

Polite But Thirsty

Yaping Tang

Since 1979, the year in which full diplomatic relations between the People's Republic of China and the United States were established, thousands of Chinese students have come to this country for higher education or research work. Filled with enthusiasm and sincerity, they begin their new life in America.

Right after their arrival, however, these students find themselves exposed to novel, unfamiliar environments. They feel vulnerable during their first year or two. For these newcomers, life is not easy. When people suddenly find themselves in a different culture, their first and dominant experience is perhaps the feeling of inadequacy. It is not only the basic inadequacy of not knowing English fluently but also the ignorance of what is appropriate and what is not, be it in school, on the bus, in restaurants, at parties, or in stores. Newcomers, not knowing the codes of the new culture, constantly fear seeming ridiculous. As a result, there appears to be no choice but to remain silent and withdraw from others. My Chinese bilingual students, for example, who have very little or no knowledge of English when they arrive, are so shocked by the new culture, as well as by the new school system, that during their first several days at school they look like deaf mutes. Some of my students have confessed, "I feel like a baby" or "I look like an idiot." Like other Chinese students, I myself had the unforgettable experience of dealing with culture shock during my first year or so in this country. I came here in 1990 to pursue my master's degree in education, beginning my life in a place whose geography, history, language, and culture contrast markedly with those of China.

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The Patron Saint of ESL

Tom Griffith

A few years back I had a million-dollar idea for an ESL course, to be titled "Reading Boston." I pitched it at B.U. and Harvard and got nowhere. The plan was to use texts by local authors—from William Bradford to Phyllis Wheatley to Longfellow to the Concordians, on and on, to moderns such as Updike. We would read them, then hike around to visit the homes of these famous authors.

The point was to exploit the amazing concentration in this area of literary ghosts. Boston has always been a magnet for brainy idealists, speaking forth their visions in lofty language. Of course, that's the problem, from an ESL standpoint. Local writers tend to be long-winded

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MATSOL Currents

Editor
Ron Clark
Boston University

Editorial Board
Mary Jane Curry
SCALE and UMass/Boston
Anne Roberti
Brookline Public Schools

Editorial Assistant
Katherine Waters

Reviews Editor
Sterling Giles

Teacher Research Editor
Jean Chandler

Advertising Liaison
Sterling Giles

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From the President

You are probably aware of the fiscal crisis MATSOL faced this past summer. One of the cost-cutting measures we were forced to take was the cancellation of the summer issue of *MATSOL Currents*. But *MATSOL* is once again in the black—and *Currents* is back. I thank all who responded to our recent call to renew membership for two years; your support was crucial to our regaining our financial equilibrium.

Now I'd like to call your attention to a few specific ways in which you can participate in the shaping of MATSOL's agenda. In other words, here's how you can have a greater say in how your dues are spent:

- If you'd like to place an item on our agenda, literally, you may call either an officer or your interest group representative. Do so by the first of a given month if you'd like the item brought up at that month's Executive Board meeting.
- You may wish to become a member of the Executive Board. The Nominating Committee, headed by Past President Betty Stone, will soon be publishing job descriptions and soliciting nominations. We're particularly interested in increasing the number of MATSOL board members involved in elementary, secondary, and adult education. Please call Betty if you'd like more information on duties and time commitments for various positions.
- Remember to get in touch with your interest group representative or any officer if you would like to ask a question or voice your opinion about anything.

The past few months have been somewhat difficult. You may have wondered what happened to a specific activity or service that you counted on from MATSOL. We had to tend to our budget crisis; now, thanks to your support, we should be able to return to other vital matters.

Esther Iwanaga

From the Editor

After a too-long absence because of the cancellation of the summer issue, I present the first *MATSOL Currents* produced under my editorial oversight. While you may notice this issue is shorter than recent others, I hope you find no drop in the quality which you have come to expect. (The shorter length is another cost-cutting measure, which, among others, has helped MATSOL out of its financial squeeze.) Nonetheless, while I continue to learn my job, forgive any errors which come to your attention but please do bring them to mine.

Great thanks must go to Suzanne Koons, my predecessor, who nurtured *MATSOL Currents* into the highly-respected state in which I received it. If I can guide this publication as well as Suzanne did, I will be proud. (Make sure you read the piece about Suzanne in this issue in which she reflects on her time in Massachusetts and as *Currents* editor.) My thanks also to Anne Roberti and Mary Jane Curry, the *Currents'* editorial board members who have stayed on in that capacity. I am truly appreciative of their talents and willingness to help.

The *Currents* will continue to serve MATSOL members as a place for the presentation and exchange of the experiences, issues and ideas important to us in our lives as English language professionals. *MATSOL Currents* is open to all

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Summary of Diane Larsen-Freeman's Plenary Address: What Does It Mean to Be a Teacher?

Ali de Groot

Perhaps you ask yourself this question every Monday morning. Or perhaps only every New Year's Eve. Or, at best, every MATSOL conference eve. In her plenary address at the fall 1995 MATSOL conference, Diane Larsen-Freeman asked herself and her audience this question and then described over fifteen (!) different roles inherent in the profession called teaching. She also came up with a new, more inclusive title that we may be adding to our nametags, resumes, and door plaques: "Manager of Learning."

Dr. Larsen-Freeman began her speech by stepping down from the distant podium, not merely to get closer to the overhead projector she would use but to get closer to the audience as well. On the screen appeared a triangle, its sides representing relationships between the corners, which were labeled "teacher/teaching," "learner/learning," and "language/culture." For example, a teacher makes decisions based on her knowledge of the learners, the language itself, and the sociopolitical environment. Glancing back in history, Dr. Larsen-Freeman highlighted the changes in perceptions of and assumptions about language, learning, and teaching.

In the mid-1900s, the prevailing assumption was that a student learns by first being prepared, then by putting the pieces together, then communicating. Language was viewed as a mixture of its parts, which include sounds, patterns, and vocabulary. Thus, the method of learning and teaching involved the techniques of repetition, drills, rule-learning, and translation. The roles of a teacher ranged from conductor and technician to performer or even cheerleader.

In the past quarter-century, these views evolved into a more holistic perspective. Language was analyzed in terms of the functions of structures and seen also as a medium for learning other subjects. Learning became more experiential, and teaching incorporated more engaging techniques, such as problem-posing/solving, process writing, and role plays. The assumption of this period was that the student learns by taking the plunge and communicating—learning by doing. Add on more roles to the complex character of "teacher": facilitator, counselor, negotiator, and collaborator.

Along with this new outlook came the more recent focus on political consciousness-raising. Language can be seen as an "instrument of power," and text comes directly out of problems that students bring from their daily lives. Political,

environmental, crosscultural, and multicultural issues are raised in the classroom. Learning can be an act of self-empowerment, and the teacher takes on the role of advocate.

Dr. Larsen-Freeman answered her opening question by saying that being a teacher means not only assuming the great variety of roles but also determining when exactly to don which hat. The ability to do this accordingly and harmoniously turns a teacher into a Manager of Learning. She summed up, with a poetic touch, her definition of what a Manager of Learning does: Creates learning opportunities, focuses student attention on the likely challenge. Then stands back and responds in the service of learning.

To illustrate her point experientially, she conducted a dialogue in the Bahasa Indonesian tongue. She modeled, orchestrated, and drilled, but despite active audience participation, she demonstrated that in fact she had not followed any of her own poetic advice: She did not respond, stand back, focus attention on the challenge, and did not necessarily even create a learning opportunity, especially since she hadn't bothered to

ascertain whether the audience knew any Bahasa Indonesian in the first place. (In a discussion workshop which followed the plenary address, Dr. Larsen-Freeman and the participants offered suggestions as to how they might have taught this lesson differently.)

The final points of the plenary address concerned, first, the need for the teacher to be an inquirer and risk-taker who constantly reflects on teaching and learning and who remains open-minded and thirsty for personal growth. Also, regarding issues such as immigrants' rights, national language, and part-time teaching benefits, Dr. Larsen-Freeman urged teachers to become activists and advocates not only for students but also for themselves. She concluded the address by reminding all teachers of the "real and lasting differences" that they contribute to students' lives. As we all become more aware of what it means to be a teacher, maybe speakers of our fine language will indeed begin to adopt "Manager of Learning," the term "teacher" then having become as lacking as "housewife" and "garbageman."

