

CURRENTS

Massachusetts Association of Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages

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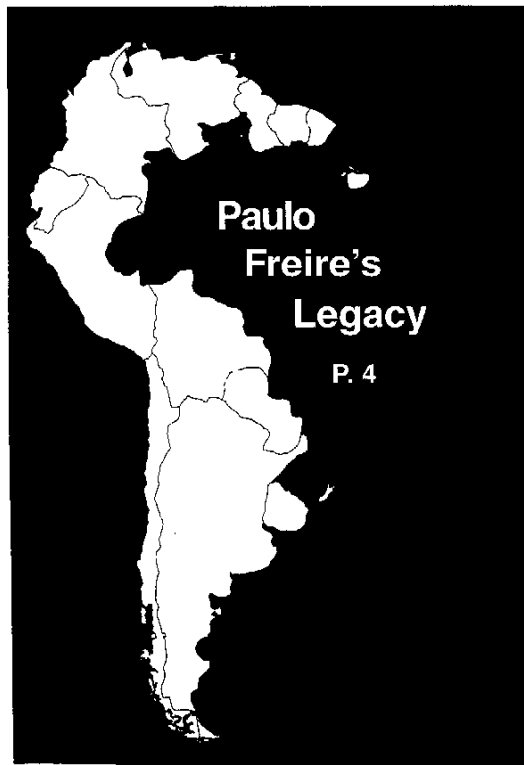
Things I Would Like to Know

Clara Pérez Fajardo

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) students usually know much more about their discipline than their English teacher. Consequently, the latter often finds him/herself in a predicament when the former demand vocabulary the teacher does not even know in the students' mother tongue. Strevens (1988:42) states that the gap between the learner's knowledge of the subject matter and the teacher's ignorance of it is one of the difficulties ESP teachers have to face. Seeing this difficulty from a positive standpoint, I echo Palacios (1993:44) when he says: "English-language teachers should learn continually from their students, with the purpose of incorporating everything they learn into their teaching."

To cater to the students' requests for extra vocabulary while widening my knowledge of their specific medical field, I have created what I call the Things I Would Like to Know notebook where students find two basic headings:

WHAT DOES... MEAN / HOW DO YOU SAY... IN ENGLISH?



Of the two, I have found students mostly use the one on the right, mainly when producing the language orally or in writing. The other is valuable
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Making Multimedia Work for ESL

John de Szendeffy

Meetings addressing computer-assisted language learning (CALL) often seem to gravitate toward talk among teachers of the awkwardness with which some programs have integrated a CALL component and the resulting difficulty in making it an effective tool of instruction. Seldom do I hear of an enlightened, systematic, and practical approach taken to integrating computers into an ESL program, at least in post-secondary programs. In light of this situation, I'm forgoing a detailed report on the Professional Development Opportunity (PDO), Making Multimedia Work for ESL¹, held on June 14 at CELOP, Boston University, in favor of submitting what I immodestly suggest is an enlightened approach to CALL—one that I took, but one that I now recognize.

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MATSOL *Currents*

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From the President

Twenty-five years ago, Bob Saitz gathered about 9 colleagues interested in ESL and proposed the creation of a Mass affiliate to TESOL. He had joined the fledgling national organization, and a few state-level branches were getting off the ground. Francine Steglitz, who had recently moved to Boston to help with the creation of a Masters' program at B.U., was enthusiastic, as was Ann Hillfredy. At the time, MABE had not yet been conceived, and English as a Second Language was English as a Foreign Language. Once established, MATSOL dues were set at \$3.00 a year. What the pioneers remember best were the many "mailing parties."

Well, we've come a long way, baby. Our mailing roster is 10 times 100. We provide two substantial conferences a year, as well as Professional Development Opportunities in half-day workshops. To our impressive *Currents*, we've added a second brief newsletter. Our Job Bank matches prospective teachers with employers, while the Directory catalogues ESL positions in the Massachusetts area. Some challenges are still with us. Preparing bulk mailings—even with the lure of mailing parties—is even more arduous as the postal service continues to create more demanding regulations. Reaching our constituents, particularly residents of the Western areas, has always been frustrating and difficult. We offer too few Elementary and Secondary presentations at workshops, yet we can't get volunteers from those areas. And, like the founders, we're still grappling with the dilemma of balancing the demands of our professional and personal lives with the

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From the Editor

Hello from the new editor, who with sincere humility takes over from Ron Clark. Ron is the quietly competent type, diligent, organized, devoted to precision in language and fairness in relations. To me as a writer, he was courteous, appreciative and easy on the red ink. He took a good product and made it better, such that the Massachusetts newsletter is now seen as a model for other state affiliates of TESOL. I wish he'd stayed on, but last fall he had twins.

As he wrote in his valedictory, it's hard balancing family responsibilities with involvement in the MATSOL board.

Do you have any idea how much work goes into the services we take for granted? I didn't myself till recently, but it's more than you think. And it's generally high-calibre, and all unpaid.

Also impressive is how the same names keep coming up in different roles. MATSOL President Linda Schulman notes in her column that this year marks the 25th anniversary of the affiliate. If you scroll through a history of officers, you see a core group that have served over and over. Kudos to them, for shoring up a young profession whose talent and dedication are not often matched by the salary. As a local laureate put it,

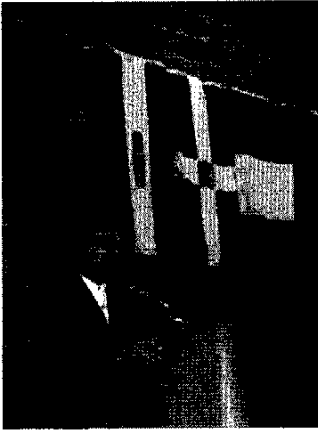
We never make no money and we don't get no respect,

But your ESL instructor is a person quite select.

That ethos is reflected in our lead articles on the fall conference, with its theme of the "Freire Legacy." In the local firmament, UMass/Boston figures as a blazing beacon of idealism. Elsa Auerbach notes frankly that she entered the profession as a sidedoor to social revolution. Not all UMass alumni (myself among them) share entirely its faith in the redeeming power of literacy. I personally think Freire's Brazil will grow richer and juster more as a result of free-market reforms than of raised consciousness. And literacy doesn't always equate to virtue. Japan and Germany, the most literate nations of their respective

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MATSOL Fall 1997 Conference

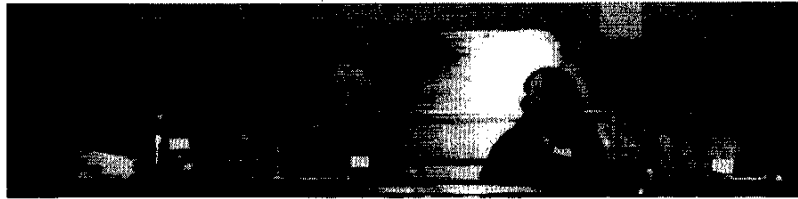


*Plenary Speaker
Donaldo Macedo*

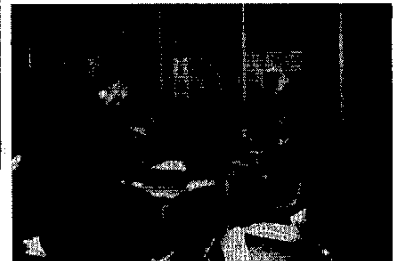
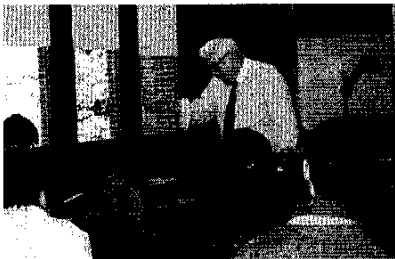
*Springfield Technical
Community College*



Plenary Panel: Maria Gonzalez, Elsa Auerbach, Lynne Jackson, Bette Steinmuller



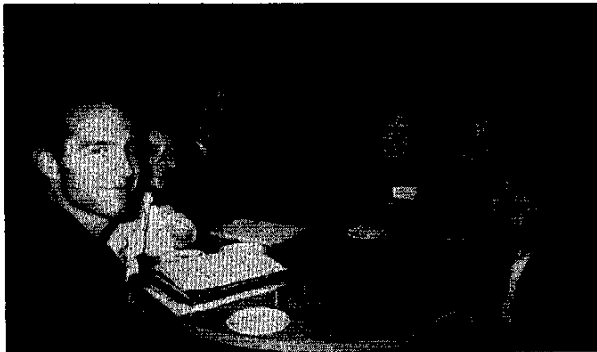
Various Presenters



Social hour

Perusing the books

Rap Group



Photos by Hisako Sato

From the panel on Paulo Freire's legacy

Freire Tales

Elsa Auerbach

The paradox of Freire's legacy is that the greatest gifts he gave us were the gifts he didn't give us.

Now doesn't that sound like something Freire himself would say?

"My greatest gift to you lies in not giving you a gift."

So what are the gifts that he did not give us?

He didn't give us the gift of solutions—of telling us how to solve problems or how to teach literacy effectively.

He didn't give us neat packages of methods (much to many people's regret).

He didn't give us an answer to the question, "How do we implement a Freirean approach to second language literacy in a North American context?" In fact, he didn't even tell us whether he thought it was possible.

What he did give us was the gift of inviting us to figure out the answers for ourselves, within our own contexts and with our students. And he gave us the inspiration to take up the challenge of linking ESL with struggles for social justice.

It's been almost twenty years now since ESL teachers first started trying to take up this challenge and there have been plenty of twists and turns in the road.

In fact, one of the results of Freire's non-gifts is that a lot of myths and misconceptions have sprung up about Freire's work—I call these Freire tales—and in what remains of my seven minutes, I want to look at some of these: The reason that I'm doing this is that I think these myths have played an important role in the process of making sense of Freire for ourselves; the fact that we've had to debunk the myths (some of which we ourselves constructed) has actually helped us to figure out what we do mean by Freirean pedagogy.

The first of these myths is the myth of politics. It goes like this: Freirean pedagogy entails putting politics on the front burner: it is more political than other approaches, and, in fact, it often means imposing a political agenda whether or not students want it.

