

What Should Teachers Know About Language? *Tom Griffith*

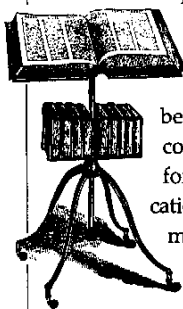
Last September 30, MATSOL pulled off something new. In years past it has mounted a full Fall Conference. But with declining attendance, that was dropped in 1998 in favor of small, targeted Professional Development sessions in different parts of the state. While these proved popular to specific groups, they didn't attract enough revenue to be viable. So a sort of hybrid conference/PDO was devised, to last a single evening but be of sufficient interest to attract much of the membership.

That formula met with success in a panel discussion entitled "Reflections on Second Language Education and Research." It was held at the Lipke Auditorium at UMass/Boston and attended by over 150. The purpose was twofold: to highlight critical issues in second-language research, and to allow members of various professional organizations - MATSOL, MABE and MCAE — to forge connections.

Moderated by Maya Honda of Wheelock's Department of Education, the panel featured three well-known figures in ESL — two academics and one journalist. All were asked to discuss what teachers should know about language learning.

The journalist, James Crawford, frankly begged off the question in order to focus on what he considered more important — analysis of the California vote last year to do away with Bilingual Education. An activist for years on behalf of linguistic minorities, Crawford took part in the campaign against Proposition 227, which nonetheless passed with 61% of the vote. He felt the lessons from the defeat were important for Massachusetts educators in case a similar challenge is mounted here.

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Celebrating Psychological Diversity in a New Graduate Course *John M. Green*

The idea seems so simple at first. Students are individuals, and they learn in different ways. One student, for instance, may enjoy collecting information for its own sake, and look to teachers and textbooks as the best sources of learning. Another may learn best from interactions in small groups of students and by relating new information to personal experiences. Because of differences like this, any "one size fits all" approach to teaching is likely to favor some learners and neglect the needs of others.

It follows that in order for as many students as possible to succeed, teachers need to recognize and understand learner differences. This is especially true because it is so easy and natural for teachers to assume that everybody learns in the same way that they do and therefore to try to replicate the kind of classroom where they themselves were most comfortable when they were students.

These ideas are easy to grasp and easy to sum up in general terms, but a full understanding of the different ways in which ESL students learn turns out to involve several complicating factors. This is why a new graduate level course, English 779, "Learner Differences in English as a Second Language," will be offered for the first time in January 2000 at Salem State College. The course, designed primarily for present and future teachers of ESL students,

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What Should Teachers Know About Language?

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The defenders of Bilingual Education were caught off guard by the new tack taken by opponent Ron Unz. Unz, an unsuccessful Republican candidate for governor, cast the issue not in the usual terms of preserving linguistic unity, but rather as one of school reform. He argued that BE was to be classed along with other "failed" social programs of the Sixties. Unz enjoyed some credibility, since he had opposed an earlier ballot measure stripping illegal aliens of welfare benefits, which was perceived as anti-immigrant and anti-Hispanic. He courted Mexican-American support so skillfully that in the early phase of the campaign, 85% of Latinos agreed with the measure.

The Bilingual Education establishment, said Crawford, remained on the defensive. It "fought the last war," insofar as it tried to implicate the measure with the English-Only movement (which Crawford thinks had reached a dead-end by 1996). And it lost an opportunity to argue that ELL students could master both English and other subjects sooner, through well-designed BE programs.

The next speaker was Catherine Snow of the Harvard Graduate School of Education. She responded to the initial question by saying teachers of ALL subjects, not just those of BE or ESL, need to know more about language acquisition. Their students, whether native speakers of English or ELL, must deepen their verbal skills and their hold on language throughout their schooling. Vocabulary growth, she said, is the key. But that doesn't occur automatically through "immersion" at any age, despite the widespread notion that very young children learn second languages easily.

She noted the difficulties of morphology and phonology specific to English, that slow up the progress of reading skills. In addition to the oft-cited demons like "knight" and "choir," Snow mentioned some words in the news lately - "titlist" (from the Ryder Cup golf tourney), "mised," and "warthog." How on earth are they to be pronounced? English spelling is so dated and illogical that it takes two and a half years to attain a reading level that, in a more phonetic tongue like Italian, takes only two and half months. (It got me thinking how different things would be if the Armada had succeeded in 1588, Britain reduced to a backwater province, and the global language now not English but the more learnable and mellifluous Spanish. *Que lastima!*)

Aside from straight language facts, Snow felt teachers should also have some grasp of sociolinguistics. They might then be able to spot cognitive problems that take the form of dialectal speaking. And they could also take advantage of Spanish and similar tongues that include a number of English cognates.

Diane Larsen-Freeman of Vermont's School of International Training spoke last. She opened by calling on teachers to be fascinated by students' learning - an outlook often lost in the pressures of "covering the material." As for what general instructors should know about language acquisition, she stressed the seminal concept of "interlanguage." This shifts focus away from the correction of error in learners, too much of which can be stifling and counterproductive. To learn a language is a creative process, and mistakes are often the result of overgeneralization - "he goed" - that reflect a healthy instinct for order and system.

She recommended too that teachers grasp the affective dimension of language learning. Students are more likely to take the necessary risks of self-expression in an atmosphere of encouragement, comfort and good humor. Similarly, she noted the inescapably social nature of language, which lends itself to collaborative learning - two

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Letter From The Editor

If this issue of *Currents* feels thinner than the last, there's a reason. It is. Not a lot of manuscripts came in since the last issue, and there's a limit to how many I can drum up.

It puzzles me, since there's a lot cooking that touches the profession. Some of that is reflected in our lead pieces - a preview of a new course at Salem State in "psychological diversity" (if you're curious what that means, read the article); and a report of the recent panel discussion at UMass/Boston on language learning. The two are linked in expressing teacherly doubts about the pressures on all American education in favor of standardization — one size fits all. Indeed, standardized testing bids to be a major issue in the coming presidential election.

How that impacts us locally is touched on in the SIG report on Sociopolitical Concerns by Maricel Santos. Her column typifies a new emphasis in MATSOL on advocacy, of which more later. Whereas MATSOL's past is evoked by Cathy Sadow's memoir of the late Edgar Sather, her collaborator in some fine textbooks, and a past president of MATSOL. She suggested, and I agreed, that the picture would be rounded out by a sketch he wrote for friends. His tale of hosting a flamboyant colleague from Guatemala catches some of the fun and endless surprise of working across cultural lines.

We continue two new features and one old one — a piece on getting into ESL, an interesting student essay, and our column on teacher research. And once more highlighting the changes in the profession, we feature book reviews - remember books, those paper-and-ink things? — as well as an exciting guide to MATSOL Internet prospects, by our

Webmaster Marian Pierre-Louis.

At one board meeting we debated names for the next conference, such as "Meeting the New Millenium," "Understanding the New Millenium," even "Shaping the New Millenium." My own suggestion was "Ignoring the New Millenium." Yet however we feel personally about change, change comes. Our discussions have reflected a shift in organizational priorities, meant to respond to new realities. Here's the gist, both to keep you abreast and to elicit member input.

Last year MATSOL commissioned a survey that got an



"Indeed, standardized testing bids to be a major issue in the coming presidential election."

extraordinary rate of response, making it more plausible. What struck me is that the membership breaks down almost equally into three basic work spheres: ESL in K-12 public education, Adult Ed, and Higher Ed. In other words, about two thirds of our members work with immigrants or their children, and one third with foreign students.

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learners are better than one, and partner or small-group work is especially appropriate.

Who learns a language alone?

Larsen-Freeman concluded by musing on the limits of standardized techniques in pedagogy. Borrowing from Tip O'Neill, she said "All classroom instruction is local." That is, teachers should keep developing professionally and expand their arsenal of techniques, yet never forget that each class situation is unique. Is teaching more art or science? It's science, she said, insofar as we must retain an "attitude of inquiry" about the learning process. But it's art, insofar as we are dealing with human beings in their infinite variety.