Ali de Groot has taught at many institutions in the Boston area and now lives in Amherst.

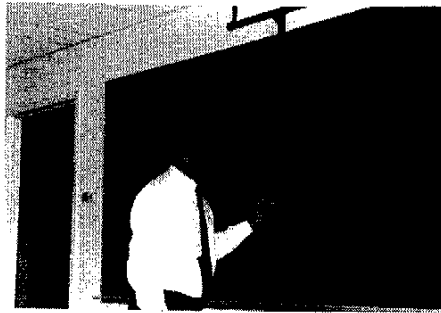


Diane Larsen-Freeman

MATSOL '95 Fall Conference



*Irene Freeman (l.), Paul Abraham,
and Peggy Gelin*



*Jeff Di Iuglio,
Higher Ed Rep and presenter*



*Donna Lee Kennedy,
Publisher's Rep*



*Our STCC connection: Anne Bonemery (l.)
and Pam Greene, Western Region Rep*



*Diane Larsen-Freeman and
attendee, post-plenary*



*Pam Greene (l.), Rob Stergis, Karen
Samuelson, Diane Larsen-Freeman,
Richard Parkin, Joy Karol, and
Esther Iwanaga*



Presenting Tom Griffith



*Beth Britz (l.), Laura Brooks,
and Betty Stone*



At the publishers' tables

Workplace Education Interest Group Rap Session

Cynthia Cook

We were a small group but we generated enough ideas and questions for a conference of our own. Our group wants to increase our influence and effectiveness as educators and advocates for equitable workplaces. Here are some of our concerns and ideas.

How can we learn more about workplace culture and systems? Have a panel of employers explain their issues and concerns when they hire linguistic minorities. Have a businessperson on the MATSOL Board. Make conferences inviting for bilingual paraprofessionals at our agencies.

What are some of the skills we want to improve as workplace educators? Educating managers about working with refugees. Designing a workplace program. Structuring

projects and billing as a workplace education consultant. Using multimedia resources to enhance instruction.

How can we be prepared for changes in direction because of variables associated with government funding sources? Receive updates about the future of adult education from legislators.

We encourage workplace educators to participate as learners and presenters at the spring 1996 MATSOL conference at Boston University.

Cynthia Cook is the Workplace Education Interest Group Representative.

Adult Education Interest Group Rap Session

John Antonellis

A small group attended the session, entitled "Issues in Adult Education: How Can MATSOL Better Serve the Adult Ed Constituency?" Information about SABES and MCAE, two valuable resource organizations for the adult education practitioner, was distributed, along with preliminary results from the recently conducted Mini-Events Survey. This included a wish list of topics and concerns listed by members who had identified their interest group as either Adult Ed or Workplace. Participants were encouraged to discuss additional ways in which MATSOL could assist practitioners without duplicating the efforts of other agencies. Below are some of the items raised:

- Health insurance: Can MATSOL provide group rates? Would this coverage be restricted to catastrophic health insurance or is HMO coverage a possibility?

- Unions: Is it feasible for adult educators to form a union? Should an effort to unionize include other interest groups, i.e., Higher Education? Would a union facilitate the provision of group health insurance?
- Professional development: Can MATSOL submit grant proposals in order to fund professional development events? This would allow MATSOL to provide free mini-events and workshops and might also facilitate collaborations with other service providers, such as SABES.

Readers are encouraged to phone John Antonellis at (617) 536-1081 or fax him at 536-1573 for more information.

John Antonellis is the MATSOL Adult Education Representative.

Higher Education Interest Group Rap Session

Jeff Di Iuglio

The Higher Education rap session was on the subject of "Pronunciation Issues and Speaking Activities for Higher Education and Adult Education Students." The session began with a presentation of some of Joan Morley's work, which is fundamental to an understanding of the history of the teaching of pronunciation in the ESL/EFL classroom. A series of questions was then given to the participants, who broke into smaller groups and discussed pronunciation issues relative to their own situations. The workshop focused on the teaching of pronunciation skills in

both isolation (as in an elective course, for example) and in an integrated skills/whole language program. All participants agreed that pronunciation was an important skill to teach; a lively discussion, which weighed the merits and effectiveness of different approaches, followed. Especially welcome were the comments from the conferees affiliated with institutions in central and western Massachusetts.

Jeff DiIuglio is the MATSOL Higher Education Representative.

Secondary Education Interest Group Rap Session

Ruth Ann Weinstein

The Secondary Education Interest Group Rap Session at the Fall '95 conference at STCC was heavily attended and highly animated.

Participants expressed the need for collaboration among professional organizations, including the cosponsorship of professional development, the invitation of all members to each other's conferences and workshops, and the sharing of professional and sociopolitical information.

A significant amount of time was spent discussing the role of MATSOL and how it can best serve its membership. MATSOL must stay aware of the current sociopolitical cli-

mate, curriculum frameworks, and political information from the state and federal departments of education and share it with its members, especially in light of the trend toward budget cuts.

Several teachers from the growing number of low incidence programs voiced the need for support and training, as did those teachers who had many questions on recertification.

Ruth Ann Weinstein teaches at Brighton High School and is the Secondary Education Interest Group Representative.

MATSOL Thanks Suzanne Koons

Former MATSOL *Currents* Editor, Colleague, and Friend

MATSOL members and the MATSOL *Currents* staff express our sincere thanks to Suzanne Koons for her dedication to this organization. Suzanne's support of MATSOL took many forms, including those of *Currents* editor; board member; and conference organizer, photographer, and presenter, among many others.

Suzanne was co-editor or editor-in-chief of the MATSOL newsletter from the summer of 1992 until the winter of 1994 and was co-editor or editor-in-chief of the newsletter's successor, MATSOL *Currents*, from the summer of 1994 until the spring of 1995—eight issues and three years worth of very hard, uncompensated work. It was under Suzanne's watch that MATSOL *Currents* became one of the most respected and admired newsletter/journals among all national and international TESOL affiliate publications, according to comments and impressions gathered at the affiliate editors workshop last spring at TESOL in Long Beach.

Arriving in Boston from Texas—and proud of it—in 1988, she had been in ESL since 1983. She had gone from tutoring to student teaching to adult education to teaching university students at Texas A&M. In Boston, Suzanne worked at Concilio Hispano, UMass/Boston, Mass. College of Pharmacy, Bentley College, Roxbury C.C., Harvard, B.U., and M.I.T., where she taught for four years. Of M.I.T. Suzanne says: "I was impressed with the bright and sophisticated students and how I was treated by Suzanne Flynn, ESL Coordinator, who always respected me as a professional. M.I.T. paid me very well and gave me full benefits." (No small matter.) Of Boston University: "I appreciated CELOP's dedicated faculty and administration, especially

Bruce Rindler, whom I found to be honest and encouraging. For professional growth, collegiality, and support, CELOP's the only game in town." On Harvard under Anne Dow: "Anne Dow and Karen Price, Mary Hammond, Bill Biddle and Alison Howe crafted and executed the finest ESL program in the country. Those of us who had the honor and pleasure to teach there enjoyed a daily menu of discipline, professional growth, camaraderie, support, music, mirth and love. My fondest and most soul-enriching memories are of my years at Harvard." Enough said.

When asked to recall a few colleagues who were especially significant, Suzanne replied, "My admiration goes out to all the people who have supported me personally and professionally over the years. Nora Smith, my first colleague in Boston, taught me the value of a strong spirit in challenging times; Ramon Valenzuela, my indefatigable grammar guru and friend; Bea Mikulecky, whose early work in reading strategies helped me see the light; and all my MATSOL board buddies and the many friends I made in my seven years in Boston."

Ruth Spack drew mention "for laying the strong foundation" for MATSOL *Currents*, which is "more than just a newsletter." As editor, Suzanne could "watch rough manuscripts become polished products, work with colleagues intimately as we endeavored to make each issue better, and feel proud at TESOL conferences when our newsletter was praised as one of the best in the country."