The second myth is the myth of pessimism. It goes like this: Because Freirean pedagogy involves problem-posing, it always focuses on the negative, on difficulties, and it is depressing. Students don't want to think about their problems. They want to be hopeful.

The third myth is the myth of process. It goes like this: There are five steps in implementing a Freirean method. First you identify generative themes; then you transform them into codes; then you facilitate dialogue around the codes; then students strategize possible actions; and finally they take action around the issues you have discussed. If the outcome

isn't action for social change, it doesn't count; it's not truly Freirean.

The fourth myth is the myth of power. It goes like this: Because Freire suggests transforming power relations in the classroom, teachers no longer have any authority. They do nothing but facilitate; Freirean classrooms are truly learner-centered.

For every one of these myths, I think there are lots of us (including me) who can say, "Been there, done that." I came to ESL from a left activist stance because I thought teaching ESL could be a pretext for doing political work with immigrants. I advocated the 'code' method of teaching ESL and was convinced that all classwork could only be worthwhile if it led to collective social action outside the classroom. Actually I don't think I ever gave up authority in the classroom but I certainly claimed that my classes were truly learner-centered.

It was through the realities of day-to-day practice, of trying to implement what we thought the principles of a Freirean approach were, that many of us came to understand what was wrong with these myths.

We came to understand that the politics myth is flawed for several reasons. First, of course, as Freire says over and over, bringing the social context into the classroom explicitly is not more political than teaching language functions or survival vocabulary: every pedagogical approach is political in that it prepares students for particular life roles. Moreover, the essence of the political aspect of Freire's approach is not imposing one's own political analysis as a teacher, but working with students to uncover the central compelling concerns in their lives. If the curriculum is truly centered on issues that come from their realities, it can't be an imposed agenda.

The myth of pessimism falls away when one understands that the center of Freirean pedagogy is looking at what is, asking why it is that way, and then asking, "What can be done about it?" This is truly a pedagogy of optimism, of possibility, of hope.

And once one is in a real classroom with real students, it's not hard to see that the process myth is based on a reductionist methods orientation. First, of course there are many ways to reflect on issues that do not entail codes; second, the sequence of events never goes as you expect it to; but most importantly, social change cannot be reduced to an

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From the panel on Paulo Freire's legacy

'Guerrilla Gardening'

Maria Elena Gonzalez

I feel very honored to be here today together with Donaldo and Elsa, both of whom were my teachers at UMass - I've learned a lot from each one of you, and certainly from Elsa Auerbach, who continues to be a mentor and a friend. But certainly the most honor is to have been asked to speak about the legacy of Paulo Freire in my personal and professional life. Like most people, I don't like public speaking. I don't feel I'm very good at it and just the thought of standing here in front of members of my professional organization, my peers, has me shaking at the knees. But out of respect for Freire's memory and legacy, I could not refuse so here I am.

Shortly after being asked to speak here today, something happened to me that crystallized once again why Paulo Freire's work continues to be relevant and important in our society. It was mid-August and the gardeners of the Southwest Corridor Farm in Jamaica Plain were having their annual party. My colleague Martha Merson and I had worked hard to organize the Tomato and Basil Extravaganza. We were pleasantly surprised to get a good turnout for the party especially from several older Latina ladies who usually don't attend. As we sat and ate, an active member of the Garden coordinating committee asked me to join their meetings. I bemoaned the fact that I was already overextended . . . as a matter of fact, I refer to my gardening as guerrilla gardening since it's based on a tactic of quick assaults. I barely have time to put something down, water it sometimes and hardly weed. As we all moaned about how busy we all are, I turned to Dona Jacinta, a vivacious 50+ year-old woman from Guatemala, an accomplished gardener and cook, and said, "*y porque Ud. no lo hace . . .*" why don't you join the gardening coordinating committee? "*Ay, porque no puedo leer ni escribir . . .*" Because I cannot read and write, she said simply in a dignified manner. Without thinking about it, I responded, "I will teach you." Immediately I thought, where I'm going to find the time? But I recognized that my quick response masked my shock. One would think that in my line of work, I would be used to an adult that cannot read or write . . . But I never am . . . I will always be shocked . . . And I think Paulo Freire would say, we should all be shocked. Not just shocked that an adult in the late 20th century doesn't have such a necessary and basic skill, but shocked as in a jump start . . . a jump start into action.

For Paulo's lesson of reading the word to read the world is as important as it ever was. One of the criticisms of Freire's work has been that the situation he faced in Brazil in the 60's, a developing country with a historically high percentage of illiteracy and poverty, is very different than the one we face

here in the United States. The implication is that it is easier to organize folks who have nothing left to lose. I think there is some truth in those comments . . . there is no denying that to be poor in a rich industrialized country looks different than in a developing country. But what the poor and/or illiterate share anywhere in the world is the high end on the balance of power. For to be disenfranchised is about not having a say on what happens to you and your families and your communities, whether it's being able to vote for the candidate that has your best interests at heart, or like Dona Jacinta, being able to have a say in what happens at the community garden.

A few years ago, hearings were held across the country on whether to continue the Adult Literacy Act. The hearing for the entire New England region was held here in Boston. Delegations of adult learners from all six states, as well as individuals, made presentations to the panel. By midday, the members of the panel, all Washington bureaucrats, were glassy-eyed after listening to speech after speech, many from immigrant ESOL learners, about how the Adult Education Act was a good thing. Then walked in the delegation from Vermont, composed of almost all literacy students. Right away you could see how that panel sat up and took notice. These were Yankee farmers, looking like they could be the parents, or the brothers and sisters, of most of those Washington officials.

I'm not implying that the panel did not care about the previous presentations. My point is that the political gets very personal when it hits close to home. Popular images of illiterates in this country tend to concentrate on the "others" . . . African-Americans, Latinos, immigrants, the poor, but the reality is that there is a significant number of functional illiterates in this country that do not fit those popular images. In 1995, the Adult Education Committee reported that 19% of Massachusetts adults have not yet attained functional literacy while 25% fall below the High School level. Combined, it adds up to 45% of Massachusetts adults who are "undereducated," most of whom, 44% to be exact, have children under 13 living below the poverty level. That's almost half of the entire adult population of this state. The National Adult Literacy survey of 1994 placed the entire country's figure at a whopping 90 million people. Even folks who dispute that high figure, place the percentage of functional illiterate in the U.S. at 50-60 million.

A colleague and former student from UMass said to me

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Secondary Ed Rap Session

Brenda B. Sloane

Six very enthusiastic MATSOLers attended my secondary ed. rap session at the MATSOL Fall Conference. The attendees consisted of four secondary ESL teachers, one for Somerville, Amherst, Westfield, and Lowell, and to individuals who wanted to learn more about the status of ESL at the secondary level. Therefore, in response to the latter's general questions, we outlined our Transitional Bilingual/ESL programs at our high schools, including such information as population, levels, individual courses, attitude of mainstream teachers and administration towards ESL student and teachers, and individual motivations to teach high school ESL. In so doing, we shared what new courses

we have created during the past five years such as conversation, accelerated reading, written lab, TOEFL, and transitional ESL. At the end of our session, we briefly concluded with our wish lists: what we would like to accomplish in the next five years. In closing, MATSOL would like to reiterate the fact that we are here to serve you as secondary ESL professionals. Therefore, if there is anything we can do to assist you professionally, please do not hesitate to contact me at bbbscupid@aol.com. Also, I look forward to our next rap session at the Spring Conference at Lantana.

Brenda B. Sloan is MATSOL representative for Secondary Education.

Freire Tales *Continued from page 4*

outcome. Change is slow, and doesn't happen in neat cause-effect sequences.

Finally, the issue of whether classes are teacher-centered or learner-centered becomes a false issue when one begins to engage in dialogue with students: there is a constant negotiation, reflection and evolution of relationships in the classroom. It's much more complicated than giving students choice, or asking them for their input. Again, the terms teacher-centered and learner-centered are reductionist terms which don't correspond to the complexity of classroom life.

So where does all this leave us? I think that it leaves us with challenges, questions that practitioners are struggling with on a day-to-day basis.

How can we find what is really compelling for students? How can we tap into their collective concerns when we live in such fragmented and incoherent communities?

How can we as teachers pose without imposing?

How can we find the tools that have the greatest power to tap into students' imaginations and energies?

How can we carry out our responsibilities as teachers by drawing out from students rather than pouring into them?

Now I'm going to say something a little personal; I don't know if this breaks the rules of plenary panels but I'm going to say it anyway. My mother died when I was a teenager and for many years I felt angry and cheated that she died before I had learned what she had to teach me, and that she left me in the middle of my struggles. But after a while, I realized that she had really given me something enormous, and that was the sense that she trusted me, and she trusted that I'd be able to figure things out for myself—and that one thing is what got me through.

Now the last thing I want to do is to suggest that Freire is a parent figure, but I do think that in some ways his legacy was similar: what he left us was a lot of questions and struggles, and along with that, the trust that we can figure out our own ways of working them out.

In keeping with what I've just said, I want to end by saying that the ones who will carry forward this legacy are not those of us who write books or make speeches about Freire but the teachers who are taking risks every day, criticizing themselves, and trying over and over to figure out ways that ESL can become a part of the larger struggle for social justice.

'Guerrilla Gardening' *Continued from page 5*

the other day, You know, Elsa gave us the method, but Paulo gave us the political framework in which to understand the work that we do. And I thought, how well put. It seems so simple but it is really profound. To me, Freire's most important legacy is how his life's work concentrated on the Dona Jacinta's of this world, and how her illiteracy affects my world and your world. It's not just "her problem." We need her to be able to read the word because a community garden in a city makes for a "world that is less ugly, more beautiful,"

to paraphrase Freire. For as he also wrote once, "... illiteracy is neither an ulcer nor a poison herb to be eradicated, nor a disease. Illiteracy is one of the concrete expressions of an unjust social reality . . . to deny the word implies something more . . . it implies the denial of the right to proclaim the world." Thank you.

Maria Elena Gonzalez, a specialist in workplace ESOL, has been SABES coordinator at the Boston Adult Literacy Resource Institute for the last five years.

