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President's Message
Association News
I was very honored to serve as interim editor of Essential Teacher for the December 2005 and March 2006 issues. At the same time, I was humbled to follow in the footsteps of founding editor Kathy Weed, who had been such a creative, capable, and caring leader.

I am pleased to announce the appointment of Tim Stewart as editor of ET. An associate professor of English at Kumamoto University, in Japan, Tim will take the helm with the June issue.

I would also like to introduce two new columnists, Andy Curtis and Ke Xu. Beginning with this issue, Andy takes over In-Service from Sheryl Slocum, and Ke, Multilingual Momentum from Gu Peiya. Heartfelt thanks to Sheryl and Peiya for their excellent contributions to ET, and a warm welcome to Andy and Ke. To read more about Tim, Andy, Ke, and other members of the ET team, see the ET page on TESOL's Web site (http://www.tesol.org/).

In this issue, teachers talk with you on a wide range of topics from practical ideas for the classroom, to suggestions for improving your teaching, to advice for content teachers and school administrators.

- Communities of Practice: Judie Haynes (Circle Time) wonders whether it is reasonable to give anglicized names to immigrant children in the United States. Jim Hughes (Home Room) takes you along on another home visit to a student’s family. Debbie Zacarian (The Road Taken) explains how to help equalize participation by group members with group reflection facilitators. Ke Xu (Multilingual Momentum) stresses the importance of teaching students how to understand implied meanings in native speaker speech. Andy Curtis (In-Service) weighs the whys and why nots of professional development, and Dorothy Zemach (From A to Z) looks back with humor at her year as a middle school ESL teacher.
Out of the Box: Baxter Jackson traces his metamorphosis from a Krashenite, to a Krashen basher, to a realistic Krashen admirer. Jenelle Reeves offers suggestions for talking to non-ESL colleagues about the inclusion of English language learners, and Elizabeth Coelho emphasizes the need to take advantage of students’ linguistic diversity. Yujong Park considers the benefits and drawbacks of being a non-native-English-speaking teacher (NNEST) in the ESL/EFL classroom.

Portal: Rong-Chang Li describes ways for you to use the Web to provide students with output as well as input opportunities. Cheri Powell outlines the procedures for setting up online pen-pal projects. Sylvan Payne explains how to prepare a music-based grammar lesson in less than an hour, and Paul Stapleton urges you to help students develop skills to filter the bad from the good on the Web.

Home and Other Pages: Leslie Greffenius and Catharine Hannay each review a text for university students. Barbara Schroeder Jensen introduces TOEFL’s new Internet-based test. Abigail Bartoshesky shares her ideas for introducing a comedy feature film in the classroom. Kaley Bierman describes a software program for pronunciation improvement.

Compleat Links (in the Essential Teacher section of http://www.tesol.org/): Like Reeves, Cristina Alfaro and Natalie Kuhlman stress the need for ESL teachers to educate colleagues and administrators about the needs of English language learners. David Balosa shares examples of his successful use of his students’ L1 in his ESL class. Shannon Sauro, a native speaker of English, contrasts Park’s experience as a NNEST with her own as a teacher of German. Lily Compton discusses copyright and fair use issues in regard to multimedia projects in the ESL classroom. Richard Firsten (Grammatically Speaking) differentiates noun adjuncts and compound nouns, explains why people say “God bless you” when someone sneezes, analyzes the rules governing the use of much, and presents a new Forum question.

Christine Meloni
Interim Editor
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Immigrant students have already suffered the trauma of leaving behind their extended family, friends, teachers, and schools. Then they enter a U.S. school and are called by a new name. I often wonder how this name change affects young children, who have no say in the decision. Isn’t your name part of your cultural identity? It bothers me to call a new third grader from Korea Leo when he is already so lost and confused.

Why do students from some cultures change their names? A Korean friend exclaimed, “We do it for you! We do it so our names are easier for Americans to pronounce.” When one student first came to the United States and enrolled in a school in a neighboring town, she was immediately asked, “What is your American name?” Her family felt obliged to give her a new name, and Hee Eun became Helen.