California now benefits from Suzanne Koons's presence. She teaches at West Valley College in Saratoga, a hilly,

Continued on the next page

Suzanne Koons *Continued from the previous page*

beautifully landscaped campus. The students are mostly Vietnamese and mostly hardworking. She has five full-time and fourteen part-time colleagues. The ESL department is only four years old but growing and gaining a good reputation. Luckily for them, Suzanne has joined CATESOL, and she presented at its recent Northern Regional Conference at U.C. Berkeley. Suzanne will also be presenting at TESOL in Chicago, where she hopes to see "all my MATSOL friends again."

MATSOL does not work without people like Suzanne Koons, good-natured, multitalented, cooperative, selfless, hardworking, professional and much respected. When you next see Suzanne at a TESOL conference, please extend your personal thanks for our organization, our publication, and our conferences would have been much the poorer or may not have happened at all without her.

The Slovak Association of Teachers of English (SATE) and MATSOL?

The presidents of SATE, Slovakia's five-year old TESOL affiliate, and MATSOL met at TESOL '95 in Long Beach and discussed the possibility of our becoming sister organizations. Many "twinning" arrangements exist between TESOL affiliates—typically one more established affiliate and a newer one.

Why SATE? It's an evolving group of eager and dedicated professionals, practicing TEFL in a fascinating part of the world in dynamic times—deserving of collegial support from an established affiliate. A number of MATSOL members have visited or lived and taught in Slovakia, "independent" since 1993 but with a history and heritage of a thousand years.

The existence and extent of any such relationship depends solely on the willingness, creativity, and international goodwill of the members of each affiliate. Its president reports that SATE is enthusiastic about the possibility, envisioning exchanges and other contacts, bringing a unique, limitless range of benefits to both MATSOL and SATE. MATSOL would like to know how *its* members feel about this opportunity. Please call or write the *Currents* editor with your comments, questions, or ideas: Ron Clark, CELOP, 890 Comm. Ave., Boston, MA 02215. (617) 353-7937.
e-mail: rclarkjr@acs.bu.edu.

The MATSOL "Mini-Events Survey" Results

The MATSOL Board and the Mini-Events Planning Committee would like to thank all who contributed their valuable ideas and opinions in our recent survey. We received returns from over fifty members. Although this number seems small, the responses were fairly equally distributed among the following three groupings: Adult and Workplace Education, Elementary and Secondary Education, and Higher Education. Most respondents said they preferred events which were theoretical with practical applications, combined with a lecture format with participation, and ones which allowed the participants to learn from the rich experience of their colleagues. Workplace representative Cindy Cook tabulated the results, which have been distributed to the board members. The suggestions for mini-event topics covered a broad range of themes; they will not only help us in planning upcoming mini-events but will also serve as a valuable resource. Are you a potential presenter looking for a topic? Contact your rep if you'd like more detailed information.

John Antonellis is the Adult Education Interest Group Representative.

Membership Fees

Starting January 1, 1996, MATSOL membership fees will increase to \$24 (professional rate) and \$16 (student rate). We will also move to a system in which all members renew at the same time, namely on April 1 of each year. The fact that our new fees are divisible by four will make it pos-

sible to pre-rate current members' renewal rates on a quarterly basis in 1996. New members will still be able to join at any time of the year, their fees also figured on a quarterly basis. Members will receive a more detailed mailing about the new system early next year.

Support for Adult Educators

Are you new to the field of Adult Education and looking for some training? Are you looking for a support group with which to share your expertise and learn from your colleagues on a wide range of adult/workplace topics?

SABES (System for Adult Basic Education Support) is a statewide organization which provides resources and workshops throughout the state on a variety of Adult Ed topics, many of which focus on Adult ESL and Workplace Education. What's more, all of their services are free! This is a great resource for both new teachers and seasoned professionals, and you will find that area coordinators are committed to offering workshops which meet your needs. It's a wonderful opportunity to get connected with the rich diversity of Adult Ed programs and professionals across the state.

SABES' Greater Boston Regional Support Center is

housed at the Adult Literacy Resource Institute (ALRI). The kinds of workshops and resources offered there are similar to those offered by other support centers across the state. Some relevant minicourses coming this winter and spring include "Basics About Teaching: Teaching ESOL," "Academic and Vocational Counseling," and "Workplace Education."

Ongoing sharing and work groups which meet regularly include "Anti-Racism Study Circle," "Black Professionals in Adult Education Sharing Group," "ESOL/ABE Video Theater," "Literacy Telecommunications Collaborative," and "Workplace Education Sharing Group."

In addition, there are workshops on topics such as "Project Based Learning," "Preparing Students for Next Steps," and "Family Literacy." Be sure and contact your regional coordinator, below, to get on their mailing list.

Boston Regional Support Center
Adult Literacy Resource Institute
Roxbury Community College and
UMass/Boston
989 Commonwealth Avenue
Boston, MA 02215
(617) 782-8956
Maria E. Gonzalez, Coordinator

Central Regional Support Center
Quinsigamond Community College
670 West Boylston Street
Worcester, MA 01606
(508) 854-4286
Margaret Ferrey, Coordinator

Northeast Regional Support Center
Northern Essex Community College
45 Franklin Street
Lawrence, MA 01840
(508) 688-6089
Marcia Hohn, Coordinator

Southeast Regional Support Center
Bristol Community College
64 Durfee Street
Fall River, MA 02720
(508) 678-2811 x2278
Ann Allerde, Coordinator

West Regional Support Center
Holyoke Community College
303 Homestead Avenue
Holyoke, MA 01040
Bill Arcand, Coordinator

Central Resource Center/Clearinghouse
World Education
210 Lincoln Street
Boston, MA 02111
(617) 482-9485
Lou Wollrab, Information Coordinator

MATSOL Spring 1996 Conference

MATSOL: Visions Past and Future

March 8 and 9 at Boston University

Plenary speakers:

Anne Dow

ESL materials consultant and former director of the Harvard Program

Maryanne Phinney

ESL software specialist and Past Chair of CALL Interest Section of TESOL

MATSOL encourages you to attend, present or volunteer; contact the conference chair, Carol Albiero at (617) 853-7846 for information.

ALLIANCE : THE MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY TEXTBOOK SERIES OF THEME-BASED CONTENT INSTRUCTION FOR ESL/EFL

**Amy Tickle, Series Editor
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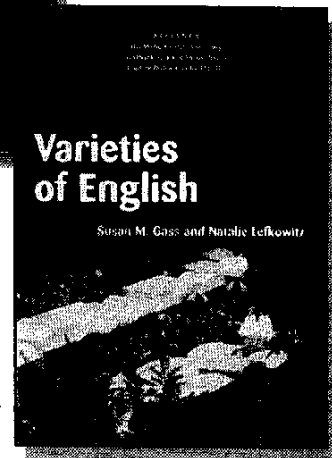
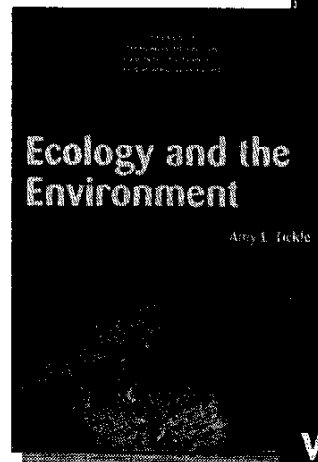
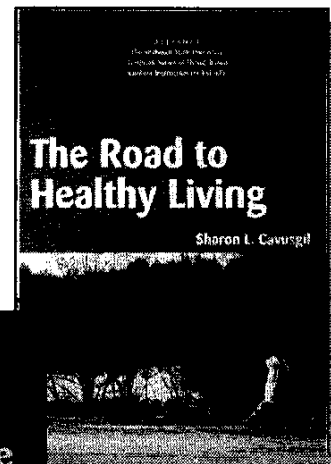
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MICHIGAN

Polite But Thirsty Continued from page 1

I recall my own first day at school at Rhode Island College. When I went to my first class, I was astonished to see some of my American classmates drinking soda and eating snacks in class. I could hardly believe my eyes and said to myself, "It's like a tea-house." In China students are not allowed to drink or eat anything in class, whether in college or in elementary or high school. From that day on, I became an adventurer in a new world. Here, then, is some of what I went through, observed, and learned.

