated life situation through a dialogue between actors with varying accents. There are foreign actors representing China, Russia, and Mexico, along with two native English speakers from North America. At the end of each unit in the

workbook there is a video transcript which the student can read with the video. At the end of the scene, one of the native English speakers introduces a few phrases which are not necessarily connected to the content or theme of the unit. Although the phrases may be important to learn, they can also be confusing to students because they sometimes appear out of context.

Third, Real People....Real Language. This section introduces non-actors (real people) in an interview format. They are all asked to answer the same question and the student listens to the various answers. There are listening comprehension exercises in the workbook which correspond to this

This series has accomplished what it set out to do: to introduce typical situations in daily life to non-native speakers, while at the same time illustrating the cultural and linguistic diversity which makes the U.S. so unique.

section. This can be appropriately challenging or extremely difficult. Teachers should be prepared to adapt this important part of the unit to their students' level.

The strengths of the series lie in the variety of exercises in the workbook (fill-in the blanks, multiple choice, word-scramble), the use of distinct accents and real people throughout the video, and the introduction of basic grammatical structures and vocabulary. There is enough variety in each unit that the teacher can be selective about what is truly effective for each class, thereby using the series as a foundation for more difficult content. The text invites the creative teacher to expand on the lesson.

One limitation of the series is the repetition of the grammatical structures and content. Each workbook covers the same material, but using a different scenario. Although this might be helpful for a self-learner to have repetitive practice, in a classroom with varying levels of speakers, it is difficult to repeat structures twice, let alone three times, if a teacher were going to use all three books. Perhaps the teacher could introduce a unit from one book and use another similar one for review, but all three seem redundant. Another weakness is that some of the answers in the answer key are not accurate. Unit Six in *Everyday Life* in particular had many errors in the

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Earthbound

by Sabine Helling, University of Michigan Press, 1997. 189 pages. ISBN 0-472-08375-9. Student text and Teacher's Manual.

Reviewed by Sterling Giles

Earthbound is one of seven titles from Michigan offering content instruction for ESL/EFL. The other texts span levels from beginning to advanced and include themes in environmental science, health, culture, drama, the media, and linguistics. They are appropriate for middle school, higher ed, and adult populations. This review focuses only on the beginning level Earthbound, which teaches basic geography. Although the decision to structure a semester around content-based instruction (CBI) has proved challenging, I highly recommend the book.

The book's (and the series') particular methodological focus is content-based instruction: instead of a reading book with a little taste of many unrelated topics, one subject is treated throughout in depth, similar to what one would encounter in a regular high school or college course. While the students remain focused on the content — content objectives are clearly stated in each chapter — the teacher is given (in the Teacher's Manual) both content and language objectives. The students' experience is, albeit at a level which incorporates a good deal of metalinguistic knowledge, closer than usual to a natural language learning process. This approach thus maximizes language learning while better preparing students for the expectations of the content courses they will soon confront in college. *Earthbound* helps students in the areas of pronunciation, discrete and whole listening, and vocabulary development skills. Reading skills and vocabulary are the principal focus.

The different chapters of *Earthbound* focus on the definition and sub-fields of geography, globes and maps, the solar system, several folk tales explaining the creation of the earth, plate tectonics, factors determining the shape of the land, water, and weather and climate. It's an excellent progression, each theme building on the previous ones, enabling beginning students to engage, eventually, in fairly sophisticated writing and discussion. E.g., the unit on creation myths led students to suggest discussion of the current creationism controversy. I was impressed with the final exams: essays on mountain building and shaping, the water cycle, etc., with academic vocabulary, specific verbs, and clear descriptions of cause and effect in multi-stage processes. Students were required to write an essay about another student's country. This went well. I followed it up with an essay on a specific aspect of another student's country, now necessitating use of the encyclopedia as well as interviews. Was it the book that made this second step surprisingly easy and successful? I think so, though I can't be certain. (It was also a semester with good class cohesion.)

Each chapter introduces or defines its subject and tells students, "At the end of this chapter, you will be able to..." It then introduces a lot of vocabulary which will be explained in

the readings, and focuses on one aspect of pronunciation/listening in this vocabulary. A variety of vocabulary exercises follow, interspersed with "grammar boxes." These are short explanations of grammar points, with clear contrastive examples. Having them set aside in boxes is a good idea, making it easy for the teacher to explain homework assignments and keeping the content separate from the grammar. Most chap-

I was impressed by the book's ability to convey so much about reading skills without using the "teacher language" which often distracts from the main purpose of reading instruction: successful interaction with the text.

ters also have a listening exercise: the teacher reads an interview, lecture, tour, or other material (found in the Teacher's Guide) and students respond in various ways in their text. There's a good variety of listening types, some involving numbers, whole ideas, specific new words, etc. Finally, the core of the chapter comprises several readings, with more exercises. These integrate material from the reading and listening; they also involve the grammar and vocabulary. They range from structured to open ended and focus on comprehension, vocabulary, and text organization, always with a focus on the content.