In my school, we encourage parents to keep their child’s original given name, but we are usually foiled in this attempt: the local immigrant community tells parents that Americans cannot pronounce unusual names, and parents come to register their child in school with a new name already chosen. Our school office records both names on all student lists so that all teachers see them.

If the teachers, administrators, and office staff in your school are to write the names of students from diverse backgrounds correctly, they need to understand how names are written in different cultures.

Here are some of the naming customs from the cultures of the students in my school.

Korean names are written with the family name (e.g., Lee) first. The given name, which usually has two
parts (e.g., Yeon Suk), follows. Either part of the given name can be a generation marker: Yeon Suk's siblings and cousins share the name Suk. Two-part given names should not be shortened—that is, Lee Yeon Suk should be called not Yeon but Yeon Suk. Yeon Suk's mother does not take her husband's name but retains her own family name. This is why she has a different surname on the school records. She may be called Mrs. Lee in the school to accommodate U.S. custom, but this is not what she is called in Korean society.

Japanese names are also written with the family name first. The Japanese elementary students I teach rarely anglicize their names, but they do change the order: Matsumoto Hiroko becomes Hiroko Matsumoto. (By the way, the given names of female students usually end in \textit{ko}.) Japanese mothers use their husband's family name.

In Russia, children have three names: a given name, a patronymic (a middle name based on the father's first name), and the father's surname. If Viktor Aleksandrovich Rakhmaninov has two children, his daughter's name would be Svetlana Viktorevna Rakhmaninova. (The \textit{a} at the end of all three names shows that she is female.) Her brother would be Mikhail Viktorevich Rakhmaninov. Viktor Aleksandrovich's wife would be Ludmila Mikhailova Rakhmaninova, unless she kept her maiden name. In U.S. schools, Russian students generally use their given and family names following U.S. custom.

In general, children from Spanish-speaking families have a given name and two surnames: the father's family name followed by the mother's. Be careful not to drop one of these surnames. For example, if a child registers as Ana López Ramírez, the school should retain both López and Ramírez. Ana's mother is Mrs. López (her husband's family name) de Ramírez. Families who have lived in the United States a long time may either hyphenate the double surname or use the father's family name.

Hindu parents from India usually base their children's names on their \textit{raashis}, which is determined by the position of the planets at the date and time of birth. The resulting names are often shortened by family and friends. For example, teachers may call brother and sister Aditya and Aarushi by these formal names, but family and friends may call them Adi and Ashi. Hindus do not call older people by their first names. Aarushi, who is younger than Aditya, calls her brother Bhaiya (Older Brother), and he calls her Ashi. Older relatives are called by their titles, such as Aunt or Grandfather.

Chinese names are made up of three characters: a one-character family name followed by a two-character given name. Families generally give their children a nickname to be used by friends and family as well as an official name for the birth certificate and for school. Students are usually called by their full name in school, but friends and close relatives may use just the given name. When children enter school in the United States, parents and children often take a new name, which is used among friends, schoolmates, and colleagues, but the Chinese names are used for official documents.

A parent in my school told me, “I have kept my Chinese name since I work at the United Nations, where cultural diversity is respected and encouraged.” Shouldn’t we as teachers strive to show the same respect and encourage our school communities to learn to pronounce names from other cultures? Why should Hee Eun become Helen unless that is truly her choice? \footnote{Thanks to Hyo Sook Chang, Deepti Dutta, Ruth Griffith, Vanessa Hernandez, and Xiao Quan Tang.}

The school office records both names on all student lists so that all teachers see them.

| PAK, | HELEN/HEE EUN |
At my elementary school, parents and school staff are separated by a cultural gap. On the surface, relations are usually cordial. Privately, some teachers and parents express deep frustration.

While most of the teachers are white, 97 percent of the students are children of color, though some have mixed ethnicity. All of the children come from low-income families. Most do not speak English at home, and many parents are not very literate in their own language.

