

## A Good Workplace Education Program Starts with a Good Workplace Needs Analysis *by Robert Vitello*

**M**any companies are asking adult education providers to start a workplace basic skills program for them at their work-site. What should your first step be? According to Connie Nelson, Director of the MA Workers' Education Roundtable, you should first conduct a Workplace Needs Analysis (WNA). A WNA is a good way to survey and research the real training and education needs. Technically it provides a systematic approach to accurately gauge the basic skills training needs of a particular workforce within the context and culture that exists at the company. Why do this? Because there may be different perceptions of the education/training issues depending upon who you speak to in the company. A WNA will provide a snapshot of how communication, both written and oral, flows through an organization and how people learn to do

their jobs. Participation in the WNA should be voluntary and involve at least 10 % of the workforce through interviews and focus groups. In addition, a first hand observation of the work-site is recommended including a review of company bulletin boards, newsletters, work orders and forms, and training material.

"This all takes some time to do it right," Nelson notes, "but it can have a number of important pay-offs." A properly conducted WNA:

- allows the education provider to gain support and establish a rapport with company and union officials as well as employees and supervisors;
- encourages stakeholders to buy into the WNA recommendations;

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## Inside

## The Art of the Conference

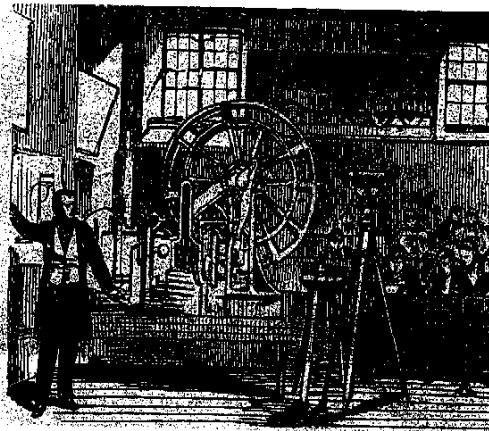
*by Tom Griffith*

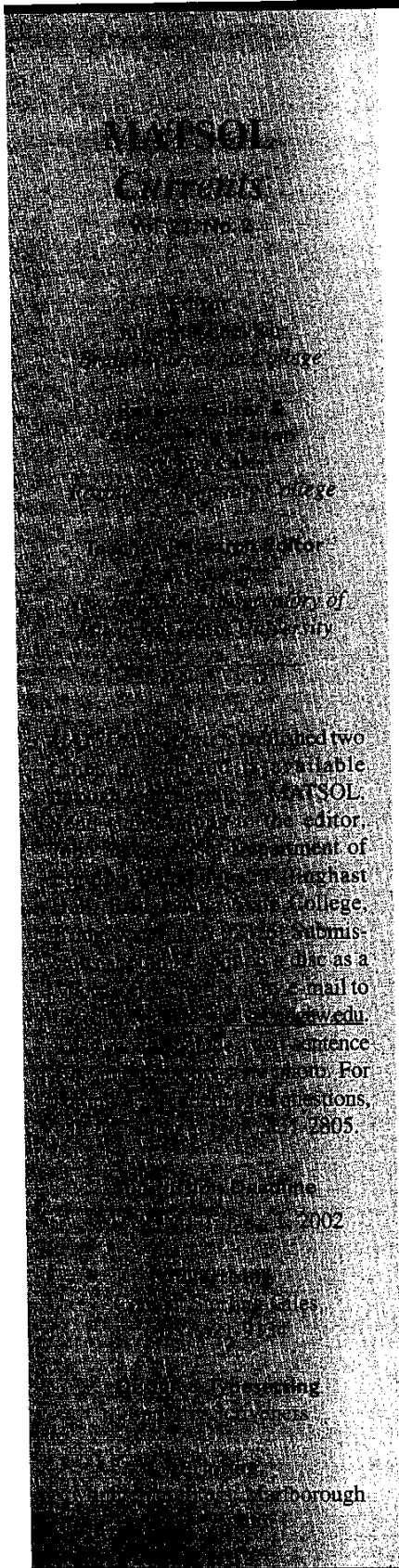
**I** love conferences. TESOL, MATSOL, THIS-OL, THAT-OL — what ever, I try very hard to get to them. I would like to say it flows from my commitment to professional development, and that's partly true. But let's be honest. Conferences are fun. They break up the tedium of work. They expose us to new places, people, ideas. And they meet a deep human longing just to get away. The Middle Ages had its pilgrimages, the 19th century its camp meetings, and our time the professional conference. The effect can be rejuvenating, even exhilarating

(especially if you go on someone else's nickel).

TESOL 2001 beckoned in December, with the arrival of the preliminary program. I always want to go to TESOL, but have managed it only five times. The style I go in has

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## From The President

**E**very year during the TESOL Convention affiliate leaders gather for a series of business meetings and leadership development workshops. These initiatives provide opportunities for TESOL affiliates such as MATSOL to exchange experiences, to access TESOL expertise and support, and to find out about the direction that TESOL and the field are taking. They also provide an opportunity for affiliates to assess themselves and identify similarities and differences in the ways that different affiliates address the needs of ESOL professionals.

This year during the TESOL Convention in St. Louis several members of the MATSOL Board of Directors participated in these initiatives and came away with a new understanding of the issues we face as an organization and profession. One such understanding was that many of our peer affiliates have witnessed a change in membership needs and a need for some form of strategic response. This validated our MATSOL Forward work and we learned that we are behind some and ahead of other affiliates along the organizational growth curve.

In the remainder of this letter, I would like to highlight one issue that MATSOL seems to have in common with many other affiliates and with TESOL. It relates to governance. As the professional development demands and teacher and learner advocacy issues continue to increase, we realize that we are not (yet) fully equipped to address these issues satisfactorily.

One reason is that we have been an organization that has operated without consistent professional management support. This has forced the Board of Directors and many of our volunteers too often to manage the business of running the organization on a daily basis (e.g., ordering supplies, scheduling events, processing membership applications) rather than engaging in strategic governance including providing policy direction. In other words, we have focused too little of our attention on developing solutions for the issues and challenges our members face.

At the planning level, I could argue that we anticipated the need for this transition somewhat when we developed MATSOL Forward. But today we face the reality that transitioning to professional management for daily operations and strategic governance, as a focus of the Board, appears to have become a necessity. Indeed, our work has grown to the point that we need to put in place a structure for delegation of management responsibilities by, for instance, adding professional staff resources. Without this change, it is unlikely that we will be able to continually increase the responsiveness of our services and the effectiveness of our members and Directors. Presentations during the Affiliate Leaders Workshop in St Louis helped us see that we had reached this critical juncture.

Where does this leave us? Should we embark on this venture? Can't we just go back to the way things were? From my perspective, going back might not be an option. The demands on our profession have changed too much and can no longer be met by conferences and workshops only or by advocacy efforts staffed solely by volunteers. The option of not going back does not imply I intend to trivialize the risks involved. Making this transition will not be easy, won't happen overnight, and can't be done without your support. It will be particularly challenging to make this change now since it requires new financial and human resources.

The benefits, however, will eventually outweigh the risks and costs. As changes take place more rapidly, for instance, we will benefit greatly from

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## Letter From The Editor

**H**ere is yet another issue of *MATSOL Currents*. This is a special one for me as it is the first one under my editorship. On behalf of the Board and our membership I would like to thank Tom Griffith for his dedicated work as the editor of *Currents* for the past three years. His genuine interest in everything ESL, wonderful sense of humor and openness towards new ideas and approaches made many of us wait for each next issue with anticipation. We hope that Tom will keep writing for *Currents*, so that his strong and witty voice will continue to be heard.

This issue reflects the latest events and trends in the life of *MATSOL* and *TESOL*. Governance, assessment for language minority students, Standards-Based Educational Reform, the secrets of conference-going as well as insights into research practices, news on *TESOL* affiliates, and an update on our Slovak sister organization — all of this and more is here for your perusal.

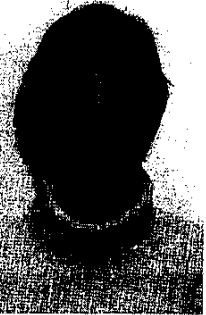
It is hard to single something out but in lieu of the changing governmental policies at schools, assessment issues have become one of the hottest discussion topics. How do we assess the needs and progress made by our students? How do administrators assess our students' achievements and the effectiveness of our teaching methods? How do our students measure up to their native speaker peers? How can we effectively change our instruction to improve our students' language acquisition? These and other important assessment-related questions need to be resolved through research and discussion. Understanding the urgency of this matter and the necessity for Massachusetts ESL professionals to voice their opinions and to learn from each as well as to listen to what policy-makers have to say about their recent decisions,

*MATSOL* chose assessment-related issues as a focus for its January two-day event. If you couldn't make it, we are publishing two briefs on the outstanding plenary addresses from this event, which will hopefully reflect the momentum of the meeting.

Knowing your interest in our successful partnership with SAUE-SATE, we also feature a special Slovakia insert. Among other interesting materials there, you will find two ready-made lesson plans featuring a drama-based approach. We hope to continue this practice in the future issues of *Currents*. If you would like to share your teaching discoveries with other *MATSOLers*, send us your favorite lesson plans. Please include age and English proficiency requirements, time needed for implementation, lesson objectives, and other necessary background information in your plan. Please be aware that publication in *Currents* can earn you those necessary PDPs!

On another note, we would like to continue our series "How I Got into ESL." Unfortunately, we didn't get any tales for this issue but hope that slow summer days and warm fall evenings will put you in the mood for writing one and sending it to *Currents*. Affinity for storytelling comes with the profession. So let's continue exercising this trait not only in our classrooms but also on the pages of *Currents*!

With this I conclude my first letter, wishing you a great school year and hoping to see you all at the *MATSOL* conference!



*Julia Stakhnevich*

*Julia Stakhnevich*

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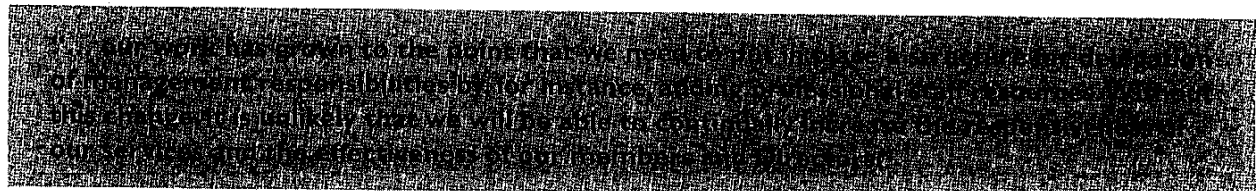
## From The President *Continued from page 2*

professional staff who will manage our day-to-day operations. This will bring stability, consistency, and increased access to *MATSOL* for members. The Board will be able to focus more on guiding the organization and providing policy direction. The encouraging amount of progress we have made during the first year of *MATSOL Forward* should give us an indication of what is possible and should give us the confidence to proceed. Gradually increasing the level of support that professional staff can

provide should enable us to accelerate the accomplishment of the goals we have set out in *MATSOL Forward*. By 2005, in other words, we should be able to cater to the professional development needs of all of our special interest groups and should be in a position to influence policies that facilitate your work and promote the welfare and well-being of the students you teach.

I invite you to participate in meeting this challenge.

*Johan Uvin*



## School Reform and Assessment

by Julia Stakhnevich

**S**tandards-Based Reform (SBR) in Massachusetts has been on its way for nearly eight years. It was no surprise then that one of the plenary addresses at the recent MATSOL January event was dedicated to the assessment issues related to this reform. In his plenary address, Dr. Paul Reville (Harvard Graduate School of Education, Executive Director, Pew Forum on Standards-Based Reform) gave an overview of the state reform, summarized its results and highlighted the challenges that still need to be resolved.

Dr. Reville identified the major goal of the SBR as providing each and every student with an opportunity to both learn and achieve at a high standard. Reville sees no alternative to Standards-Based Reform, saying, "we cannot go back to the way it was before when so many children were being so underserved by the system."

According to Reville, the SBR is a part of the American mythology of public education as 'the great equalizer', and the way to achieve this is to have the same set of expectations for all our students. The pursuit of this goal will be a "test of our will and our patience as a society as we stay the course and survive the bumps and detours on the road towards the reform implementation."

Reville traced the evolution of the school reform, pointing out that in the past standards and assessment were left to teachers and local educators. Achievement was widely distributed and correlated, as it still is, with socioeconomic status. Grades in one school might have a different meaning than grades in another school because the standards were so widely varied.

According to Reville, the basic theory behind the current SBR is "a system of standards which for the first time will articulate in a clear language what it is to be expected of young people to know and to do at varying stages of their education." The second building block of the reform is an assessment system, which will be designed for both diagnostic and accountability purposes and will periodically test to what extent the children have achieved those learning goals. The third building block of the reform is the accountability system, which will provide consequences in the form of interventions, rewards, sanctions, for both adults and students.

According to Dr. Reville, Massachusetts SBR consists

of three stages:

- Initially the reform will be focused on the development of the standards, assessment and accountability systems;

- Then the implementation of a variety of changes to the whole system, such as new ways of professional development, re-certification, etc. will occur; and

- Finally, necessary financial innovations will take place to ensure the success of the two previous stages.

