



NEWSLETTER

Vol. 7, No. 1

Massachusetts Association for Teachers of Speakers of Other Languages

FALL, 1978

In Creating A Community

Elizabeth Sparks
Perkins School for the Blind

I teach English as a second language to seven visually impaired foreign students at Perkins School for the Blind. They are from Puerto Rico, the Azores, Mexico and Greece, and they are between the ages of seventeen and twenty-two. In addition to varying degrees of blindness and their struggles with a new language, they must contend with other handicaps, which include learning disabilities, constant physical pain, emotional disturbances, poverty, family problems, a neurological disorder resulting in confinement to a wheelchair, and educational deprivation. Three of my students began their formal education in early adulthood, in a language and society foreign to them. They have spent most of their lives isolated from people other than their families. All of my students have grown up excluded not only from sight, but also, from many of the normal activities of the sighted world. Most have never really fit in anywhere. The way the sighted world has dealt or avoided dealing with them has handicapped them more than blindness itself.

A person with limited sight depends upon language far more than someone who sees normally. Just where is "over there"? Just how is "like this"? Yet because of their limited exposure to normal life, my students tend to have limited vocabularies in their own languages. Until I began teaching at Perkins, I had always worked with people who were simply learning to express in English what they already knew how to say in their native languages. At Perkins I started off by replacing visual demonstrations of new words with a quick translation, and I discovered unexpected holes in my students' knowledge. They lacked concepts that one would expect of people their age, and they often did not know what I was talking about. I found that in many ways I needed to teach them English as if it were their first language. In coming to Perkins, I had stumbled upon some people for whom the term "educational deprivation" seemed a laughable euphemism for a profound deprivation of life experience.

In dramatic ways, then, my students have needs that far transcend the usual province of a language class. This is, of course, true

of all students, but usually to a degree which is less spectacular and easier to ignore. I cannot ignore my students' reality, so I have created ESL courses that respond to their needs as total persons. We work on language skills in the context of their lives. I help them try to make sense of their dealings with the American culture; I teach survival skills; I help them fill in some of the gaps in their experience; and I provide a safe place where they can talk about issues that are important to them when they feel like it. At whatever level they are functioning, I want them to find goals for themselves and to learn how to move toward them. They need to learn what possibilities are open to them as blind foreigners in this country, and they need to find their strengths. Their weaknesses they already know too well. I want them to learn to fend for themselves, starting with life at Perkins. That means learning how to speak up for themselves in English, indeed, deciding that they have the right to opinions and desires after a lifetime of being ignored or infantilized. I want them to see that they can make a place for themselves in this world, and that they deserve a place, a life. I also want them to be interested in other people and in the life around them. And I want them to learn how to learn on their own. So I create situations which point my students in these directions.

I orchestrate compatible groupings of two to seven students, so that they can help each other learn what they need to. I have been developing a course in American studies for the more advanced people. In other groups, we talk together about what is happening in their lives. We discuss what behavior is acceptable and unacceptable in this society, and we compare notes on how things are done in the U.S. and in their own countries. Some are still struggling to express themselves in simple English, or learning how to show an interest in others. The ones who are more sophisticated socially and linguistically are learning to draw out people shyer than themselves and trying to speak more carefully and set a good example. Those who somehow survived childhood with their spirits intact have been developing a compassion for their less resilient classmates, and they often provide just the response that is needed when someone is having a problem. All are learning to function in a group of their peers, and they are finding that they each have something

to give that is of value to someone else. Through the common activities and the discovery of common experience, they are creating a community.

I have the luxury of working with each student individually as well, so that we can focus more precisely on what each one needs. For example, several are in the midst of learning how to read and write for the first time, and they are doing it in a foreign language. Whatever anyone is interested in, we talk about, write about, read about. I have high standards; I want my students to speak and write correctly. I have evolved a policy of loving harassment: I "what???" them to death on anything we have dwelt on that they persist in doing wrong, be it a grammar point, or how to greet people in a friendly fashion. I also encourage them to know what they want, and to act on their wants, because I believe in their worth as people and in the possibility of them seizing more control over their own lives. So when they don't like their schedule, or have been bruised by a misunderstanding with a staff person or a clash with an American student, we talk things over. I arm them with the requisite American social niceties for the situation, and always, I agitate for action. I set examples; I provide moral support; and I am accessible. And they are using English, and learning how to survive.