This context gives complaints a distinctive character. I hear teachers say, “They have home entertainment centers but no books!” “Even if they don’t speak English, why won’t they read to their children in their native language?” “They send them off with chips, candy, and soda for breakfast! How can we teach kids who eat like that?”

In turn, I hear parents say, “I can’t understand the homework! Why don’t the teachers explain it?” “How can my child learn if she’s afraid she’ll be beat up at recess?” “Why go to school meetings? Even if there’s a translator, nobody listens to what parents say!”

Attempts are made to bridge the gap—the desire is nearly always there—but the bridge is mostly one-way; parents cross it to access school grounds. We send out notices and bulletins. We arrange meetings. We schedule ESL, computer, and parenting classes and family math or reading nights. For a few families, we provide therapy. Some parents come, but those who find the experience unintelligible, intimidating, strange, or hostile are not apt to return except to attend banquets and student performances.

In fall 1997, our principal and most of the teachers attempted to moderate cultural differences through home visits. The bridge became two-way. At parent-teacher conferences, I asked parents if I could visit. Everyone appeared to agree except for a Laotian mother who said she would need to ask her husband. I was shy about intruding on their privacy and preferred to wait for them to answer, but they didn’t.
For the same reason, I did not pursue visits to parents whose willingness seemed more polite than authentic. For example, when I broached the subject of home visits during a telephone conference with a parent, her moment-too-long of silence made me wonder about her reluctance. Were there goings-on she did not want me to witness? Was she suspicious of my motives just as I was now suspicious of hers? Or was she thinking, as I would be, about having to clean the house?

Since I hadn’t time to see everyone, it was far easier to call on those parents who appeared eager to have me over. The visit I described in my December 2005 column was typical. Perhaps, as a rule, I was right not to pursue reluctant parents. Home visits can be awkward. One does not ordinarily invite oneself to someone else’s house. Parents and teachers are strangers who meet because of a mutual interest in a particular child. Both parties have ideas and responsibilities relating to this child, circumstances that can lead to conflict as well as cooperation.

There was one family, however, that I was determined to visit. Michael Ramos suffered from spina bifida, a congenital defect that had paralyzed him from the waist down. I feared he was being neglected. He had been dismissed from various therapies because he did not keep his appointments. Often his wheelchair was in disrepair, his clothes were worn and dirty, and he needed a bath, a matter made acute by the fact that this eight-year-old wore diapers.

His mother, Ms. Walker, put me off, mostly with the excuse that she was sick from pregnancy. I suspected other reasons based on reports that her house was the site of domestic disturbances and illegal drug activity. Finally she gave in. I took our school’s family counselor with me. We winced at how Ms. Walker gushed over her boy, hugging and kissing him and cooing, “My baby! My angel!” Michael's father was not present, unless he was one of the three Latino men who passed through. Ms. Walker assured us that Michael’s seventeen-year-old sister, who had recently had a baby, bathed and diapered him. The house, perhaps because of our having to step over trash bags at the front door, gave the impression of having been recently picked up. The pumpkin-colored carpet appeared freshly vacuumed. It was, however, badly stained, and the curtains and upholstery were filthy.

“Sit down,” said Ms. Walker.
I put as little of myself as I could on the sofa, perching on its edge. I doubted there was anything real and useful I could take from this visit.

Then Michael slid from his mother’s lap and crawled across the rug, pulling himself by his arms, his legs dragging.

“I didn’t know you could do that!” I cried.
“I move fast, don’t I?”
“Want to do that at school?”
“Oh, yes!”

From that day forward, I lowered him to the rug when we formed a circle or when it was appropriate for him to play or work there. I was glad I had badgered his mother for a visit. How he enjoyed scooting over to play checkers or choose a book from the shelf!