Reville noted that here in Massachusetts the reform has been proceeding more smoothly than in many places in the country because we have clarified and raised our expectations of children and educators, and made a very substantial commitment to provide necessary financial resources. Eight years into the reform, Massachusetts has made some headway towards fulfilling the reform's major goal but, as noted by Dr. Reville, there is still a long way to go.

Dr. Reville underlined the following as the current accomplishments of the state reform:

- The reform initiated intense and focused conversation on the assessment and standards for those students who were not properly served by the system in the past;

- Due to the reform a new financial system was developed, which is pouring more dollars into public education;

- We have developed clear expectations of what we exactly expect from learning;

- We made a start in the reforming our assessment practices with launching MCAS;

- We have launched new curriculum and professional development opportunities for educators;

- We finally established a measure of accountability;

Among the reform challenges, Dr. Reville mentioned:

- The necessity to align our financial policies and reform goals;

- Keeping public education a priority in the state government;

- Establishing control over fund-spending by schools;

- Setting up a clear and fair system of accountability and assessment with adults being accountable first;

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## Getting Straight A's: Assessing Language Minority Students

by Dynnelle Fields

**D**r. Margo Gottlieb's plenary address at the MATSOL conference "The Stakes of Assessment-English Language Learners: Linking Research, Policy & Practice," challenged us all to rethink our methods of assessing English language learners. Dr. Gottlieb believes that by addressing the six areas necessary for adequate assessment, including accuracy, appropriateness, alignment, assessment, accommodations, and achievement, our schools can attain "straight A's."

Dr. Gottlieb works at the Illinois Research Center, analyzing and developing assessment tools for schools. Her goal is to "level the playing field" and help English language learners (ELLs) have access to a rich curriculum, sound instruction, and appropriate assessment.

The first question that Dr. Gottlieb asks when viewing an assessment tool is: "How accurately does it measure learning?" She suggests looking at learning through four phases:

1. Planning: Look at variables that ELLs bring that impact on standards and assessment. Figure out how each student's background, education, and culture influences his or her learning. Think about these factors during planning and instruction.
2. Create measures that allow students to demonstrate their learning in concrete ways. Use gestures, visuals, and graphic organizers.
3. Collect information appropriately. Use multiple measures to assess and document learning — not just pen and paper tests. Document learning systematically to formulate a more complete picture of the student and interpret the student's work consistently. Use rubrics and performance guides to help maintain uniform interpretation.

4. Report results in a meaningful context. Make sure your data are defensible and provide the students and their parents with practical, understandable information (in their language). Be sure to monitor student progress and make sure that the students know why you are doing what you do.

The second consideration in striving towards straight A's is appropriateness. Gottlieb believes that everything that is taught must be appropriate developmentally, linguistically, and culturally for each student. The material must be on the student's cognitive level as well. In order to do this, teachers must capitalize on students' prior knowledge and experiences. Teachers should also be sure that all levels of language learning needs are represented in the classroom. Fur-

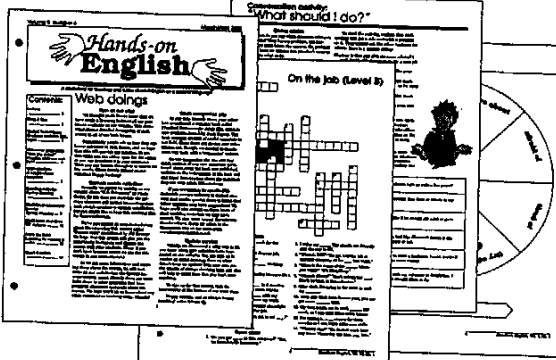
ther, all the cultures of the group you teach should be represented in your teaching.

In order for the audience to better understand her idea of appropriate assessment, Dr. Gottlieb used the Delaware Language Arts Content Standards for LEP students as an example. These standards have been adapted to fit ELLs. Then information has been collected on each student in two ways: to demonstrate formative learning, showing what is being learned on a quarterly basis; and to demonstrate summative learning using standardized tests and self-evaluations. Moreover, there are holistic scales and rubrics for each standard.

The third area of focus in working towards all A's is alignment. Standards, curriculum, instruction, and assessment all need to be aligned. The language of instruction needs to be aligned with the language of assessment (i.e., teachers should test students in the language in which they are taught). In addition, assessment needs to be aligned with the level of student support services. If one student receives

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## Getting Straight A's *Continued from page 5*

forty minutes a week of ESL and another is in an immersion program, the differences in support services should be taken into account during the assessment process.

Dr. Gottlieb helped her listeners to understand how she applies her assessment philosophy in her work by showing a few pages from the IMAGE (Illinois Measure of Annual Growth in English) test. This test is a product of the Illinois Assessment Initiative. The pages that she demonstrated included a graphic and a narrative. The narrative was followed by a question with multiple right answers showing different levels of skill in understanding English. For instance, are the student's answers based only on the picture, on facts stated in the reading, on inferencing, or on other higher-level skills? Based on the test, students are broken into four groups reflecting their skill levels: beginning, strengthening, expanding, or transitioning.

The fourth "A" that Dr. Gottlieb wants teachers to strive for deals directly with assessment. Dr. Gottlieb suggests that teachers use portfolios including performance activities, tasks, and rubrics. Assessment tools should be alternated and reflect different learning styles and skills. The tasks assessed should include multiple opportunities for learning (e.g., a poster display, an oral report, and a written report on a topic that also includes a group self-assessment on cooperative learning achievements). Teachers should create task-specific scales for learning activities to align rubrics with what is being done in the classroom. As an example, Dr. Gottlieb distributed a Focused Analytic Scale, which is currently being used in Wisconsin. This scale measures vocabulary, language use, conceptual development, and problem-solving skills on five levels, and is entitled "Measuring Essential Communication in the Content Areas (MECCA)."

Large-scale assessment (district-wide standardized tools and state-wide tests such as the MCAS) was considered along with other more classroom-specific assessment, and this consideration led Dr. Gottlieb to her fifth concern: accommodations. Dr. Gottlieb believes that appropriate accommodations are vital to student participation in and success with an assessment tool. In her experience, the accommodations offered are often not useful for ELLs.

To make this point clear, she demonstrated a multiple-

choice question in Polish and asked her listeners to tell her the answer. When they could not, she offered the audience some of the accommodations that she said were typical for testing situations. These included: extended time, small groups, individual administration of the test, frequent and longer breaks, having the directions read to us in English, or allowing us to use bilingual word lists or dictionaries to help us. It was clear through this exercise that unless we had at least a basic grasp of the language, none of these measures would enable us to pass the test.

Dr. Gottlieb then led her audience through an example of "better" accommodations, using the MCAS as her starting point. Dr. Gottlieb took one question from each of the four testing levels (grades 4, 8, and 10) in content areas that were not supposed to be testing English, and changed them so that they would better test and reflect the skills of English language learners. Her accommodations included: simplified text, highlighting key words, illustrations that supported the question, graphic organizers, reduction of choices, and the use of mathematical symbols. The difference between the original questions and the rewritten questions was remarkable, and the obvious clarity that resulted made these accommodations very desirable for our ELLs. Dr. Gottlieb encouraged the audience to advocate for such accommodations for our students.

The result of incorporating the previously mentioned "A" goals in teaching is the last goal, namely, achievement. Dr. Gottlieb stated that by following all the "A"s students would acquire language and attain standards. Therefore, if teachers collect accurate data, use appropriate instruction, align what they do, assess on a continuous basis, make accommodations that help students succeed, and help them achieve, they will get all A's.

Dr. Gottlieb's final words of advice were these:

- Adhere to sound educational practices;
- Acknowledge classroom assessment in local decision-making;
- Adjust high stakes assessment to fit ELLs;
- Always strive for straight A's.

*Dynnelle Fields received her MAT from the School for International Training and currently teaches English at the Learning Center for Deaf Children in Framingham, MA.*

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## A Good Workplace Education Program Starts with a Good Workplace Needs Analysis *Continued from page 1*

- ensures that realistic expectations are set for the basic skills education program;
- provides a solid foundation for implementing a work place education program;
- helps the company prioritize different training and education needs;
- convinces employers/funders/unions to support the workplace education and training program;
- can provide baseline information for benchmarking and evaluating program progress;
- engages people who may later participate on an oversight or steering committee.

There are four main steps in conducting a WNA. The first step involves laying the groundwork and setting up the WNA Team. It is an effective practice to have company people work with an outside training provider to form a WNA Team. Guidelines on how the group is going to work together should be established. Next the Team needs to decide what areas the survey will investigate and design the WNA survey. Once the survey is ready it is important to inform others about the WNA process and recruit volunteers and identify key people to interview such as frontline supervisors, quality control, and lead operators.

The second step is actually conducting the WNA. Again, a general rule is to include at least 10 % of the workforce gaining a cross section of ages, experience, gender and ethnicity. After conducting the WNA, the third step is interpreting and reporting the results. It is necessary to budget time and resources to accurately summarize and analyze all the data collected. The preliminary findings should be presented to all the stakeholders again in order to build understanding, awareness and support. After gaining any addi-

tional feedback, a final report can be written. The fourth and final step is evaluating the WNA process with the Team and documenting all the lessons learned.

Connie Nelson offered some wise cautions when engaging in this process:

- stress and honor confidentiality;
- use clear language;
- do not promise anything to anyone about the possible outcomes of the WNA or classes;
- the training provider should always practice impartiality;
- accept limits to information – some areas are different to documents and capture;
- be creative and be flexible in your approach.

The MA Workers' Education Roundtable has several resources available on conducting focus groups, gathering workplace material, writing up the WNA report and structuring program evaluation. One good resource is the 1999 Workplace Education Guide, which is available for \$10.00 (includes tax and shipping) through:

World Education/SABES  
44 Farnsworth Street  
Boston, MA 02210  
Attention: Heather Brack

*This article is based on the material presented at the MATSOL 2001 Assessment Event, held January 13<sup>th</sup> at Pine Manor College, by Connie Nelson, Director of the Massachusetts Workers' Education Roundtable. Roundtable is a network of unions and adult educators. We work with the AFL-CIO and with individual unions to set up and support education and training programs in the workplace and the community. You can reach Roundtable staff at 617-983-3667 or [roundtable@admin.umass.edu](mailto:roundtable@admin.umass.edu).*

## School Reform and Assessment *Continued from page 4*

- Development of multiple-measure assessment instruments; and
- Reformation of our teaching practices.

Dr. Reville consistently warned policy makers against a potentially dangerous misconception that setting standards, having assessments and holding people accountable would automatically result in performance improvement. Our assessment instruments show that today we still have tremendous gaps in student performance. Assessment, curriculum and teaching methodology have to be aligned with what our students are expected to learn.

Another fundamental condition of a successful SBR that Dr. Reville called to the attention of his audience is that our

standards also need to be aligned with the expectations of our young people. We need to move towards a system of education that is more student-centered and provides each student with what they need in order to achieve our standards. This will involve drastic schedule, time and financial changes in our schools.

Reville firmly believes that "the course of SBR, however flawed it may be, is still the best course to achieve equity for students..." On the other hand, it is a mass endeavor involving hundreds of thousands of people, tens of thousands of educators and is centered around a very ambitious goal. And with something this size and magnitude "one would not expect to lay down plans and not make mid-course corrections."

## The Art of the Conference *Continued from page 1*

reflected my career fortunes. For San Francisco 1980 and New York 1990, I traveled by bus, crashed on a friend's sofa, and munched bagels for breakfast and lunch. Since then I have flown, eaten well, and stayed in hotels of increasing opulence. This peaked last month at the St. Louis Radisson, where I somehow got a honeymoon suite with a view of the famous Arch.

So, part of the art of conference-going is logistical. Aim for comfort, even if you're the hardy-traveler type who once gloried in how cheaply and roughly you could live. That's fine for the twenty-somethings. If you want to remember any of what you hear, you really need a good night's sleep. Start with a good hotel, then stake out the conference center itself. I did so the first afternoon in St. Louis, traipsing through cold and deserted downtown streets to "America's Center." St. Louis might be the summit of Midwestern boosterism. Everything bore a name tinged with the grandiose — America's Center, America's Gateway, America's Main Street. As I walked the center's vast corridors, I half-expected to find America's Men's Room. But it really was a good facility, once you figured out the room numbers.

This reconnaissance is important, for you need to plan carefully. The TESOL program nowadays resembles the phonebook of a medium-sized city. There are literally hundreds of offerings. In my early, carefree days I would wander from session to session, checking the schedule at each door and taking in whatever struck my fancy. I went to anything having to do with drama, music or pronunciation (though teaching the last, I now believe, is futile). These days, however, I have risen to the heights of ESL Coordinator at Showa Boston. I came to St. Louis with definite goals, based on the needs of our program — improved teaching of reading, assessment of vocabulary, distance learning, and teaching in Japan.

To pursue these goals takes some homework. Each night in the hotel, I spent upwards of 45 minutes reviewing the next day's offerings. Consumer savvy is needful here — you have to discern which talks might communicate something useful, and which will be mind-numbing displays of academic verbiage. I choose sessions based on the intelligibility of the description. For example, would you prefer a talk titled "Retrospective miscue analysis with adult L2 readers," or "Help, I'm a coordinator!" Obviously, the latter. Unfortunately, I missed it since it conflicted with a presentation by a friend (and the new editor of *Currents*).