1998 MATSOL Grants

for

Travel, Research and Professional Development Opportunity Workshops

From 1990 to 1995, the MATSOL Executive Board provided grants for MATSOL members to attend conferences and to conduct classroom-based research. The grants were suspended for a year while the organization was recovering from a decline in revenues. Now that the funds are once more available, the grants are being reinstated. A MATSOL Grant Committee has been appointed to select grant recipients and distribute grant money. Members of the MATSOL Executive Board and members of the MATSOL Grant Committee are not eligible to receive awards, nor are recipients of 1997 awards. The Grant Committee encourages all eligible members to apply.

Travel Grants

Grants totaling \$3000 (up to \$300 for an individual applicant) will be awarded to enable MATSOL members to attend professional meetings such as the annual TESOL Convention, a regional TESOL affiliate conference, or any workshop or meeting that can demonstrably enhance a MATSOL member's ESL teaching experience and benefit the MATSOL community.

Research Grants

Six \$500 grants will be awarded to support classroom-based research conducted individually or collaboratively by MATSOL members. Classroom research enables teachers to become researchers by observing closely what is occurring in their classrooms and then theorizing from their own

experience. Teacher-Researchers formulate their own questions, collect and describe their own data, and share their results with other teachers. The principle underlying such research is that teachers can and should play a central role in the creation of new knowledge about teaching and learning.

Professional Development Opportunity Workshops

Six \$500 grants will be awarded to individuals or institutions to share professional expertise in a half-day workshop format. The workshops can be aimed at a specific MATSOL interest group or the teaching community at large. Professional Development Points (PDPs) will be given to both the presenters and attendees if the content of the workshop meets the requirements set by the Massachusetts Department of Education. The workshop will be held at a location arranged by those applying for the grant. The money will be used to pay presenters, which may include the organizers of the PDO. A nominal fee may be charged for registration to cover costs such as rental of space or equipment, photocopying and refreshments. Unused fees will be turned over to the MATSOL treasury. A member of the board will act as liaison to assist in mailing, publicity, and registration.

MATSOL Grant Committee members: John Antonellis (Corp. for Business, Work, & Learning), Sterling Giles, Chair (Roxbury Community College), Amelia Onorato (UMass/Boston), John deSzendeffy (Boston University), Ruth Weinstein (Brighton High School)

From the Editor Continued from page 2

continents, were the ones who started World War II.

Nonetheless, it's right to honor the idealism that impelled most of us into the field. At this point in world history, proficiency in English is an economic asset. To impart it is to empower people, often the neediest. That's reflected in Maria Elena Gonzalez's piece about Latino immigrants in Boston, and Rae Mims' report on Peace Corps opportunities.

Now a brief comment on the purpose of *MATSOL Currents*. It's first of all a newsletter and therefore functional — a vehicle for official announcements, and reports on the two annual conferences. Yet I'd like it to avoid the pitfall of most official newsletters, which is to be boring. The last two editors, Suzanne Koons and Ron Clark, solicited articles of an impressive range and literary quality. Why not? There's a lot of talent out there, and a lot of fascinating classroom

experience to share. I hope therefore that its tone can be both teacherly, and writerly. It's a mystery why so much of our professional literature is unreadable. You'd think people who teach English for a living could write it intelligibly, but it ain't always so. And the higher the level, the worse it gets.

So contributors — please don't try to use *Currents* as a farm-league for academic publication. No footnotes. Rather, see it as a forum for the specific community of Massachusetts ESL teachers. Talk about your classroom. An example is last issue's lead story "Broken English" by Marilyn Fontana, a charming memoir of her Italian grandmother's struggles with a new language. Book reviews, columns, interest group updates, technical info we will have, but may the emphasis always be on well-told stories.

Tom Griffith

MATSOL TRAVEL GRANT

Purpose: To support a MATSOL member who wishes to attend a conference, workshop, or meeting that will promote professional development.

Amount: Up to \$300

Eligibility: Any MATSOL member in good standing as of January 1, 1998. You may apply for this grant even if you are receiving partial support from other sources.

Criteria: Applications will be evaluated on the basis of (1) your reasons for wishing to attend and (2) the benefits that your participation will bring to you, your institution and the MATSOL community.

Stipulation: (1) Travel must be completed during the 1998 calendar year. (2) Award recipients will write a brief report for the issue of *Currents* immediately following the conference. Applications must be postmarked on or before March 30, 1998. Recipients will be notified by April 30, 1998. Awards will be announced in *MATSOL Currents*.

MATSOL Travel Grant Application

- (1) Name _____
Address _____
Telephone (work) _____ (home) _____
Affiliation(s) [workplace/place of study] _____
Position(s) _____
- (2) Which conference/workshop/meeting do you wish to attend? _____
location _____ date(s) _____
- (3) Have you previously attended this conference/workshop/meeting? yes ____ no ____
If yes, when? _____ where? _____
- (4) Estimated expenses: Registration _____ Accommodation _____ Transportation _____
- (5) Have you applied for/received funding from another source? no ____ yes ____
If yes, amount requested/received _____ Source: _____
- (6) Amount requested from MATSOL (maximum \$300) _____
- (7) Personal statement (250 words maximum, typewritten, double-spaced. Attach separate sheet with your name at the top): Describe your reasons for wishing to attend the conference/workshop/meeting, noting the ways in which it will enhance your teaching or learning upon return to the classroom. Please include a brief statement describing your background and professional goals.

Send application to:

Sterling Giles, Grant Committee Chair, 154 W. Newton Street, Boston, MA 02118
sterlg@aol.com (617) 421-9134

MATSOL RESEARCH GRANT

Purpose: To support classroom-based research

Amount: \$500

Eligibility: Any MATSOL member(s) in good standing as of January 1, 1998. Research may be conducted individually or collaboratively (several individuals or a program or institution).

Criteria: Applications will be evaluated on the basis of (1) the clarity of the research question and (2) the feasibility of the research plan.

Stipulations: (1) Research must be completed within the 1998 calendar year. (2) Award recipients will report on their research findings at the MATSOL conference immediately following the completion of the project. Applications must be postmarked on or before March 30, 1998. Recipients will be notified by April 30, 1998. Awards will be announced in the *MATSOL Currents*.

MATSOL Research Grant Application

(1) Name _____
Address _____
Telephone (work) _____ (home) _____
Affiliation(s) [workplace/place of study] _____
Position (s) _____

(Attach separate sheet with bio-data for each researcher.)

(2) Research Question(s):

(3) **Research Proposal** (500 words maximum, typewritten, double-spaced): How do you propose to answer the question(s) noted above? Please present a research plan including relevant dates. Attach separate sheets with your name(s) at the top of each sheet.

Send application to:

Sterling Giles, Grant Committee Chair, 154 W. Newton Street, Boston, MA 02118

sterlg@aol.com (617) 421-9134

MATSOL

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITY GRANT

Purpose: To support Professional Development Opportunity Workshops

Amount: \$500

Eligibility: Any MATSOL member(s) in good standing as of January 1, 1998. The workshop may be presented by an individual or a group (several individuals or a program or an institution).

Criteria: Applications will be evaluated on the basis of (1) the clarity of the outline and (2) the current needs of the MATSOL community.

Stipulations: (1) Workshop must be held within the 1998 calendar year. (2) Award recipients will write a report for the issue of *Currents* immediately following the workshop. Applications must be post-marked on or before March 30, 1998. Recipients will be notified by April 30, 1998. Awards will be announced in the *MATSOL Currents*.

MATSOL Professional Development Opportunity Grant

(1) Name _____
Address _____
Telephone (work) _____ (home) _____
Affiliation(s) [workplace/place of study] _____
Position(s) _____

(Attach separate sheet with bio-data for each applicant.)

(2) Theme of Workshop:

3) Workshop Proposal (500 words maximum, typewritten, double-spaced): How do you propose to conduct the workshop? Please present a plan which includes possible presenters, date, site, outline of activities and budget. Attach separate sheets with your name at the top of each sheet.

Send application to:

Sterling Giles, Grant Committee Chair, 154 W. Newton Street, Boston, MA 02118

sterlg@aol.com (617) 421-9134

Things I Would Like to Know *Continued from page 1*

when students read or listen to texts more complex than those found in literature of their field.

I have also found it useful to ask students to include other headings which demand explanations about the difference between two words or expressions that are usually confused because of their similarity in spelling or in meaning. Some of the words my students have asked me to help them differentiate are: do and make, pain and ache, ill and sick, pill and tablet, and dose and dosage.

In answering their questions I not only give them the dictionary definition, but also examples that help them to use the new word or phrase in context.

In addition, as most of the words used in the so called "technical" language are of Greek and Latin origin, it is useful for ESP students to be familiar with the particular way in which these foreign words form their plurals. Therefore, some students have requested the additional heading, "WHAT'S THE PLURAL OF O?"

Others have asked for word families such as:

| VERB | NOUN | ADJECTIVE | ADVERB |
|------------|------------------------|-----------|-----------|
| advise (t) | advice advisability | advisable | advisably |

Depending on students' needs, there are many other things that could be included in this notebook to enrich their specialized vocabulary. Since this vocabulary emerges from their own questions, learning and correct usage are more likely to occur. I also encourage students to search actively for answers in order to promote more participation besides simply jotting down their questions.

The notebook is always available on my desk, even when vocabulary which is not part of the regular lesson is needed. If they bring a question from outside of class, for example from a film, or something they have seen in a book or a scientific article, they list the word under the corresponding heading in the notebook. Before the lesson ends, or during the break, they ask each other for answers. If no one in class, including the teacher, knows the answer, everyone copies the word and looks it up at home or in the library. In the following class, they discuss the results of their research and look for the best and clearest definition as well as examples for using the

As Greenwood points out, students need to develop strategies that enable them to infer meanings of unknown words within a context or at least be able to proceed with their reading or listening even if they do not know the exact meaning of certain words.

word in context. It is then my task to provide meaningful practice of the new vocabulary.