But the meeting had not bridged the cultural gap, bringing us closer. Its nature was inquisitorial. In the mother’s eyes, we were officials of the state, spying out evidence of child abuse. Ms. Walker’s duty, as she saw it, was to defend the bridge against intruders or, at least, maintain barriers. She protected her family by making a show of having a “normal”—that is, a clean, tidy, and respectable—household whose adoring mother was much beloved by her child. We made a show of being concerned, sympathetic advocates for her and her son, though it was her child’s well-being that had brought us there.

Much, then, was pretense, which was not conducive to mutual learning or a relationship of trust, the intent of home visits. This visit, however necessary and productive, had been about storming the bridge.
The Road Taken

Seriously, How Did You Arrive at the Answer?
by Debbie Zacarian

“Seriously, how did you arrive at the answer?” Mr. Miller, a math teacher, asked the first group that had completed the problem set.

“We worked with Taka,” a representative of the group replied.

“Taka? He doesn’t speak any English. Seriously, how did you arrive at the answer?” Mr. Miller repeated.

“We worked with Taka,” they reiterated.

“Taka? He doesn’t speak any . . . .” Before he could bring himself to ask the question again, realizing that he might sound foolish, Mr. Miller asked the group of students to explain to him and the class how Taka had worked with them to solve the problem set.

Watching carefully, he observed the group signal Taka to show them how he had helped them solve key aspects of the set. Sitting at a round table, Taka tackled the first element of the problem, and his teammates responded by writing the next element. Within a short time, Mr. Miller realized that Taka had indeed played a key role in the group despite his lack of English.

Taka was an active participant in the group and was contributing fully, concluded Mr. Miller. Thankfully, he thought, he did not have to be as concerned about Taka in his math class as he had been. Within the next few days, however, while the team was collectively struggling with a new problem set, Mr. Miller noticed that Taka did not appear to be participating. His eyes were focused away from the group and, therefore, not on the problem, and the group did not appear to notice his lack of participation.

Mr. Miller was faced with a familiar challenge: how could he ensure that Taka had his mind on math, and that the assigned tasks and activities were engaging and, most important, purposeful? The challenge was to give Taka multiple opportunities to learn actively every day. Mr. Miller felt that this was a tall order and that his ability to create lessons that were purposeful for the English language learners in his classes was inconsistent at best.
He had attended several training sessions about math teaching. Group work was always emphasized as an important teaching method, and he believed strongly in its value. Recently, he had also attended many professional development sessions geared specifically toward math teachers of English language learners. These sessions had supported his use of group work as a way to provide students with rich opportunities to use and practice English. He had also been encouraged to create groups composed of native speakers of American English and English language learners. Various trainers had stated that this heterogeneous configuration would enhance two important functions. It would support the ideal that each student was an important resource with something important to offer, and it would provide English language learners with important language models and opportunities to practice the new language.

Armed with a strong belief in the value of separating his classes into small, heterogeneous groups, Mr. Miller designed tasks and activities that he hoped would be meaningful and purposeful for each student. He began thinking about Taka and his uneven participation in the small group that he had been assigned to and began observing Taka’s group in earnest. What was striking was that the students paid inconsistent attention to Taka. Often, they began a conversation without paying any attention to who was or was not participating.

Mr. Miller developed a strategy for addressing this dilemma. He asked each group to select one member to reflect on the group’s collaborative process, called, in Mr. Miller’s term, a group reflection facilitator. “With your group,” Mr. Miller said, “design a chart that you will use to mark down each time a group member speaks or uses body language, either to signal agreement with another member or to contribute a new idea.” He asked each group to share the chart with the whole class so that all groups had the opportunity to see how other groups had designed theirs. By the end of class, each group had completed the design of its chart.

The next day, Mr. Miller asked each reflection facilitator to use the chart to mark the group members’ participation. At the end of class, he asked the facilitators to share their chart with their group and to discuss their group’s process. Interestingly, several noted that the English language learners in each group had not participated as often as the other members. Noting this, Mr. Miller asked each group to encourage the participation of the English language learners so that the turn taking would be more equitable. He asked the reflection facilitators to note the turn taking of the group on the chart during the next five classes and to discuss their group’s process at the close of each class.