The talks were followed by some interesting questions from the audience. How can we help kids who have, in effect, no native language? Snow said that families have to decide whether to stress English or the ancestral language, but that the ages 4-14 were crucial for "growing" one or the other.

What if parents themselves were illiterate? Not insuperable, she said, since even uneducated adults know 20,000 words just orally. What to do with children who arrive in the US at the age of 14 or so? This sparked the evening's only note of controversy. Snow said that by that age, immersion in English was the best approach. She was promptly refuted by UMass/Boston's Elsa Auerbach, who said no such generalizations were possible.

The most passionate and poignant comment came from a BE teacher from Salem, a Hispanic woman who complained that every August, at the last minute, positions in her district were filled not by trained teachers but by unqualified people who happened to speak Spanish. She said this gave Bilingual Education a bad name, and undercut the success of those who did it right. The speakers nodded sympathetically. The meeting was then adjourned, and all present enjoyed an excellent catered snack in the lobby.

Tom Griffith, the Editor of MATSOL Currents, teaches at Showa Boston.

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will examine the ways in which various learner characteristics can influence students' approaches to language learning and the needs they bring to language classrooms. Techniques for identifying and accommodating learner differences will also be an important part of the course.

Learner differences are frequently included among the topics covered in courses on the principles or methods of teaching ESL, and they are often addressed in in-service training. Such formats, however, can only devote a few hours to a subject that really deserves a course of its own. A full-length semester course will allow an in-depth look at a number of important theoretical and practical issues that would be impossible to treat adequately in a shorter amount of time.

To begin with, there is no all-inclusive theory of learner differences. Instead, we find a variety of conceptual models and terms in the literature. Different writers focus on different dimensions of learner styles including sensory preferences, differences in cognitive styles such as preferences for sequential or random presentation of material, and differences in personality type such as introversion/extroversion and field dependence/independence. To complicate matters further, the conceptual models and terms used by various writers sometimes overlap, with the result that someone reading the

research will need to remember that a term used by one writer means almost (but not quite) the same thing as a similar term used by somebody else.

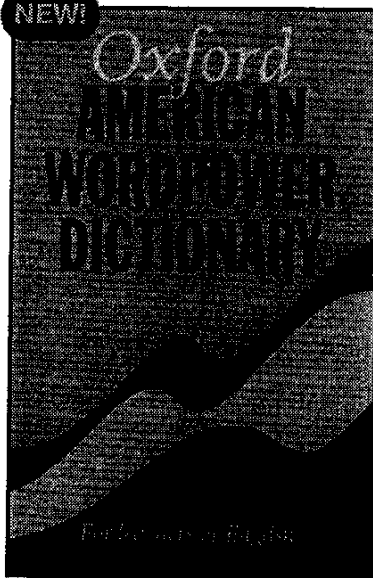
All this makes it difficult to get an overview of the whole picture, and to judge whether some kinds of learner differences are more important for teachers to be aware of than others. Although there is no "unified field theory" of learner differences, Reid (1995, 1996) and Ehrman (1996) have produced useful surveys of the different dimensions discussed in the literature, and the relationships among them.

Another reason why the subject of learning styles is more complex than it might at first appear has to do with the very practical question of identifying the characteristics of the individual students in one's own classroom. There are a number of ways of doing this, including observation, interviews, language learning histories, and teaching the students themselves about styles and having them become aware of and identify their own profiles. In addition, there are questionnaires and surveys such as Rebecca Oxford's Style Analysis Survey (SAS), the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), the Kiersey Temperament Sorter, David Kolb's Learning Styles Inventory, and others. Some of these instruments have been validated by psychometric research and some have not; some were written with ESL/EFL students in mind and some were not.

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Socio-Political SIG Report

Maricel Santos

Office of New Bostonians Focused on Adult ESOL Needs

Strengthening adult ESOL services in Boston is one of the key issues being addressed by the Office of New Bostonians, an initiative of Mayor Thomas M. Menino to support the city's immigrant and refugee communities. This past September, the Office hosted two meetings with various community groups and organizations to identify the needs and barriers facing adult ESOL students and programs. Meeting participants discussed several factors affecting the quality and delivery of ESOL services, including the lack of coordination among programs, and the need for increased program funding. The meeting also highlighted the need for accurate information about the existing resources and citywide data on the need for ESOL services, such as the

number of people on waiting lists. Other issues raised concerned access issues, programs for students with special needs, and the need for employer-supported ESOL programs.

The meetings were also used to discuss ideas for action in response to these needs and obstacles. Suggestions included conducting a systematic needs assessment, developing a media campaign to heighten public awareness of ESOL issues and needs, and recruiting business participation and financial support.

Two follow-up meetings have been scheduled: Tuesday, November 2, 10 am - 12 noon, and Monday, November 8, 5:30 pm - 7:30 pm, both in the BRA Boardroom (Boston City Hall, 9th Floor. (One daytime and one evening meeting is schedule to try and accommodate participants' schedules). These meet-

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New Graduate Course *Continued from page 4*

Another complex area is the question of what teachers should do in the classroom to address the needs of a variety of students. There are a number of questions to be considered here. What specific kinds of activities are likely to appeal to some students and create potential problems for others? How can a teacher tell whether his or her classroom practices tend to be biased for some types of students? How can a teacher be sensitive to the individual needs of many students at the same time? Is it possible to do so with large numbers of students? How can a teacher simultaneously satisfy (for example) students who prefer organized, clearly structured lessons and students who prefer open-ended spontaneous discussions?

In the new course at Salem State, we will examine and explore all of these complex but very important issues. Students enrolled in the course will:

- learn about a variety of useful theoretical models of learner differences;
- apply those theoretical ideas in a number of ways;
- identify aspects of their own learning styles and the learning styles of others;
- relate the theory to their own learning experiences and the learning experiences of others; and
- learn how to "celebrate psychological diversity" in the language classroom by meeting the needs of a variety of students, including those whose learning styles are different from their own.

A special feature of the course will be e-mail discussions in which the author of the primary text, Dr. Madeline Ehrman, will participate. Dr. Ehrman has published a number of books and articles on the psychology of language learners. She will

also visit the class and give a public presentation in Charlotte Forten Hall at Salem State College on Monday, April 3, at 7 p.m.

A detailed syllabus for the course is available online at <<http://www.salem.mass.edu/~jgreen/ENG779.syl.html>>. Mail, fax, and touch-tone enrollment for English 779 and other spring semester courses will begin on November 22. Phone-in registration will begin on December 13, and walk-in registration will begin on January 3. The Salem State Registrar's office can be reached at 978/542-6300; the number for phone-in registration is 978/542-6334.

The course will be an elective in the Salem State College English Department's Master of Arts in Teaching English as a Second Language program, but students do not need to be enrolled in that program to take the course. More information on the English Department's graduate TESL program is available from the English Department (978/542-6270) or on-line at: <<http://www.salem.mass.edu/english/grad/MATESL.html>>.

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John M. Green teaches graduate TESL courses and undergraduate ESL courses at Salem State College. He can be reached at jgreen@salem.mass.edu or at 978/542-6252.

Socio-Political SIG Report Continued from page 5

ings will focus on developing specific strategies to address the key needs and issues identified in the first meetings. These strategies will eventually be presented to the Mayor as proposals for implementing a citywide strategy to improve ESL services. If you are interested in attending a strategic planning meeting, contact the Office of New Bostonians at (617) 635-2980.

Increase in federal funds for adult education and family literacy

The Senate appropriations subcommittee last September allocated \$468 million for adult education and family literacy state grants for the upcoming year. This amount represents the full \$103 million increase requested by President Clinton. (From the NLA list, September 28, 1999)

Rhode Island Passes Adult Education Bill of Rights

The Rhode Island 1999 legislative assembly has passed an Adult Education Bill of Rights, sponsored by Representatives Hetherington, Carpenter, Ajello, Aiken and C. Levesque. The act acknowledges that adult learners have basic rights relating to their education, such as the right to be treated with dignity and respect, to be fully informed about educational choices, and to be involved in policy development affecting adult education. The Adult Education Bill of Rights may be accessed in its entirety through the Literacy Resources/Rhode Island webpage: [HYPERLINK http://www.brown.edu/Departments/Swearer_Center/Literacy_Resources/](http://www.brown.edu/Departments/Swearer_Center/Literacy_Resources/) http://www.brown.edu/Departments/Swearer_Center/Literacy_Resources/

Should learners and practitioners in Massachusetts considering developing a similar piece of legislation? Readers are encouraged to share their reactions and ideas by submitting articles to future Currents or organizing discussion groups at the upcoming MATSOL conference in January 2000.