Conclusion

As Greenwood (1989:107) points out, students need to develop strategies that enable them to infer meanings of unknown words within a context or at least be able to proceed with their reading or listening even if they do not know the exact meaning of certain words. Nevertheless, the Things I Would Like to Know notebook has turned out to be an additional way to learn vocabulary. It results in a personal, needs-specific dictionary, not only for ESP students and me, but also for my General English students, my colleagues and their students. Furthermore, it helps students to develop their investigative spirit and enjoy learning more about their discipline.

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- Clara Pérez has written for MATSOL Currents in the past. She taught in Medical Sciences for many years and now teaches at the International School in Havana, Cuba, where she was also Bette Steinmuller's student in 1993.*

From the President *Continued from page 2*

time-consuming demands of our volunteer positions on the board.

MATSOL is in many ways like a 25 year-old. Emerging into young adulthood, we've become established and mature. We're now focused and accomplished, yet open to change and idealistic. Some small quirks in our nature will always

persist, as hard as we struggle to overcome them, yet we never surrender the hope that we can be better. As we honor our conception at the Spring Conference on Saturday, we should remember our infancy and celebrate our remarkable growth and strength in reaching this 25th milestone.

Linda Schulman

Making Multimedia Work for ESL *Continued from page 1*

Not to be completely ignored, the PDO, held to present and discuss specific computer applications and activities for ESL teachers, proved to be a teaser and a torture as it demonstrated the possibilities while unavoidably revealing the complexities of CALL. There were 75 takers for the 50 spots available, and that enthusiasm was apparent as the participants, many working in pairs in the two Multimedia Language Labs, proved that students empowered with computers have little need for an attention- and control-hungry teacher (me, for example). The next such workshop should offer a 9:1 ratio of hands-on exploration to lecture. Students at computers, as students of language generally, learn by doing and experimenting, not by lectures and excessive guidance.

To learn about specific applications, look for the next PDO of this type, or, better yet, get yourself to a lab and give it a go yourself. For now, here's a message for administrators and teachers who find themselves somewhere in the transition to CALL labs.

The nature of the analog-to-digital transition in language labs seems to be more push than pull. For reasons of competition and prestige, many programs are expected by the administration to offer a computer-based lab long before teachers and staff know what to do with one. Grant providers and administrators are often concerned with getting hardware on desks—the tangible acquisitions—and underestimate the so-called hidden costs and concerns—the intangibles. Ironically, it is these intangibles that will make or break a lab, though it is the hardware that attracts the most concern. Continuing the irony, traditionally non-technical academic programs seem to have little appreciation for the value of knowledge when it comes to the human resources—particularly technical specialists—they allocate to getting a lab working and achieving the desired goals.

In those cases where a decision for a CALL lab is *not* made in advance of serious thought, here are a few preliminary considerations:²

1. Is the proposed lab compatible with the program's pedagogical goals?
2. Is the program ready to use it *immediately* for a variety of tasks to utilize and justify the capabilities? (Computers are tools not investments. They have value only in their *use*.)
3. Computer networks typical of CALL installations are technically complicated. Does the program have knowledgeable, experienced, and objective people responsible for making informed purchasing decisions, installing, configuring, and maintaining this system? Will a coordinator be needed? If so, with what balance between technical and teaching experience?
4. Do the teachers have the computer training, enthusiasm, and time to develop or implement a CALL

curriculum?

5. Will the program have enough licensed material to use?
6. A CALL lab will not save money. In addition to the initial outlay for hardware and labor, will the budget allow for a coordinator, faculty release time, maintenance, upgrades, software, outside consulting, professional development, and so forth?

Choosing, installing, configuring, maintaining, and teaching in a high-end networked computer lab is expensive, complicated, and ambitious. Most ESL programs are not set up to handle such a project effectively. Too much of the process differs from their daily missions; thus knowledgeable and experienced outside help needs to be brought in. Far from an added expense, this is actually the cheapest route in that it will avert expensive mistakes and free up administrators and teachers for what they do best—which may not be setting up a lab.

Coupled with possible missteps in this process, the other possible foot trap on the path to success may be teacher resistance, or simply anxiety. People tend to resist change by nature, dismissing the long-term benefits of this change by focusing on the difficulty of the transition alone. It's worth remembering that CALL is a long-term repositioning, not a short-term solution. Though the transition period will be one characterized by longing for the relatively uncomplicated days of the old lab, that energy would be better spent accepting the new lab and getting on with it. Fortunately, at least some teachers do embrace the new, and with an infectious and frenzied enthusiasm.

Once in a new CALL lab, the first inclination of teachers is often to replicate functions and activities performed in the old lab. This is an unavoidable mistake. CALL pedagogy differs from conventional classroom pedagogy, and the CALL lab itself differs appreciably from its predecessor, the tape-based lab. It's an enormous task to relearn an approach to classroom teaching and learn to skillfully use complex tools. It would be a mistake to assume that it can be done in a semester or two, before a computer culture evolves within the program, or even that every teacher will make the transition successfully. The key is to have an open mind to accept new approaches and possibilities, have the enthusiasm to explore them, and have the resourcefulness to meet teaching goals regardless of whether these new approaches and tools work at any *one* moment in class.

With the greater capabilities of the CALL lab comes greater complexity. Thus the illogical sentiment "I want the lab without the technology" discounts the many-fold increase in communicative and critical thinking possibilities, the enormous content wrapped up in the means (i.e., technology as intermediary content), and the relevance of computer

Continued on page 13

Making Multimedia Work for ESL *Continued from page 12*

skills for our students' futures. The neo-Luddites clamoring for the good old days of simple listening and repeating in the tape-based lab may well not have used it any more (or more effectively) than they use a CALL lab.

Newcomers to CALL easily lose sight of the fact that this technology is the *means* to pedagogical goals and not an end in itself. In this dark phase, a teacher may think of having a "computer class." This perspective can be forgiven—as long as it's eventually outgrown. Having a "computer class" focuses on the means instead of the end. Nonetheless, after the initial fascination (or trauma, depending upon one's experience and disposition) induced by the means, the goal of delivering and engaging students with English is more effectively accomplished in a CALL lab.

Though the CALL transition has its difficulties, we're more concerned with life *after* that. In the meantime, administrators would be well served by approaching this endeavor with great respect for what they *don't* know and the realization that expertise will *not* come easily or cheaply. Teachers need to be finessed into the fold and not intimidated into teaching with computers because everyone else is. The first part of this process involves conveying the wisdom, as opposed to the righteousness, of CALL pedagogy through

more showing than telling, which, coincidentally, provides a *segué* for me to refer you to the MLL web site (what closing remarks these days are complete without a call to "visit the web site"?). So, visit the web site. In the "Admin/Tech" area, click on "Call Rationale." You'll find examples of how CALL provides a more effective, stimulating, and relevant environment for a language lab.

Notes

- 1 My CELOP colleagues Margo Downey and Michael Feldman joined me in presenting.
- 2 These questions are taken from a paper delivered at TESOL Orlando, 1997: *Designing a Digital Learning Lab for the 21st Century*, by Pamela Couch, John de Szendeffy, Margo Downey, and Bruce Rindler.

John de Szendeffy is the Coordinator of the Multimedia Language Lab at CELOP. He occasionally consults on other CALL lab installations and recommends the MLL web site to administrators, teachers, and technical people involved in CALL lab setup. URL: www.bu.edu/CELOP/MLL/johndesz@bu.edu

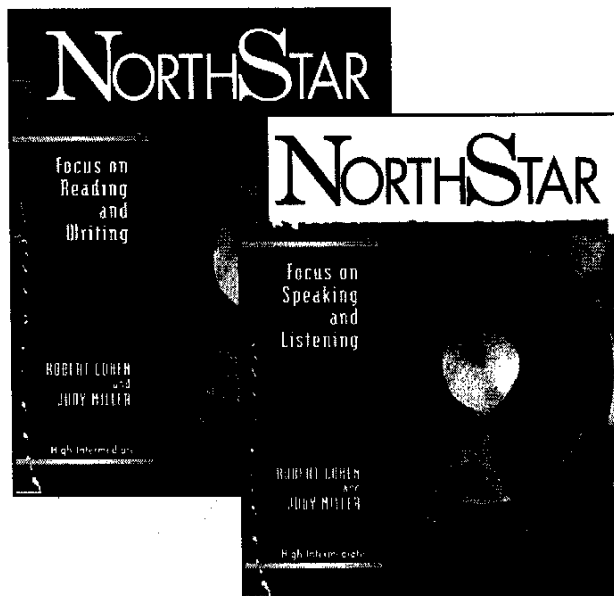
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Getting Teacher-Research Published

Jean Chandler



As a teacher who has been doing research in my own classroom for the last ten years and finds it not only improves my teaching but prevents burnout, I would like to offer some reflections from my own experience of trying to share my research with a wider audience. I was encouraged that the *TESOL Quarterly* reportedly is revising its guidelines so that the acceptance of teacher-research for publication might be possible. It is difficult to find publications for teachers which publish research and it is equally difficult to get teacher-research published in research journals. As one of the respondents to the MATSOL questionnaire (reported on in the last issue of this column) asked rhetorically, "Why do research writers tend towards extremes of over statistical/over theoretical but not relevant or anecdotal and relevant but sloppily researched?" I was impressed and encouraged that 56% of the 71 respondents to the MATSOL survey said that they had done formal or informal research in their teaching. I wish we had asked how

many had ever tried to get it published.

Some people seem to have the view that teacher research is only of local interest and therefore should only be published in-house, but my contention is that there are many questions and problems that many teachers have in common and that if research done in many different classrooms were published, eventually the generalizability, or limits thereof, would become clear and thereby knowledge would be contributed to the field. If a journal about pedagogy such as the *TESOL Quarterly* published more articles about questions of interest to teachers, including some written by teachers, over time perhaps more teachers would read the journal and also more would be motivated to share the results of research they have done in their own classrooms.