Elizabeth Sparks
Perkins School for the Blind
Watertown, Massachusetts

Bilingual Theater Success

Under the guidance of Rafael DeGruttola and Cecilia Soriano-Breshahan, students from the Boston Public Schools System formed a bilingual theater arts program in
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Poet's Corner

to a mushroom
the elm leaf clings
on its way down.

Fall, 1978
Raffael DeGruttola

**The editor welcomes poetic contributions of no more than five verses. Please fill this corner.

TESOL CONVENTION NEWS

1979 Convention, 2/27 - 3/4, Sheraton-Boston Hotel

MATSOL Newsletter

Contributions to the Newsletter are welcome and should be sent to:

Catherine Tansey
American Language Academy
Babson Park, Mass. 02157

Articles should be typed on one side of a sheet and double-spaced. The deadline for the next issue is

January 8, 1979

Volunteers

MATSOL needs as many volunteers as possible to help in the preparations for the TESOL convention. We cordially invite anyone who would like to help prepare for the convention, or who would like to work at the convention site, to contact one of the following committee persons:

Registration

Ed Korza (617) 492-8000
John Corcoran (617) 756-2484

Publicity

Caroline Banks (617) 646-1000

Volunteers

Ann Hilferty (617) 354-2279

Teacher-Made Material

Penny Shaw (617) 287-1900, Ext. 2745
Vivian Zamel Same

A-V Equipment

Edgar Sather (617) 739-1800
Bill Annand (617) 237-0320

School Visits

Glynda Bell Smith (617) 648-1260
Margarita Munez (617) 484-4214

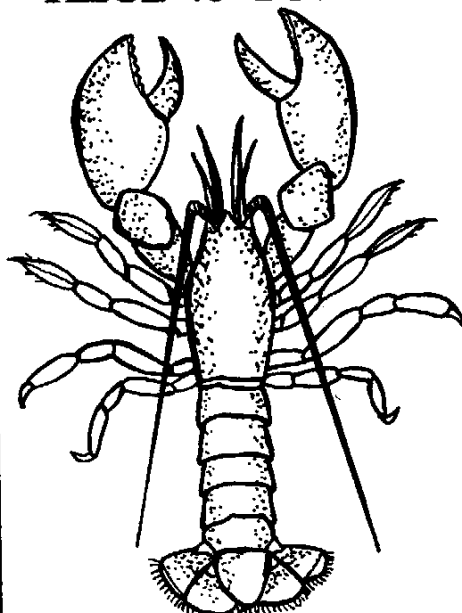
Convention Daily

Catherine Tansey (617) 237-0320

Convention Office

Bert Perreira (617) 335-2974
George de George (401) 351-2291

TESOL '78 - BOSTON



El-Sect Committee

If you are an elementary or secondary teacher, or someone who is particularly interested in this level, please add your name to the membership of this special interest group, if you have not already done so. For further information contact:

Glynda Bell-Smith
Harrington School
Cambridge, Ma. 02141

School visits in the metropolitan area of Boston are being arranged for the TESOL convention. If you would like to participate in this aspect of the TESOL program, contact:

Glynda Bell-Smith
or
Margarita Munez
Boston Public Schools
8th Floor
26 Court St.
Boston, Ma. 02108

Call for Teacher-Made Materials

The Teacher-Made Materials Exhibit Area can be an important part of the annual TESOL convention. It can provide teachers with the opportunity to share original ideas and techniques such as games, audiovisual materials, adaptations, hand-outs or any new approach to old problems.

Since the materials displayed are usually submitted by local TESOL members, it is up to us to make the exhibit this year one that will be visited and remembered. Think about materials you've put together to meet a classroom challenge that wasn't met by your text. Share them with us. Describe them briefly and send the information to:

Penny Shaw and Vivian Zamel
English Department
U. Mass./Harbour Campus
Boston, Ma. 02125

Massachusetts Association for Teachers of Speakers of Other Languages
179 Longwood Avenue
Boston, Mass.