Call for Student Success Stories

Part of advocacy work involves educating ourselves, co-workers, students, community leaders, and our legislators of who we are as teachers, who our students are, and what goes on in our classrooms and programs. The Socio-Political Special Interest Group would like to invite MATSOL members to share stories of valuable teaching and learning moments, and of successful and memorable teachers and students.

For example, the SP SIG is currently working on an article profiling the achievements of high school valedictorians who have graduated from bilingual education programs in Massachusetts. We all have compelling and inspiring stories to share. If you are interested in submitting a story, please contact Maricel Santos at 617-495-1712 or santosma@gse.harvard.edu

Resources

Refugees as English Language Learners: Issues and Concerns National Clearinghouse for ESL Literacy, by Peggy Seufert, published by the National Clearinghouse for ESL Literacy Education. This 4-page report provides recent demographic information on refugees in the US, and addresses important questions about addressing the instructional needs of newcomer groups. Contact NCLE to request a free report at NCLE@cal.org or telephone (202) 362-0700, extension 200. The brief is also available on-line at www.cal.org/nclc

What Elementary Teachers Need to Know about Language, by Catherine Snow and Lily Wong-Fillmore, published through ERIC Clearinghouse on Languages and Linguistics. Ideas in this paper will guide discussion and activities at the Department of Education's 1999 Regional Conference on Improving America's Schools. At the September 29 panel event Reflections on Second Language Education and Research at UMass Boston, Professor Snow noted that a draft of the paper is viewable on-line at: <http://www.ncbe.gwu.edu/iasconferences/1999/institutes/lep/discussiondraft.htm>.

Why, How, and When Should My Child Learn a Second Language? a brochure very popular with parents, is also available through ERIC Clearinghouse on Languages and Linguistics. 80,000 copies have been printed since its first publication. See <http://www.accesseric.org/resources/parent/language.htm>; <http://www.accesseric.org/resources/parent/language.html> for on-line copies. Print copies are available through ACCESS ERIC at 1-800-LET-ERIC or accesseric@accesseric.org.

Call for Proposals

Deadline: December 10, 1999

Georgetown University Round Table on Languages and Linguistics (GURT) 2000. Linguistics, Language, and the Professions: Education, Journalism, Law, Medicine, and Technology. May 4-6, 2000, Georgetown University, Washington, D.C. Plenary Speakers: Education — Dr. Shirley Brice Heath, Stanford University; Journalism — Dr. Allan Bell, Auckland University; Journal of Sociolinguistics; Law — Dr. Roger Shuy, Georgetown University; Medicine — Dr. Richard Frankel, University of Rochester School of Medicine and Dentistry; Technology — Fr. Lee Lubbers, S.J., SCOLA.

The Georgetown University Round Table on Languages and Linguistics (GURT) 2000 will focus on the interrelationships between linguistics and other professions. Send proposals to: GURT 2000, Department of Linguistics, Georgetown University, Washington, D.C. 20057. For information, contact: tana@gusun.georgetown.edu

From The Editor continued from page 1

While we're all teaching English, our student populations are pretty divergent in makeup and interests. Immigrants tend to be poor, and to come from developing countries in the Caribbean, Africa, Latin America or Southeast Asia. Foreign students are more middle or upper-class, with a higher number from Europe, the Middle East and wealthier Asian and South American nations. Immigrants mostly stay here, form families and take low-skill jobs. Students are here short-term, acquiring English and high-tech skills in order to flourish in the global economy.

This leads to divergent priorities for their teachers as well. I mused that my own career showed the contrast. I went from the Peace Corps in Niger to a series of VESL jobs, aimed at getting immigrants off assistance and into the workforce. I found meaning in imparting language skills needed for survival, in helping the latest wave of immigrants to assimilate. Then I went to grad school and learned that "assimilation" had become a dirty word.

Along the way I acquired a wife and children who have this bad habit of eating. In 1990 I was toiling away in Lynn. I loved the students but not the program's mismanagement and corruption. I was so ill-paid that one night my wife threw a fit and insisted I go strew resumes to colleges in Boston. It was a dilemma - I wanted to serve the poor, but was tired of being poor. And I had to support a family. With a finished degree, hard work and much luck, I finally got established at college level ESL. And through it all, my outlook and sympathies subtly changed.

I think it's fair to say that the higher-ed sector has dominated MATSOL, if not the entire profession, from the start. That may be because the postwar boom in demand for English, here and abroad, was initially at university level. Then the surge in immigration, from the Sixties on, extended de-

mand to the public schools. Whatever the reason, the MATSOL board now more nearly mirrors the membership, in its focus on the immigrant student population and its concern with advocacy. This trend can be seen in the direction of TESOL itself. The challenge locally is to maintain a balancing act, registering the shift in priorities while still meeting the needs of the minority in higher ed.

What unites us all, I would guess, is a love of diversity that results in concern for the well-being of immigrants. But of what does that well-being consist? And how do we advocate both for our students and for ourselves?

These are some of the questions roiling the waters, and fueling broader national debates over multiculturalism, immigration, education and worker security. Our vice-president, Johan Uvin, has invested tremendous effort and vision into a plan for MATSOL's future. But he's cagey, and wants to unveil it in his own time. I can't resist, however, whetting your appetite with some of the provocative points raised lately. What relation should MATSOL have to the embattled cause of Bilingual Education? Are ESL teachers its natural allies, or competitors? Where do we stand on affirmative action, insofar as it touches language minorities? On the recent abandonment in Boston and elsewhere of racial factors in school assignment? Does our very name - teachers of ENGLISH to speakers of other languages unfairly advantage the dominant culture? Should the profession more accurately reflect the ethnic makeup of our student population? That is, should it have proportionately more persons of color? Should we follow the lead of public school teachers and unionize?

There's more, which should motivate you all to get to the next conference. Or sound off in print, to MATSOL *Currents*, ever ready to publish your views.

Tom Griffith

Contest for Brainy Currents Readers — Two Ichthyological Conundra



First, when George Bernard Shaw sought to demonstrate the madness of English spelling, he claimed that the word "fish" could be spelled with what five letters, and what three examples?

Second, what is the significance of the new *Currents* logo? (Hint: Charles Bulfinch)

Mail or e-mail your answers to the editor by March 15. Grand prize: lunch with the editor at famous Doyle's in Jamaica Plain. On him.



Edgar Sather (1926–1999)

Edgar should have been an actor. Or a writer. But for many in the ESL world who knew, loved and appreciated him, we are glad that he became a teacher, an ESL author, an administrator and a MATSOL president.

After graduating from Carleton College in 1948, Edgar went to Talis, Turkey to teach English. This was the beginning of his ESL career, and the beginning of a special affinity he had for Turkey and Turkish students. He then went to New York, got his Master's degree at Union Theological Seminary, and spent the next three years (1959-1962) as the Chaplain and Assistant Professor of Religion at Skidmore College. At his memorial service, a one-time student and friend talked about how he had involved her in the Civil Rights Movement and changed her life. Nobody was surprised.

In 1962, with his wife Nell and his sons Geoffrey and Paul, he went to Greece to become the Chairman of the English Department of Anatolia College in Thessalonika. In 1971 the Sather family moved back to the United States to Brattleboro, Vermont, and in 1972 Edgar got his Master's in ESL at the School for International Training (SIT).

He spent the next years commuting from Brattleboro to Boston teaching at ALA, CELOP, the English Department at BU, and Harvard. He became MATSOL president in 1979. He was the Associate Director of the ELC at Northeastern from 1980 to 1985, and everyone who worked with him has wonderful "Edgar" stories to tell.