By the end of the second week of this intervention activity, almost everyone, including Mr. Miller, noted a higher rate of participation for each student. Mr. Miller believed that the strategy of adding reflection facilitators and the turn-taking charts increased his ability to tap the positive power of group work. He also believed that this intervention increased the performance of the English language learners, in math and in English.
At a recent reception given by the Chinese Consulate in New York City, I met a group of Chinese scholars pursuing advanced degrees in the United States. We talked about their early experiences as students at U.S. universities. When I asked about the linguistic difficulties they had encountered as new arrivals, quite a few mentioned that weak listening comprehension skills had kept them from feeling comfortable in conversational settings.

Over the years, I have heard similar laments from other students just starting their degree programs. I know from my own experience, however, that this unease and insecurity is as addressable as it is common. In my ESL classes at the City University of New York, I have made the building of listening confidence one of the most important basic objectives.

New York City offers learners ample opportunities to practice listening outside class—on the bus, in shops, in the workplace, anywhere students come in contact with the city's many inhabitants. My job is to encourage students to take risks by helping them develop skills and strategies that will build their listening confidence.

Brown (2001) suggests that learning to listen really means learning to respond and to continue a chain of listening and responding. In the classroom, the teaching of listening must at some point include instruction in the two-way nature of listening.

The adults I teach respond best to listening activities that are truly communicative and interactive. The key is creating opportunities for them to interact with each other instead of only with me. This semester the class and I have focused on developing a comfort level with implied speech and sustaining a classroom environment that makes the students feel safe enough to take risks, especially in small groups, since much real-world interaction occurs in small groups.

From drums and gongs,
You hear the beats;
From human talk,
You perceive the hints.—Chinese proverb

I teach students how to listen between the lines by creating contexts that help sharpen their sense of implied meaning.
ESL students often fail to function in real-life communication because they lack experience with implied meanings, especially in conversation. In the words of the Chinese proverb, they can’t perceive “the hints from human talk.” One hot day, for example, I walked into my classroom and realized immediately that the air conditioning was off. I asked Kim, a Korean student sitting next to the air conditioner, “What happened to the air conditioner?”

“Nothing happened,” he answered.

“Don’t you feel hot?” I asked.

“No, I am OK. Thanks,” he answered politely, not understanding that I was suggesting that he turn it on. Another student, who did understand the message, turned on the air conditioner.

I now teach students how to listen between the lines by creating different contexts that will help sharpen their sense of implied meaning. For example, seeing an empty seat next to a student, I might point to it and ask, “May I?” Or I might look at the clock on the wall, saying, “Oh, it’s eleven o’clock,” and then wait for my students’ response: “Time to take a break!”

Sometimes we watch clips from movies or listen to audiotapes and discuss scenes in which the characters perceive or miss implied meanings. My favorites are comedies built on the humor that results when someone intentionally ignores the conventional implication. The students discuss in groups what they’ve understood, comparing notes on what is funny, what message was implied, and how it was misinterpreted.

After a few months, many students have increased their understanding of U.S. culture, and they find it easier to perceive implied meanings in real-life communication. For instance, a Chinese student told me that, before he took my class, he didn’t know that “I won’t keep you here any longer” or “Thank you for coming” may actually mean “It’s time for you to leave.”

In class, the students and I also focus on the listening skills necessary for class discussions. We practice understanding and producing phrases and expressions students need to negotiate meanings—implied and direct, such as when giving feedback and asking for clarification.

Group work functions well as a way of generating interactive language, but setting up effective groups requires care. For example, my classes include many Chinese students who speak a common native language. How should I group them so that they will feel safe enough to use English rather than their first language? One technique I’ve used is to survey same-language speakers to find out which part of the country they are from, which dialect they speak at home, and how many and which dialects they understand aurally. One semester, the results demonstrated that, although most of the Chinese students read Chinese, they speak different dialects (e.g., Mandarin, Cantonese, Fukianese, Hakka, Taishan). Few students are comfortable speaking a second dialect, so I have placed those speaking different dialects into the same group, where they interact in English.