It is, I think, a wise decision to choose CBI, yet I also believe in letting students shape the curriculum. With the need to order books in advance, a typical reader allows us to bounce around in the text and give students a voice in choosing which topics to study. When I chose *Earthbound* I made this decision for them, for the entire semester. I also chose a book which clearly works best when you begin with chapter one and move on to two, three, etc. We had less freedom, but this resulted in a more profound experience. The book led us to explore in detail complex topics, which most students understood. The topics naturally opened up, and we found ourselves making meaningful connections between material in the text, encyclopedias, newspapers, magazines, a few books, and interviews with classmates, all at the low-intermediate level. I thought it was a great semester. When choosing the book I wavered between a beginner and intermediate text from Michigan's CBI series. I cautiously chose the beginner text, which was perhaps slightly easy for my students. But we complemented this with regular use of *National Geographic*

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Why...Thank You: How to Have Fun Writing Fantastic Notes and More

by Cat Wagman. Working Words, 1997. 108 pages. ISBN 0-9652670-6-7.

Reviewed by Eileen Feldman

Why...*Thank You's* subtitle sums up Wagman's purpose and tone in this illustrated, easy-to-read little book. The back cover's blurb refers to getting "back to the common courtesies of Life, Living, and Remembering." Such enabling civility is what is needed in both survival and business ESL texts.

In ten chapters Wagman presents the rationale, organization, problems, creative muse, process, and examples of writing thank you notes. The opening chapters on how to organize are thorough to the point of describing the card file and writing materials. Chapters on customizing notes and being creative lend themselves to lessons on variety in vocabulary and synonyms (e.g., for *happy*, *wonderful*, and *gift*). Humor - an elusive language facility - is consciously taught and valued in Wagman's notes. Mousse, the cartoon cat, gets into funny situations that involve language your students will want to use themselves. Visualization aids creativity and whimsy and affective barriers to learning are quickly broken down by this humor.

The latter five chapters contain samples of both kids' and adults' note writing, accompanied by the facts surrounding the giving of the gift, such as reason, giver, and special connections. The facts mirror real-life experiences with which readers and would-be note writers can identify. The language level and length of the samples vary appropriately with age, as do the types of occasions ranging from births and birthdays, to retirements.

Useful vocabulary and spelling lessons can be extracted from these samples. Correct letter formatting can also be discussed. Cultural lessons derive naturally from discussions of turning points and other events such as weddings, deaths, Mother's Day, and the offer of free sports tickets in a business situation.

Following the ten instructional chapters are several user-friendly features. The index allows for easy retrieval for given occasions, letter formats, or creativity techniques. The book in-

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Earthbound *Continued from page 23*

magazine, with its challenging unadapted text. Here we focused on the pictures and their captions. It worked well and the pictures made conversations easy at the beginning.

I used the book in a low-intermediate, semester-long college prep reading/writing class, which met 6 hours/week at a community college. I'd read about content-based instruction and its effectiveness and decided it was time to "just do it." I was a bit nervous that my students would be stuck with a topic they didn't want. This turned out not to be the case. They enjoyed the topic and I could see that we had a successful semester: people's writing improved dramatically, students understood the material and got very involved learning about details and specific aspects of one another's cultures, text-based vocabulary strategies improved, and the English (rather than bilingual) dictionary became the tool of choice. Nevertheless, at the end of the semester, when I asked them if I should use the book again or revert to a typical reader, with its little tastes of many topics, they advised that my next batch of students would probably prefer a variety of topics in the course. I felt the CBI method had served them well and wondered if they knew what was good for them. I continue to wrestle with this problem.

I was impressed by the book's ability to convey so much about reading skills without using the "teacher language" which often distracts from the main purpose of reading instruction: successful interaction with the text. The book also avoids the common problem of lengthy task descriptions which are beyond the students' reading ability. The

one criticism I have of this book is that it is not attractively laid out, which is not just an aesthetic issue. The book does an excellent job of relating text to graphs and illustrations, with exercises to help students make this connection, but some of the illustrations are not clear and make this task unnecessarily difficult. Some tasks are broken up on sepa-

I was impressed with the final exams: essays on mountain building and shaping, the water cycle, etc., with academic vocabulary, specific verbs, and clear descriptions of cause and effect in multi-stage processes.

rate pages in ways which confuse students. These are unfortunate details in an otherwise engaging and useful book. There's no question that this book is a good choice. However, the decision to use one content area for most or a semester in a general skills class remains a brave step forward for many teachers.