In 1985 after the death of his wife Nell, Edgar decided to

stay in Brattleboro, retire and do some of the things he had been longing to do. In fact, he became busier than ever. Very little was said at the memorial service about his life in ESL. What was said was that he had changed Brattleboro. Edgar was a founding member of the Brattleboro Area Community Land Trust and the Brattleboro Drop-In Center. He was also on the Board of Directors of the Morningside Shelter for the Homeless and the Yellow Barn Music Festival. He was an enthusiastic fundraiser for all of these organizations. And one of the events not-to-be-missed in Brattleboro was attending a wonderful fundraising dinner, organized by Edgar, where only men prepared a meal, served it and cleaned up.

In his "spare time," Edgar co-authored three ESL books—*Talk Radio* (Addison-Wesley 1987), *People at Work* (1990), and *On the Air: Listening to Radio Talk* (Cambridge University Press 1998). Although he had cancer for four years, Edgar continued to live his life as he had always lived it, with concern for all, with vigor and with endless fun. The minister talked about how he had been planning his memorial service with her up to the very last moments, particularly the music and the biblical passages, both of which were very important in his life. For several years Edgar had been talking about publishing a book of personal essays; he never got to it. But those of us who received "little essays" from him several times a year loved them and will miss both their arrival in the mail and the man himself.

Cathy Sadow

Home Stay

Edgar Sather

Back when I was doing occasional house-sitting, I learned this cardinal rule: "Leave the place better than when you came." Especially if you want to be asked back. So usually, winding up my stay I would dust and vacuum, leave some cut flowers in a vase on the piano or dining room table, and grace the refrigerator with some freshly-squeezed orange juice, that sort of thing.

But, does that same rule apply to being a GUEST in a person's home? I certainly never had thought so. But I'm not sure about that anymore, not after Alfredo's visit anyway.

I had been asked if I would provide a "home stay" for one of the Central American English teachers who were doing a special course in pedagogy here in Brattleboro at the School for International Training. I reluctantly succumbed to the request, anguishing at the thought of the necessary preparations for such a visit.

My guest would be Alfredo Carrero, an English teacher at the University in Guatemala City. I had been informed that Alfredo enjoys dancing, shopping, going to museums, and ping pong. I would be picking him up on the campus at 5 pm on Friday and delivering him back about the same time on Sunday.

Good heavens! Two whole days! I would need to prepare a lengthy list of conversational possibilities and gambits. And, daunting as that was, even more so was the prospect of getting the house in order for such a visit. Living alone, in a small house filled with both organized and unorganized clutter, it is one thing to have someone come in for lunch and confine that person to the living room and dining room. But it is quite another matter indeed to have someone in the house for two days. How could one possibly prepare for such an invasion when anything and everything could be under continual critical scrutiny!

My solution would have to be to close off the basement, lock the closets, push the piles of newspapers under the beds, hope he didn't run his fingers over exposed parts of the furniture or walls, and yes, hope for tolerance and mercy.

In preparation, I did as much cleaning as I could bear. And I held lengthy telephone planning sessions with friends, and called around to the local museum - also to the MFA in Boston (just two hours distant) where a spectacular Goya exhibit was dazzling art lovers. I began to feel reasonably confident: there was contra dancing in East Putney for Friday night, the Goya in Boston for all day Saturday, then shopping in the Keene mall on Sunday, neatly and sensitively covering my guest's key interests.

Unfortunately, the basement ping pong table had buckled under the weight of many boxes of miscellaneous papers and odds and ends stored there for years, so ping pong was out. But there was plenty else and I was not loath to encour-

aging him to sleep late and retire early. I could also insist politely on afternoon naps, which I could claim had been a family tradition for generations.

But what about food! For Friday we could go together to the Grand Union and pick up a prepared chicken and select from the salad bar. And I had seen frozen burritos, a Mexican delicacy carried by the Food Coop, and certainly he would like that for Saturday night, if we didn't go to Boston for Goya. Breakfasts would be raisin bran and toast. I would not ask him if he liked eggs or how he liked them.

Bring on Alfredo.

Picked him up on Friday afternoon as planned. It was clear early on that he was a chatterer, so fears of long, embarrassed silences were assuaged. He was charmingly nonstop all through the Grand Union as we foraged for our first evening meal together: "Oh, yes, I love chicken. Lettuce and tomatoes would be delicious..." It appeared that he would eat virtually anything and would at least give the impression that he liked it. A major problem, food, solved.

We got home and I showed him his room.

When we arrived back in the living room, I vainly attempted to steer him away from the recliner chair onto the sofa, but he protestingly ensconced himself there, only to have the left arm drop off, as it generally did if someone leaned on it. That arm had been an annual gluing project of Nell's, and often through her talented care it would stay set for months at a time. Now, it would just fall off, even without provocation. (I am not interested in gluing, nor do I have the talent for it.)

"Well, we'll have to fix that," Alfredo said. "No problem," he continued enthusiastically, "just a couple of nails and some sandpaper, a small saw and hammer. Would you please turn on this lamp so I can see the chair a bit better?" He had been trying unsuccessfully to get the switch to operate.

I had to confess, "Sorry, but the lamp doesn't work."

"Take me to your tool table. We'll get right after this arm and this lamp," he insisted, as my heart sank. Tool table! Zooks. Piled high with old lampshades, old Whitman Sampler boxes, a leaky garden hose, hammers, nails, Christmas tree ornaments, and furthermore, IN THE BASEMENT!

That would mean threading our way down the precipitous basement stairway, past stacks of old *Smithsonian* and *National Geographic* magazines piled precariously on each step, over not only the prickly pine needles of trees from Christmases past, but also over the countless pennies which had cascaded down from the landing where I had tripped one day, sending a bucketload flying from the top step.

Hastily I announced that I'd just go right on down and find all those things and be right up. "You can wait for me

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Home Stay Continued from page 9

here! Watch a little TV." No. He insisted on coming along.

Cautiously and laboriously I set off down the basement stairs ahead of Alfredo. We finally arrived at the bottom step, wheezing from the dust. That's when he first saw the ping pong table. "Ping pong, my favorite game. It should be no problem to fix it. We'll need an electric drill and several pieces of wood just the right size."

As we vainly searched for tools, it was getting close to the time we would need to have dinner if we were to get to the contra dance on time. Though I made an effort to get him to come upstairs with me, he insisted on "just looking around down here" for a bit while I got the food on the table.

When I went down to announce dinner twenty minutes later, all the paraphernalia and junk previously stored on the ping pong table had been neatly stacked in the small available space on the back wall, the tooltable had been tidied up, boxes had been sorted and piled, and the ping pong table was being readied for its forthcoming rehabilitation. He had even found one of two of the tools he was going to need.

The dinner proved edible and at the dance, a triumph, he

received countless invitations to be a partner. It turned out he had been a Samba champion in Guatemala some years ago, so the intricacies of contra dancing posed no problems for him at all.

Back home we talked on into the night making elaborate plans for all the repair work that would have to be done before he left on Sunday afternoon: lamps, armchairs, a ping pong table, etc., for by then he had spotted plants that needed repotting, bathroom shelves (discovered hidden behind the toilet) that had to be repositioned, and on and on. "If I stayed a week or two, we could probably finish off most of the projects," he ventured.

Goya, apparently, would have to wait.

On Saturday I overslept to 8 am and chased downstairs to find that all the wastebaskets had been emptied. Bookshelves that had been sagging had been restacked, with heavy books at the ends and light ones in the middle, where they belonged. Alfredo was in the basement humming a Spanish folk song, and planning his attack on the ping pong table.