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Mass. College of Pharmacy

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American Language Academy

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MATSOL NEWSLETTER costs are included in the annual membership dues.

Upcoming Events

October 21

MATSOL — Teacher Demonstrations and performance of *Next Move Theater*. \$1.00, members — \$1.00 plus membership for non-members. 2-5 PM.

November 2

Mass. Teachers Association Post Grad Ed. Institute — Sheraton-Lexington — "Foreign Language, Bilingual, Bicultural, ESL" — Info: Elizabeth Downey, MTA, 20 Ashburton Pl., Boston

November 2-3

National Association of Foreign Student Affairs — Sheraton-Lincoln, Worcester, Mass. — Emphasis on the Middle Eastern and Chinese students.

November 11

Mass. Foreign Language Association — Sheraton-Boxboro — Conference — Wilga Rivers, guest speaker.

MATSOL-MABE: A Merger?

by Rafael DeGruttola
Boston Public Schools

The tally of votes as of September 16, 1978 was 53 in favor of a merger and 20 against. A few of the membership were concerned with the reasons for and against such an undertaking. Some were concerned about the name of the new organization. A merger would address issues such as:

- Better communication to a larger constituency.
- Combined research endeavors.
- Federal, state, and local support both educationally and financially.
- Cultural perspectives which encompass the total education of the person.

A separate organization would tend to divide the fields of study as complete within their own purview, namely:

- Emphasis on the ESL or bilingual components in Bilingual Education Programs.
- Fear of any one interest group dominating the goals and objectives of the organization.

We have extended the deadline for the vote on this merger to October 31, 1978. If you have not already done so, please vote.

Some Useful Testing Resources

This article will list and briefly describe some practical sources which ESL teachers can use to obtain information about existing ESL tests or suggestions for writing one's own tests. Of special emphasis are sources which offer teachers procedures and item types for measuring various aspects of ESL on their own classroom tests.

This article is the result of the author's own efforts to answer teacher requests for information about ESL testing. The sources listed here are those which have received the most favorable comments from teachers.

The reasons which prompt ESL teachers to seek information about tests and testing are diverse. Most want to improve their own teaching as well as student learning. Others are part of efforts to design an identification and assessment procedure to "comply with LAU." In addition, there seems to be a trend toward greater sophistication among ESL teachers regarding the language skills they are developing in their students. This teaching trend seems to have touched off a search for more sophisticated means of testing, if the author is to judge by the quality of the requests that he has received in recent months. The author has been both challenged and impressed by these requests.

It is hoped that this article provides some of the better information available to its seekers.

Report on Education Development Center Algerian Practicum

As you may remember, earlier this spring I sent you a description of a special teacher-training practicum for Algerian nationals that would give simultaneous instruction to Boston-area ESL students.

The practicum took place in August for four weeks. It was sponsored locally by the Education Development Center of Newton and was paid for by the Algerian Institutes of Electricity and Electronics.

In some ways the practicum was quite unique in that it matched non-native students in the U.S. with non-native teachers in the U.S. With any first attempt of this sort we had our successes and our failures. Of the approximately ninety students enrolled in the eight levels, two-thirds completed the course and received certificates of attendance. Of these, end-of-course evaluations indicated feelings ranging from satisfied to very satisfied. Unfortunately, we did lose a number of students and one entire class because the teachers of this class did not act responsibly in preparing their lessons and making the course beneficial to the students.

The majority of the teachers improved in their abilities to assess students, to set goals, to choose materials, to plan lessons and to evaluate students. However, because

Clark, J.L.D. *Foreign Language Testing: Theory and Practice*. Philadelphia; Center for Curriculum Development, 1972. Available through C. Heinle, 29 Lexington Road, Concord, Massachusetts.

This text provides useful item types for measuring all four language skills. Chapters cover testing for prognosis, achievement, proficiency, and knowledge of culture and literature. Of special note are discussions on response modalities and the direct testing of communicative proficiency. This text is especially recommended for those seeking information regarding the good and bad points of various language item types as well as enlightening discussions on item reliability.