But that's another important principle — for God's sake, support your friends. I've only presented once, at Baltimore 1993. It was scheduled late — Saturday morning — and nervousness clouded the whole conference for me. That day I woke up sick, and staggered to the room expecting to vomit at any moment. Yet I got through it, much encouraged by the sight of three familiar faces — dear Ginny Keniry and

Yuki Sakamaki of Showa, and Anne Dow of Harvard. They came from sheer loyalty, and I've tried to reciprocate ever since.

So you should plan what you want to attend thematically. After a few sessions on one topic, your understanding of it deepens, including that of the ever-changing jargon. Who knows what ER stands for? I would have said "Emergency Room." In fact, it stands for "Extensive Reading." That means reading outside of the usual classroom texts. The research now suggests that students gain more vocabulary from reading than from conversation. Having been trained with a strong "communicative" bias, this requires me to rethink how I teach, and that's good.

On the other hand, the conference-goer shouldn't be

**Each night in the hotel, I spent upwards of 45 minutes reviewing the next day's offerings. Consumer savvy is needful here — you have to discern which talks might communicate something useful, and which will be mind-numbing displays of academic verbiage.**

too bound by a prior agenda. There's such a wealth of offerings that you must stay flexible, open to the unexpected revelation. Some of my most stimulating times came in hallway chats, or in plenaries that didn't sound promising at all.

### Examples

- A psycholinguist, Mary Ann Christison, reported on new research that claimed brain cells could actually regenerate as we age. Among the factors that help the process are exercise, a high standard of living, and a smart spouse!
- A Japanese scholar, Kensaku Yoshida, likened English-teaching in his country to a "fishbowl" — isolated, artificial, keyed not to usage but to tests. He told of one student who entered a prestigious university but couldn't stand not having the goals and structure that tests gave to his life; so he dropped out and went back to cram school! Yoshida recommended a new model of "the open sea," and then he sang to us.
- A report on "The Role of Gender in Language Learning" examined the stereotype that females have a natural advantage. Not always — when some American foreign language learners studied abroad, the males progressed

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## The Art of the Conference *Continued from page 9*

faster. Why? The speaker, Barbara Schwarte, hypothesized that men gain more from immersion, since they have a wider scope of experience outside class. When the women tried to get out, they ran into sexual harassment and retreated to campus.

Next, take in the local color. New conference sites let you get acquainted with a different part of the world. We in Massachusetts may share the bi-coastal snobbery that views the Midwest as "fly-over" country, a barbarous hinterland of people who own guns and vote for Bush. I myself e-mailed an expatriate friend that I must really be dedicated, to attend a conference in St. Louis.

But that was unfair. St. Louis has its charms, and much to teach. For one thing, it's far more cosmopolitan than you'd think, and always has been. In the 19th century German settlers developed the most extensive and successful bilingual education system ever, till it collapsed amidst WWI hysteria. More recently the area has received new waves of immigrants from places like Bosnia. A speaker from an immigrant-advocacy group told how heartland areas are becoming as diverse as the usual "gateway" states of California, Texas, Florida. He said there were now 40,000 Mexicans in Nashville. Nashville!

So St. Louis and other cities have worked hard at educating newcomers, and we heard about it. All praise to those toiling in urban school systems, underpaid and obscure, mostly female, doing God's work. Likewise St. Louis embodies the issue, which, in our history and culture classes at Showa, I always teach as THE American problem — race. In New England we may talk about it a lot, but the reality can seem a bit removed. Not so in St. Louis, a classic case of an industrial city now hollowed-out by white flight. The old downtown has benefited from vast infusions of public money, in stadiums, parks, conference centers, but it lacks a healthy dynamism. A British friend I ran into said it gave him a chill. Not far from the river docks that figured in the slave trade, we were all confronted with the results of our national original sin.

But those St. Louis blues have been transmuted into fabulous music. Some colleagues from our Tokyo campus were attending, and they wanted to hear blues. The one American among them, Gordon Robson, picked a spot from the phone book and made reservations. We met at their hotel and dashed six blocks away from downtown. The Japanese got nervous, as the neighborhood grew more deserted and down-at-heel. But once we reached BB's Blues House, the evening turned magical.

Their regular star Bluesman — "Oliver Sain, the Soul of St. Louis!" — was celebrating his 69th birthday. His musician friends, black and white, kept turning up all night, un-

packing their instruments, crowding onto the stage to jam. There was no schedule, no program, no hurry, but everything flowed together. We ate jumbalaya, swilled beer and smoked Cuban cigars that Gordon brought from Tokyo. Our Japanese friends soon got tired, but after walking us back to the hotel, Gordon returned and stayed till dawn. He and I relished the scene in a way they couldn't, in that music like blues or jazz offers a bridge across the racial divide that haunts all Americans. For a brief while, it melts differences with a potent brew of rhythm, smoke and smiles.

Last, make contacts. Most of us work in isolation, teaching the same courses over and over, and doing so in simplified English. Whereas a TESOL conference gathers upwards of 10,000 teachers, a high proportion from other countries. It draws intellectual breezes from every direction. You'll be stimulated by seeing old friends in new settings, and also by meeting ESL heavyweights.

A high point for me came in a forum on "Faith, Values and Language Teaching." The topic itself reflected the Midwest setting, where the organizers actually spoke the word "God" in a context other than swearing. I never heard that at any other TESOL. In the program, this forum sounded almost like a Garrison Keillor joke — what happens when you put a Moslem, a Christian, a Buddhist, a Jew, and an atheist on the same stage? Well, nothing much, till the atheist started making trouble. He was Henry Widdowson, one of the keenest thinkers in the profession. I always attend his presentations, regardless of topic.

Dr. Widdowson was preceded by four believers who read solemn essays on how their faith affected their teaching. The atmosphere was strained and dull till he rose and, in the style of British debate, rebutted them all off-the-cuff. It took guts, since the audience was mostly made up of religious folk; that's why they came. His points weren't original — religion leads to genocide and such — but they were delivered with such spontaneity and wit that the meeting came alive. I myself was galvanized to answer him back, but the session ended and I had to run to catch my plane.

The point is I brought home a bit of the ferment, e-mailed him in Vienna, and he e-mailed me back. This renowned scholar agreed to debate a stranger, an impertinent American who launched a surprise cyberattack. His reply was gracious and thoughtful, indeed, more Christian in tone than mine. Moreover, that British friend I mentioned, Alan Broomhead, had been a student of Widdowson's in London, and we're still wrangling over the same topic. It feels good to think, and it wouldn't have happened if I hadn't gone to St. Louis.

Is attending a TESOL conference expensive and inconvenient? Always, but it's worth it. It will divert and instruct, make you a better teacher, impart a sense of solidarity, and suggest that your career-choice wasn't so bad after all.

# From The Front Lines of The TESOL Affiliates: Is It All Quiet on The Western Front?

by Julia Stakhnevich

**N**inety-three independent organizations are affiliated with TESOL. Forty-two of them are in the US, including MATSOL. Fifty-one are located in other countries with a whopping total of 47,000 members. Affiliate organizations strive to become centers of ESL/EFL communities in their regions, providing educators with various opportunities to exchange professional information on different levels and to obtain support in their endeavors. A sample of activities that are typically offered through an affiliate organization includes conferences, newsletters, outreach campaigns, retreats, and an array of other services which are geared towards professional development.

One of my goals at the TESOL 2001 in St Louis was learning more about TESOL affiliates, their organizational and professional challenges, achievements, and concerns. I decided that I would attend sessions on these regional organizations and consequently would write a report on the most informative and comprehensive one. The affiliate session of my choice is "What's Going On With TESOL affiliates",

which featured representatives of ten diverse organizations in an attempt to share their views on the profession and report on how their organizations respond to the needs of ESL professionals in their regions and countries. The represented affiliates included TESOL Scotland, Georgia TESOL, TESOL Italy, TESOL Ukraine, Sweden, Modern Language Society (MLS), Society of Pakistan English Teachers (SPELT), California TESOL, New York State TESOL, Illinois TESOL and Kentucky TESOL.

The differences between these organizations were numerous: location, number of members, the predominant language of their area, work conditions, support of their activities, just to mention a few. However, there was a commonality which united them and that was their dedication to the field, their desire to make learning English more efficient, successful and fun for all involved. So how are they working towards achieving this goal and what can we learn from their battles?

One of the most interesting parts of the session was a

*Continued on page 11*



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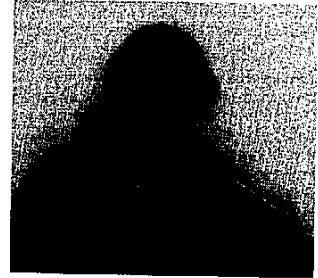
## From The Front Lines of The TESOL Affiliates Continued from page 10

brief report on the work conducted by the Society of Pakistani English Teachers (SPELT). This affiliate was established in 1994 and now has several chapters in various cities across the country. So far English has not been recognized in Pakistan as a bona fide field of study. This lack of support puts an extra strain on teachers at all levels. Despite this, the organization provides invaluable and unsurpassed opportunities for Pakistani EFL teachers to build a professional community, establish links within and outside of this community and make their professional lives richer and more fulfilled. Interestingly, most of the Pakistani EFL teachers are women. Within the context of the Pakistani society, it is not acceptable for women to travel by themselves. Since this curtailed the majority of teachers travelling to a central location to attend an annual conference, SPELT came up with an original idea of having the conference come to them. Each year conference participants travel from one city to another presenting their topics and sharing their professional experiences. No matter what the obstacles, the word will get out!

Our colleagues from Sweden do not have a separate organization dedicated to the field of teaching English. The Modern Language Teachers' Association of Sweden was founded in 1939 with a current membership of 5000 and integrates teachers of all modern languages, including English. Typically, Swedish teachers of English also teach a second language, such as French, Spanish or German. This is one of the reasons why there is no separate association. One of the hottest issues in the EFL profession in Sweden is also well-

known in the States, namely the lack of qualified teachers. It seemed that one of the common concerns of the ma-

*Zakia Sarwar, a Research Coordinator from SPELT Working Committee, making her presentation on the work of SPELT at the TESOL Affiliates session in St. Louis in March, 2001.*



majority of our colleagues here at home was how to increase and diversify their membership. For example, as a way of reaching to the community New York State TESOL established a recognition award to a community member (a journalist, politician, etc.) who proved to be supportive of the ESL issues. Kentucky TESOL which membership fluctuates between 80 and 100, in addition to two annual conferences established a summer/fall retreat for its members to provide extra opportunities for professional development. California TESOL is working on better marketing techniques, including a new logo, newsletter revision with the inclusion of teaching techniques, and revamping its advertising strategies.

These are just brief notes on the presentations from the *Continued on page 15*

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# The Future Of The MATSOL / SAUA-SATE Partnership

by Marjorie Soriano

In November 2000, I returned to Slovakia. It was my third visit since teaching there in 1994-95; only this time as a liaison between MATSOL and our international partner, SAUA-SATE in the Slovak Republic. With MATSOL Forward taking on new initiatives on many fronts, including extending our partnership beyond the successful teacher exchanges, I journeyed there to assess the needs of EFL teachers and trainers, to determine if and how MATSOL can play a role in the future of ELT in that country and in what ways participation in that role will benefit our members.

We are not the only international TESOL partnership, but we seem to have come further along than most with our teacher exchanges. At TESOL 2000, Vancouver, there was a breakout session for similar partnerships with the same basic goals of cultural and professional awareness. The presenters were the Michigan/Czech Republic partnership who had accomplished a summer teacher-training institute (1999) with trainers from Michigan, Britain and the Czech Republic. MATSOL/SAUA-SATE's professional development goals in the Slovak Republic are of this nature.

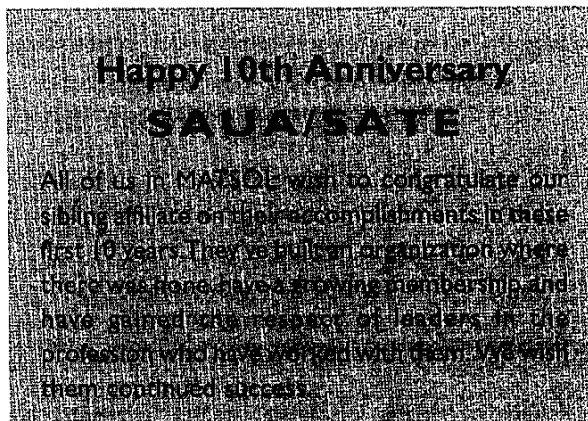
In both Slovakia and the Czech Republic, USIS (United States Information Service) and the British Council had teamed to offer extensive English language teacher-training programs to those teachers who lacked alternative methodology, having been educated and/or having taught during the communist occupation. After 7 years, these organizations have moved on, as is the intention and SAUA-SATE is for the most part, on its own.

The organization, the Slovak equivalent of MATSOL, was established in 1991, and has since grown in numbers and sophistication. It is composed of dedicated teachers, and a more than dedicated board, committed to the appeal for national educational reform and new opportunities for diversity in methodology.