Continued on page 11

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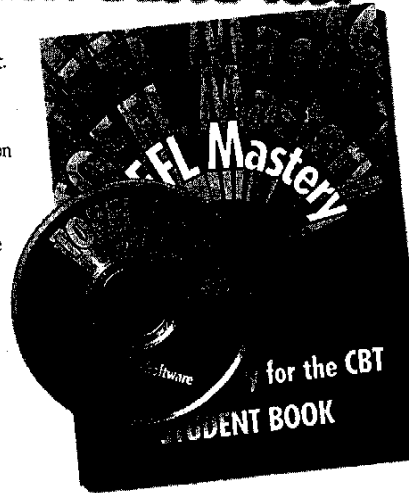
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Home Stay Continued from page 10

We had our breakfast watching the doves, cardinals, nuthatches, finches, chickadees and, especially, squirrels at the bird feeder. Then to work. The morning hours sped by as we searched the house and garage high and low for all the tools and equipment - string, wire, nails, screws, pliers, screwdriver, light bulbs, light sockets, pieces of wood - needed for the various upcoming tasks. Alfredo was determined that we would buy nothing unless his imagination and wits could not produce the necessities creatively from the materials at hand.

As we hunted around and about, I got the bare bones of his story: a teacher of English at the University, where each day he teaches ten separate classes with a total of five hundred students. He says he knows all their names by the end of the third week. A first marriage that ended in divorce. A current lady friend about whom he ruminates. He told me about spending his weekends fixing, cleaning, repairing, restoring, rehabilitating. And always with the materials he can find at home, or in the yard, or borrowed from a neighbor. Never purchasing at a store, if it can be avoided. His

watchword: recycle!

Lunch? I don't remember. The projects had consumed us. Likely peanut butter sandwiches and a banana and potato chips. I just know that it was getting dark at about 5:30 when I made a hasty trip alone to the Food Coop where I unwisely bought frozen Mexican burritos. Also some carrots, which I would prepare with Vermont maple syrup, my idea of *haute cuisine*.

When I returned, the basement steps had been cleared and swept, all the pennies had been collected, the *Smithsonians* had been stacked out of sight near the woodpile, and the ping pong table project was well underway.

After dinner, I was able to push him out of the house away from all the projects, to go to see the movie *Rain Man*, which we discussed at length the next morning over our raisin bran. I had completely missed the point that "rain man" was the way Dustin Hoffman's character had understood the name "Raymond," a key to understanding the movie, and Alfredo patiently explained it all as we watched the cardinals at the bird

Continued on page 12

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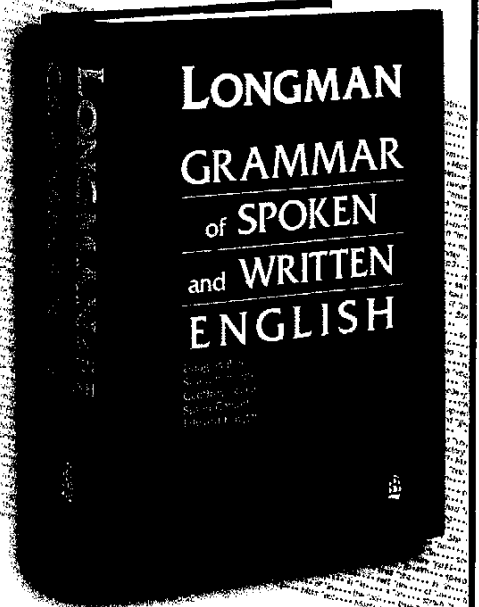
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How I Got Into ESL

Marjorie Soriano

We all have a story. Most ESL professionals have entered ESL from English, Foreign Language or Peace Corps backgrounds. I wandered in from enchantment with Africa.

It was 1987 and my brother's final year as a Social Science Advisor to the AID Mission in Rwanda; last chance to see, not just hear about his work. What better way to use my recent inheritance than for us to share his experience.

After a two-week safari in Tanzania (before it was popular), I found myself sitting around a dinner table in a typical Rwandan-style restaurant with my brother and other American ex-pats. The conversation turned towards my daughter, a Broadcast Journalism and Political Science major. What to do next year that combined her major with her enthusiasm for travel. "Teach English for a start" was the unanimous, all too rapid response. "No, not this gal", I said.

But wasn't it me, the former science teacher, who was engaged in the same dilemma? What to do when I grow up—the second time? Wasn't it me, accompanying my brother on his rounds to the villages, me trekking in the mountains pursuing Jane Fossy's gorillas, bargaining in the markets in mostly forgotten French... loving every second of the entire

experience? Hadn't I spent years working with student exchange programs, hosting foreign students (to enlighten my children, I had thought)? But me who vowed never, ever, to spend another night on lesson plans again.

Hooked on the ex-pat life, upon returning, I naively began inquiries about "a" course to update old methods and transfer the process to teaching English. Fancy that! Nowa-

"It's never too late to find your niche and realize a passion."

days, teaching immigrants in night school is actually a profession; and it's expanded into workplace and universities. Surprise! There are even degrees in it.

One course and an internship at BU, sold me on my future. As age was a factor (just look around Methods 101), I chose to get on with it. So off to London for intensive training, returning certified and on my way; today regretting only that I hadn't begun 10 years earlier, insuring a Masters, but acknowledging that it's never too late to find your niche and realize a passion.

Home Stay *Continued from page 11*

feeder. Where were the squirrels?

But now, Sunday morning, there was still much work to be done with the ping pong table. The night before we had let the legs down and wetted the surface, then had piled all the heaviest objects of the basement on it so that the warped surface would straighten itself out.

By noon, after I had located an electric drill at a neighbor's, and he had carefully sawed several little wooden pieces he would need, and accomplished all the countless, intricate tasks necessary in the rehabilitation project, we were finally ready for a game on that like-new table surface. Unfortunately the net disintegrated into a thousand pieces as we tried to put it in place. But we found that ping pong is possible without a net, though some of the close calls proved to be imaginative tests of our integrity.

We each won two games, and we lost four ping pong balls in the debris of the surrounding basement area.

With some persuasion, I was able to convince a reluctant Alfredo (he had his heart set on repotting the rest of the houseplants) to take the trip to the Keene shopping mall about which he had passionately spoken as we drove to my house that first afternoon, and before his appetite for doing rehabili-

tation had been so insatiably whetted.

When we walked into the central atrium of the beautifully restored Colony Mill there in Keene early Sunday afternoon, a tall, curly-haired folksinger saw us enter, and quickly sizing up the situation, broke into a rollicking Spanish song, smiling at Alfredo as he did so.

Then, after a thorough tour of the shops at the colony Mill and a reflective drive back, I delivered Alfredo to his dorm on the campus and we parted, promising that neither of us would look back.

With one mutually shared major regret: one particular unaccomplished project he had especially wanted to do - reglue the arm of the recliner chair.

Nevertheless, I can now turn on that lamp, sit in the recliner chair and read. I hadn't been able to do that for years. From there I can look over and see Alfredo's greatest triumph: the repotted ivy plant with a wire cleverly positioned just behind it on the wall, where each new leaf forms itself ever closer to the ceiling.

Alfredo, yo estoy muy contento. Muchas gracias.

Oh yes, I almost forgot. He gave me a beautiful Guatemalan wall hanging as a thank-you gift.

Approaches to Teacher Research

Jean Chandler

The last two issues of *Educational Researcher* (April and June-July 1999), published by the American Educational Research Association, have had articles about teacher research. In the most recent one, "The New Paradigm Wars: Is There Room for Rigorous Practitioner Knowledge in Schools and Universities?", Anderson and Herr report that while the 1992 *Handbook of Qualitative Research in Education* made no mention of practitioner research in its 881 pages, the newest *Handbook of Research on Teaching* (1998) does have a chapter on it, albeit written by academics. Moreover, in addition to a plethora of edited books about practitioner research which have been published since 1992, Anderson and Herr cite several refereed journals that now publish practitioner research. These are *Teacher Research: The Journal of Classroom Inquiry*, edited by Ruth Hubbard and Brenda Powers; *Educational Action Research*, a British journal edited by Chris Day et al.; *Teaching and Change*, published by the National Educational Association and Corwin Press; *Teaching Today for Tomorrow: A Journal about Education and Teaching* (online at www.mbnet.mb.ca/~sevenoak/ttt/main.htm); and *Network: An Online Journal for Teacher Research*, edited by Gordon Wells (www.oise.utoronto.ca/~ctd/networks). Other journals such as *Language Arts*, *Harvard Educational Review*, *Educational Foundations*, and *Journal of Teaching Writing* also occasionally publish practitioner research.