Harris, D.P. *Testing English as a Second Language*. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1969.

This text is intended for the teacher or the teacher trainer. It is succinct and contains well-illustrated item types. Chapters deal with the testing of grammatical structure, auditory discrimination and comprehension, vocabulary, reading comprehension, writing, and oral production. There are suggestions on improving one's own tests and several chapters on the test development process.

Heaton, J.B. *Writing English Language Tests: A Practical Guide for Teachers of English as a Second Foreign Language*. London: Longman, 1975.

This is a comprehensive manual for the

of the demands of teaching (fifteen hours per week per team) teachers didn't have as much opportunity for specialized workshops as we would have liked.

If this practicum is held again the Education Development Center looks forward to an improved program for both students and teachers. I personally would like to take this occasion to thank all of you who gave me advice or sent students our way.

Penny Shaw
Director — Algerian Practicum
Education Development Center

The Secretary's Notes

Those people who have not sent in their dues should send them as soon as possible to:

Alice Fastov
MATSOL
525 V.F.W. Parkway
Chestnut Hill, Ma. 02167

Anyone who is interested in typing for the secretary-treasurer should contact Alice at the above address.

If you joined the Job Bank before July 1, 1978, and if you have not paid the \$2.00 fee by November 1, 1978, your name will be omitted from the list. If you wish to join the job bank, please send your resume and \$2.00 to Alice Fastov at the above address.

ESL teacher. It contains chapters on testing grammar and usage, vocabulary, listening comprehension, oral production, reading comprehension, and writing. The Appendix deals with the use of dictation, translation, paraphrase, precis and summary writing, and with testing of literature. Emphasis is placed upon objective tests; subjectively scored items are presented for speaking and writing.

Silvaroli, N.J.; Skinner, J.T.; and Maynes, J.O. *Oral Language Evaluation: Teacher's Manual*. St. Paul, Minnesota: EMA Corporation, 1977.

This manual presents oral language evaluations for English and Spanish in a four-stage procedure: identifying children who need training in oral language; a brief assessment of the child's "primary" language; a more thorough diagnosis of the child's oral language development; teaching activities for developing children's oral language. The third stage, diagnosis, utilizes the story retelling technique. The examinee's oral language production is analyzed on the basis of six levels of "oral language development" defined in the manual. Examples of responses are given to assist teachers in scoring.

Valette, R.M. "Evaluation of Learning in a Second Language." *Handbook on Formative and Summative Evaluation of Student Learning*. Written and edited by B.S. Bloom, J.T. Hastings, and G.F.

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ESL Blues and the Iranian Connection (Part I)

Since Iranian students comprise the majority of foreign students in the U.S. at this time, it is especially important for ESL teachers to be aware of the mistakes that Iranian ESL students are likely to make. The spectrum of types of errors made by learners of a second or foreign language is quite broad, including interference errors and errors of overgeneralization. Although many of these errors are made by other non-native speakers of English, in this article, I would like to point out a few major areas of difference between Farsi, the dominant Persian dialect in Iran, and English, specifically with regard to grammatical structures. The comments made here are based on actual teaching experience.

To begin with, the pronominal system in Farsi may account for the following typical error: "I asked my girlfriend to go to the party, but he didn't want to." In Farsi, "he" and "she" have the same grammatical form. The inadvertent pronominal switch as illustrated is a common error among the students, and it is occasionally found among fluent English speakers. Though this type of error in class rarely fails to provide a bit of unexpected comic relief during a lesson, the teacher, naturally, must be careful to avoid embarrassing the student. Sometimes students will automatically correct themselves if they hear the teacher repeat the error with rising intonation or feigned disbelief.

Since Farsi does not employ inversion in question formation, this may explain why one common error among Iranian speakers is the lack of inversion in forming questions. One often hears students say "Why you are studying English?" One way to tackle this problem is to start with simple yes-no questions, and then proceed to WH-word questions while using hand signals to indicate inversion.