Currently it seems difficult to get research by teacher-researchers published for several reasons. Even if teachers were trained in research techniques and had the time to do

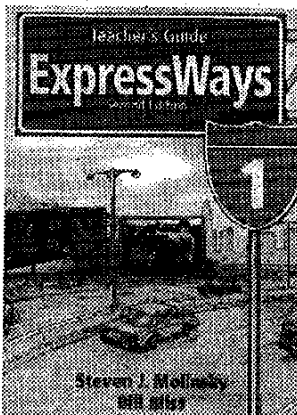
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Teacher Research *Continued from page 14*

careful research, sometimes up-to-date references of unpublished materials, or even published materials, are hard to get access to. (I've had as much success getting pertinent articles from interlibrary loan in my public library as I have from the Harvard Graduate School of Education library, to which I have access because of being an alumna.) Even if the literature review and methodology are adequate and the study is well written, most studies done on one or two classes are considered too small or populations too specific to be considered publishable. Moreover, it is less likely to achieve statistical significance with a small sample, and a quantitative study that does not achieve statistical significance is likely to be rejected. It is difficult to write up qualitative studies convincingly within the narrow page limit of most journals.

Some other frustrations from my experience: Whenever I have sent an article to the *TESOL Quarterly*, the response has been simply, "We have too many articles" with no indication of why one is published and another not. Although most other journals do send reasons for rejection by reviewers, dialogue is not welcome (publisher's forum, AAAL conference, March 1997) even if the comments of the editor or reviewer make no

sense to the author. A personal case study: I won a MATSOL research award for a study on error correction, a topic on Pica's "ten most wanted list in language teaching" (see *TESOL Quarterly*, Spring 1994). Both the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) teacher research committee and the editor of the *Journal of Second Language Writing*, however, found this topic not to be of current interest. Truscott, in the June 1996 issue of *Language Learning*, published a review article on this topic which, in my opinion, seriously misrepresented the findings of some previous research. However, unlike most other journals, *Language Learning* does not publish responses to its articles. The editor rejected the study I submitted which showed contrary results, stated in the article that the writing tasks had all been identical and written under identical circumstances. The first two criticisms didn't make any sense to me; the third too could probably be dealt with easily if he had explained why the groups might not be seen as equivalent. (The reaction of my Harvard mentor, herself a journal editor, was that he had misread my article, but there seemed to be no recourse to his decision.) Last semester I taught a course on teacher research to students in

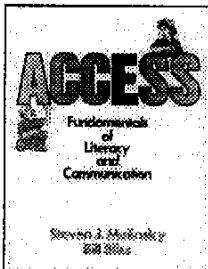
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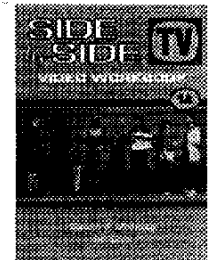
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MATSOL *Currents*

Call for Manuscripts

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

Please follow the guidelines below in preparing your submission:

Full-length articles

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

Columns

Foreign Correspondence

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

Program Spotlight

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

Reviews

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

Teacher Research

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

Teaching Ideas

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

Technology Showcase

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

Letters to the Editor

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

Guidelines

- Manuscripts should be typed double-spaced with 1" margins on top, bottom, and sides of each page.
- Two copies of the manuscript should be submitted. In addition, if possible, documents should be submitted on a 3.5" computer disk—preferably formatted for Macintosh in Microsoft Word word-processing software. Disks will be returned upon request.
- Photographs, illustrations or other graphics related to the content of the article are welcome. (Black and white photos, line drawings and simple graphics reproduce best.)
- Source citations should conform to MLA or APA guidelines.
- Your full name, affiliation, home address, day and evening phone and fax numbers and, if possible, e-mail address should be included. Please include your own one- or two-sentence biographical note.
- *MATSOL Currents* retains the right to edit all manuscripts that are accepted for publication. A writer's request for final approval is honored whenever possible.

Send submissions, except for Teacher Research or Reviews, to the editor:

Tom Griffith
MATSOL *Currents* Editor
43 County Road
Essex, MA 01929
(617) 522-0080 x 8004

Peace Corps: The Adventure of A Lifetime

Rae Mims

For over 35 years, thousands of men and women have traveled all over the world serving as Peace Corps Volunteers, teaching English. Over 5,000,000 people have been taught since that first group of Volunteers went to Ghana in 1961. Currently, more than 2,500 Volunteers are working directly with students, teachers, schools, and communities, constituting one of the largest international educational work forces of any international development agency.

ESL teacher Peace Corps Volunteers know what every good teacher knows: often, the teacher becomes the student. Volunteers foster a learning environment that encourages cross cultural exchange. Therefore, Volunteers become part of the local family and/or community, and learn the language, traditions and culture of the country of service. Likewise, the local community learns about the United States and the culture of American peoples through their relationship with the Volunteers.

Your ESL Skills to Good Use

Cynthia Roberts had always wanted to join the Peace Corps. Ever since she was a little girl she just knew she was going to travel to some exotic land far from her New England home. While a student in college, she was an ESL tutor for international students, a visiting professor, and a Bosnian family, who were participating in a local refugee resettlement program.

Upon being selected to serve as a Peace Corps Volunteer, Cynthia was assigned to Nyiregyhaza, a medium-sized city in Hungary located 30 km from the Ukraine. There she taught English to sixth, seventh and eight graders. Unlike other Volunteers who live in remote areas, Cynthia lived in an urban area with all the challenges of urban life.

However, during her initial three-month training, she stayed with a local family who, even after she left to live on her own, became her surrogate family for the next two years. They included Cynthia in their holiday and special event celebrations and helped her integrate into the culture. During vacation Cynthia had the opportunity to expand her knowledge of the geographical area by visiting neighboring countries such as Slovakia, Poland, Bulgaria, Greece, Austria and the Czech Republic.

According to Cynthia, Nyiregyhaza is a very economically depressed area with lots of buildings with dark communist-style architecture. "The people tended to be very serious, with grave facial expressions making them seem unapproachable. But, when I got to know them and vice versa they embraced me so warmly," said Cynthia.

She found that her time in Hungary made her understand what it means to be generous. "They have so little in material wealth, but they will give the best of what they have. They are very selfless," said Cynthia. She also learned how ethnocentric some people can be when they travel to other countries.

She herself was amazed at the level of sophistication and education many of the local people had where she lived. Here in the United States, we usually do not learn about the specifics of other cultures, therefore we often have preconceived ideas that are not correct, she said.

The biggest impact that serving with Peace Corps has had on her life is that any other job or work she does in the future has to have meaning, a sense of contribution to the community - like Peace Corps.

Education continues to be the most frequently requested skill by countries where Peace Corps Volunteers serve. Eighty percent of all active Peace Corps programs around the world have education projects, and forty percent of all Volunteers are serving in these projects. Some of the countries with education projects include: China, Ethiopia, Poland, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Kazakstan, Honduras, Nepal, Madagascar, Estonia and the Dominican Republic.

In addition to her main project of teaching at the local school, Cynthia also worked on other secondary projects. She supervised professional development seminars for her co-workers and taught Bosnian children in a refugee camp near Nyiregyhaza. She credits working with children as being one of the most satisfying experiences of the whole two years. "The children give you so much. The job is really tiring emotionally and physically, but the children are so loving and sincere, they make it all worth while," she said.

ESL teacher Volunteers are assigned to a secondary school and are considered a professional member of the school faculty, and are supervised by the school principal. University English teacher Volunteers work alongside host country teachers as classroom instructors and as resources for innovative teaching methodologies. They may be assigned to a school, a regional office of the Ministry of Education, a regional teachers' resource center or a teacher training college and supervised by a department head.

Both types of volunteer assignments teach for a certain amount of time per week; search for text and resource materials; develop lesson plans, handouts and visual aids; and prepare their students to pass national exams.

The Need Is Greater than Ever

As in the past, the English teacher position continues to be our largest assignment area. Currently, we are looking to fill over 500 positions this year alone and the numbers continue to increase. Therefore, it is important to educate the ESL teacher community about the exciting opportunity that exists with Peace Corps.

Most assignments begin between late May and early September. Volunteers are usually assigned to Eastern Eu-

Continued on page 18

Peace Corps *Continued from page 17*

rope, Central Asia, Africa, Asia and the Pacific Islands. Many countries ask for their Volunteers to arrive in country in late spring and early summer so that the Volunteers can do their initial three-month training and be ready to begin teaching in September. ESL teacher positions are available throughout the year, however the majority of the programs begin as noted above, in late spring and early summer.

Becoming a Peace Corps ESL teacher Volunteer will provide significant resume-building skills needed for today's job market. It will definitely put you a step ahead of your peers in terms of hands-on international work experience.

How Can I Qualify?

To qualify for either the ESL teacher or University teacher positions you must have one of the following:

- BA/BS in Secondary Education with a concentration in English, TEFL or foreign language;
- BA/BS in any discipline with a certification to teach English, TEFL or a foreign language;
- MA/MAT in English, TEFL or linguistics; (*University teacher*)
- MA/MAT in French; (*University teacher*)
- BA/BS in English, TEFL, or linguistics;
- BA/BS in any discipline with at least 3 months of ESL tutoring experience.

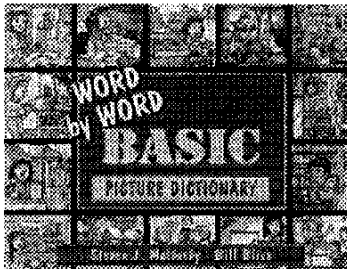
For more information about Peace Corps' ESL teacher positions or to request an application, please contact the Boston Regional Recruitment Office at (800) 424-8580, press 1, ask for ext. 457.

Rae Mims is public relations coordinator for the Boston branch of the Peace Corps.



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Teacher Research *Continued from page 15*

a Masters of Arts in Teaching Program. (Doing a classroom-based research project is now required in Massachusetts for teacher certification.) One of my students used Truscott's review as the basis of his literature summary, not realizing that the findings of studies in this area are more complicated than Truscott led one to believe, and so he concluded with Truscott that error correction is not only ineffective but harmful, the opposite of the findings of my own study.