One aspect of this TESOL affiliate partnership, the teacher exchanges, offers cultural awareness and professional development opportunities as MATSOL and SAUA-SATE teachers attend each other's conferences, observe classes in session and host each other in their homes.

What new direction will MATSOL take in the future? Research was my task. Like Massachusetts, they too are in the midst of evaluating English Language Teaching (ELT) in terms of curriculum, standards, assessment, and staff development opportunities. Interviewing teachers and trainers, discussing, and observing classroom teaching at elementary/secondary level, pedagogical faculties at universities, and language schools, I gathered information and suggestions.

One of the outstanding issues is the lack of native En-



glish speakers teaching in the country. Brainstorming, we came up with ideas at all levels. These include, but are not limited to, exciting opportunities for Massachusetts ESL undergraduates and Master's candidates to do their practice teaching in Slovakia, experienced teacher trainers/methodologists to work at the university level, to offer staff development in regional centers and summer institutes and teach as native speakers in K-12. How exciting; how much fun to work together with these wonderful people who have become dearer with each encounter — from existing friendships to the new ones that have grown out of the interviews and homestays on this recent journey. The opportunity is yours. Quoting from a recent Michigan Fulbrighter:

"My students are an EFL teacher's dream — very strong language skills, very serious about perfecting their English, ... and ALL clamor for native speakers for teachers! It sounds like I am exaggerating, but they are always in class, well prepared, work hard. So tell those folks in MA that they would enjoy working with these guys for a semester or two."

As acknowledged by yet another Michigan representative, "those of us, who have been a part of this partnership program, have benefited in many ways, including acquiring new, endearing personal friendships that go beyond the organizational level."

Our role in Slovakia's future English language programs can mean opportunities for those MATSOLers who have dreamed of teaching abroad and making a difference; as well as for those who have had this experience. If you are interested in participating in the future of our partnership, either here as a host for teacher exchanges and/or on a planning committee, or in a capacity overseas, i.e. teaching EFL, teacher training, program development, please contact:

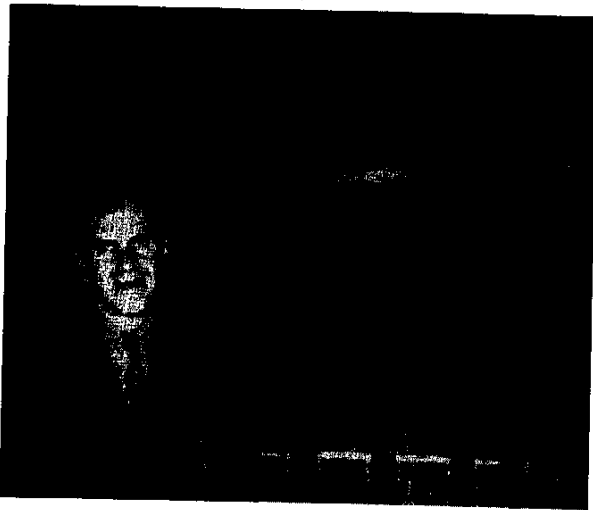
Marjorie Soriano, MATSOL liaison to SAUA-SATE, 978-927-2077, [marjorie.s@juno.com](mailto:marjorie.s@juno.com)

# Plenaries and Practice: Connecting The Threads

by Marjorie Soriano

**S**itting at the plenary sessions, I thought back to October '94 when I had taught in Slovakia and attended SAUA-SATE's second conference. They have come along way in program development and organizational skills, culminating in Conference 2000.

Over the past ten years, SAUA-SATE has built bridges to notable figures from Great Britain and the USA, with a representative few accepting invitations as guests and plenary speakers at this conference. Together, these native speakers addressed the audience with messages pertinent to this Central European nation, both as non-native speakers and as a people who are still emerging educationally from the thought processes and teaching methods of Communism, offering direction for their future. How different from our plenary addresses these are, I had thought, as they made



Gregory Orr, Public Affairs Officer, U.S. Embassy, Bratislava.

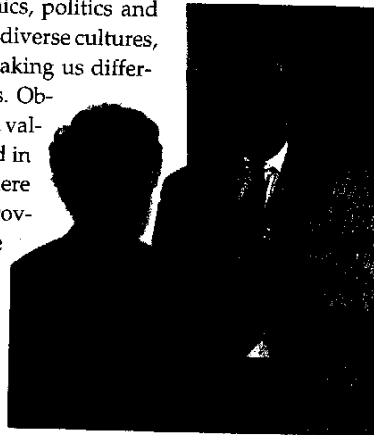
their thought-provoking points.

Gregory Orr, Public Affairs Officer from the US Embassy, opened the plenary. Both Simon Greenwall, past president IATEFL (an EFL organization), and Daniel Lopez (US State Department) emphasized the importance of sociocultural awareness in the classroom; but from different vantage points. Thinking globally, Mr. Greenwall referred to the responsibility of teachers to act as facilitators in cultural understanding along with the teaching of English; training students to become citizens of the world. Better communication and understanding of sociocultural rituals could ultimately prevent stereotyping, prejudice and breakdowns in communication which lead to wars, he communicated to the audience.



Left to right: Eva Tandlikova, Vice President, SAUA SATE; Ken Wilson, materials writer; Gabriela Dirnikova, President, SAUA SATE.

Mr. Lopez addressed sociocultural awareness more specifically: "What is American culture?" He brilliantly involved the audience, pointing out that outsiders see only a 'surface culture' rather than a 'deep culture' — what we eat, how we dress, our holidays, stereotyping Americans (using himself as an example), rather than our values — openness, informality, practicality, optimism, our work and family ethics, politics and the differences in our diverse cultures, all contributing to making us different from other nations. Observe that American values are often reflected in our proverbs. I sat there thinking about the proverbs. "A man's home is his castle," "A bird in the hand..." His analogies presented a picture of our complex society — 'the salad bowl' — where we mix but maintain our identity; 'a pizza' — with a common value base but with different toppings. You can't teach culture, he said. A multifaceted society like ours must be experienced.



Grammarians/author Michael Swan

— with a common value base but with different toppings. You can't teach culture, he said. A multifaceted society like ours must be experienced.

Famed grammarian and writer of teaching and refer-

Continued on page 14

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## Autumn in Slovakia: SAUA-SATE-MATSOL Exchange 2000

by Veronica McCormack

“Are There Any New Ways in the Art of ELT?” was the theme of the fifth SAUA-SATE Conference held at Comenius University in Bratislava, Slovakia November 10-12. Yes, there are still new ways, and there are also new and wonderful relationships being cultivated.

In the spring of 1999 MATSOL hosted our first visitors. That was when I met and became friends with Edita Maricova and Jana Sedlakova, two great women who teach high school English in Slovakia. They visited my classes at Roxbury Community College, toured the campus, and joined me for a stroll through Harvard Square, where we stopped for coffee and conversation. Visits of this very nature are meaningful as they provide us with an opportunity to get to know one another better. In early fall 2000, I was encouraged to participate in the SAUA-SATE exchange; not much later I was flying over the Atlantic on my way to Central Europe. My flight took me to Vienna and from there I took a 45-minute bus ride into Bratislava. It had been raining, and just after crossing into Slovakia, a huge rainbow appeared in the horizon.

What a welcome!

I was soon met by my host and friend, Edita, and embarked on a train to Sala, a very cute little town just south of Bratislava, not too far from the Hungarian border. I spent two nights with my three “sisters,” Edita and her two beautiful daughters. *Continued on page 15*

### Conference 2000 – Bratislava, Slovakia



Veronica McCormack, MATSOL (left) and Marjorie Soriano (3rd from right), with SAUA/SATE exchange teachers.

### Plenaries And Practice: Connecting The Threads *Continued from page 13*

ence materials, Michael Swan (Great Britain), emphasized teaching English rather than grammar, urging teachers to abandon perfectionism and directing them away from traditional teacher-centered patterns of the Socialist Era, in favor of the written and spoken language.

Supporting this philosophy, Ken Wilson (Great Britain), author and materials writer for ELT radio and TV, whose expertise is theater, spoke of giving students, specifically teenagers, the opportunity to interact with teachers, sharing their knowledge. With humor, he explained that teachers are tired because they work too hard and talk too much.

Today, in Slovakia, those teachers who have participated in teacher training programs are turning to the more communicative approach to ELT. Visiting one elementary school, I watched eleven-year-olds led by an energetic teacher utilizing physical space to role play introductions — without translation, with unstructured gestures.

The highpoint of new methodology there at the moment, is the drama-based approach, which began in England (see the article “A Dedicated Space,” page 16). I had the opportunity to visit a methodology course at a university where this approach was in, team -taught by a British and a Slovak teacher (see the article “A Dramatic Approach to Learning,” page 17). I was mesmerized by the motivational attitude that permeated the room as the students/prospective teachers just plunged into this concept, without embarrassment, mentally and physically involved in the theatrics of “The Frog Prince”(see the lesson plan, page 18). Could/would these students reproduce this experience in their own classrooms? While a new concept, apparently they are.

Flying back to the states, I think about how much change is required to move from an ‘encyclopedic knowledge / rote - learning system to a ‘knowledge and value’ system, and how many years it takes to affect such change.

*Marjory Soriano is MATSOL liaison to SAUA-SATE.*

## SAUA-SATE-MATSOL Exchange 2000 Continued from page 14

All day Thursday and Friday morning were spent visiting Edita's high school English classes, meeting her colleagues, and getting a tour of the school's labs. The students there use the Internet for research and e-mail, and have computer programs for instruction. I was impressed by how well they speak English (they are learning British English.), and by how polite they are. And they are not so unlike teenagers here; they watch South Park, are into Jennifer Lopez and Latin music (which is quite "hot"), they download Napster, and play basketball. And they are stressing over "matricula," the MCAS of Slovakia.

Thursday afternoon Edita and I took the train back to Bratislava for a meeting at the British Council. A group of ELT professionals are collaborating on a curriculum development project for Children's Rights to address the special needs and vulnerability of children as human beings. References to standards set by NSPCC, UNICEF, and other NGOs (non-governmental organizations) were discussed and will be incorporated into the curriculum. I look forward to an exchange of resources on this project.

Friday afternoon Edita and I took the train again to Bratislava for the conference which started at noon. That evening all conference attendees were invited to a reception at the Bratislava Castle. A mere 10-minute hike up a hill on a long, steep, winding, cobblestone street through the very, very charming Old Town leads to the castle, which overlooks the Danube. The reception was, finally, a chance to relax and socialize with new friends. Below, under crystal chandeliers, we were served those delectable burgers. Every last detail of this magnificent ball evoked the elegance of a time past.

Friday night Edita and I moved in with Jana, who lives in Bratislava, not far from the conference. Saturday was again

spent at the conference. The presentations and workshops I attended were rich in ideas. Marta Hosszuova, who is working on the MATRICULA, provided an enlightening look at test items and the distractors found in multiple choice questions, which often invalidate the validity of the test. Jozef Medvecky led a brief but brilliant discussion of the Internet and presented rather creative ways of using few computers

**Given a choice to sightsee or to spend time with such wonderful people, I would not change a minute. To quote a Slovak poet, there were so many minutes that I often thought to myself, "Time, please stop. This moment is too beautiful to let go."**

with many students. William Hanks presented *Related Mind Learning* to balance active and right brain hemispheres. (By now I was ready for his relaxing techniques!) I found another presentation, *Teaching English for Tourism*, a source of good activities for test presentations, and got to wondering how RCL could do something similar through our new Hospitality Program.

On Sunday morning I gave a presentation on teaching language skills for health care, most of the faculty who attended came from hospitals or medical universities. I was pleased with my presentation. I have been in touch with one of the teachers, and am helping her get copies of the text. I am hoping to stay in touch with her and continue to exchange resources.

Sunday afternoon Marjorie Soriano, MATSOL liaison, our hosts and I were invited to a lovely lunch with SAUA-SATE board members and conference planners. This was another rare chance to relax and get to know our colleagues.

On Monday morning, before heading back to Vienna, I made one last visit, this time to Jana's high-school English class, a rather lively group who also spoke English quite well. From there, we went to the bus station and, with tears in my eyes, I said good-bye to my "sister" Jana.

Before leaving for Slovakia I had been told that every minute would be full. (Good thing my luggage has wheels!) Yes, every minute was full, and with the conference and school visits — all in less than four days — there was no time for the sightseeing included in the usual ten day exchange. However, given a choice to sightsee or to spend time with such wonderful people, I would not change a minute. To quote a Slovak poet, there were so many minutes that I often thought to myself, "Time, please stop. This moment is too beautiful to let go".

## From The Front Lines

*Continued from page*

affiliates that were represented at this session. As a Massachusetts ESL educator, I can testify that all of these issues to a certain extent apply to the ESL profession here. Yes, we can travel without restriction but a lot still needs to be done on reaching all ESL educators throughout the state. Like Sweden, we are faced with a critical shortage of qualified ESL professionals to teach at various levels, but especially in K-12. On the organizational level, we in MATSOL, like our colleagues all over the country, are at the crossroads of making new plans for the organization and rethinking our role as a catalyst which brings ideas and people together.