What struck me as I perused some excellent articles in these new sources is that almost all are qualitative research. Dixie Goswami (1984) even defines teacher research as "naturalistic inquiry procedures which do not result in statistical data toward which journals of education are so heavily biased." But I agree with Myers (1985: 5) who writes, "Research by teachers should not be limited to case studies without numbers or partnership roles for teachers, although both can be forms of teacher research." Therefore, I will use this column next time to outline various simple quantitative research designs that teachers might want to use and to describe how statistical tests can be done easily with Excel, a spreadsheet software program which is widely available. In this month's column I will make a brief comparison of qualitative and quantitative research.

Besides the fact that qualitative research examines the patterns in the data in non-numerical ways, it takes an open-ended exploratory approach to the situation. This is an important way to start research if one is unsure exactly what one's research question is or what one wants to examine. The problematic issue in qualitative research is reliability, i.e., whether another researcher would find the same patterns. The main approach to this problem is to seek triangulation, that is, finding the same patterns in several data sources, such as field notes, interview responses, etc. The point of view of

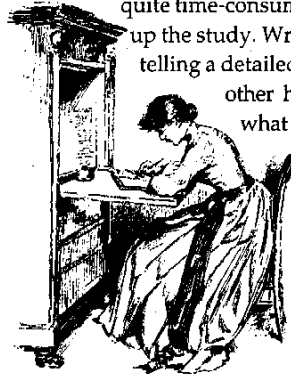
the participants is always sought in qualitative research. Taking field notes and transcribing interview responses is quite time-consuming, and so is analyzing and writing up the study. Writing about qualitative data is akin to telling a detailed story. In quantitative research, on the other hand, one must know ahead of time what one is looking to measure or test. The problematic issue is validity, i.e., whether this measure is a good one to represent the important things that are going on in the real world. This problem, it seems to me, is less a problem in practitioner research, by definition, than in laboratory studies.

But the most important aspect of quantitative research, which must be thought about carefully before the study is begun, is the research design. Unlike qualitative research, one must know exactly what data one will collect and how they will address one's research question before one starts a quantitative study. But after the planning is done, the data collection can be relatively straightforward. Analysis may be tedious, but writing up the quantitative study is easier than writing about qualitative research because there is a formula for the former: One always writes an introduction and literature review that shows the research gap (why the study needs to be done), followed by a methodology section, the results, usually accompanied by tables, and a discussion of the findings, with implications for practice and/or further research.

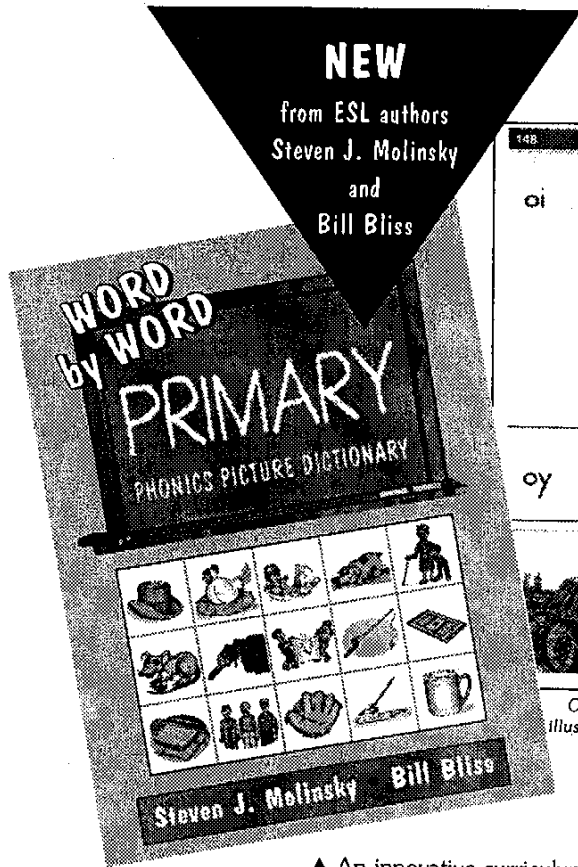
This column publishes both qualitative and quantitative studies as long as they can be described in 1000 words or less, which, granted, is a major restriction. The editor encourages unsolicited submissions and is willing to consult about research design, data collection and analysis, and writing. Anyone who wants help with a research study can also come to MATSOL's teacher research meetings. Since we have dwindled to a very small group, we are currently only meeting about three times a year but we can accommodate to the schedule of those interested in coming. We usually meet at Bentley College. Please contact Rick Lizotte if you are interested in coming and being on the mailing list. Phone 978-556-3835 or e-mail rlizotte@necc.mass.edu.

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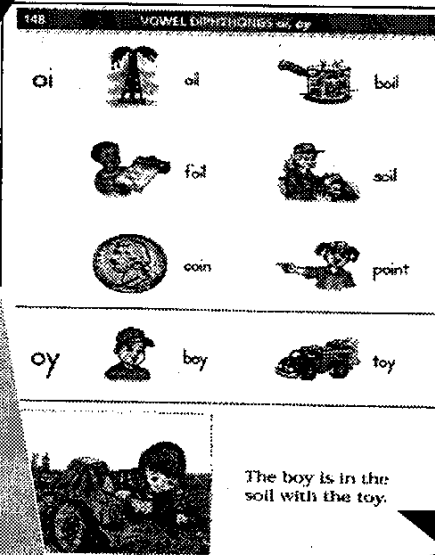


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Spring Conference

“Setting Our Course”

January 21–22, 2000

A spring conference in January? Yes, the MATSOL Board, ever true to its reputation for daring innovation, has decided to break with tradition and hold its professional get-together on Friday, January 21 and Saturday, January 22, 2000. It will be held at the Boston campus of the University of Massachusetts.

In spite of the threat of bad weather, there are some good reasons for this decision.

- 1) MATSOL members will not have to choose between MATSOL and TESOL. They can do both!
- 2) This date is better for the publishers and other organizations and agencies, so we are hoping to get more participation.
- 3) Because classes are not yet in session, we will have full access to the computer labs and the classrooms, giving more flexibility in programming.
- 4) The exciting workshops and speakers will help dispel the January doldrums.

The location itself offers some special benefits” easy

parking, easy access to a highway and a computer lab that has modern PC and Macintosh computer. The theme for this year’s conference is “Setting Our course,” referring not only to the millennium, but also personal and Institutional goals for our profession. The five areas of focus are 1) Standards, 2) Technology, 3) Language Learning Research, 4) Professional Development, and 5) Culture and Diversity. The Board has chosen these areas in response to member requests and input from focus groups this past spring and summer, so a flurry of proposals is expected and welcomed. The keynote speakers are Aida Walqui, Donald Freeman and Nancy Clair.

MATSOL is now accepting topics for presentations and work shops. Send your completed forms (on page 3 of the October 2 *MATSOL Bulletin*) to Carol Allen at CELOP, 890 Commonwealth Avenue, Boston, MA 02215. The deadline for proposals is November 5, 1999. For information about the Call for Personations, you can call Carol at 617-353-4870.

Laura Bozarth

Participate in MATSOL’s Membership Drive and win a free trip to TESOL Vancouver!

MATSOL will pay for your travel, lodging, and registration (up to \$1,500) associated with your participation in TESOL 2000 in Vancouver. This is how it works. If you recruit three new members or renew three old members before December 31, 1999, MATSOL will enter a ticket under your name in the Spring Conference Vancouver Lottery for every three members you recruit. The lottery will be held at the spring Conference MATSOL 2000: Setting Our Course, on January 22, 2000 at UMass Boston. If you win the lottery, MATSOL will pay you up to \$1,500 for expenses related to your TESOL participation. If you decide not to go to TESOL, you can sign your ticket over to a lottery participant who is:

- 1) Collect the membership fees from the three new or renewing members through three separate checks made out to MATSOL.

- 2) Have your new recruits complete the membership application form (contact Lisa Soricone at 617-495-1712, download from <http://www.matsol.org>, or use the form on page 19 of this issue of *MATSOL Currents*).

- 3) Write down your name and a telephone number or e-mail address where we can reach you.