First, in the United States, people usually call each other by first names rather than family names. Everyone does this, including colleagues, classmates, students and teachers, friends, relatives, even children and parents. Americans don't like to be treated with special deference for age or position; it makes them uncomfortable. Being on a first-name basis is taken as a sign of acceptance and friendliness. In China, people don't call each other by their first names unless they are relatives or close friends. Rather, people use the whole name or just call you "Xiao" or "Lao" along with your family name. "Ziao" in Chinese means young or little, and "Lao" means old. Like other Chinese students, therefore, I felt very awkward, in the beginning, when I was called by my first name.

Second, Americans are very direct. When they want something they say "yes" and when they don't they say "no." Furthermore, if they want something different from what is offered, they ask for it. But Chinese people usually respond with a "no" the first or even the second time they are offered something—even if they really want it. Being courteous requires standing on ceremony, and we don't want to bother others. It's very common in China for someone to repeatedly offer something to a person and then impose it on him or her even after having had it rejected a number of times. Two days after I arrived in America, I went to visit my advisor, Dr. Green. It was a hot summer afternoon. After sitting and talking for a while, I felt very thirsty. Just then, Dr. Green asked me, "Would you like something to drink?" "Oh, no, thank you. Please don't trouble yourself," I answered. Then she said, "Are you sure you wouldn't like some orange juice, or a Coke?" Once again I refused politely: "No, really, thank you just the same." At this, she said, "OK" and walked out. A few seconds later, she returned with a Coke. She continued to talk while drinking. At that point I felt confused as well as thirsty. Later, I wrote to my husband in China about this "polite but thirsty" story and he wrote back jokingly, "Nice try but don't cry!"

Third, in America, when someone says to you, "That's a beautiful sweater you're wearing," you might respond, "Thank you. My mother knitted it for me two years ago." But if this conversation happens between two Chinese, the response will be, "Oh, no, I've had this ugly old thing for two years" or "No, it's already out of date." Modesty is an-

other Chinese cultural norm. Another example: You are invited to dinner at a Chinese friend's home; the host will usually say, "Sorry, there's not much food for you. It's just a simple meal" even though the table is covered with a dozen dishes. What is more, in China, at the table, when someone says, "Oh the food is so good. Your wife is really a good cook," the answer is always something like, "Oh, no. The food is not good this time. She's only a so-so cook. You overpraise her." Unlike the Chinese, Americans do not consider excessive modesty a virtue. After observing and experiencing, I have gotten used to the American way of giving and receiving compliments.

Fourth, in America, if a person is given a gift, he or she will usually open it and say, "Oh, how beautiful it is! Thank you very much." In China, a person usually accepts a gift and says, "Thank you" and then leaves the gift aside, unopened. Opening the gift in front of the giver is considered impolite (so people sometimes don't know what gift they have got until their friends or relatives leave!). In addition, Chinese people usually present their gifts just before they leave, while Americans usually give their gifts right after they arrive.

Fifth, in mainland China we never tip anybody. Chinese students find it hard to get used to the tipping system here and feel very embarrassed when they forget to tip a taxi driver or a waitress in a restaurant.

But simple embarrassment is one thing; in addition to suffering from culture shock when dealing with external matters such as differences in food, climate, language, mannerisms, and communication, newcomers also suffer psychologically from status change and status loss. Most Chinese students, for example, have been academically successful at home and are professionally well-established. They suddenly face intense academic pressure and adjustments. They also have to work hard to pay their tuition and living expenses. Some even hold two or three jobs

Continued on the next page

Adult Education Notes

Did you know there is a lending library at the Adult Literacy Resource Institute (ALRI)? It's filled with great resource materials, texts, etc., most of which can be borrowed for one month. Check it out.

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Polite But Thirsty Continued from previous page

at once. They work harder and for longer hours than most other students. Many do such jobs as taking care of the disabled or elderly, babysitting, cleaning houses, or working in restaurants. (I was a student-worker and had another job off campus taking care of a disabled girl on weekends.) Most Chinese students were university teachers, scholars, and engineers in China, where people like them would never do these kinds of jobs, so some of them feel a distinct loss of status.

As a result of culture shock, some Chinese students experience a painful social vulnerability. Having lost cultural and personal structures upon separating from the home country and feeling fearful about making contact with Americans, very few are successful in establishing close relationships with Americans. Instead, they often create a co-national "subculture," which recapitulates the home setting and provides necessary support but which also serves as a barrier to deep intercultural contact. Other symptoms of culture shock are the following: absent-mindedness; a feeling of hopelessness; fits of anger; excessive fear of being cheated, robbed, or injured; and, finally, that terrible longing to be back home.

Life is never smooth sailing. It requires a continual series of adaptations to new environments. But what should newcomers do to mitigate the shock of confronting a new culture? It's best to face unfamiliar cultural settings squarely and try to cope with them; and coping with a new culture requires the acquisition of new information and the learning of new responses and skills. But by doing so, we can broaden our perspectives, promote personal growth, gain insight into the culture of origin through a contrast with other world views, and, ultimately, successfully adapt to our new world.

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Yaping Tang is a bilingual education teacher in the Brookline Public Schools.

The Patron Saint of ESL Continued from page 1

and dense, hard even for native speakers. Confess: How many of you have ever read Emerson voluntarily?

Perhaps my idea was doomed from the start. Yet as sometimes happens, a version of it fell right into my lap. At Showa Women's Institute, we teach American culture, along with the English, to our Japanese college students. One course includes a weekly field trip, organized around historic sites: the Freedom Trail, Plymouth, Salem, Concord, Newport, Lowell, and others. We prep the students with some simplified history and lots of videos, and they like it. It confirms my hunch that getting them out of doors and *literally* into the content pays off. This area is a cultural goldmine, yet many foreign students never go deeper than Newbury Street.

Our students' all-time favorite is Orchard House in Concord, the home of Louisa May Alcott. Apparently, *Little Women* is big in Japan, maybe bigger than here. I guess it figures that modern Japanese would relate to a tale of close family, strict morality and a strong but absent father. And Jo makes a nice feminist hero, with her famous line about spurning marriage in order to "paddle her own canoe."

What you learn in the excellent tour of the house, however, is that Louisa had a deeper motive for becoming our first great woman writer—poverty. The life

of the Alcott family diverged from that of the fictional Marches in one important respect: Bronson Alcott, though a famous and visionary educator, was never able to support his family. His failure as a breadwinner so scorched young Louisa that she drove herself mercilessly, and at the expense of her health, into commercial success.

It is Bronson the father who has become a source of fascination for me. Wouldn't his fate strike a chord with anyone trying to make a living as an ESL teacher? For his blend of idealism, progressivism, earnestness, compassion, and total lack of practicality, I nominate him as patron saint of ESL.

True, ESL wasn't his field, but in pedagogical outlook there are many points of rapport. ESL teachers tend to be on the cultural fringe, wary of tradition, eager to empower, nurturing, affirming, seeing our work as almost a spiritual vocation—so too Bronson, mold-breaker *extraordinaire*. In the early 1800s he repeatedly lost positions for doing things we now take for granted. Pitying his deskbound students, he introduced physical education and art. He was among the first to mix black and white children in one class. He had them write journals, which he read and responded to. Perhaps most revolutionary, he diverged from straight lecture and simply talked to his students, treating their opinions with respect—this in a day when children were viewed as pas-

Continued on page 17

Just Wait a Minute

Robert Saitz



Grammar and usage books often give rules that apply in many contexts but conflict with effective communication in others. For example, most such texts have a rule on modifiers. The St. Martin's *Handbook* says that modifiers should go "right before the words they modify." The book cites, "The court only hears *civil* cases on Tuesdays" as ambiguous; to fix it we put *only* before *cases* or before *Tuesdays*, depending on what is meant. Quirk and Greenbaum in their *A Concise Grammar of Contemporary English* say that "an adjunct normally precedes (the element) on which it is focused." This rule is useful because a change in position can create a change in meaning: "You'll get a B grade just for that answer" is different from "You'll get just a B grade for that answer." And since it is harder in writing to suggest variations than it is in speech, position therefore becomes especially important. In speech we can convey at least three different messages by varying the stress in "John only phoned Mary today." If *Mary* is stressed, it refers to Mary and no one else. If *today* is stressed, it means the call happened today and not before. If *only* is stressed, it was just John who phoned. In writing, if we don't want to use italics, we can get the same three meanings by moving *only* in front of *Mary*, *today*, and *John*, respectively.