For more information on TESOL affiliates go to [www.tesol.org/isaffil/index.html](http://www.tesol.org/isaffil/index.html)

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## A Dedicated Space: A Drama-Based Approach to ELT

by Daniela Bacová & Tim Phillips

**W**atch out! There's a dragon in the classroom! How did it get here? Before all this started there was just an ordinary classroom with tables and chairs in rows, a blackboard at the front, a teacher, and lot of students. But then we pushed all the chairs and tables back, a story was told, and — there was the dragon! As you can see from the picture, it was huge, it dominated the classroom, it swallowed boys! But it was not all bad. It wore a smile sometimes and as the class developed the story, the dragon would also show a more sensitive side.

This is a snapshot of a drama in an ELT classroom for younger learners, but there are no age limitations in drama. Its features are clear — a flexible use of classroom space; the physical, emotional and intellectual aspects of learning are integrated; language teaching and learning are placed within an imaginative dramatic frame. The techniques are derived from the extensive literature and practice of drama-in-education — the work of figures such as Dorothy Heathcote and Cecily O'Neill. Its relevance to foreign language teaching is that, in the words of Jonothan Neelands, "drama is a medium for learning talk" and it helps create in the classroom the conditions for good language learning, a motivating context in which students are exposed to language input and use language to do things (in the terms Jane Willis used in her book, *A Framework for Task-Based Learning* Longman, 1996). The goal of drama in ELT, then, is no more and no less than trying to provide the most effective language learning experience possible for students.

What does this all mean in practice? First of all, we must stress that it does not mean theatre performances. What we are talking about is the use of drama techniques such as hot-seating, still images, improvisations, teacher-in-role, etc. to structure language learning activity in the classroom. What this does mean, however, is a fresh approach to lesson planning. First of all, the lesson is conceived in terms of the dramatic frame, the context in which the target language is used. It is normally a dramatic situation, which sets up atmosphere with some conflict in it. The lesson will have language objectives but it will also have social learning objectives, intellectual, drama (e.g. learning

how to develop good still images) and other objectives. In the book of drama-based lesson plans, *As If...*, which we edited, we used the following lesson plan structure: four stages in this order — warm-up, pre-drama, drama, calming down. Each of these contributes to the whole. The warm-up prepares the students physically, emotionally, intellectually for some of the tasks they will carry out; pre-drama develops their understanding and commitment to the dramatic frame; drama explores it fully; and the calming down stage gives an opportunity to reflect on the lesson activity.

Our work in Slovakia began in 1998 with a British Council project on Drama in ELT, in particular with a training course held in July 1999 in Slovakia at which the material now published as the book *As If...* was first produced. We began, in the words of one teacher we work with, on the basis that "no tradition of drama in English in Slovakia does not necessarily mean no interest." Drama in ELT has grown through the Drama SIG of the Slovak Association of Teachers of English (SAUA/SATE) led by Daniela Bacová. This was set up in 1998 to provide a sustainable focus for disseminating ideas and information about drama in ELT. It now numbers over 80 members. Its activities include drama days on Saturdays in the fall of each year where

students and teachers gather for a day of drama activities in English; English drama festivals in the spring in the three regions of Slovakia (an idea that came from teachers in the SIG and which involves about 30 schools and 400 students nation-wide); and the drama journal, *Dedicated Space*, which is published once a year.

Using drama in ELT is challenging to language teachers, as they need to acquire new skills and develop existing teaching skills. But the excitement of the lessons and the motivational atmosphere of purposeful learning are among its rewards. If this article has whetted your appetite, we hope you'll investigate a drama-based approach to language teaching and learning further. Get in contact with us and purchase a copy of *As If...* or look at our website at <http://www.britishcouncil.sk/arts/asif.htm>. It's an exciting field — we hope you'll take it further!





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# A Dramatic Approach to Learning: An Alternative Methods Course

by Andrea Billiková and Conrad Toft

**T**he idea behind using drama to teach foreign languages is that it is a technique, which brings the language to life. Students use the language in real situations. For example, when we practice a grammar structure, we use it in an appropriate setting and students' imagination is engaged. This sets the studied language material in students' memory and prepares them to use it again in the future. In addition, role-playing allows students to 'forget' their fear of the language and takes the learning process into the realms of the unconscious.

It is these advantages which led us to the creation of



the Drama Techniques in Education (DTiE) course at the university. In addition, it was clear to us from the very beginning that these advantages could be applied, not only to the learning of

*Andrea Billiková and Conrad Toft, university teachers dressed for "The Frog Prince."*

languages, but also to the learning of teaching techniques themselves. With this in mind, DTiE became a total immersion course - the teacher trainees become 'students' in our meta-classroom, and the teacher trainers become 'teachers'. Each technique is practically presented in the classroom through structured lesson plans, which the teacher trainees could use in their own classroom.

At various points during each class, the 'lesson' is paused and the students are encouraged to reflect on what they have experienced, what the aim of the techniques were, and how they could apply/adapt them in their own classrooms. These reflections are built up over the term into a journal, which the students can use for their own teaching in the future. The grading for the course is based on this journal, a reading journal (reflections on articles from a prepared file or the students' own chosen reading) and a final project. The final project contains a les-

son plan (part of which they present in class or with their own students), a theoretical background to this, and their reflections and conclusions based on their experience giving the lesson.

Each of the lessons is based around a theme (this is something we encourage our students to do in the preparation of their own lesson plans) - for example, in the lesson plan included in this journal, the practice of first conditional is themed around the Frog Prince fairy tale.



It is important to note that we are teaching theory through practice, and not vice versa. This has led to some problems, in that the course is sometimes accused of not be-



ing 'academic' enough - an accusation, which is also often leveled at drama in the classroom itself. The students are seen to be enjoying themselves too much! However, we have found that this inductive approach has produced good re-

*Continued on page 18*

# “The Frog Prince” – Practicing The First Conditional Through Drama and Storytelling

*This lesson plan is reproduced with permission from As If ... Drama-Based Lesson Plans For English Language Teaching, edited by D. Bacová & T. Phillips and produced in Slovakia by The British Council, 1999.*

**T**his pair of lesson plans is suitable for all age groups. We have used it with 13-year-olds to adults. The lesson is aimed at practising the first conditional with students. Of course, if they already know it, it will be used to review the grammar.

## Lesson Objectives

- To learn the first condition in a relaxed atmosphere.
- To use if conditionals in context.
- To distinguish definite and indefinite articles in conditional clauses.
- To encourage socializing within the class.
- To improve imagination and creativity.
- To become part of the magic world of fairy tales.

## Materials

‘If’ story posters, magic wand and imaginary frog!

## Magic Wand

To create the magical atmosphere, the teacher brings a magic wand to the class. Any object in the room can be turned into something magical using the wand. Each person, one by one, uses the wand to create something magical and mimes what it is to the other students (e.g., a bicycle or a folding piano!). They have to keep the object with them when they go back into the circle (e.g., the person with the bicycle must keep cycling until the end of the activity).

## Swapping magic present

Students move freely in the classroom and swap their magical objects with each other (and keep miming the objects). After a few minutes, the teacher asks who has what and which objects were the favorite ones.

## Creating the frog

The teacher tells the students that she has a *very nice, friendly* frog in her hand. It is an imaginary frog but she behaves as if it is real. She invites the students to describe it. “What color is it?” “Is it a happy frog?” “Where does it live?” “What does it do?” and so on.

## Passing the frog

The imaginary frog is passed around the circle, each student does something with the frog, and says something to it (in English) — e.g., “You’re a lovely little frog.” whilst petting the frog. All the students in the circle *must* actually touch the frog. Then the frog sits in the centre and watches.

The students are told that the person next to them is now the frog and they must behave to that person as though he/she were the frog (and say the same thing). They do this one by one round the circle.

## Introducing posters and story

The students are invited to look at the posters around the

*Continued on page 19*

## A Dramatic Approach to Learning *Continued from page 17*

sults — the course has been running for two years and already many students from the first year of the course are teachers. At a recent alumni in-service event, every student from the course claimed to be using drama as a regular part of their lessons — and encouraged those who had not taken the course to use the techniques themselves. At the same time several of our students are engaged in research into the effectiveness of drama in the classroom as part of their masters theses. It is these results which encourage us that our approach is valid and lead us to continue to develop the course further.

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*FF UKF, Stefnikova 67, 949 74 Nitra, Slovakia or via email at conradtoft@yahoo.com.*

## “The Frog Prince” *Continued from page 18*

class. They are then asked which fairy tales the sentence comes from. Make sure you elicit the Frog Prince!!! The posters are there to allow the students to refer to these sample ‘if’ clauses throughout the class. Example sentences for the posters are at the end of the second lesson plan.

### **Kissing the Frog**

This is a choral drilling activity. The frog is still sitting in the centre of the circle watching the students. Individually, each student goes to the centre of the circle to kiss the frog. The other students, in chorus, say, “If you kiss the frog, . . .” The individual in the circle, kisses the frog and finishes the sentence, with “he will...” (e.g., “he will grow bigger and bigger.”).

### **Jumping animals**

We practice the structure. When the animal is sent from student A to student B, student A says: “If you kiss the *frog*, it will turn into a *cat*.” Student B (catching the animal), replies “If you kiss the *cat*, it will turn into an elephant.” And so on. It can be played in a circle, being thrown around, or in pairs.

### **Making the masks**

The students make the frog masks and crowns ready for the next lesson (this could be done for homework).

### **Materials**

‘If’ story posters, colored pens, frog- and crown-shaped paper, picture story sheets, frog masks and crowns (optional — could be made by the students as in the previous lesson)

### **What is the story of the magic frog**

The story of the magic frog is elicited from the students (starting with just the words from the story). With younger learners you may wish to write a few basic words on the board. We must mention the princess losing her golden ball.

### **What kind of ball**

The students are asked what sport the princess was playing when she lost the golden ball. After several responses have been elicited, the teacher asks all the students to mime ball games. Whilst they are miming, the teacher tells them to find other students who are miming the same sport. This can be used to form pairs. If a student cannot find anyone doing their sport then they should try to find a similar sport to their own with the help of the teacher (sport in water, same-sized ball, number of players).

### **Making fun of the princess**

In their pairs the students choose who is the princess and who is the frog. The frogs go to one side of the class and the princesses to the other. The teacher asks the students what

the frog does when he finds the ball. He makes fun of the princess! All the frogs mime making fun of the princesses. This should be exaggerated. Then the princesses become the frogs and vice versa. The activity is repeated.

### **Frog/Princess mime**

The frogs and princesses, in their pairs, mime the negotiation for the ball. The roles are swapped and the mime repeated. Which of the princesses got their ball back?

### **Frog/Princess Dialogue written and dramatized**

Each pair is given one frog- and one crown-shaped paper. On these, they will write the dialogue between the frog and the princess (frog’s sentences on the frog-shaped papers, princess’s on the crown). They can only use ‘if’ sentences. This is then read aloud to the class in a dramatic way.

### **Finishing the story**

The students work in groups. They have papers with pictures of five fairy tale characters on them. Each paper should have different pictures on it, but all will include the frog and princess (e.g., a frog, a princess, a giant, a ring, a magic carpet and a monster). The students have to use all the pictures to finish the story using If... will/won’t... This will take some time. The students can perform their stories with one narrator and the rest miming it.

These stories could be pinned on the wall of the classroom afterwards.

### **Poster Sentences**

If I tell him the way to grandma’s house, he will eat her!  
If I go to the ball, I will meet the handsome prince.  
If you kiss me, I will give you the ball.  
If the bears come back, they will be very angry.  
If we eat some of this gingerbread house, we won’t be hungry any more.  
If they eat my house, I will eat them!

### **Frog / Princess Papers**

Students work much better when the paper they have to write on for the exercise is shaped. These are the simple shapes we recommend for the frog and the princess:



*Andrea Sabová and Conrad Toft teach at the University of Constantine the Philosopher, Nitra, Slovakia*

# The Great Flood

by Daniela Bacová & Tim Phillips

A lesson plan for elementary learners of English between the ages of 9 and 13 involving the telling of the story of Noah's Ark and drama activities on the subject of the "great flood."

## Lesson objectives

- To participate in role as members of a family in a decision-making process.
- To practice vocabulary and grammar relating to the weather and the story of Noah.
- To practice answering interview questions using *going to* for the future.
- To prepare students to work within a *dramatic frame* and with *still image*.
- To encourage effective co-operation in groups.

## Time

45-60 minutes

## Materials

A poster-size drawing of Noah's ark, including Noah and Mrs. Noah, the ark and pairs of animals. An umbrella.

## Stages

### A. Warm-up

1. A guessing game — Teacher asks the students to guess 2 words (**water & umbrella**). They can ask yes/no questions or guess in a game like *hangman*.
2. Brainstorm other words associated with water and umbrella in the form of a mind map. Make sure the word **flood** is put into the mind map.

### B. Pre-drama

1. Show the picture of Noah's Ark — elicit what it is. Allow the children to come to the front and have a look. Ask round the class for words of things they can see in the picture.
2. Elicit the story of Noah — the teacher tells and then asks the children to re-tell the story round the class.

### C. Drama

1. Teacher in rôle as a reporter (using an umbrella as a microphone)

"I am a reporter from national television. I am here in . . . because for three days there has been rain. Rain, rain, rain. People here are very worried because the water is getting higher. They are afraid there is going to be a flood! So I am here to interview families about what they are going to do about the flood. What are they going to do? Where are they going to go? What are they going to take?"