- 4) Send all information to Lisa Soricone, c/o NCSALL, Harvard Graduate School of Education, Nichols House, Appian Way, Cambridge, MA 02138.

Note

The lottery will be held only when 60 members have recruited or renewed three members. In the event that fewer members participate, each participating member will receive a free MATSOL 2000 membership. Members of the Executive Board can recruit new members but their names will not be entered in the Vancouver TESOL lottery.

Reprinted from MATSOL Bulletin, October 2, 1999.

**Would You Like to Attend
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STUDENT WORK

Assignment: "Write about an personal experience and what it taught you."

The Final Race of Our Team

Chika Kanno

When I was in high school, I belonged to the track and field club as a manager. There were many athletes. I kept their time, washed their clothes and took care of them. I had thought it is the best to run fast, and to win the race in track and field. Of course, these are very important things. But I noticed that there was a more important thing. I changed my mind from the final race of our team.

Our relay team was very strong and won the race many times. All members of the team were very fast runners. One day, I had to choose new members of the relay team with our teacher. The race would be the final one before we graduated. My teacher let a boy who was not such a good runner run the race. He was the same age as me. So the race was also the final race for him. But he had never run the relay race because he didn't run as fast as other members. I was sure if he ran, we would not be able to win the race. I wanted our relay team to win because we didn't have a next time. But my teacher wanted the boy to run, because he also didn't have a next time.

We decided that two teams would enter the race from our school. One was made up of regular members. And the other was made up of some regular members and the boy. He practiced handing the baton and getting timing every day. He looked very glad.

On the day of the final race, our regular team won, and got a qualification to enter for the prefectural race. The other one... could not advance to the prefectural race. But we were satisfied and very glad, because the boy made his new record. He did the best!! We were very glad. Our teacher also looked very glad.

I learned from these it is important to do one's best. Speed and winning are very important in track and field. But it is not the most important. I want to thank my teacher. If he didn't choose the boy as a member, the boy couldn't make a new record and I couldn't notice about these things.

Chika Kanno is an English major at Showa Women's University in Tokyo. She spent the fall '99 semester at Showa Boston.

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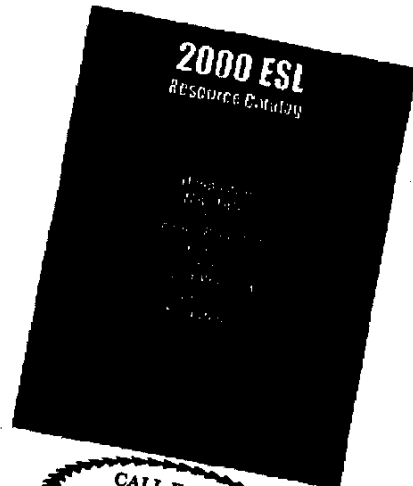
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MATSOL Debuts Its Official Website

Marian Pierre-Louis

In order to meet the needs of all its members, MATSOL this year acquired a permanent internet web address (www.matsol.org) and initiated an official website. By doing this MATSOL recognizes the increasing number of Massachusetts ESL instructors who use the internet for communication and information.

The MATSOL website provides a way to disseminate information to the membership at a moment's notice, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Updated information can be shared with internet users within minutes instead of waiting for monthly or quarterly mailings.

How can I get to the MATSOL website?

The best way to get to the website is to type <http://www.matsol.org> directly into your browser and then to bookmark it. Otherwise, use one of the major search engines, such as AltaVista (www.altavista.com), Excite (www.excite.com), Lycos (www.lycos.com) or Yahoo (www.yahoo.com) and then type in the keyword "MATSOL". You will then be given several links to the MATSOL webpage.

What can you expect to find on the website?

- * a calendar providing at-a-glance dates for events and publications deadlines
- * the latest information on MATSOL conferences and Professional Development Opportunities including times, locations and directions
- * links to general ESL resources on the web
- * announcements from the job bank
- * information from the special interest groups
- * membership information
- * and much, much more

Another benefit of the website is the MATSOL Listserv. The MATSOL Listserv is an e-mail service that sends announcements directly to your electronic mailbox. By joining the listserv, visitors to the site receive email reminders about MATSOL, TESOL and special interest group activities. The listserv only sends out relevant information a few times a month thus preventing information overload for the recipient.

To sign up for the listserv you simply type your e-mail address into the box provided on the MATSOL homepage. You will then be prompted to give a password. The password allows you to unsubscribe from the listserv in the future if you choose. As well, if you accidentally delete an e-mail you can go to the listserv site (www.listbot.com) and view an archive of the announcements there. Please note: MATSOL will not automatically sign up members to the listserv. To join, interested members must go to the site and sign up themselves.

In the future we hope to make the MATSOL website the one stop for Massachusetts ESL instructors to find information about ESL on the web. The website is a tremendous tool in helping to voice the concerns of the ESL community by disseminating information about government and institutional policy affecting ESL programs. By staying informed ESL instructors can become advocates for themselves and the population they support.

We'd like to hear from you! Do you have any ideas or suggestions about what you'd like to see on the website? Or perhaps you would like to join the communications committee and help maintain the website. To get involved please contact the webmaster at BostonESL@yahoo.com

Marian Pierre-Louis is the webmaster for the MATSOL website. She is currently a graduate student in Applied Linguistics at the University of Massachusetts, Boston. Marian Pierre-Louis email: BostonESL@yahoo.com

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REVIEWS



New International Business English. Leo Jones and Richard Alexander. Cambridge University Press, 1996. 176 pages. ISBN 0521-45580-4. Student's book and Workbook. Cassettes for each. Teacher's Book, video Teacher's Guide, Video Cassette in three formats.

Reviewed by Patricia Brennecke

The new edition of Leo Jones and Richard Alexander's *International Business English*, re-titled *New International Business English*, is a handsome, multipurpose, integrated skills text suitable for a wide range of learners, from intermediate to advanced. In their introduction, the authors refer to the book as a course, and indeed the book and its accompanying workbook, tape, and teacher's book are so packed with well-sequenced activities that the material could easily stand alone as the content for an entire course.

There are 15 units in the Student's Book, each organized around a different business task or situation. Units 1-5 deal with the basics of oral and written communication: meeting people in a business setting, using the telephone and fax, making notes, summarizing, and writing reports, skills which are recycled throughout the rest of the units. Units 6-14 center on individual business situations such as participation in meetings, marketing a product or service, dealing with various methods of payment, and so on, each involving integrated language skills aimed at performing a particular function. For example, the unit International Trade includes strategies for making inquiries, offering and confirming, while Dealing with Problems focuses on strategies for complaining and apologizing.

The integrated skills activities use a variety of methods to make the most out of each situation and to keep students motivated. For example, students may begin by listening to two versions of a recorded conversation and critiquing them for tone and register, then engage in an information gap activity similar to the one heard on the tape. Afterward, students may do a role-play or some form of written activity to expand the situation further.

In order to simulate real-life situations in international business, the authors have included a wide variety of accents on the tapes — British, American and non-native English. No single accent predominates, and the conversations are completely natural. The authors have treated the vocabulary similarly, including both British and American lexical items. However, the authors have stayed within the bounds of those business and commercial contexts common to both cultures,

making the book suitable for all learners.

While the book's material is aimed at a business-minded audience, no previous knowledge of business is necessary. Open-ended discussion activities provide the opportunity for those with work experience or a business background to share their knowledge, while information gap and role-play exercises provide less experienced students with the chance to rehearse the skills they will use later. These information gap activities are included in the Files section at the back of the book, arranged like those in Jones's other books, *Functions of American English* and *Great Ideas*, so that students may not cheat by seeing each other's information.

Finally, the last unit brings together all the strands of the book into one final simulation in which students work in teams, using all their acquired skills. Realistic and well imagined, it is an appropriate ending to the course.

I recommend this material wholeheartedly. The excellent Teacher's Book gives helpful hints about what to anticipate from students and how best to arrange groups for each exercise, and it estimates the time each activity should take. In addition, the Teacher's Book contains extra activities that may be added to each unit, including sample documents that may be photocopied for use in class. The range of activities in this attractive, full-color text should keep students interested and motivated throughout the semester.