Sometimes reviewers write in condescending tones, assuming the writer is ignorant, especially when the discourse style used is not formal and impersonal. In the March 1997 issue of *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, Rod Ellis writes (p. 87): "The other reason [besides methodological inadequacies, as seen by academic researchers] why teacher research is likely to have little impact on SLA [second language acquisition] is that it is likely to be reported in the Discourse of LP [language pedagogy] rather than the Discourse of SLA. Research must not only be rigorous, it must also be discursively convincing before it will be taken seriously by the SLA community. The Discourse practiced by the SLA community is a reflection of their social world. It is also a means of excluding interlopers. As Stenhouse (1979, p. 82) puts it, 'it is difficult for the researcher to admit practitioner research because it means a diminution of his

power vis-a-vis teachers.' "

I personally feel strongly that the voice of the teacher needs to be heard, in terms accessible to teachers and on questions of interest to teachers, not only for the sake of teachers but also for the sake of knowledge. If we don't find forums for sharing our reflections and research on our teaching, how can our field progress? At least we do have MATSOL and TESOL conferences, MATSOL Teacher Research grants, and *MATSOL Currents*. This column is open to anyone who wants to submit a reflection about any aspect of teacher-research or a short report of research findings. There is also a new journal called *Language Teaching Research* whose first issue in January 1997 contained an article on second language teaching and research relationships and which specifically welcomes "action research."

Also I want to report on possibilities of sharing teacher-research or getting help with it via the Internet. Not only is there a juried TESOL electronic journal on the World Wide Web, but also there is an organization called CASAS, which sets up mentoring relationships for ESL and adult educators who want to conduct teacher research and publish it electronically.

Jean Chandler teaches at the New England Conservatory of Music.



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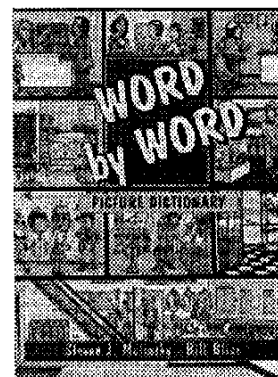
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Trading Places

John McCarthy

Like any ESL teacher, I'm constantly trying to put myself in my students' place. I wonder: *Did they get anything out of that activity? How embarrassing was it for them to do that interview? Are they answering the two previous questions honestly?* I try to put myself in my students' place, but I'm not in their place. I have no language problems when I go shopping, watch TV or read street signs. And, in class, I understand everything I say.

This spring, I was in a very different situation, though. Possessed with a desire to improve my Japanese and an elusive full-time job with summers off, I decided to spend two months in Japan. My plan was to immerse myself in the language and absorb as much as I could. During my stay, I did learn a good amount of Japanese, but I also got some new insight into how I learn. I've found that these ideas have helped not only me, but my students as well. I've listed some below.

Don't Be Shy

When I teach directions in class, I hope that my students will then go out and use the language in real situations. It's a good way to practice what you've learned, and it keeps you from getting lost. As anyone who's taken a train in Tokyo can imagine, I spent a lot of time asking directions during my trip. I learned new words (*transfer, limited express*) because I heard them so much, but I also got into a lot of conversations that were unrelated to directions. I'd ask someone if the train stopped at a certain place. He'd tell me and ask where I was from. A few minutes later, I'd be learning new vocabulary for baseball. Asking strangers something in a foreign language can be embarrassing, but there's no way around it: If you want to improve your speaking ability, you have to speak.

Don't Think You're Stupid

Many of us have had second language blunders. I once told a Japanese teenager that he could improve his English easily because his elephant was flexible. I meant to say that his brain could adapt to new things. Of course, I felt a little dumb when I found out what I'd said, but it helped to think about the situation objectively. Was I dumber than him because I didn't speak Japanese well? Was I smarter because my English was better? Am I dumber than a two-year-old German who speaks better German? Am I smarter than Regis Philbin because I speak better French? (Well, maybe not because of the French.) The point is, you could go on forever classifying yourself as smart or dumb, given different scenarios, so try not to worry about it. I'm sure this is not easy for my students, but I think it helps them to know that their teacher has been through the same thing.

Stay in the Target Language

During my stay in Japan, I met many friends and former students who had studied English in Boston. A few had

near-native fluency. When I spoke with these people, there was a lot of code-switching going on, and it sometimes gave me problems. If I'm conversing in Japanese, even a few sentences of English can throw me off. My brain switches out of Japanese gear, and it's hard to get back in. It seems that the longer you stay in the target language, the more smoothly the language flows, but that's only part of it for me. Once the conversation has switched to English, going back to Japanese seems like more of an exercise and less like real communication. When my conversation partner is fluent in English, speaking Japanese is, in fact, an exercise. I am using Japanese to improve my language skill, not because it's the most effective way to communicate. However, if we continually converse only in Japanese, I stop thinking about how much easier it would be to speak English. It becomes natural to speak Japanese with that person. And, through this speaking practice, my Japanese improves so that Japanese becomes more of an effective way to communicate.

It Doesn't Have To Be Intellectual To Be Educational

Have you ever learned anything from *Full House* or *Men Behaving Badly*? Can you even endure a whole episode? I, probably like you, have scoffed at these shows, yet I found myself intently watching the Japanese equivalent. It wasn't because the plots were so fascinating, but because I could actually figure out what was going on. This gave me a sense of accomplishment. I learned more from these shows than from more serious dramas or, especially, news, because the action and overacting helped me understand things from context. I started to realize that my students could learn from and enjoy goofy shows even if they would never watch the same thing in their own language.

Twice Is Not Enough

Often I'll explain a word or grammar point only to see it forgotten or misused soon afterward. Then I think of how long I've been trying to learn certain Japanese constructions. How many times have I asked the difference between the active and passive forms of *found*? A hundred? Having experienced the gap between learning something and knowing something, I'm more aware of my students' need for reinforcement. Before, I might think I was beating a certain usage into the ground, but now I'm likely to feel like a little more beating is in order.

Now that I'm back to being a full-time language teacher instead of a language learner, I don't have as many opportunities to work on my Japanese. When I do have time to study, I try to apply what I found out about my language learning during my stay in Japan. When I don't have time to study, I find that I can apply many of the same things in my teaching.

John McCarthy taught in Japan and now teaches English and computer skills at Showa Boston.

MATSOL'S Exchanges with SAUA/SATA Our Slovak "Sibling"

Bea Mikulecky

In 1996, MATSOL signed an agreement with SAUA/SATE (the Slovak English teachers' organization) which calls for the development of an exchange partnership between English teachers in Slovakia and Massachusetts. The first official contact occurred at TESOL in Orlando, where a Slovak representative, Michal Mlynar, and three MATSOL Board members (Carol Pineiro, Linda Schulman, and Esther Iwanaga) met to discuss our first exchanges.

As the next step in building our partnership, MATSOL was invited to send someone to Bratislava, Slovakia, at the end of August to present a workshop at a teacher-trainer's symposium sponsored by SAUA/SATE, USIS, and the British Council. I was happy to represent MATSOL in that capacity.

I traveled to Bratislava on Friday, August 22, for an eight-day visit which was rich in professional and personal experiences. My time was carefully planned by Gabriela Dornakova, vice-president and incoming president of SAUA/SATE. I was hosted in Bratislava by SAUA/SATE treasurer Jana Pramukova and her family and in Poprod (the magnificent Alpine region) by Michal Mlynar and his family. I met dozens of EFL teachers when I led two workshops at an in-service retreat held at a mountain inn.

The teacher-training symposium, held at Comenius University in Bratislava on the shore of the Danube River, was extremely well run and user friendly. Chaired by Dr. Eva Tandlichova of the Faculty of Arts, and conducted entirely in English, the conference included a wide variety of topics and interesting plenaries. The reception was magnificent: very beautifully-laid banquet tables loaded with delicious Slovak snacks, champagne, and tempting sweets.

At two luncheon meetings with the SAUA/SATE board, we discussed ideas for further cooperation between our organizations, including exchanges of members at least once a year to coincide with presenting at each other's conferences.

SAUA/SATE treasurer Jana Pramukova, an EFL teacher at the elementary level, was designated to be their next representative, and, indeed, she has just completed a visit to Massachusetts which included visits to schools, sightseeing, and a presentation at the fall conference on October 18 in Springfield. She stayed at the homes of three MATSOL members: Paula Merchant, Paula Parely, and me. We felt we gained even more than Jana did during her visit, because of her friendly nature, her curiosity, and her professional concerns. Another SAUA/SATE representative plans to present at the MATSOL 1999 spring conference.

Additional possibilities for cooperation between the two organizations include: a suggested plan to organize a one-to-two-week-long exchange of about 6 teachers from Massachusetts and Slovakia in the near future, the announcement

of openings for American native speakers/teachers in Bratislava and in the eastern region of Slovakia for the next academic year, and the inclusion of each other on our mailing lists.

The openings for teachers in Bratislava offer an excellent opportunity for newly graduated students who are looking for a year of EFL experience. The jobs pay the standard local teachers' wage and include living accommodations. During the 1998-99 academic year, the gymnasium (high school) in Poprod (where Michal Mlynar works) will ex-

Additional possibilities for cooperation between the two organizations include: a suggested plan to organize one-to-two-week-long exchange of about 6 teachers from Massachusetts and Slovakia in the near future, the announcement of openings for American native speakers/teachers in Bratislava and in the eastern region of Slovakia for the next academic year, and the inclusion of each other on our mailing lists.

pand its English program, and they would welcome a native speaker of English to their faculty then.

Jana, Michal, and other SAUA/SATE members showed me many wonderful parts of their homeland. I found Slovakia to be a beautiful, uncrowded country of rolling hills, vast golden plains, cozy villages tucked into peaceful valleys, a breathtakingly beautiful mountain range that looks just like the Alps, and grand old castles. The people were extremely hospitable, friendly, and unpretentious. Slovaks I met expressed a fondness for American country-western music, healthy food, outdoor activities, and good beer. The restaurants I sampled served tasty and attractive meals, and the trains rivaled the best of western Europe.

I believe that MATSOL members have much to gain from our partnership with Slovak English teachers. Because English teaching is a top priority in Slovakia, teachers are enthusiastic, professionally active, and eager to share what they have learned about new ways of teaching. I appreciate the opportunity I had of being the first MATSOL representative in Slovakia, and I would be happy to provide additional information to anyone interested in participating actively in this partnership.