I also try to design learning tasks that are closely related to real life. For example, some of my students happen to be preparing for job interviews. One successful activity (from Nunan 1995) focused on helping students practice for upcoming interviews. Students read a job description and candidate requirements, listen to an audiotape of candidates being interviewed for the job, and then select the best person for the job. Perceiving the hints from human talk is no easy task, but it is not impossible. As long as teachers provide guidance and appropriate strategies, learners can move past the beats and into the comfortable realm of listening and responding with ease.

References


A good starting point for professional development is to realize that the whys greatly outnumber the why nots.

In-Service

Weighing the Whys and Why Nots of Professional Development
by Andy Curtis

The Colombian government has reportedly issued a letter expressing official displeasure at the Brad Pitt–Angelina Jolie movie Mr. and Mrs. Smith, about an ordinary, suburban married couple who are secretly—and unbeknownst to each other—professional killers. Apart from the dubious plot line, the Colombian government is unhappy because the opening scene, full of helicopter gunships, explosions and angry-sounding, Spanish-speaking military police, is set in Bogotá, Colombia.

This is just one of the many interesting things I learned from a recent visit to Colombia, where I presented at the Fortieth Annual Convention of the Association of Colombian English Language Teachers. I also learned that engaging in professional development is a real challenge for Colombian teachers. Wherever I went, the English language teachers I met agreed that professional development was important but that there were many obstacles to engaging in it. From visits to more than twenty countries over the past ten years, I have learned that this is a recurring theme among teachers.

What factors limit the quantity and quality of the professional development that English language teachers can engage in? Some years ago, I started to compile a list of reasons given by teachers in different countries (see Bailey, Curtis, and Nunan 2001 for more detail). Here are the top ten limiting factors given, listed more or less in the order of frequency of response:

- lack of time: I’m too busy.
- lack of energy: I’m too tired.
- no motivation: I’m not clear on the purposes and benefits.
- lack of institutional support: I don’t have funding, release time, and so on.
- lack of encouragement: Colleagues and supervisors don’t support professional development.
- dislike of theories and experts: I think teaching is all about practice. Theory has little to do with it.
- dislike of fashions and fads: Professional development is just another temporary trend.
interference with the teaching process: Professional development is a distraction.

resistance to change: If it ain’t broke, why fix it?

fear of confronting the self: I’m afraid of seeing aspects of myself I may not like.

Most of the items on the list are all too familiar and self-explanatory, though a few are worth looking at in a little more detail. For example, I’m disappointed to see that some teachers still cling to the artificial and simplistic theory-practice dichotomy. Useful educational theory comes out of and feeds back into effective classroom teaching, with such teaching informing and being informed by such theory. This reason may relate to the idea that professional development may be taking teachers’ attention away from teaching, but again, consistently effective teaching is often the result of deliberate, structured, and systematic involvement in teacher professional development.

The last reason given, fear of confronting the self, relates to what Bailey, Nunan, and I (1998) have referred to as “undeniable insights.” We mean that if, for example, your peers, your supervisors, and your students tell you that you talk too quickly in class, you can resist changing because the impetus to change has come from outside yourself. However, if one day you are watching a video of your teaching and realize that you do in fact speak too quickly in class, then you must change because you now know—through your own, self-generated insight—that this cannot continue. This, then, is one of the central goals of any teacher professional development: to enable self-generated awareness and insights so you can move forward.