Indirect speech is another bugaboo for ESL teachers of Iranian students. There is virtually no structural difference in Farsi between direct and indirect speech. Thus, one encounters errors of not making the necessary switches in pronoun, adjective, or tense markers. Reza said, "I'm tired of waiting for my friend every day." "Reza said I'm tired of waiting for my friend every day." "Meet me at Harvard Square," Soheila said. "She said meet me at Harvard Square." Exercises involving real communication between students or between student and teacher might help eliminate this problem. For example, the teacher could ask one student, "What do you do in your spare time?" After the student replies to this question, the teacher asks another student what the first student said. Simple commands for classroom activities, the use of audio-visual media such as filmstrips with narration, films and TV are various ways of getting the student to concentrate

on indirect speech in meaningful interchanges.

Another potential problem area is the relative clause. Unlike English, which can delete a relative marker which is an object not immediately following a preposition, or a subject relative marker with a *be*-form before a participle. Farsi, by contrast, has a relative marker /keh/ that is almost never omitted. This fact may lead students to say sentences like the following: "Robert Redford is the actor that I heard him on the radio last night." Furthermore, there is no formal distinction like the *who(m)/which* dichotomy in English. This may account for errors such as the following: "She is the doctor which I met at the party last night." Again, the teacher's repetition of the error with a tinge of surprise and rising intonation may elicit the correct form. In addition to this, an explicit presentation of the formal and semantic differences between "which" and "who" as relative markers serves to deepen the students' understanding of the point.

Whereas English generally uses the present perfect tense to express an action that begins in the past and continues up to the present, Farsi employs the present tense for this purpose. Hence, one sometimes hears or reads, "I am watching TV since 9:00 this morning." "My friend is living with me for two months now." In this case, the teacher might begin with communicative yes-no questions in the present, and then go on to questions using the present perfect tense. "What sports do you play?" "How long have you been playing football?" The students can also conduct interviews of each other by asking similar questions.

In addition, colloquial Farsi often omits the directional preposition /beh/, meaning "to." This phenomenon may lead to ungrammatical sentences like the following one: "Next weekend I'm going New York." In such a case, the instructor might ask, "Where to, to New Jersey?" so that the error will be corrected by the student. An exercise involving rebuttal may be useful, too. "You're going to New York this weekend, right, Reza?" S: "No, I'm not going to . . ." T: "Where are you going then?"

Though the exact source of many ESL problems is like "The Unanswered Question," Charles Ives' musical composition of the early twentieth century, a knowledge of potential interference errors based on actual errors made by students might be useful. Since I have found many Iranian students to be very sensitive to the correction of their errors in front of others, the second part of this article will be a discussion of the cultural sensitivities of these students within the ESL classroom.

Mark Stepner
American Language Academy

Some Useful Testing Resources (continued from page 3)

Madaus. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1971.

This chapter breaks down the field of foreign language learning according to Bloom's taxonomy. It presents a table of specifications for foreign language content and skills, language objectives, item types for formative and summative evaluation, special problems in testing foreign language learning, and a section dealing with criterion referenced tests, communicative competence, and proficiency.

Valette, R.M. and Disick, R.S. *Modern Language Objectives and Individualization: A Handbook*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1972.

The second part of this text classifies objectives or student behaviors and suggests item types to measure them. The student behaviors covered are in the affective area, listening, speaking, reading, writing, gestures, way-of-life culture, civilization and literature.

Silverman, R.J.; Noa, J.K.; and Russell, R.H. *Oral Language Tests for Bilingual Students on the Evaluation of Language Dominance and Proficiency*. Portland, Oregon: Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 1976.

This book describes and evaluates twenty-four existing language tests, most of which have both an English and a non-English component. The book's first section deals with current issues in language testing and presents the criteria for assessing the twenty-four language tests. This text can be a great time saver for teachers seeking language tests.

Nafziger, D.H., et al. *Tests of Functional Adult Literacy: An Evaluation of Currently Available Instruments*. Portland, Oregon, Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 1975.

This book describes and evaluates seventeen tests of adult functional literacy. A section on the problems of measuring adult literacy is presented along with evaluative criteria. This text is a potential time saver for teachers seeking tests of this kind.