Sterling Giles teaches at Roxbury Community College and CELOP. A former member of the Board, he is now the Reviews Editor for MATSOL Currents. sterlg@aol.com

Over the Transom

Currents has recently received the following books: Several local authors have interesting new offerings. Margaret Gelin has produced *Taking Turns: A Pair-Based Text for Beginning ESL*, which was recently picked up by the University of Michigan Press. Kevin King, from Brandeis, has written a richly imaginative book on idioms which uses easily understood physical metaphors as an organizing principle. From Cambridge University Press we have Catherine Sadow and Edgar Sather's *On the Air: Listening to Talk Radio*, with a variety of engaging new topics.

Also from Cambridge's several series on Language Teaching, Training, and Applied Linguistics we have new books on the Mental Lexicon, Focus on Form, Affect, Mentor Courses, and Intercultural Perspectives. Newbury House has produced *Learning About Language Assessment*, also for teachers and administrators. Longman gives us *Britain Close Up*, a contemporary content reader, and an *Idioms Dictionary* with over 6,000 idioms. Michigan has come out with a resource guide for interactive, contextual grammar practice, as well as *Speech Craft*, a series of books on various aspects of advanced

and academic discourse. *Pronunciation Matters* offers story-based activities that are unusually rich, though traditional. *Choice Readings* is now available in an international edition for EFL environments. *Eureka* is a high-intermediate/advanced reader which teaches vocabulary, vocabulary acquisition skills, and cultural information through proverbs and fables. Alta has recently produced a handbook for administrators as well as several interesting collections of imaginative activities. *Talk It Over!*, from Houghton Mifflin, integrates pronunciation with whole listening and

speaking exercises on a variety of interesting topics. They also have a new book on *Targeting Pronunciation*. Oxford's *American Wordpower Dictionary*, in paper and CD-ROM versions, is also available for review, as well as a new *Picture Dictionary for Kids*. And from the Management Development Center in Hong Kong we have *Business English and Communication*.

If you are interested in writing a review of any of these texts, contact Sterling Giles at (617) 421-9134, sterlg@aol.com. You can earn PDP's for writing published reviews.

REVIEW A BOOK FOR CURRENTS

How to Have Fun Writing Fantastic Notes and More

Continued from page 23

cludes information on ordering with group discounts, and a mention of Wagman's in-school presentations to educators.

Beyond the immediate need to write appropriate thank-you notes for various deeds and gifts, users of this book might be motivated toward further creative writing: a short story or poem surrounding the gift, a character sketch of the

giver, hypothetical business thank you's following up interviews or raises, comparisons of customs in the US and other countries. The simple act of writing a note opens up many doors for learning about the language of life.

Eileen Feldman teaches at Bunker Hill Community College and Suffolk University.

Researching American Colleges Online

Continued from page 14

ing "Multicultural Student Profiles." Clicking on one of the colleges listed there brings the user to a page displaying information about minority enrollment, multicultural activities, and scholarships.

Of the many college search websites I have visited, the ones described above have been the most useful. Choosing a degree program can seem overwhelming for ESL students, and these sites should simplify the process. Getting into one's first choice, however, is as difficult as ever.

John McCarthy teaches computer skills and ESL courses, including American Colleges, at Showa Boston. In a previous life, he worked at a software company as a technical writer. johnm@showaboston.org

CORRECTION

In Vol. 25, No. 1 we published a review of *New Directions: An Integrated Approach to Reading, Writing, and Critical Thinking*. The publisher and ISBN number listed in the review were wrong. (The title has moved from its original publisher to another.) This book is currently published by Cambridge University Press, the ISBN number is 0-521-65776-8. Our apologies to Cambridge.

Corporate Sponsors of Spring Conference Continued from page 8

positions are entry level opportunities and are filled by the growing Latino and other recent immigrant population. Chadwick's in partnership with the union has been proactive in addressing the training and basic communication needs of the workforce. From funding provided through the Corporation for Business Work and Learning, a worker training effort directed by a UNITE industrial engineer was launched in August 1999. In addition, an ESOL program funded by MA DOE and coordinated by Bristol Community College began in the Fall. UNITE Business agent Ernie Loring says the union has always be active in promoting worker education, "At Chadwick's there is a real opportunity to have a positive impact on people's work lives through the ESOL and job training program. Members see that the union is working with the company to get resources and made these programs work." Tom Minichiello, H.R. Director notes that people take pride in attending the classes. "The classes gives workers an opportunity to connect better here at Chadwick's so that they will have more job satisfaction and advance in their jobs."