Bea Mikulecky, Vice President of MATSOL, teaches at Northeastern and in the MATSEL program at Simmons College.

Testing The Waters

Sarah Dietrich

Well, I'm interested in teaching English but...I'm not sure if I'd like it...I don't have any experience...I'm not ready for graduate school."

Do any of these feelings sound familiar? Despite the increasing professionalization of our field, there are many people who are considering becoming teachers of English to non-native speakers who are not ready to make the commitment of entering a Masters level program. People who fall into this category are often interested in gaining basic practical and theoretical training within a short time-frame. Since July 1997, I have been an instructor for a teacher training program which provides just this kind of instruction.

The program is organized through Approach, a language school in Allston. During their training, future teachers, or interns, receive a grounding in second-language theory and methods as well as practical experience in the classroom. Three basic components make up the three-month program. First, the interns attend a weekly two-hour seminar in which they receive instruction in linguistic and educational theory. These classes also teach them to plan for and successfully execute a variety of different kinds of lessons. Second, several weeks into the program, the interns begin observing classes. Finally, when the interns have completed the seminar, they begin teaching classes of their own.

In the past, the interns who have participated in the program have come from a number of different educational and cultural backgrounds. Two of the interns in the last group I taught were undergraduate students. One was a young woman whose major was elementary education. The second college student was a Spanish major who was interested in teaching English in Japan. Two other interns had come to the United States to further their educations. One, a Brazilian man, is now studying computer engineering at Boston University. The second, a Japanese woman, plans on becoming an English teacher when she returns to her country. The fifth intern is the only student who had had experience teaching English when she entered the program. A Brazilian woman, she has been in this country for several years and has taught both here and in Brazil.

As the program is designed to train potential teachers from a wide variety of backgrounds, the prerequisites for those who wish to enter this program are simple. They must demonstrate an advanced level of English, an interest in teaching, and a commitment to fulfilling the requirements of the training program. After they have applied for the program, interns are asked to take a written test to assess their ability to recognize and accurately use grammar structures. Potential interns meet with me and with the director of Approach for interviews which allow us to gain a more complete picture of the candidates' backgrounds and to assess their potential skills as teachers.

Interns who are chosen to participate in the program begin their training by attending the weekly seminar that I

teach. During these two-hour classes, the students are introduced to second-language acquisition theory, as well as theory about learning styles and individual differences. They also study second-language teaching methods and discuss which methodologies would be most appropriate for the students they plan to teach. In addition to studying the theories of teaching English, interns learn the practical aspects of lesson planning. Finally, through readings and discussion, they explore different ways of teaching grammar, reading and writing and speaking.

As part of their training the interns have a chance to further explore what they are learning during the seminar by observing more experienced teachers. Once a week, the interns spend an hour completing observations for which they receive a particular task. When we study learning styles, for example, I ask the interns to take note of the ways in which teachers shape their teaching to meet the individual needs of their students.

The knowledge the interns have of the resources available to them increases over the course of the training program as they are asked to complete four projects. Their knowledge of metalanguage is assessed through a written test. To acquaint them with the variety of resources which are available to teachers, the interns are asked to create exercises to be used with a movie and to explore the uses of different software programs which are used to teach English. Finally, the interns carry out a case study during which they familiarize themselves with the background and strengths of a particular student; they design five lessons to meet the needs and goals of the student.

At the start of the training, some of the interns have extensive knowledge of grammar and the metalanguage of the foreign language classroom. Others have practice working with people and are used to drawing on the patience and creativity required of a successful teacher. For all of them, however, the experience of giving class is a daunting one at first. Like all beginning teachers, they are insecure about their own knowledge, hesitant about answering questions to which they are unsure of the answer, or simply lacking in the experience necessary to confidently guide their students' learning.

During their three months of coursework, projects, observations and practice teaching, however, the interns grow in confidence and experience. When they leave the program, some interns begin teaching at language schools in this country. Others apply what they have learned in teaching positions overseas. Regardless of how they chose to apply their training, however, through their interactions with their students and with each other, the interns have acquired the basic tools with which to continue building their knowledge of teaching and their expertise.

Sarah E. Dietrich is the Academic Coordinator at LIFE and a doctoral candidate in Literacy, Language and Cultural Studies at Boston University

“Greek Prohibited”

Nena Meimaris

I made up the schedule,” the director of the language school (known as frontistirio-tutoring school) told me anxiously. She looked tired sitting beside me in the dark office. It was 9:00 p.m. and she had a hard day of teaching from morning until late afternoon. She needed me to teach two classes, both intermediate English. I agreed to take up the responsibility somewhat reluctantly. I had never taught outside the Boston setting. I am a teacher in an inner city school, where people, including me, look at it mostly as a series of dilemmas and hardships. I was a bit apprehensive for a number of reasons. First, most of these students were from a different socioeconomic background than the one of my Boston students. Second, the curriculum was British and not standardized American English. Finally, this time was my summer vacation after a hard and long school year of work. The town I was in, Katerini, Greece, is the town that I and my husband were born and raised in. I left it to come to Boston for higher education and finally settled there. My husband and I come back to it yearly to visit parents, relatives, and friends and enjoy our apartment.

I started teaching early Monday morning. I introduced myself and announced to the class that we should speak only in English. I wrote on the board “Greek prohibited.” We then proceeded to review general questions that the book suggested. I tried to figure out each student’s level and intellectual capacity. It took me a few days to get to know them well. They enjoyed listening to stories from the States. They looked at pictures of my Boston students and they were greatly amazed at the diversity of the cultures represented in my school. The stickers that I gave them upon completion of their homework fascinated them since they had not seen them before. By the end of the third week, I got to meet many of the parents. By the end of the first month, practically all parents visited me and asked about their children. Language classes cost a lot and parents want to know if their money is invested well in their kids’ education. It is also very common to see households with lower middle income to invest in language school for the children. Learning another language is not just vogue but it represents hope for a bright future. My five year old niece told me one day that the reason she attends English classes is to go and visit Disney so she can see Mickey. That was a serious enough reason for her as a five-year-old to try to master the language.

There are language schools in practically every corner in the center of town. All of them are full with students. Language requirement is part of a rigorous elementary and secondary public and private education. It is not surprising that 75% of Greek high school graduates know at least one language other than Greek and 35% of them know two or more languages according to European Union figures. Being a part of a United Europe makes the second-language acquisition necessary.

I shared with the director that I wanted to try writing with my students. She was a bit reluctant but I started by asking the students to buy a notebook and write about anything that would be of interest to them. Soon after that we started on journals. Vivian Zamel would have been very proud of me!! I responded to every entry. We had our ups and downs but finally everybody had a journal that they used consistently. I must admit I have seen some of the best writing from these students. I ended up having some of them as pen pals. “What’s going on?” I asked one day puzzled as all the students made the sign of the cross three times at the ringing of some church bells. “It’s a saint’s day” they replied. I was a little shocked. It’s been a long time since I left Greece. I



forgot how instrumental the church was in the students’ life and the involvement in education especially during the Ottoman empire’s occupation of 400 years. It was the priest that played the role of the teacher during that time in educating kids to read in the famous “secret school”.

Somehow, I was missing teaching through children’s literature. I started using in the classroom children’s books that I brought from the States. I used the Corduroy series, Christmas stories, *Arthur*, and whatever else I could find. We started a mobile library where students exchanged books among themselves. Soon, the end of the summer session came. Before returning to Boston, I took my class out for lunch to a pizza restaurant and we had a great time.

My summer teaching experience showed me that there is not a big difference between my students in Boston and in Katerini, Greece. They all have the same needs and expectations. Attitudes are not much different. I observed the same learning styles in both places. I worked just as hard in Greece as I do in Boston. Budgets have the same constraints. Would I do this again? Would I teach to a new group overseas? Without a doubt!!

Nena Meimaris has taught ESL for nine years at the Taft Middle School in Boston.

REVIEW

Easy True Stories: A Picture-Based Beginning Reader, by Sandra Heyer. Longman, 1994. 91 pages. ISBN # 0-8013-1089 x.



Reviewed by Dilip Dutt

Contrary to popular belief, Orwell and Huxley did not make the same prophecy. Orwell feared the banning of books, whereas Huxley feared the end of a reading populace. Fortunately, both of them have proved wrong, at least in my ESOL classes. The enjoyable, fascinating stories in the slim volume *Easy True Stories* are enormously popular.

Students acquire and retain a new language more quickly when structures and vocabulary are presented in meaningful contexts. *Easy True Stories* is a contextualized exercise book of twenty units, each unit dealing with a real-life story superbly adapted from a newspaper or magazine. Well chosen for their striking human interest content, the stories encompass a wide gamut of life experiences, enabling the students to easily make interesting personal connections.

Perhaps the most commendable feature of the volume is the simple yet captivating English which renders them accessible to low-beginning readers, for whom reading for comprehension can often be a nerve-wracking experience. The simple style not only whets the students' appetite for reading but also sustains it to a large degree. The imaginative pre-reading drawings and photographs contribute substantially to the understanding of the plot and vocabulary; they also lend specificity and a dimension of clarity and authenticity to each story.

The discussion exercises stimulate brainstorming among low-beginners who are inhibited by their inability to write whole sentences or still struggling to get over the "reticent

period" in class. Some of the discussion exercises are designed to encourage more adventurous students to expand on their first answers. Although relatively easy, the writing exercises are self contained and equally

appropriate for independent homework and for pair or group work in class. Moreover, the follow-up exercises elicit feedback on the classroom activities students like best.

The flip side of this wonderful selection of stories is that the range of vocabulary is basic and limited. The length of the stories is sometimes skimpy, and the comprehension exercises are often bland and unimaginative. The author would be well advised to address these drawbacks when revising the next edition of the book.

Each exercise presents vocabulary relating to a particular context and structures which are relevant to that context, thus forming a cohesive unit. The exercises and the story selections slowly build up the beginning students' confidence and induce them to read. This book emphasizes the importance of deduction by including practice in guessing meaning from the context, making inferences, and recognizing supporting materials in a story. The teaching tips are also an excellent resource for teachers new to the field.