Yet at times when we follow the rule and place adjuncts before the objects on which they focus, we lose some communicative power. Thus a department chair, speaking of the value of quantitative research, says, "I don't just mean numbers." According to the rule, *just* would go before *numbers*, but if the chair put it there she'd get a less effective stress pattern. She'd have a tertiary (weak) stress on *just* and a strong stress on *numbers*. Also, the two stresses would occur next to each other. The way she actually said it put a

secondary (stronger than tertiary) stress on *just* and a strong stress on *numbers*; the placement of the secondary earlier in the sentence sets up a foreshadowing that links *just* and *numbers*—in English, a common pattern that links key words ("There's a monkey in the bathroom").

Consider this sentence: "I would just like to be alone." *Just* clearly goes with *to be alone*. That's what I want—only to be alone. It doesn't mean that the only thing I want to do is to like something. We could put *just* before *to be alone*: "I would like just to be alone." That's possible but it creates an unbalanced rhythm (but which could be effective in some situations). It puts three lightly stressed words in the first half of the sentence and all the heavy stuff at the end. It's probably more likely that we'll find *just* in the first half, where it acts as a foreshadowing and a balance to the major stress on *alone* in the second half.

In "Without his help it simply would never have happened," the placement of *simply* before *would* creates an effect very different from "Without his help it would simply never have happened." The first version sets up an uninterrupted rocking motion, anapestic and iambic, that carries through the whole sentence. The second version has a trochaic/anapestic rhythm, a more halting effect that slows us down. Each version can be useful for setting different tones.

Thus, while the adjunct focus rule is pedagogically safe, we have to recognize that varying it is common among native speakers as they use different positionings to create different effects.

Robert Saitz teaches at Boston University.

From the Editor Continued from page 2

literary genres and article types and has, or can make, a spot for any worthy submission, so please feel free to contact me with questions or ideas you are even remotely pondering. What is now a question, a thought, or a feeling might become our next quality piece. Especially encouraged are contributions from elementary, secondary, and adult education practitioners and administrators and those from the central and western parts of the state. We'd really like to hear from you.

Finally, let me make a call to those members who may be interested in helping to produce *MATSOL Currents*, perhaps with editorial help, although this is not the only form your assistance can take. Each issue of the *Currents* has always depended on—and always will depend on—the active support of members just like you.

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The Benefits of Teacher Research



Rick Lizotte (with Jane Thiefels)

Why should anyone want to conduct classroom research? It's true that research may better show you how you teach. It may also show you how to teach better. It may even show you how your students truly learn.

But there are problems. What exactly do you want to research? How do you transform what you want to study into a researchable question? What kind of analysis will you use on the data? How will you get your class to go along? And how can you be sure that your research won't interfere with the work of the classroom? How will you face any ethical dilemmas in the gathering of data? And perhaps the most difficult question of all: When will you find time to complete this extra work?

Those who have considered for more than a few minutes doing classroom research have asked themselves these or similar questions and faced what could be called researcher's regret. In this column I would like to show why you should push through this regret and *do* that research. Using research that my colleagues and I are conducting as an example, I hope to demonstrate some of the tangible benefits that can be derived from doing research. Although some of the benefits we have derived may not apply to all research situations, each research situation undoubtedly provides both general benefits from simply doing research and more specific benefits from the particular research being done.

The Teacher Research Project

As part of a larger project at Northern Essex Community College in Haverhill, ESL professor Jane Thiefels and I have been participating in a study funded by a grant from FIPSE (Fund for the Improvement of Post-Secondary Education). In the last two semesters, Jane and I have investigated ways to use barcoded videodisc materials to help instruct ESL students in the study skills and general academic skills necessary to get through our institution's human biology class. The materials consist of commercially available videodiscs on topics in human biology, along with scripts developed by our team. The scripts contain transcripts of the audio on the videodiscs as well as diagrams, definitions, and semantic maps that remind students of the material covered on the videodisc and help them to organize and otherwise process the information. Some versions of the scripts are intended for use by the instructor in the classroom and the students in a reading lab. Their barcodes allow the user to access easily particular segments of the videodisc or the pronunciation of key vocabulary items.

In the classroom, we first presented the videodisc ma-

terial to the students twice and immediately tested to see how much material they had absorbed solely from watching the video. Then we went through the video step-by-step, using a barcoded script for easy access during instruction. The next step included class and group discussion and written exercises in the classroom, reinforcing the skills needed to complete human biology exams, which require students to write definitions of terms and essay questions on bodily processes.

In this preliminary phase of the research, we used two simple methods of evaluation to test the effectiveness of what we were doing. First, we pre- and post-tested a selected range of the material to see if students had truly absorbed it. Second, we administered a pre- and post-course survey to see if the students' attitudes toward taking biology courses had improved after our instruction.

Some Benefits of the Research

The benefits Jane and I have derived from doing this research have been both *direct* and *indirect*. The direct benefits are evident in the results from our two objective measures—the testing of the material and the attitudinal surveys. Students indeed are learning the material well from our methods of instruction, and their attitudes toward taking biology courses have become more favorable. In fact, a few students have decided to take the human biology course in semesters following our instruction.

The indirect benefits evolved as we actually *did* the research. At the end of this past semester, as Jane and I reviewed what had happened in the classroom, we realized that we had developed new methods of instruction and had gained new insights into instruction, which we wanted to apply more generally in our teaching.

The first indirect benefit Jane aptly termed "accountability." Because we were doing research and knew that the results of our instruction would be post-tested, we were more motivated to carefully plan which material we needed to teach and to be sure that our exercises, class discussions, and tests adequately covered the material. We now realize better than ever how *detailed* planning of the content of our courses makes us more effective teachers.

Having to complete a certain amount of material in a specified time resulted in another indirect benefit related to the presentation and pacing of instruction. As we tightened up the pacing, we gained insight into the tension in the teaching/learning process between student-centered and teacher-centered instruction. For instance, we were often faced with

Continued on the next page

The Benefits of Teacher Research Continued from the previous page

questions such as whether we should allow students more time for group work on the material in order to practice critical thinking skills but, consequently, perhaps sacrifice more complete coverage of the material; or should we instruct students more directly in order to get through more material but perhaps run the risk that students would rely more on memorization than critical analysis in order to assimilate that extra material? Although we had recognized this tension before, the constant evaluation and feedback in the research process made us more aware of it and caused us to respond in our courses with a variety of ways of presenting the material and testing our students.

As the ultimate goal of most teacher-research situations is to determine how to teach better, different methods of instruction are often tested. As Jane and I continued to use the videodisc material, we realized that although students could, after viewing the videodiscs, answer completion questions on the material, they still could not write essays on it. When asked to provide process essays on the path of food in the digestive system, for example, many students handed in blank sheets; they needed other kinds of exercises to enable them to construct essays. We therefore devised sequencing exercises to help them begin to deal with the material in written form. Rather than, for example, having to face a blank page and write a complete essay on the path of food through the digestive system, students could sequence sentences that described different elements of the path. The next indirect benefit from our research, then, was a step-by-step approach to essay writing that we could now apply in our classes, with some modification, to other material.

Researching different methods of instruction also more clearly revealed how our students' learning styles differed. Some students immediately picked up almost all the information aurally and visually from the videodisc. Others wanted to follow along in the script as they watched the video because they could not understand the quickly moving audio. It became clearer to us how learning styles affect comprehension of material.