Quaker Fabrics

941 Grinnell Street
Fall River, MA 02721

Quaker Fabrics began operations in 1945 as a small family-owned fabric mill. Today it is one of the largest producers of Jacquard upholstery fabric in the world employing 2,700 in Massachusetts. As Quaker's workforce has grown, so has the need for employee training and development. The company is in the process of constructing a dedicated learning center to house their training efforts which include read/write skills, reading tutoring, GED/ESOL, and classroom and skill based machine training. Joy McGuirk-Hadley, Director of Training states, "in striving to be a world class suppliers of quality upholstery fabric, Quaker recognizes the need to support and improve employee skill development. Establishing the company's new learning center will be another step forward in providing employees with the tools and opportunity to grow and advance in their jobs as well as in their personal lives."

English for New Americans Continued from page 21

Real People...Real Language section.

I used the series with a mixed-beginner listening/speaking elective which met 9 hours weekly for 12 weeks, in the context of a 24 hour/week program. My experience with this series was relatively positive, but I wasn't able to cover all of the material usefully. I used *Everyday Life* first because it was the most relevant to my beginning level students. After finishing the seven units, however, I did not feel it would be appropriate to go all the way back to the beginning of the other workbooks for a review. Instead, I chose only the more difficult units from the other workbooks for review. I was disappointed that the students did not become more engaged in the story lines or lives of the actors in the simulated situations. I think if they had, it would have been more interesting for them. At the end of the course the students told me that they

liked the videotape a lot because they could hear different accents. Some thought it was too easy; others felt it was appropriately challenging.

This series has accomplished what it set out to do: to introduce typical situations in daily life to non-native speakers, while at the same time illustrating the cultural and linguistic diversity which makes the U.S. so unique. I would urge any teacher to become acquainted with the content and grammatical structures of all of the units of the three books, in order to best utilize the repetitive material efficiently and effectively.

Kira Porter has been teaching ESL in the U.S. and Europe since 1992. She has an M.Ed. from Harvard University, and is a Senior Lecturer at Boston University's CELOP, as well as a teacher and curriculum developer at the Harvard Business School. kirap@earthlink.net

How I Got into ESL Continued from page 17

State University American Language Program, and started my own small business teaching at American based supply companies of Honda of America, and at Plaskolite, teaching Vietnamese and Cambodian refugees.

With the dissertation completed and graduate diploma in hand, I was hired by Northeastern University (July 1977) and relocated to the Boston area. Little did I know that I would find myself in ESL administration full-time after the departure of two Directors from our English Language

Center. It has been a challenging year to say the least. I also teach Russian senior citizens in the evenings at the YMCA on Huntington Avenue, just to stay in touch with the classroom and contribute in a small way to the community. As I look back at all the people who have touched my life I can only smile and hope that each of them knows they are not forgotten. Each has added to my strength as an educator and each has given me the opportunity to open new doors.

New MATSOL Executive Board Members



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Bartleby Scriveners Does Currents' Layout

Bob Schecter, of Bartleby Scriveners, who comments here on his association with MATSOL, lays out each issue of Currents. He also designs, writes, and produces newsletters for several other professional associations, non-profits, and businesses.

As a layman interested in language, I have enjoyed laying out and helping to proof *MATSOL Currents* for the past seven years. The editors whom I have assisted — Ruth Spack, Susanne Koons, Ron Clark, and Tom Griffith — have seemed to me uniformly dedicated to the task of producing a publication that supports the needs of MATSOL's members while helping the Massachusetts section cut a good figure in the wider ESL world.

My meetings with the editors since 1993 have been as varied as MATSOL's membership. I usually saw Ruth Spack briefly at the printer's to get material and instructions, and often delivered drafts and proofs through the screen door of her nearby home. I met with Susanne Koons twenty stories up in the high rise apartment she shared with her graduate student husband at MIT, and we would review the draft over lunch, out. I connected with Ron Clark mainly by phone and in brief stops at his home; editorship coincided with the birth of a first child. But he did the job as well as anyone. For more than two years now I have worked with Tom Griffith, and perhaps because we share some particular interests apart from language — stemming in part from our longish synchronous sojourns in Africa — we have taken to meeting at the famous Doyle's in Jamaica Plain, not far from Tom's Showa campus, to talk of *Currents* and other matters.

I have come to appreciate, from my reading of *Currents* over the years — the historical linguistics columns, and the imaginative teaching devices developed by numerous instructors have been my special favorites — that ESL teaching professionals have struggled — still struggle — to gain full recognition and treatment equal to that received by colleagues in other fields. I am sure that *Currents* helps, and I am glad to be associated with the effort.

PS Although Bartleby preferred not to, I do.

Bob Schecter

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







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