2. Teacher out of rôle. Divide the class into groups. Each group is a family. Their task is to decide:

- which family members they are and what their names are;
- what they are going to do, where they are going to go, what are they going to take;
- who is going to speak to the reporter and what exactly they are going to say.

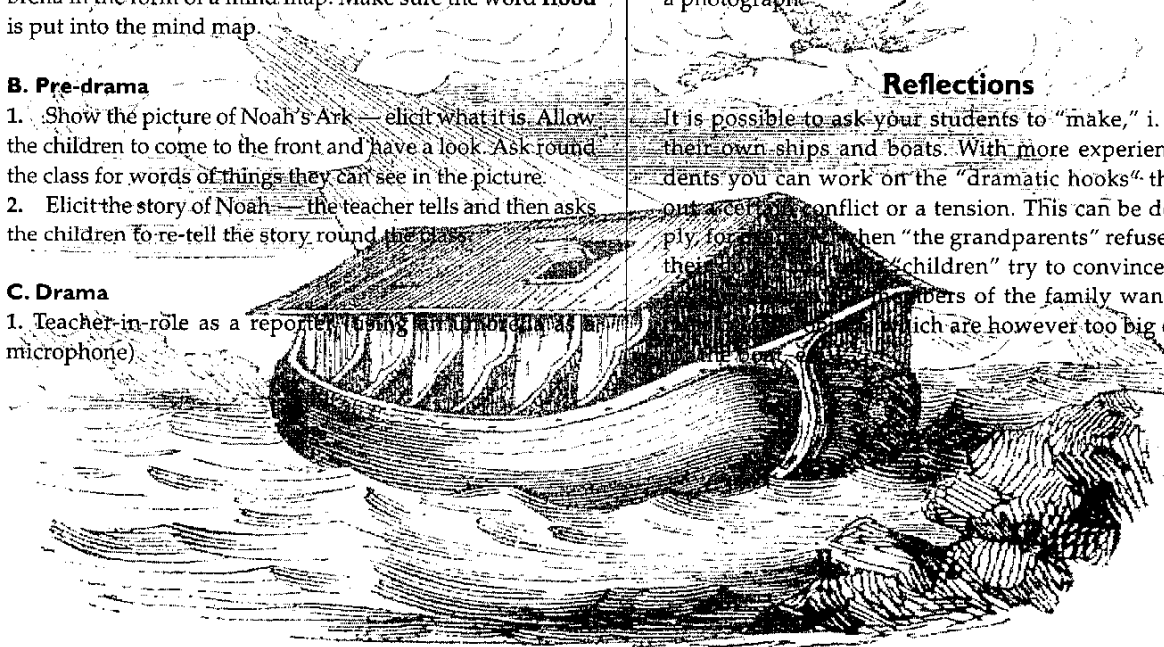
3. After time for the students to work in groups on these tasks, teacher-in-rôle as the television reporter interviews each group — "Who are you? What are you going to do? Where are you going to go? What are you going to take?"

### D. Calming down

1. The class prepares a still-image of one scene representing a photograph.

## Reflections

It is possible to ask your students to "make," i. e., draw their own ships and boats. With more experienced students you can work on the "dramatic hooks" that point out real conflict or a tension. This can be done simply for example when "the grandparents" refuse to leave their homes and the "children" try to convince them to do so. Members of the family want to take things which are however too big or heavy



## Equity for Part-Time Faculty

by Veronica McComack

**T**here's an international dialogue on the Internet on the adjunct teaching experience. Hundreds of stories, some of horror, some of hope, are pouring in from around the world. From France to Japan, the experiences are largely the same as those here in Massachusetts.

The idea of part-time faculty was originally to provide flexibility in fulfilling staffing requirements and providing special expertise. This has given way to using part-time faculty as an economical device. The problem is global and is now more entrenched than ever. In this country, approximately 500,000 adjunct faculty make up 51 percent of the men and women who teach in our public and private colleges and universities. The aspiration today is a 70:30 ratio of fulltime to part-time. In most colleges, half of the courses in a major are taught by temporary employees, many of who become temporary for their lifetime.

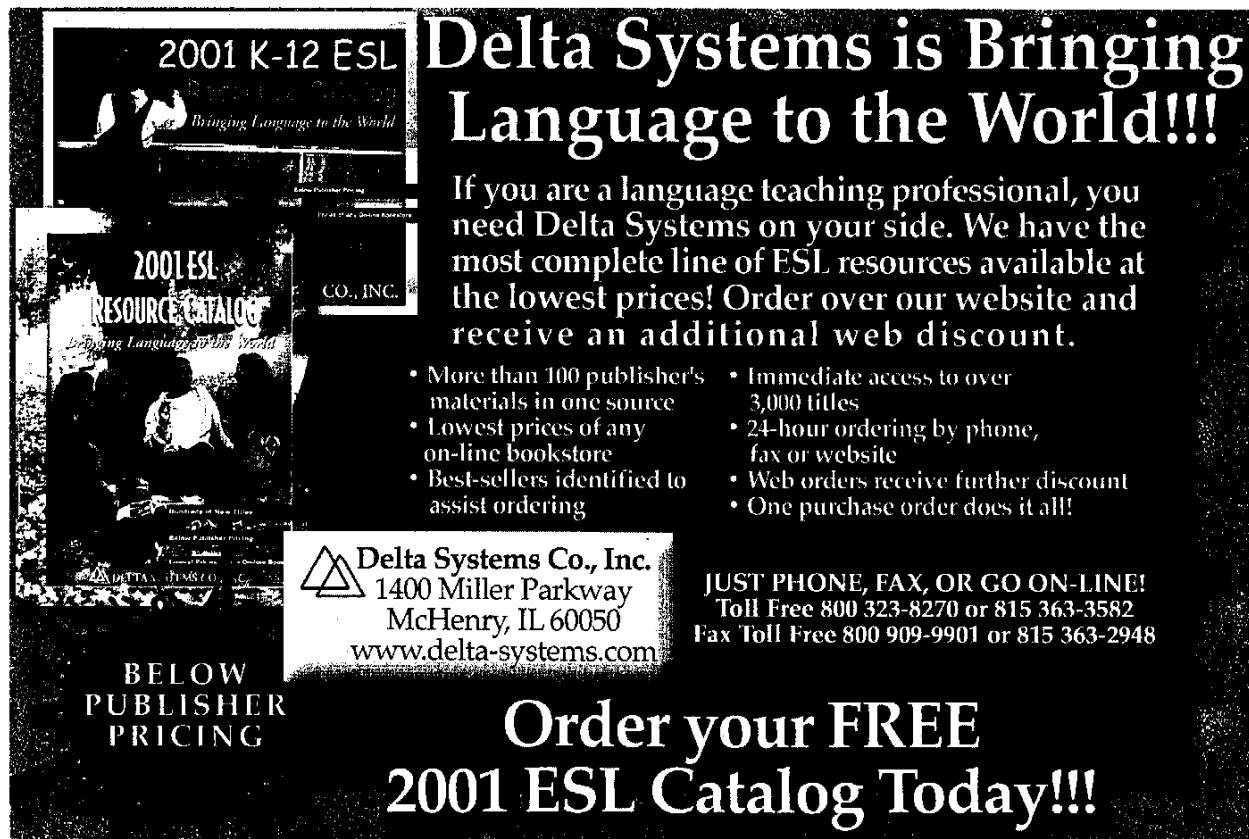
Various activist groups are addressing issues of labor justice (labor injustice): the salaries are not equitable to full-time faculty salaries; part-time faculty are essentially excluded from medical care; and they rarely have retirement

benefits. To say that they don't have a voice is an understatement; few even have offices or phones. In turn, the exploitation of part-time faculty impacts the full-time faculty too, who end up pulling a heavy load. Small numbers of full-timers work on every conceivable committee and task force, advise and counsel beyond the hours required. We must all remember that the working conditions are the same under which students learn, which raises issues of quality of education.

The good news is that adjunct faculty are organizing like never before. Back in December 1986, the part-time faculty at Massachusetts Community Colleges voted to be represented by the local chapter of the MTA, MA Community College Council (MCCC). In 1990, after two years of bargaining, the Division of Continuing Education faculty went on strike. The majority of those walking the picket line were full-time faculty. As a result, the first DCE contract was signed.

This summer two important bills went before legislature. The hearing for House Bill 254, Part-Time Faculty Pen-

*Continued on page 22*



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## Equity for Part-Time Faculty

Continued from page

sion Improvements, was held on May 15th. The hearing for House Bill 1425, Health Benefits for Part-Time Faculty, was held on June 26th. For the updated information on these bills contact Jon.Millman@umb.edu and ask your legislators in the House and Senate for their support on these bills. To join on-line discussions among part-time and continuing education faculty in Massachusetts state institutions of higher education email at [mta-adjunct@egroups.com](mailto:mta-adjunct@egroups.com). A government accounting office report on contingent labor and related legislation sponsored by Senator Ted Kennedy (D-MA) has helped to document the extent of the problem.

The TESOL Caucus on Part-time Employment Concerns (COPTTEC) is also very active. In October 2000, the TESOL Board of Directors endorsed the AFT Resolution on part-time employment, calling for the end of "financial and professional exploitation of part-time faculty." For the full text of the resolution, go to [http://www.aft.org/higher\\_ed/resolutions.html](http://www.aft.org/higher_ed/resolutions.html).

In March 2001, the New York State Assembly on Higher Education and Labor Committee held a hearing on adjunct working conditions, which was the largest hearing in 24 years. 150 attended and over 75 testified, including the president of NYC Tech. Let's beat that on May 15th and June 26th!

In Massachusetts there is an active chapter of the Coalition of Contingent Academic Labor, COCAL, a national network of activists seeking to improve working conditions of part-time and non-tenure faculty, graduate teaching and research assistants. The Boston chapter originated in the Spring 1998, when part-time activists at UMASS Boston won a victory: half-time status, full medical, dental and pension benefits, and a minimum of \$4,000.00 per course. According to one report, the national average is \$3,000.00 per course. UMB activists then joined with adjunct faculty from Suffolk

University, the American Association of University Professors, IWW and other unions and agencies to host COCAL's Third National Conference in 1999. Since then, COCAL has been educating the public about the exploitation of contingent faculty, and organizing activist groups at area colleges.

The A.A.U.P. has made a commitment to addressing adjunct faculty issues; a full-time national staff person, Richard Moser, has been appointed (call at 800-4244-2973X3043 or email [rmoser@aaup.org](mailto:rmoser@aaup.org)). Rich Moser works closely with

Boston COCAL.

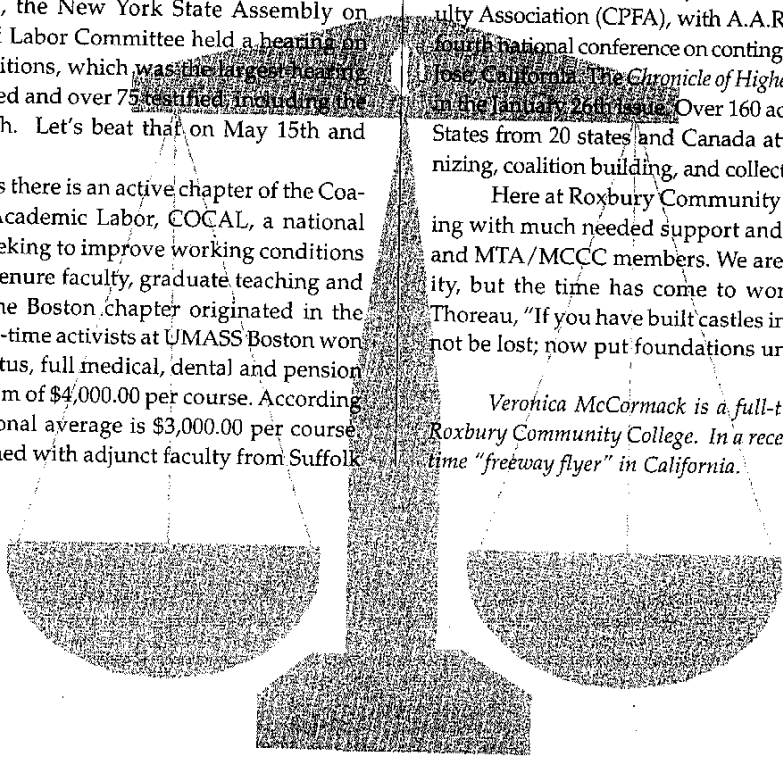
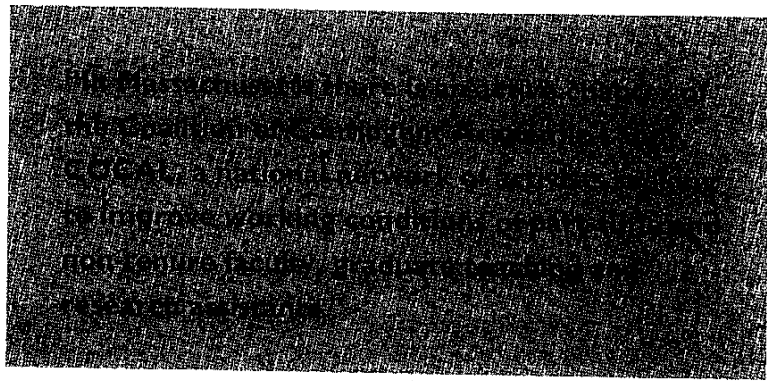
Their goal is to serve as a clearinghouse for health benefits, hiring, and other part-time faculty issues. A.A.U.P. has a survey on adjunct faculty working conditions ([www.aaup.org](http://www.aaup.org)). For more information go to COCAL web page at <http://omega.cc.umb.edu>

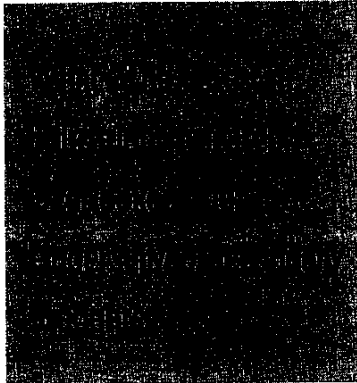
or call Barbara Gottfried, the COCAL co-chair, at 617-899-8403.