Several benefits that Jane and I derived from working on our project were due to the fact that we were teaching in a content area that primarily used objective means of evaluation. As ESL instructors, we often use subjective essays as testing instruments, evaluating them in a holistic way. But, by using more objective scientific materials and methods of evaluation in our research project, we gained insight into how our students would fare when we could not give them a subjective boost in our grading. The grades on our tests became much clearer indicators of which students were assimilating the academic skills we were teaching. We could also see which students succeeded through memorization and which used critical analysis in order to gain a true understanding of the concepts.

The final indirect benefit that Jane and I derived from our research came from working on a team with science instructors. By observing science classes and labs and questioning the instructors, we learned more about the nature of the content and modes of instruction our students would face after leaving ESL classes. We can now use this knowledge to prepare our students better for science and other courses.

Conclusion

Many benefits—both direct and indirect—can be derived from conducting classroom research. It is true that conflicts between doing good research and being a compassionate and effective instructor sometimes exist, and these conflicts will be discussed in a later column in this series. It is also true that research adds to your workload, to which I can attest after having faced a monumental backlog of work at the end of last semester. But I hope to have shown that both the answering of researchable questions and the constant observation and evaluation that research requires can lead, with reflection and planning, to a stimulating and innovative boost to instruction for both teachers and students.

Rick Lizotte teaches in the ESL program at Northern Essex Community College.

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What's a Tune?

John Flynn



"What's a tune?" "A jingle?" "A hit record?"

These were questions commonly asked by my students—future teachers of English or French—during my two years of English instruction at Balti State University, in the former Soviet Republic of Moldova, which became independent in 1991. This tiny, landlocked republic, about the size of New Hampshire, borders Romania to the west and the Ukraine to the east. I was the *second* American ever to lay eyes on Balti (the first was a Baptist missionary), but I was certainly the first to live and work there.

It is not an attractive city. The air often smells rank, and one sees a certain grim cast in the faces and the buildings—typical of smaller, industrial cities in the former Soviet Union. Balti has 180,000 residents and 75% unemployment. It features the now-closed Lenin factory, covering a few city blocks, which once built parts for Soviet submarines. Other plants, about a dozen in all, make vodka, cognac, sugar, and sausage, among other things. (Moldova possesses a black soil and an agricultural tradition that at one time were responsible for producing much of the fruit, wine, and brandy of the Soviet Union.) Balti, like many other post-Soviet cities, is rusting through the economic upheavals brought on by *perestroika*.

But why the questions from my students? And why were lessons involving American pop music no doubt the most satisfying of all those I experienced during my tenure in Moldova?

Call it a fascination with the unknown. Most of my Balti students became teenagers during the time of *perestroika* and *glasnost*. They suffered little anxiety when it came to being openly curious about all things western. In fact, when I arrived in Balti in the fall of 1993, a mania for the Occident, especially "true" American objects or cultural idiosyncrasies, was in full swing. The students were all looking to America (we had just built our, and the first, embassy in the capital, Chisinau) for guidance and support. Idealism had flourished under Gorbachev but then had burned out. Most Moldovans felt morally depleted by the recent civil war fought over autonomy in the Trans-Dneister region and disillusioned with their so-called freedom and democracy; it was only in the students that some flame of hope for a better future burned. For their generation, despite the gloom at home, a relatively astonishing amount of alternatives existed, from translating work in Europe to exchange programs and scholarships in America and all over the world. What my students wanted, beyond exposure to my native-speaker

rhythms, was cultural information. While they had had little access to films beyond *RoboCop* or *Terminator II*, they knew of Whitney Houston, Ace of Base, and Led Zeppelin. There existed this strange outer-market but inaccurate idea of America. What I aimed for was coloring it in, so to speak. Thus, when I had electricity, and the unheated classrooms were not too frigid for sitting and listening to music, I played cassettes of uniquely American songs by artists to whom I knew the students had never been exposed.

This is hardly an earth-shattering technique for any experienced EFL instructor and, of course, it sounds easy. Consider, however, that, when I first arrived in Balti, I couldn't find soap or toilet paper or gasoline, let alone access to a photocopier, a computer, an electric typewriter, blank cassette tapes, or American music. In time, though, I managed to solve each of these latter problems (and by the time I left, I'm happy to say, all the other items could be found as well).

I found carbon paper, and I visited Americans working in Chisinau, about three hours south by bus, and borrowed cassettes and the use of a high-speed dual recorder. I had toted with me a \$5 Smith Corona manual which in two years turned out to be worth triple its weight in gold. (Even with blackouts three times per day due to electricity rationing, I could continue to type by candlelight.) So I not only had American music, I could have the lyrics in multiple copies!

I started with Louis Armstrong and Ella Fitzgerald singing "Let's Call the Whole Thing Off," introducing the students to American jazz singers as well as to the Gershwins. The song wonderfully accentuates the accepted vagaries in pronunciation, "tomato" versus "tomahto," and includes quirky, useful words like "pajamas."

John Cougar Mellancamp's "Small Town" and "Blood on the Plow" were deemed big hits by the students for the singer's ability to convey a reasonably intelligent and emotional message without sacrificing foot-stomping danceability. First they listened just to enjoy the rock music. But with "Small Town," some students cried. The lyrics "... probably die in this small town/and that's good enough for me" touched a nerve. Many of them had come to Balti from rural villages as immutable as any midwestern backwater. They knew, regardless of the new openness, that many would never leave their village. Money and transportation, difficult as such things were to obtain, would always work against their mobility. They would finish with their diplomas, hire on at a village school (likely their home town),

Continued on the next page

What's a Tune? *Continued from the previous page*

marry before age twenty-five, and settle down. Even if they ended up in Chisinau, translating for Westerners, no one could pull the love of their native village, their roots, from their hearts. To think an American pop musician was expressing such a sentiment! Weren't all Americans just too busy with money and too indifferent for that?

"Blood on the Plow" led to discussions of farming, private land-holding, capitalism, and the political messages musicians can convey. The students learned the English words "plow," "barn," "hayseed," "crops," and "harvest," terms they had used all their lives—but only in Romanian or Russian. They came to the pleasant realization that the United States also consists of farmlands and village-like communities. (In future lessons, I referred back to this song for long and tedious explanations concerning banking: credit, loans, interest, and ATM machines—all of that being so foreign and therefore appealing.)

In Kenny Rogers's "The Gambler" we had the existen-

tial cowboy attitude romanticized: the distant loner, on a train, smoking cigarettes and drinking whiskey. Its idioms tied into a host of other lessons. This song most successfully introduced a more student-centered activity: the playing of that favorite American pastime, poker. How many idioms come from poker?! Over the course of a couple of lessons the students had the hang of it and could play untutored.

I used these lessons to complement, of course, more traditional TEFL lessons and a learner-centered approach. That approach and this kind of culturally-centered material blew into Balti like a warm breeze off the Black Sea. Though I always arrived in class with a ready Plan B, one which did not depend on electricity, I tried to bring positive, truthful, appealing aspects of our culture into those students' lives, and it seemed pop music was a suitable medium.

John Flynn is a writer and English teacher now living in the Worcester area.

The Patron Saint of ESL *Continued from page 11*

sive recipients of adult wisdom, best seen but not heard.

In his own journal of 1826, he wrote what he called *General Maxims by which to Regulate the Instructor's Duties*. These maxims are collected on a poster sold at the Orchard House giftshop. Any teacher would gain by reading them, and some are uncannily germane to ESL:

VII. To teach, distinctive from all sinister, sectarian and oppressive principle. [Avoid cultural bias.]

XVII. To teach, that alone which is useful. [Teach language that students actually need.]

XXIII . . . illustrating by sensible and tangible objects. [Use visual aids.]

LIII . . . intermingling Question with Instruction. [Seek active participation.]

XX . . . in the Inductive method. [Encourage linguistic reasoning.]

LVI . . . without holding pupils in comparison with one another. [Strive for an egalitarian spirit . . .]