Bye, T.J. *Tests that Measure Language Ability: A Descriptive Compilation*. Berkeley, California: Bay Area Bilingual Education League, ND.

This text list describes forty currently available language tests. The descriptions are quite comprehensive. Some tests deal with ESL entirely while others contain ESL components. A potential time saver.

Holloman, J.W. "A Conceptual Approach to Assessing Bilingualism in Children Entering School." *TESOL Quarterly*, II (December 1977), 389-99.

The author summarizes his research in structuring a "sequence of questions whose verbal responses can be used to reveal or reflect the concepts already acquired by the bilingual child." The Information-Eliciting

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Oxford Picture Dictionary of American English

Three Editions: Monolingual English
English/Spanish English/French Index
E. C. PARNWELL, Spanish Linguistic Consultants:
MIGDALIA ROMERO DE ORTIZ, EFRAÍN BARRERA,
EDUARDO ORDÓÑEZ, and RICARDO OTHÉGUY
"I recommend the *Oxford Picture Dictionary of American English* (English/Spanish) as a supplementary book for bilingual teachers to use for instruction in science, social studies, and other subject areas." — José A. Vasquez, Bilingual Education Office, Hunter College
1978 \$3.50 each

Focus on Composition

ANN RAIMES, Hunter College, The City University of New York
Designed for adults at the intermediate level, this innovative course combines syntactic and rhetorical exercises in a single text. It offers composition topics of real student interest and stimulates discussion of the student's own writing.
1978 \$5.95

Jazz Chants for Children

CAROLYN GRAHAM. The delight of *Jazz Chants* in a book designed specifically for children. This collection of songs, poems, exercises and activities teaches the structures and rhythms of American English, and is accompanied by a cassette. A Teacher's Edition is forthcoming.
February 1979

Jazz Chants

CAROLYN GRAHAM, American Language Institute, New York University
Demonstrated in workshops acclaimed from Miami to Montreal, Mexico to Australia, *Jazz Chants* sets everyday situational English to jazz rhythms, to teach the rhythm and intonation patterns of spoken American English. It is ideal for reinforcing specific language structures. The text and cassette are designed for class or individual use.
1978 text: \$3.50 cassette: \$5.95
Special Offer: book and cassette package: \$7.50

A Practical Guide to the Teaching of English

As a Second or Foreign Language
WILGA M. RIVERS, Harvard University, and MARY S. TEMPERLEY
"Excellent blend of innovative and tried-and-true.... Practical, workable concept of the nature of communication, and a wealth of techniques to produce competence and performance." — John F. Kunkle, University of Southwestern Louisiana
1978 \$5.95
Prices and publication dates are subject to change.



200 Madison Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10016

Some Useful Testing Resources
(continued from page 1)

Question Instrument consists of items in five conceptual categories: classification, serial ordering, spatial relations, temporal relations, cause and effect. The instrument can be used to assess bilingualism, fluency, mixing, and code switching. The Appendix provides examples of questions. This could be a useful source of items for ESL teachers interested in this approach.

All of these resources are available to ESL teachers in Massachusetts. Some may be in public, college or university libraries. Almost all should be in the collections of the New England Bilingual Training Resource Center in the School of Education at Boston University. All are in the library of the National Assessment and Dissemination Center at Lesley College in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

George DeGeorge
National Assessment and Dissemination Center

Bilingual Theater Success
(continued from page 4)

September, 1974. The Hispanic Theater Company of Boston has grown and thrived in performing one-act folktales which have been adapted from Puerto Rican, Cuban, and Dominican stories. Both Spanish and English lines have been incorporated in the dialogues. The secondary school students have given many performances at past MATSOL conferences and socials. This summer the students put on performances with the Just Around the Corner Theater Company with the help of a communities outreach grant from the Massachusetts Council on the Arts and Humanities.

In a recent interview in The Boston Globe, Cecilia Soriano-Breshahan reported on the success of this young theater group in which English and Spanish-speaking students share a common, enjoyable experience. Look for a performance of this group at Boston's Latin American Theater Festival in October and future presentations next year.