In January, COCAL joined the California Part-time Faculty Association (CPFA), with A.A.R.P. as the sponsor, for the fourth national conference on contingent academic labor, in San Jose, California. *The Chronicle of Higher Education* reported on it in the January 26th issue. Over 160 academics from the United States from 20 states and Canada attended sessions on organizing, coalition building, and collective bargaining.

Here at Roxbury Community College we are organizing with much needed support and guidance from COCAL and MTA/MCCC members. We are a long way from equality, but the time has come to work for justice. To quote Thoreau, "If you have built castles in the air, your work need not be lost; now put foundations under them".

*Veronica McCormack is a full-time professor of ESOL at Roxbury Community College. In a recent past life she was a part-time "freeway flyer" in California.*





Immigrant students' needs are not being met in most secondary schools and classrooms in the United States. That is the main finding from a recent report by the Urban Institute, "Overlooked and underserved: Immigrant students in U.S. secondary schools" (December 2000). The report draws primarily on data from the Institute's assessment of the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation's Program in Immigrant Education (PRIME), and emphasizes the challenges of educating middle and high school students with low literacy and/or significant gaps in their schooling. PRIME focused on improving three kinds of educational outcomes:

- English language and literacy
- Mastery of academic content and skills
- Preparation for postsecondary opportunities

Included in the report is a national profile of the immigrant student population, based on 1970-1995 data from the U.S. Census and the U.S. Department of Education's Schools and Staffing Survey. The profile suggests an immigrant student population that is more heavily concentrated in high-poverty, secondary schools than 30 years ago. In contrast, language resources and services (e.g., ESL/bilingual education programs and staff) remain clustered at the

*Continued on page 24*

## Teacher Research

# Turning Language Samples into Data

by Jean Chandler

Sometimes colleagues who have not done any teacher research but like the idea of doing it share with me that they collected lots of data but don't know what to do with them. My usual response, although perhaps not offering much help, is that it depends on what one's research question is. A typical reaction to this is a puzzled "What do you mean?" What I mean is that the standard way to carry out research, in the classroom or elsewhere, is first to formulate a research question you want to answer and then to develop a data collection and analysis plan to answer this question.

However, I understand my colleagues' predicament as until recently I had been in a similar situation. For years I have been collecting samples of my students' writing. They were not collected with a formal research plan in mind and I didn't quite know what to do with them. They were thought too interesting to throw on the scrap heap. I have long been interested in how student language and writing change over time, but at that time I didn't know exactly how to analyze



it. I knew that I had an opportunity — somewhat unique — to do a longitudinal study because I often teach the same students for as many as five semesters. Each semester I would photocopy one or two samples of the same students' writing.

Recently I read an article, "Documenting Improvement in College Writing: A Longitudinal Approach," by Richard H. Haswell, in the July 2000 issue of *Written Language*. Having reviewed several articles on how students' writing tends to alter with time, experience, and instruction, Haswell proceeds to build on a previous cross-sectional study he conducted in 1986. This study compared the writing of students at the beginning of their first, second, and third year of college to the writing of college graduates who were 35 years or older, working in business, and judged by their supervisors as competent writers. In the 1986 study Haswell gathered more than 100 measures of writing and used factor analysis to group these variables into nine factors.

Haswell then designed a new study, in which he only used one variable from each of the nine factors derived in the earlier study. His argument was that, given the interrelationships among variables, these nine measures could "stand in" for the larger data set, thus letting him analyze new data and compare the findings with those of the 1986 study. These nine measures were applied to a new longitudinal sample of undergraduate writing. He compared a two-hour impromptu essay written by 64 students in the beginning of their first year with a two-hour impromptu essay on a similar topic written by the same students two years later. One of the measures he used was a holistic rating; the other eight were all quantifiable measures (such as *mean length of sentences*, *mean length of clauses*, or *number of words longer than nine letters*). Eight of the nine measures showed significant longitudinal change from first to third year in the direction that professional, postgraduate writing had differed from undergraduate writing in his earlier 1986 study. Note that the earlier study had not used longitudinal data from the same students, but had

*Continued on page 24*

## Overlooked and Underserved Secondary Students

Continued from page 23

elementary school level. Moreover, immigrant students who are limited English proficient are likely to be segregated from their mainstream peers — in separate classrooms or schools. The result is dropout and underachievement among immigrant youth. Findings support the following strategies for improving learning outcomes for immigrant students at the secondary school level:

- Restructuring the school schedule to support cross-departmental collaboration among staff and expanded instruction time for students;
- Linking immigrant education to wider reform efforts by developing performance standards for ESL/bilingual education programs;
- Involving a wider coalition of stakeholders in immigrant education reform;
- Focusing professional development on mainstream teachers and administrators who work with immigrant students;
- Implementing demonstration and research projects designed to address gaps in the data related to underschooled teen newcomers and long-term LEP students.

### Find Out More

"Overlooked and underserved" is written by Urban Institute researchers Jorge Ruiz-de-Velasco and Michael Fix, with Beatriz Chu Clewall. The report is available on the Urban Institute website: <http://www.urban.org>

### The Bilingual Brain

That teaching can make a difference in brain development is one of the conclusions that Fred Genesee reaches in "Brain research: Implications for second language learning" (ERIC Digest, 2000). His discus-

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## Turning Language Samples into Data

Continued from page 23

compared different students at different stages of learning.

Haswell was able to carry out a longitudinal study on the later data by basing it on measures tested in his earlier research.

This brings us to my data, which is similar to Haswell's in some ways and different in others. Mine is from the writing of second language learners rather than that of native English-speaking college students. It is from homework assignments rather than impromptu writing. Since the amount of time spent on the assignment is not controlled in my data, I cannot use one of Haswell's measures, i.e., length of essay. But I do have multiple essays from the same students on similar topics (the same type of writing, e.g., narrative or comparison/contrast) written over two years. Therefore, I can take advantage of the careful work done by Haswell and use nearly the same measures he used in my analysis of the writing development of my ESL students. What I hope to find out is whether my second-language learners developed in the same ways as his native English-speaking students in their college writing.

Is it cheating to use the same measures that Haswell used? Not at all, in fact, it makes it easier to compare my findings with his results, and that makes both my work and his more useful as contributions to the state of knowledge about student writing. I agree with Haswell "that research will advance more by exploring new contexts with old variables and old contexts with new variables than it will with new variables in new contexts" (p. 338). One of the criticisms that are often made of teacher research in general is that it is 'local,' as its findings apply only to a particular population in a particular situation. However, it is rare for any educational research to produce a finding that is true of all learners in all situations. Having that in mind, we cannot let this dissuade us from investigating how our students learn in a given context. But it is even more important to disseminate all findings so that we can learn what applies in what contexts. One good way to do that is to take advantage of good research designs generated by others who have studied similar questions, even if they involved different students or contexts.

It is still usually best to decide on a research question and design before collecting data, but sometimes one can be lucky enough, as I have been with Haswell's article, to find measures that can be applied to language samples one has already collected. This way language samples can be turned into data to address the research question; in my case, the question is "How does the writing of my ESL students change over a two-year period?"

It is still usually best to decide on a research question and design before collecting data, but sometimes one can be lucky enough to find measures that can be applied to language samples one has already collected. This way language samples can be turned into data to address the research question.



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- Submission deadline for Vol. 28, No. 1 is October 1, 2000.
- All materials should be either e-mailed or sent by mail to: Editor, MATSOL CURRENTS, 10000 University Ave., Suite 100, San Diego, CA 92121. E-mail: [editor@currents.matsol.org](mailto:editor@currents.matsol.org).
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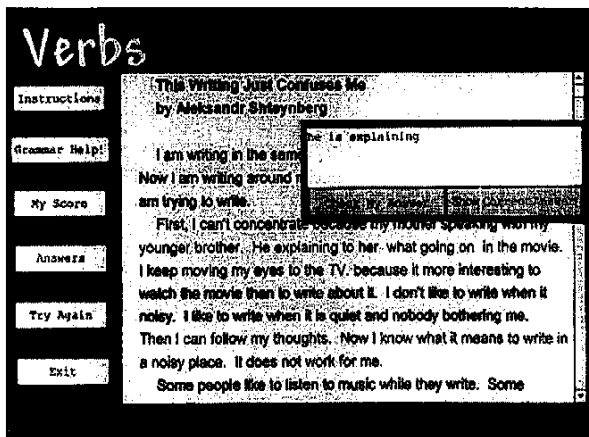
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## REVIEWS



# **The Young Composers: Composition's Beginnings in Nineteenth-Century Schools**

by Lucille M. Schultz. Southern Illinois University Press, 1999. 218 pages. ISBN 0-8093-2236-6.

**Reviewed by Eileen Feldman**

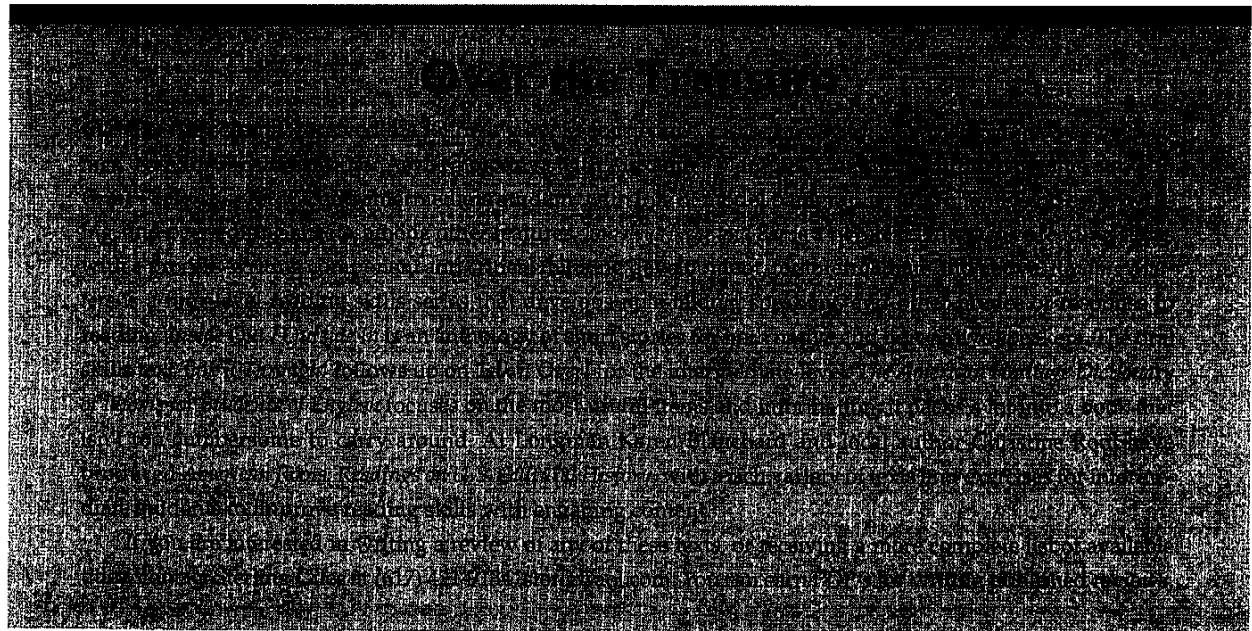
In *The Young Composers*, the author's running thesis is that, even before the 1830's, personal, experience-based writing instruction began evolving from traditional grammar and rhetorical models, began opening new topics for contemplation and democratizing social strata, yet continued strengthening cultural values. The book shows how theories of multiple intelligences, moral/character education, and concepts of childhood were treated over time. They are commingled and referred to with different names, but these concepts form the gist of the book. These are not new ideas of the twentieth century, but rather belong to the previous few centuries, when Pestalozzi, Froebel, Locke, and Rousseau were rethinking child development and education.

Before 1830 many felt children needed first to learn rhetorical patterns and later would be able to write original compositions. The conventional method of composition was:

"1) the proposition, 2) the reason, 3) the confirmation, 4) the simile, 5) the example, 6) the testimony, 7) the conclusion." After the pupils copied down the rules, the teacher read and discussed the prepared essay; then students wrote it from memory; finally, the teacher corrected it. Schultz notes that from the 1830's there began a shift from this model to the reform model, where only rules needed for personal essays were taught.