XXXVI . . . to secure the habit of independence of thought and feeling. [. . . but nurture the individual]

To me, this last one is the key to Alcott's legacy, and to the revolutionary potential of what we do. In some graduate ESL departments, you're taught that American education repressed individuality until the 1960s. Alcott's career suggests otherwise; though ahead of his time, his ideas soon caught on and permeated pedagogical thinking. In fact, the

western nurturance of the self goes back centuries, though it's always gone furthest in this country. (I recently saw a poster in an elementary school, where the encouragement of self-esteem is a virtual cult, which read, simply, "HOO-RAY FOR ME".) I think this attitude underlies the worldwide attraction of English, which strikes many as the idiom of personal freedom.

Think of this next time you urge members of your polyglot class to give their opinion on something or write it in a journal. The cultural assumption here is that their opinion has value. But does it? It may not elsewhere. That we think so is partly owing to the influence of Bronson Alcott, a much-loved but feckless visionary, once known as "the American Plato," whose home and ghost should be visited by all who take teaching seriously.

Tom Griffith usually speaks forth from his column, "Tip of the Tongue."

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PREVIEW

Paragraph Reading

Main Idea

Before You Begin

Fables are a type of story told around the world. They are short, easy-to-remember tales that teach lessons about how people behave or about how they should behave. Read the fable below. What is the moral, that is, lesson about human behavior, of this fable?

Table 1: The Lion and the Four Bulls

Lion used to walk about a field in which Four Bulls used to live. Many times he tried to attack them, but whenever he came near they turned their tails toward one another so that whichever way the lion tried to attack, he would have to face the horns of one of them.

At last, however, the bulls started arguing with each other, and each went off to a different part of the field by himself. Then the Lion attacked them one by one and soon had killed all four.

Moral: _____

What are some fables that you have heard? Your teacher may want you to work in small groups to make a list of fables you know before you read the fables in this chapter.

Read the fables below and, after each one, write the moral. You may find that some fables have more than one moral or that two individuals see more than one moral in the same fable. You also may notice that different fables have the same moral.

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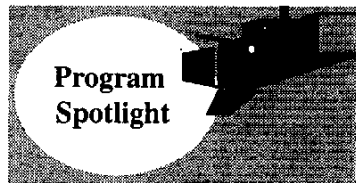
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MICHIGAN

The Providence Public Library's Family Writing Center

Linda Darman



The Providence Public Library's Family Writing Center Program is an ESL program designed to serve parents and school-aged children from the many and varied immigrant groups in the Providence area. Since 1992, families from as many as twenty countries have participated in the program, funded by a grant from the U. S. Department of Education through the *Library Services and Construction Act*.

The program is based on an oral history model, which lends itself well to the goals of the project, which include providing a personally satisfying and nonthreatening opportunity for students to acquire ESL skills, fostering and supporting cultural communication among family members, and producing a record which introduces participants to the community at large.

The project takes place with the cooperation of several community agencies, each of which provides a liaison between the agency and the Providence Library. The liaison recruits and maintains close contact with the students, acts as a tutor, and assists the program coordinator.

Most tutors are volunteers from the community who receive extensive training in tutoring ESL through an oral history model based on the Language Experience Approach. Tutors are initially trained by the program coordinator and others, with formal training continuing for all tutors between sessions. In addition, a half-hour period is reserved before the start of each class for ongoing training, evaluation, and support.

Classes meet twice a week for an hour and a half for ten weeks. Students work in small groups, each with its own tutor. Parents and children work separately in the first weekly session; families work together in the second.

Oral History

The process of collecting an oral history validates and preserves the rich everyday experiences of the narrator. The sharing of these personal and cultural experiences can bind families and communities.

In the Family Writing Center, the Language Experience Approach ensures that the students' own experiences become the basis of the language lesson. A weekly theme (a special person, a favorite childhood memory, the immigration experience, etc.) relates to the students' personal experiences. The interviewing takes place on many levels: Students are interviewed by the tutor, other family members, and other

students. After a discussion period, students are asked to write the stories they have told. The tutor then helps to correct and edit the stories, using them as the basis for a language lesson. Students later share their stories with other family members and other families. Families are also encouraged to make audiotapes of their stories.

The Computer Labs

The grant funds a small computer lab at each of the three branch library sites. Students not only learn extremely useful computer skills but create very satisfying and professional-looking final products, which are then placed into a family album. The children are also generally asked to illustrate their stories. These illustrations are also included in the family album, which becomes the possession of the family at the end of the session. At that time, each student is also asked to donate a favorite story to a collection on display at the Providence Library. Parts of the collection also have been reproduced in a small publication.

In addition to *Microsoft Works*, other educational software (for writing, beginning ESL speaking and listening, typing, spelling, vocabulary development, etc.) has been installed on the labs' Macintosh computers. The labs are monitored and open at specific times during the week. These open hours give the students the opportunity to do additional work on their oral history projects as well as on various language and computer skills.

Additional Services

Program participants are also introduced to the Providence Public Library collections and services. They are informed of appropriate programs as they occur and consistently are encouraged to take advantage of the resources and services.

In addition, students are strongly encouraged to continue their ESL studies in other programs after completing the Family Writing Center Program. To that end, an organized referral process informs families of the options available and assists them in making contact with appropriate programs.

Conclusion

A program of this nature is not without its frustrations (student attrition and volunteer reliability being two of the most obvious), but the Family Writing Center Program seems to

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ESL Outrages

Joe Pettigrew

From the Editor:

MATSOL Currents recently received some criticism of this column, criticism both general and specific to the situation discussed in the Winter/Spring 1995 issue (Vol. 21, No. 2) regarding the "inexcusable inefficiency" at a Boston area community college—a college which allowed some teachers to show up on the first night of class, and in one case even to begin teaching, only to be informed at that very late moment that they would not be assigned to the class. While the individuals raising the criticisms mentioned above did not wish to be identified and their criticisms printed here verbatim, *MATSOL Currents* believes their concerns may be addressed herein to the benefit of all our readers.



Specific to the column regarding the situation at the community college in the Boston area, Joe Pettigrew was accused of having written in an excessively negative manner and, perhaps, of having insufficient knowledge of the incidents and institution, and, perhaps, of having unreliable sources or not confirming the story, among other things. Also, one reader questioned if it would not be difficult for the administration in question to offer apologies to the faculty involved, as Joe Pettigrew suggested, if those faculty did not identify themselves or were not identified in this column.

Generally speaking, "ESL Outrages" was characterized as being overly negative, unproductive, and unsupportive of the very population it is meant to support.

Dear Readers:

With regard to the situation at the community college discussed in this column last time, I want to stress that I had half a dozen sources. I spoke to six different teachers who worked at the program in question, three of them for twenty to thirty minutes each. All confirmed that several teachers were told to show up for their first night of work not knowing whether or not they would actually have jobs—and some didn't as it turned out. Two people had first-hand knowledge of the teacher who was interrupted in mid-class and told she would not be teaching, and all the others had indirect knowledge of the incident.

If you find the tone of my prose exaggerated, you have every right to your opinion. I feel very confident, however, that what I said happened, did happen.

As for whom should get an apology, it should be very easy for the institution to identify them. These people were told to show up. Presumably, the person who told them that wrote their names down somewhere. If not, things must be even more disorganized there than it appears.

Now I'd like to make a few general points about this column. First, is *MATSOL Currents* not supportive or constructive enough? Look at any given issue. How much negativity do you see? If someone were to skip this column and read everything else, I dare say he or she would think everything was pretty darn wonderful in our field. I don't delude myself into thinking this column will change much. However, if it were to disappear tomorrow, would the lives of ESL teachers have a better chance of improving, due solely to a *Currents* with a more supportive tone? Eliminating this column and the stories it tells wouldn't likely yield any posi-

tive results, aside from making a couple of administrators happy.

Second, I don't make these stories up. People who work at various places in the state tell me some of the terrible things they witness or experience. If it sounds negative, it's because there's a lot of negative stuff going on out there. Every teacher I've ever spoken with has at least one horror story to tell about working conditions in this field. This column only relates a part of what is going on. And not printing it surely won't make it go away.