Easy True Stories is an ideal reader for beginning ESOL students. It is appropriate for both notional-functional and grammar-oriented syllabi. This book focuses on comprehension, vocabulary, discussion, and elementary writing; it is a flexible text which may be used as a primary text or as supplementary material, depending on the structure of the course.

Editor's note: Other books in this series include *True Stories in the News* (2nd edition, with audio cassette), *More True Stories* and *Even More True Stories*.

Dilip Dutt was born in South Africa and has lived in the US for 7 years. He teaches at Roxbury Community College and the Community Learning Center in Cambridge.

REVIEW

Five Star Films: An Intermediate Listening/Speaking Text, by Elizabeth A. Mejia & Frederick O'Connor. Prentice Hall Regents, 1994. 168 pages. ISBN 0-13-035536-4.



Reviewed by Carol Piñeiro

In her second co-authored book on films for the ESL classroom, Elizabeth Mejia gives us another well-written volume suitable for adult students of intermediate to advanced levels. Instead of emphasizing the cultural diversity of the U.S., as she did in *American Picture Show*, Mejia and O'Connor use turning points in American history, such as the Civil War (*Gone with the Wind*), the westward expansion

(*Dances with Wolves*), segregation (*To Kill a Mockingbird*), the Second World War (*Casablanca*), and the war between the sexes (*When Harry Met Sally*) to teach language. As the themes touch upon different eras of his-

tory, so the films touch upon different eras of movie production, which makes for an enticing mix.

Each of the five chapters contains a similar format: introductory reading from an authentic source such as a novel or history book, idioms from the film with definitions and exercises, and more exercises to accompany six scenes from the movie. The scenes chosen present points of cultural or linguistic interest, and the scripts for them are in the back of the book. The chapters carefully outline how teachers should go

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REVIEW

about showing the scenes, with silent viewing at first so students can observe body language and compare it with that of their own cultures.

Different "teaching points" are then presented, which highlight various linguistic features such as intonation, implication, metamesages, and conversational framing, followed by activities that help students to perceive and practice them. After all six scenes are presented, previewing questions are listed to prepare the students to watch the movie in its entirety. Post-viewing questions and activities are also given to help students make sense of the movie and integrate it into their own experience. For students who are interested in a particular period of American history, books and films for further reading and viewing are suggested.

Several of the movies are American classics, and students may already be familiar with them. Although the language in the earlier ones (*Gone with the Wind*, *Casablanca*, and *To Kill*



a Mockingbird) may be difficult to understand because of the accents of the characters, they are certainly worth showing to international students because they present important aspects of both American history and the American film industry. Mejia and

O'Connor have made this goal more attainable for teachers because of their step-by-step directions and practical exercises. *Five Star Films* is an innovative and highly useful book for the novice or expert. I recommend it as an excellent way to begin or continue using movies in the classroom.

[Mejia's first book, *American Picture Show: A Cultural Reader*, was reviewed in *MATSOL Currents*, Vol. 21, No. 1 (Fall 1994)]

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REVIEW

A Sampling of Electronic Resources

Reviewed by David Maisel

Oxford English Dictionary, CD-ROM, Second Edition. Oxford University Press, 1992 (Windows version) and 1993 (Macintosh version).

This full text of the 1989 twenty-volume edition is searchable by words the user labels as occurring in a definition, etymology, literary example sentence, or by suffixes. It has hypertext links to other entries and, unlike the original CD-ROM version, can be printed from. \$395 is a bargain, but it's still \$395; the CD is available for use at many libraries. For Windows and Mac System requirements, phone 800-451-7556.

SIL Linguistic Glossary. Summer Institute of Linguistics. WWW database. <http://www.sil.org/glossary/>

Comprehensive definitions of 989 linguistics terms, most of them not listed in unabridged dictionaries, are given with contextual examples, references to related terms that are other entries in the glossary, and bibliographic citations. Entries can be looked up by spelling them or finding them in the table of contents. There are 25 chapters and each heading, sub-sub-heading and other branch is itself an entry. Among the 25 chapters are Aspect, Case, Clauses, Constituent Types, Conversation Analysis, Implicature, Mood and Modality, Noun Classes, Reference, Speech Acts, Transitivity, and Trope. A chapter on Word Types stores 101 different types, from Absolute Adjective to Complementizer, Copula, and Dummy.



The Metaphors chapter presents examples, insights and exercises that can lead to games for language teachers and their students. On one page it lists 130 metaphor types, such as Purpose as Physical Goal, Choosing as Touching, and Anger as Burden. On separate pages reached through hypertext links it gives, for each of those types, about four illustrative examples that are conventional English metaphors. Casually browsing this website can teach you a lot about linguistics because the links ensure that you not only learn definitions, but that you make meaningful connections as well. This is a resource which you can use to develop lessons, as well as an aid which makes linguistic literature more easily accessible.

The Internet Movie Database. <http://www.imdb.com>
This website makes 75,000 movies searchable by the country they're set in, and by unimaginable thousands of other traits, via word search of plot summaries about 100 words long. Other search criteria include words in biographies of actors and of people behind the scenes, technical and business details, language, characters' names, words in characters' memorable quotes. It has many other features, including 14,000 published reviews. (In text-only navigators, open the Biographies link to search the plots.)

If you're interested in other multimedia CD-ROM video guides, see the *Economist* of May 18, 1996, which reviewed five of them.

The Digital Tradition Folk Song Server. WWW database. <http://www.deltablues.com>

The lyrics of 5,600 British and American folksongs and

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H*Y*M*A*N K*A*P*L*A*N Lives!

Kristin Lems

When asked why I decided to become an ESL teacher, I search my memory....when did the idea of standing in front of a group of people who couldn't understand me begin to appeal to me? Probably, it was when I read *The Education of H*Y*M*A*N K*A*P*L*A*N: The Classic Triumph of Goodwill over Grammar*, a sidesplitting collection of short stories about an incorrigible ESL student and the class who loves him, which first appeared in *The New Yorker* magazine in 1937. Its author, Leo Rosten, wrote the stories under the pseudonym Leonard Q. Ross, and the book still appears under that authorship, because Rosten worked in academia, and later, the Office of War Information, and didn't want his other work considered frivolous because of this humorous novel.

Rosten died at the age of 88 in February of this year, after a distinguished career as a political scientist and author of the definitive classic, *The Joys of Yiddish*, the book most responsible for bringing Yiddish words and humor into daily American English. Still, his most immortal work is unquestionably the one he wrote on the side, and it seems a fitting tribute to Rosten to reminisce now about some of the timeless passages of H*Y*M*A*N K*A*P*L*A*N.

Hyman Kaplan comes to the attention of his teacher at the American Night Preparatory School for Adults when the teacher, Mr. Parkhill, discovers that Kaplan writes his name in red, blue and green crayons, in capital letters with stars between each letter, on each piece of writing. This is only the opening glimpse into the strange linguistic universe of this remarkable student. In every class, Hyman Kaplan manages to know just enough English to make a detour somewhere

along the way and come up with an original interpretation that defies correction. "We don't say 'good, gooder, goodest, do we?'" asks the teacher invitingly. "No sir!" responds Mr. Kaplan. "Ha! It's to leff!" He continues, it's High-class!"

Hyman Kaplan always gets the last word, because no one can ever make a comeback to his unsinkable reasoning. When Mr. Bloom, a classmate, corrects Hyman Kaplan's letter on the blackboard which has a salutation to his brother beginning "Hello Max!!!" by saying that three exclamation points are excessive, Hyman Kaplan is ready. He ripostes, "For mine favorite brother you eskink vun — leetle — haxclimation point? ... Ha! Dat I give to strengers! ... Mr. Bloom," writes Rosten, "retired from the field, annihilated."

In his brilliant malapropisms, he often stumbles onto a deeper nuance. He writes "headaches" as "headaxe." He visits "Corney Island." The father of his new country is "Judge Vashington," and the great Emancipator, "Abraham Lincohen." When he's asked to interpret the "Out, out, brief candle" speech of Macbeth, Hyman Kaplan, inspired, declares to the class, "Life is like a bum actor, strottink and hollerink arond de stage for only vun hour before he's kicked ot. Life is a tale told by idjots, dat's all, full of fonny sounds and phooey!" Yes, he has a logic all his own, and Mr. Parkhill and his class are often left with mouths hanging open, dumbstruck by Hyman Kaplan's inner workings.

This is probably the first American novel set in an ESL class, and remains the best I know of. It is the novel many ESL teachers would love to have written, but Leo Rosten is the one who did it. Hyman Kaplan, and his creator, truly belong to the ages.

A Sampling of Electronic Resources *Continued from page 25*

the tunes (readable and audible) of most are here, searchable by any word(s) occurring in a song, 600 subject keywords, or a mix of both. One keystroke delivers the 305 English and Scottish ballads that Harvard scholar F. J. Child spent half the 19th century collecting in parts of Britain, Massachusetts and the South. Keywords (*elope, England, environment, escape, evolution, exile*) alas do not include communicative functions or linguistic structures, but could if volunteers provide that indexing; the website's managers invite submissions of new keywords and indexing.

MTV Unplugged. 10,000 Maniacs. Elektra Entertainment, 1993. Compact disc, audio cassette, video cassette. Lyrics on the WWW via *Yahoo:Entertainment: Music: Artists:10,000: Discography:Classic*.

Young, middle-aged and senior ESL students listening to this record to pick out the lyrics missing from a cloze text took

to the task with devotion bordering on the religious. They desperately needed to know what every line meant. Their knees and shoulders suggested that the motivation was rhythm. The band's name is an exaggeration; their music is emotional and intense, but wholesome enough for them to have performed at Bill Clinton's inaugural ball in 1993. Their singer-lyricist Natalie Merchant has a dulcet voice with the enunciation of a beginning ESL teacher, the poise of a well-heeled diplomat and the guts of an animal. This is a rock record for people who hate rock but like bluegrass, blues, rhythm & blues, Broadway, folk, country & western, gospel, spirituals, salsa or reggae. It could also be a fast-working introduction to any of those American rhythms for ESL students who will listen only to rock.

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