Schultz demonstrates how the artistic sensibilities of children were tapped by the inclusion of woodcuts and engravings, made possible through improved printing technology. Illustrations provided means for students to describe concrete objects and characters and encouraged personal narratives associated with pictured settings. (boy writing letter, work scene, etc.) Many early texts urged students to compose original essays with prompt questions eliciting

*Continued on page 27*



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## The Young Composers *Continued from page 26*

cause/effect, comparison, or argumentation related to the pictures. These tasks broke from the traditional British rhetorical curricula, which focused on memorization and abstract topics such as "patience" or "duty."

Children's community service sensibilities were developed by obligatory letter writing, both in class and at home. In fact, this genre was often the first taught in composition texts. Other extra-curricular writing took place in school newspapers; peer editing, learning to resist status quo in their lives, and examining other schools' student anthologies were introduced. Schultz feels writing at home in journals and for school papers offered students "greater freedom in selecting their purpose, audience, and genre, greater room for creativity and for experimentation, greater room for thinking of themselves not just as students but also as writers." One early text even suggested that students' field research or interviews would be prompts for response. By contrast, class themes were standardized models of adults' work.

Cultural values were recognized and codified in the edu-

cational system of the time. Women's styles and language usage were noted and applauded in the numerous women's schools of the nineteenth century; theirs contrasted with the directness of male style. Rule memorization of grammar, figurative language, and rhetorical form was included in most texts of the period, though their order of placement varied with the philosophy of the authors.

*The Young Composers* helps us to evaluate our present methods of teaching composition and our criteria for textbook selection. Furthermore, the expansive bibliography invites us to continue this historical expedition in search of solutions to our surprisingly not-so-unique contemporary problems. Many sources of 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup>-century student writing are available in Harvard's Gutman Library, the Boston Public Library, and Boston Latin School archives. Education reform comes in many forms. Should we go back to the future to find our educational salvation? Lucille Schultz's retrospective offers food for this thought.

*Eileen Feldman teaches at Suffolk University and Bunker Hill Community College. [efeldman@acad.suffolk.edu](mailto:efeldman@acad.suffolk.edu)*

## Targeting Pronunciation: The Intonation, Sounds, and Rhythm of American English

by Sue F. Miller. Houghton Mifflin, 2000. 270 pages. Instructor's manual, tape and website. ISBN: 0-395-90331-9.

**Reviewed by Benjamin White**

**H**ere is an original pronunciation textbook for students of English at an intermediate to advanced level. Targeting Pronunciation provides students with four key goals: promotion of "effective communication," student work outside the classroom, student responsibility for changing individual pronunciation, and promotion of self-confidence. Miller pursues these goals in a well planned, innovative manner which is non-threatening to students as well as teachers inexperienced in matters of pronunciation.

The book is broken into twelve chapters. Chapter One — with listening test, discussion of pronunciation targets, speech sample, and practice tips — serves as a wonderful springboard for student and teacher to get started. Students are introduced to the aspects of pronunciation with which they will be working. These include intonation, thought groups, word stress, linking, focus words, reductions, consonants, and vowels. Students are also given opportunity to perform such necessary tasks as self-monitoring and goal setting. Helpful activities are provided for the production of student speech samples. For example, students are asked to talk on tape about why they have decided to take a pronunciation class. These samples help the instructor both to iden-

tify students' strengths and weaknesses and to learn about students' backgrounds and motivations.

The book focuses heavily on suprasegmentals (aspects of speech beyond individual sounds, such as intonation). Chapters 2-4 address word stress, intonation change, connected speech, and focal stress. Chapters 8-9 cover rhythm and intonation patterns. Chapters 11-12 examine reduction and thought groups. The remaining chapters primarily address segmentals. Chapters 5-7 focus on unstressed syllables, vowels, and consonants. This includes manner and place of articulation. Chapter 10 addresses word endings "ed" and "s" as well as other consonant sounds. The appendices include a glossary, charts, checklists, and exercises for consonants and vowels.

The book's greatest strength is that it sets realistic goals. Altering one's pronunciation in a second language can be a long, arduous task. Miller warns of this in the introduction and helps the student to identify which goals are most important for that individual student. There is a priority on student responsibility throughout the book. Activities require self-monitoring and encourage practice outside of class. "Talk Times" and "On Your Own" at the end of each chapter suggest con-

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## Targeting Pronunciation *Continued from page 27*

versational tasks students might perform in their daily life.

The material within the book is highly accessible. Symbols are easy to follow, concepts are not overwhelming, and goals are clearly defined. Activities fit within a framework of chapter targets. These targets address those aspects of pronunciation listed above. Activities provide receptive and productive practice by utilizing students' listening, speaking, and monitoring skills. For example, in Chapter 5, students are provided with a list of proverbs where all function words (e.g., articles, prepositions, pronouns, etc.) have been removed. Students listen to the reading of these proverbs and attempt to fill in the missing words. This exercise focuses student attention on the vowel reduction of function words. In Chapter 11, students listen to "Leaving on a Jet Plane" by John Denver. Exercises following ask students to practice word endings and stress patterns found in the song. Partner practice, dialogues, songs, and chants provide the basic forms of in-class student production.

In my own experience with the book, I have found the

models of word stress and focal stress to work especially well. Within a dialogue, students can easily see which syllables take stress and where pitch should change. This assists them in production and removes some of the mysterious cloud that often hangs over stress and intonation. In addition, the dialogues in the book are ones students might overhear or engage in in real life. This helps students to find the relevance of in-class activities to outside-of-class communication.

Targeting Pronunciation does just that. It introduces students to different aspects of pronunciation and gives them targets to work towards. These targets are realistic, they are aimed at improving communication, and they are applicable to social interactions beyond the classroom. I have found Miller's book to be a valuable aid in my own classroom. I recommend it to anyone interested in teaching pronunciation. *Benjamin White is a graduate student in the School of Education at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. He teaches ESL for the Division of Continuing Education at UMass.*



## Talk About It!: An Integrated Approach to Bold, Dynamic Topics – Student Workbook

by Joyce Bryan, Leslie Bishop, Melinda Roth Sayavedra. University of Michigan Press, 1997. 98 pages. ISBN: 0-472-08395-3.

**Reviewed by Carole Thieme**

**T**alk About It! is a workbook and teaching guide which aims to help low-intermediate students develop the language skills necessary to discuss topics of everyday life. In eight self-contained units, the authors offer a variety of activities such as cooperative learning tasks, idiom and slang worksheets, information gathering assignments, brief readings, and a number of exercises requiring interaction with peers and native speakers. Although the authors state that the units may be treated non-sequentially, the first three units focus on those language functions that enable students to become comfortable with casual conversation. The remaining five units are directed at generating discussion about issues such as sexism in the workplace, alcohol abuse, advertising practices, AIDS education, and music as a political tool. All of these chapters are full of activities and exercises which encourage students to use their newly acquired skills to speak up and out, to listen for specific information, to elicit responses and to compare ideas. Slang and idiomatic language are introduced early and often to allow learners to become familiar with

"real-world" language. The four macro skills of reading, writing, listening and speaking are integrated thoughtfully within the units.

Although some of the exercises have been treated in a similar way in any number of good ESL texts, others offer a fresh and/or unique twist to a familiar task. For example, in a beginning unit, students are asked to interview a partner as a way to get to know a person. Nothing particularly novel in that activity! However, as an added task, the students are asked to re-consider some of the questions they have written in order to determine a level of appropriateness. This added activity could lead to a thoughtful classroom discussion of culturally specific differences. I appreciated that added feature to the typical "getting to know you" exercise. In a later unit dealing with the power of advertising, students are asked to look through various newspaper advertisements with a partner and to determine what kind of advertisement it is – a classified ad, a personal, a corporate ad, or a public service message. Again, nothing new.

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## Talk About It! Continued from page 28

But as a follow-up assignment, students read an article that examines how the public is manipulated by advertisers to buy their products. In the article several kinds of "appeals ads" are defined, and students are then asked to work in groups to decide which kind of appeal each of the newspaper advertisements has employed and who the target audience might be. An exercise such as this not only helps to raise a student's language level, but also increases critical thinking skills.

As with many textbooks that teach idioms and slang, the teacher needs to make a distinction between *understanding* the expressions and the delicate issue of *employing* them, as they may become passé quickly and are often appropriate only for specific groups. Some terms will sound artificial when used by a non-native speaker anyway. On the other hand, there are many expressions in this workbook that have made their way into our active vocabulary and will remain there — *to hit it off with someone*, *to break even*, and *to jack up the price*. This is language any new speaker will hear often. A teacher will need to edit any content that no longer seems timely.

One of the workbook's main strengths lies in the read-

ings that accompany each unit. The authors state they are from authentic sources (although the sources are not cited) and all of them are pertinent to the topic, engaging, and pitched at a level appropriate to intermediate students. The authors have suggested pre- and post-reading activities, but teachers could easily use the articles in any number of ways for class and homework assignments. In one article addressing the dangers of drinking and driving, there is a chart showing the relationship of body weight, number of drinks and blood alcohol level. Students in my class were surprised to discover how quickly the levels rose with each drink, and a lively discussion ensued about possible ways to keep drunk drivers off the road and what kinds of punishments they should face.

There is much offered in *Talk About It*. The wide range of activities allows teachers to choose what best suits their particular classes and time frames, be it one exercise or an entire unit. Additionally, teachers may want to look at this workbook as an adjunct to another text. Overall, I'd recommend *Talk About It!* as a useful addition to any ESL instructor's library.

*Carole Thieme teaches ESL and American Culture at Showa Boston. cthieme@showaboston.org*



## For Your Information – Books 1, 2, & 3

by Karen Blanchard and Christine Root. Longman, 1996. Approximately 220 pages per level.

ISBN Book 1 0-201-83409-x, Book 2 0-201-82538-4, Book 3 0-201-87798-8.

**Reviewed by Susan Strand**

**T**he FYI series by K. Blanchard and C. Root is a basic reading skills text. Its goal is to offer in interesting and challenging reading material and exercises for the high beginning to the high-intermediate level English language learner. It is the authors' belief that ESL students can comprehend reading material at a higher level of English than they can produce.

FYI book 1 is for high-beginning or low-intermediate ESL students. Students are encouraged to become more competent and confident readers by expanding their vocabulary and developing word attack skills. Through eight thematically based units, each with a selection of 3-4 readings, comprehension exercises, and vocabulary builders, students are drawn into the reading process, becoming active participants rather than passive readers. Topics discussed include travel, facing challenges, attitudes about animals, memories, climate and weather, food for thought, television and companies. Exercises encourage students to draw on their own experi-

ences, for instance, in "Travel Talk" students share travel experiences and vacation dreams.

FYI book 2 is geared to intermediate students. It helps students to become more independent readers by building on students' prior knowledge and facilitating understanding and integration of new ideas. While intended to be a reading text, exercises encourage speaking, listening, reading and analytical skills. Each unit is structured with pre-reading questions, followed by a selection of readings and skill-building tasks. Finally, each unit is tied together with word games and a "Reader's Journal." Topics range from "Playing to Win" and "Our Fragile Planet" to "Getting Down to Business" and "Are You Superstitious?"

FYI book 3 serves high-intermediate students. Students are taught to be less dependant on the text and increasingly adept at the application and analysis of information. As in book 2, many skills beyond reading are engaged. Again each

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## **For Your Information** *Continued from page 29*

unit begins with pre-reading questions and moves on to readings and tasks. Students are able to hone their reading skills through such strategies as previewing, predicting, skimming, scanning etc. Each unit finishes with questions that reflect on the readings. Topics discussed include "Winning isn't everything," "What is Art?" and "The Age of Information."

All three books deliver an assortment of interesting authentic reading material. Students are engaged in thought-

ful discussions and challenged by a variety of games and exercises that follow each reading. While high school students at a high beginning level of language proficiency may find the vocabulary too difficult, intermediate level student, from the high school level to adults, will find these texts relevant and stimulating.

*Susan Strand expects to graduate from the MATESL program at Simmons College in May 2001. Her interests lie in teaching abroad. susan.strand@verizon.net.*

## **Overlooked and Underserved Secondary Students** *Continued from page 24*

sion of recent findings from brain and "bilingual brain" research suggests how to go about using that information to more effectively teach linguistically diverse learners.

Genesee starts with new evidence that "the specialized functions of specific regions of the brain are not fixed at birth but are shaped by experience and learning." Both experience and learning have the ability to create new and complex connections between neural networks, connections that contribute to additional knowledge and skills. Not giving up on older language learners is one of the implications of this finding. Another is to make provisions for individual differences in learning styles by supporting a context-rich environment. Genesee cautions that the results from brain research do not prescribe

exactly what or how to teach, but do add important insights to what makes education effective.

### **Find Out More**

Fred Genesee is a professor of psychology at McGill University who has conducted research on second language learning and social and neuropsychological aspects of bilingualism.

"Brain research: Implications for second language learning" is available online at: <http://www.cal.org/ericcl/digest/0012brain.html> These research articles were reproduced with permission from NCBE Outlook, National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education.



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