Third, accusations of outrageous treatment are confirmed. I do not put into print the rantings of one disgruntled faculty member. I talk to others at the same worksite to try to make sure what I write is accurate. If someone can show me that I've made a mistake, I will gladly print a retraction and an apology. Up to now, no one has contacted me. The previous editor of the *Currents*, however, did get an earful once or twice from an angry administrator, and I'd like to publicly thank her for her support and encouragement.

Fourth, when I took over this column, I inherited a policy of not naming names. I'm not crazy about it, but it makes many people feel more comfortable, including some of the people who share their outrages with me for publication. It should go without saying that the people who confide in me must remain anonymous. Most are part-timers working from one term to the next with no job security. It has happened, at more than one institution, that a "complainer" has simply not been rehired.

Finally, if anyone has any comments or suggestions, I'd

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REVIEWS

Making Business Decisions

Reviewed by Laura Monahon English



Making Business Decisions by Frances Boyd. Addison-Wesley, 1994. 163 pages. Student Book: ISBN 0-201-59281-9. Cassette: ISBN 0-201-59282-7.

M*aking Business Decisions* is an ESL text intended for the upper-intermediate through advanced student who is actively involved in the business arena, intends to be involved, or is simply interested in learning more about the business world. The book does not require any previous knowledge of business.

The author's stated goal is to "help students learn to communicate, in English, like business managers and feel confident doing so" (p. vii). Boyd uses the case-study approach, which immediately puts students into interesting and thought-provoking roles. They are required to think like business people and solve complex business problems.

There are ten chapters, each focusing on an actual company, ranging from Ben and Jerry's to Azko, a company which produces chemicals, fibers, paints, and health care products. Many of the cases present companies involved in international operations in Latin America, Europe, and Asia. Each chapter also explores a different high-interest business topic applied to the company under investigation.

Each chapter consists of two parts. Part One requires students to gather company information, beginning with an introduction of the company. Students are given background data and a photo or two of the company's products. Other background gathering activities include listening to interviews, using questionnaires, and reading charts and graphs. All of these activities are highly engaging and the visual aspect is pleasing. Boyd's approach is clear, thorough, and pedagogically sound; she provides students with ample and interesting prereading, outline completion, information gap, interpretation, and vocabulary activities.

Part Two focuses on current business topics. Students are led through a series of activities which culminates in a

business meeting simulation. The section begins with a reading or listening activity about a business topic, such as international trade agreements, current environmental regulations, a marketing issue, crisis management, employer-employee relations, to name a few. The reading is followed by a "short strategy for negotiation" section that allows students to explore a specific language function they may need for the meeting simulation. These language functions include *interrupting and asking for clarification, expressing disagreement and doubt, and eliciting more information*. The business simulation requires that students use problem solving and decision making skills. The simulation centers on a problem faced by the company that is directly related to the business topic introduced in the beginning of the section. Students are required to pull together all of the information they have gathered throughout the chapter. Role cards and agendas are provided to help students remain focused. Follow-up activities include writing business letters, memos, interoffice communications, and business proposals.

Boyd's highly ambitious work succeeds in providing the business-oriented classroom with authentic business material, high-interest company profiles, and pedagogically sound activities. The business content is well researched. *Making Business Decisions* distinguishes itself from other business case-study texts in that the material is presented to the students in highly absorbing activities. If some teachers find that the units have too much material, they may give some of the readings for homework or choose to eliminate a writing section at the end of the unit. In any case, the book is flexible and moves at a quick pace, so the students should never be bored and the teacher never at a lack for material.

Laura Monahon English is co-author of Business Across Cultures: Effective Communication Strategies. She has taught in Barcelona, Spain, and currently teaches at Roxbury Community College and Boston University.

Process Writing Portfolio Program

Reviewed by Ann Marie Folan

Process Writing Portfolio Program by Charles Skidmore. Addison-Wesley, 1994. Student Portfolio: 31 pages. ISBN 0-201-62392-7. Teachers Handbook: 77 pages. ISBN 0-201-62391-9.

The *Process Writing Portfolio Program* is a versatile text

for ESL writing classes or integrated skills classes with a writing component. The program can be used alone or in conjunction with *Turning Points* from Addison-Wesley. The *Student Portfolio* gives an overview of process writing (brain-

Continued on the next page

Process Writing Portfolio Program *Continued from the previous page*

storm, first draft, feedback, revise/edit, final copy) and provides an example of a paragraph and a self-evaluation checklist. Grammar is reviewed through the use of multilevel editing exercises. The *Teachers Handbook* gives a step-by-step description of process writing as well as guidelines for using computers in process writing. A list of topics is broken down in several ways: level of difficulty (beginning, intermediate, advanced); thematically (school/community, academic life, leisure time, etc.); and rhetorically (narrative, descriptive, persuasive, etc.). Brainstorming suggestions are given for each topic. Guidelines for evaluation include symbols for correction, a scoring scale, a focused correction example, and suggestions for various types of teacher's comments.

The *Process Writing Program* is extremely flexible. It can be used with beginning, intermediate or advanced writers, and although it was written primarily with teenagers in mind, almost any age group from middle school to adult education populations can use it. For courses that require students to produce a composition with a rhetorical focus, topics are organized rhetorically. Because

the topics are diverse, the program can be used in conjunction with a variety of other texts. Although it is a concise text, it has most of the necessary elements of a successful writing curriculum. An important criticism is that the reviewing and revising of drafts focuses almost exclusively on grammar structure. Little attention is paid to organization.

The program reiterates many times that writing is a process. Because the student text is basically a folder for keeping drafts and a checklist for recording information concerning process writing, students can see their progress and review what they have previously written. The program has no "fat." Teachers will not be flipping through this text wondering what would be best to use for their class and what would be best to leave out. Every single exercise, activity or suggestion is useful and pertinent. The *Process Writing Portfolio Program* is an asset to writing teachers or any teacher who wishes to integrate process writing into the curriculum.

*Ann Marie Folan teaches part-time at Bunker Hill Community College.
e-mail: amfolan@bu.edu*

Family Writing Center *Continued from page 19*

be very much a success. Virtually all of its stated goals are met, and students consistently respond with enthusiasm on the anonymous written evaluations completed at the end of each session. The number of sites has increased since the first year, and the program continues to grow at each site. The Family Writing Center serves as a firm stepping stone

from which students can continue toward their goals of acquiring language skills, functioning in the community, and enriching it.

Linda Darman lives in New Bedford, MA, and was formerly Director of the Family Writing Center.

ESL Outrages *Continued from page 20*

love to hear them. Feel free to contact me at my e-mail address below or at CELOP, 890 Commonwealth Ave., Boston, MA 02215.

*Joe Pettigrew teaches at Boston University.
e-mail: jpettigr@acs.bu.edu*

Postscript

A message from the chairperson at the ESL program discussed above: "I would like it to be known that anytime an instructor feels she or he has been treated unfairly or unprofessionally she or he can safely share* such cause with me and know that I will do whatever I can to investigate and correct unprofessional action. Although using the sugges-

tion boxes might be useful in cases where anonymity is preferred, this also makes resolution of an individual case virtually impossible. Know too the danger of rumors. Call to confirm what you hear before you assume it's true. Your comments, questions, and suggestions are always welcome. (* Community college department chairs are not administrators; we are faculty and MCCC union members. Division chairs are administrators and are not unit members.)"

Write for MATSOL Currents!

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MATSOL Currents

Editor
 Ron Clark
 Boston University
 353-7937
 rclarkjr@acs.bu.edu

Publishers Liaison

Sterling Giles
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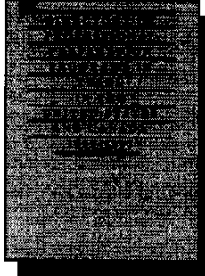
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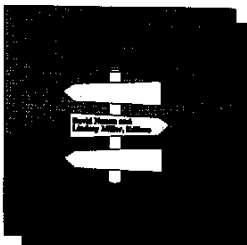
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