I would also like to congratulate the authors on producing materials in which the Americans don't all sound like they walked off the set of Dallas. It's a refreshing change.

Patricia Brennecke is a Lecturer in the Foreign Languages and Literatures/ESL Section at MIT.

Review A Book

Currents receives so many new books for review purposes that it's impossible to review them all. Here are a few of the titles that have arrived recently. If you are interested in writing a review of one, call Sterling Giles at (617) 421-9134.

New Directions: An Integrated Approach to Reading, Writing, and Critical Thinking

Peter S. Gardner. St. Martin's Press, 1996. 285 pages. ISBN 0-312-11216-5. Instructor's Manual.

Reviewed by David Howland

Seldom do we see a reading/writing textbook that is as thorough, flexible, and engaging as *New Directions*. This thematically-based text, a blend of readings and exercises, is appropriate for intensive ESL/EFL, college-level ESL/EFL, and college-level writing classes, as well as cross-cultural communication courses where effective written skills are emphasized.

New Directions offers a versatile thematic approach to writing, and it is not afraid to address controversial issues. Each of the book's five chapters covers a single, broad topic area (e.g., Cross-Cultural Communication, Stereotyping and Discrimination, Gender Roles, Work and Education) and includes three primary readings and three to four additional selections, all interrelated. Readings in each chapter are typically 2,500–5,000 words in length, enabling students not only to build on what they learn, providing continuity and increasing complexity in their thinking and writing, but also to negotiate authentic (textually complex) academic discourse,

bridging the gap between the language learning classroom and the content classroom.

Yet the book's approach does not address language solely at the discourse level. A generous sampling of exercises, particularly for vocabulary building, provides students with the opportunity to focus on language at the structural level as well. The result is something for everyone, and all of this is unified by Gardner's multicultural perspective.

This unifying perspective serves to enhance the language learning process and develop students' communicative competence in English. Unlike ESL/EFL readers which fragment English into skill areas and stress static retrieval of information rather than dynamic interaction with the text, *New Directions* challenges students to generate meaning for themselves and guides them through this with its extremely clear format and activities that encourage the development of holistic and synthetic reading and writing strategies. This closely simu-

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Proposed Certification Changes

David Tolson

At the November 1999 Board Meeting of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Department of Education new regulations for the training of teachers were presented in the form of a draft concept paper.

Certification for teaching ESL is greatly impacted by the new regulations. Sandra Stotsky, Deputy Commissioner at the DOE, presented the paper to the board. Among the proposed changes are new names for certifications, with the term ESL being replaced by ESOL (English for Speaker of Other Languages), and the terms "license" replacing "certificate." At the meeting Ms. Stotsky stated that, "more modern, current wording" would be used throughout the certification regulations.

Most significant in the proposal is the change in the ESOL License from the current Provisional to Standard Certification track to a new status as Specialist License. Essentially, in the new regulations ESOL will become an "add on" license. In order to teach ESOL, a licensee must first hold another teaching license to which ESOL can be added. Subject matter knowledge standards for ESOL will remain unchanged.

The proposed changes in ESL/ESOL will have a big

impact on current programs which license teachers. In the proposed regulations, graduate students who previously were able to earn a Provisional ESL Certificate must first earn a teaching license in another field.

New teachers must also pass the Massachusetts Educator Certification Tests. The MECT cover the areas of Communication and Literacy, as well as the content area for which the license is issued. ESOL licensees, in the new regulations, will also have to pass another content exam in the area for which they are earning their first license.

How these new regulations will impact the number of ESOL licensees in the future is unknown. While ESOL programs may become more appealing for existing teachers to add ESOL to their license, it appears that initial licensing in ESOL will become more difficult and problematic for graduate students. Ms. Stotsky can be reached for public comment at ssotsky@doe.mass.edu or through the DOE's Malden, Massachusetts office.

David Tolson is ESL Coordinator at Eastern Nazarene College.

"New Directions" Review

Continued from page 19

lates the academic nature of content courses and helps students deal more effectively with varied language uses and the sophisticated material they will encounter in college classes.

New Directions is very student centered, it avoids traditional prescriptive rules and "right/wrong" questions. Its emphasis, rather, is on an in-depth exploration of ideas, and throughout the book Gardner has incorporated collaborative learning through pair and small group work, encouraging students to learn from one another and not to rely on the teacher for "the right answer."

The teacher will welcome the highly generative approach to writing that *New Directions* offers. Each reading is preceded and followed by several writing activities (e.g., journal entries, letters, case studies, speeches, essays) that engage descriptive, narrative, expository, and persuasive

modes. Moreover, a number of helpful appendices focus attention on reading and writing strategies. ("Paraphrasing," "Context Clues," etc.)

The instructor's manual has helpful suggestions on how to use the text, a summary of the content of each reading with typical student responses, comments on the activities, and sample answers to most questions, as well as a list of recommended readings and films related to each chapter topic. Used in tandem, the text and manual provide a complete course of study for reading and writing. Both thoughtful and invigorating, *New Directions* will prove challenging for even the most discriminating student and teacher.

David Howland has been a teacher trainer, materials writer, and educational consultant in the U.S. and abroad. He is currently an Instructor of ESL and Intercultural Communication at Showa/Boston.

ZIP Code Alert

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

Call for Manuscripts

MATSOL *Currents* welcomes submissions of interest to its membership of approximately 900 ESL professionals, who are in the field as classroom teachers (K through adult/university), program administrators, or professionals in related services, such as publishing. We accept articles on matters relating to ESL methodology and techniques; curriculum design and development; materials; teacher education; program administration; classroom observation and research; professionally-related topics, such as employment or sociopolitical issues, etc. We also welcome contributions to our regular columns.

Please follow the guidelines below in preparing your submission:

Full-length articles

Articles should present new ideas or information related to the topics listed above. Please contact the editor beforehand if you expect your submission to exceed approximately 1250 words in length, which is the general guideline.

Columns

Foreign Correspondence

This column features accounts of EFL teaching experiences. Geographical, sociopolitical, or cultural information often provides helpful background, but the primary focus of the article should be on aspects of teaching and learning English. Submissions should be about 750–1,000 words in length.

Program Spotlight

Submissions should describe innovative programs that are successful in meeting defined needs. 750–1,000 words in length.

Reviews

Reviews should be between 500 and 750 words and should evaluate recently-published ESL classroom materials or professional resources. Submissions should be sent to Sterling Giles, Reviews Editor, 62 Chandler Street, Boston, MA 02116.

Teacher Research

Contributions (of about 1,000 words) should describe any aspect of teacher research or provide summaries of completed projects or studies in progress. Send submissions to Jean Chandler, Teacher Research Editor, 15 Leonard Avenue, Cambridge, MA 02139.

Teaching Ideas

For this column submit a step-by-step but brief account of successful classroom techniques; include your rationale, variations, etc. (500–750 words).

Technology Showcase

Intended as a forum for introducing and discussing uses of technology both in the classroom and as a professional resource, this column accepts submissions of between 500–750 words in length.

Letters to the Editor

Readers are encouraged to respond to any article that has appeared in *MATSOL Currents*. Letters should be brief (about 250–350 words).

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- Two copies of the manuscript should be submitted. In addition, if possible, documents should be submitted on a 3.5" computer disk—preferably formatted for Macintosh in Microsoft Word word-processing software. Disks will be returned upon request.
- Photographs, illustrations or other graphics related to the content of the article are welcome. (Black and white photos, line drawings and simple graphics reproduce best.)
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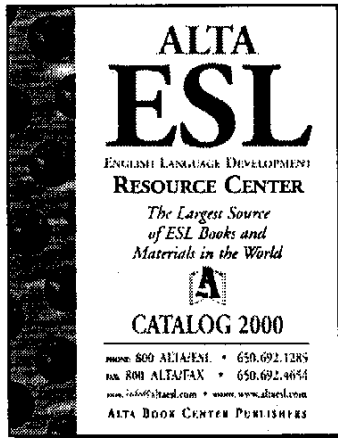
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