What is perhaps even more important than these factors limiting teachers’ professional development is teachers’ response to the question: In spite of such constraints, why do English language teaching professionals still strive to engage in professional development? In most of the countries in which I asked these two questions, the teachers generated nearly twice as many reasons to engage in professional development as they did factors limiting it. Here are the top twenty reasons given, again not in any precise order:

- acquire new knowledge and skills
- upgrade present knowledge and skills
- develop new language teaching and learning approaches, methods, and techniques
- learn about new materials, such as new course books
- learn about or learn to use new technologies, such as the Internet
- share ideas and challenges, problems, and solutions collaboratively and cooperatively
- cope with changes in the context and setting outside of the school, such as large-scale, national political change
- cope with changes in the context and setting inside the school, such as small-scale, internal political change
- cope with external educational initiatives, such as those introduced by local, provincial, or national governments
- network with other English language teaching professionals
- earn higher income and greater prestige
- enhance promotion prospects
- empower myself
- gain enjoyment from creative problem solving
- fulfill a need for variety and novelty
- avoid routinization, that is, excessive reliance on automatic responses
- create professional interest and support groups
- communicate with the wider community, including parents and other educational stakeholders
- prevent burnout
- gain respect as a professional

Again, most of the items on the list are familiar and self-explanatory. In my June 2006 column, I will look at practical ways in which you can take part in professional development without adding excessively to your already-too-full schedule. But before looking at the question of how, a good starting point is to realize that the whys greatly outnumber the why nots.

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I’ve spent most of my teaching life in university classrooms. However, in search of a job with health insurance, I once spent a year in a private secondary school, armed with only dim memories of my own school days and some helpful suggestions from colleagues (“Remember—they can smell your fear”). After all, I reasoned, how hard could it be? ESL is ESL. These students would be just the same as the others, only shorter.

It was . . . different. I taught the lowest level classes, so the students came in with almost no English. Fortunately, they were young, flexible, and living in an English-speaking country, and within just days they were confidently calling out their first English phrase: “Extra credit!” (What is it with extra credit? Students would ask about it before even beginning the regular assignment, and would work harder and longer on something with that magic label. If I had to do it all over again, I’d just call everything extra credit.)

The contact hours were higher than at the university; the classes were larger, and the students had twice as much energy and three times as many questions, many of which had nothing to do with ESL. It was an exhilarating (if exhausting) ride, but at the time I had trouble making sense of it all. Each class period seemed like an episode in a situation comedy in which I played the bumbling title role.

The feminine protection episode: Just before class, Marina frantically beckoned me outside. As soon as I stepped out, she pulled me to the side and whipped a tampon out of her pocket. “I have to know how to use this before third period,” she said. “For PE [physical education] class. Swimming. In America, it isn’t excuse.” Her mother, it appeared, didn’t know how to use one either and had sent her off with inadequate instructions. I’d never actually read a job description for my position, but I was sure this wasn’t in it.

In my cowardice, I attempted to pass the buck: “Why don’t you ask your PE teacher?” Marina blushed. “I’m too embarrassed to ask him.” Fortunately, we had just been studying giving instructions and had even talked about the value of a diagram, which I hastily drew. I never asked for a progress report, but Marina passed PE, including swimming.
The unfortunate nickname episode: In grammar class, students were taking turns reading aloud from a textbook some sentences they’d put into the simple past. One by one, they read sentences in which various characters—Mary, Bob, Sandy, and so on—performed their simple past actions. Things went smoothly until little Kazu read out sentence 6: “Dick ____ his apartment in a hurry this morning because he was late for school.” Pandemonium broke out. “Ms. Zemach! Did you hear what he said?” “Is he going to get detention?” “Read it again, Kazu!” “Is that really someone’s name? It’s not against the law?”

In his embarrassment, Kazu actually slipped through the back of his seat, wedging in his rear end and leaving his arms and legs flailing in the air in front of him. It took me and a husky Tongan boy several minutes of tugging to extract him. No more grammar was checked during that class.

The squashed bug episode: Our ground-floor classroom, whose door to the outside I left open for ventilation, attracted a number of slow-moving beetles. The boys stepped on them until I threatened the loss of five points on a quiz to any killers. One day, as I carefully swept another beetle outside, the art teacher walked by and squashed the beetle flat in front of the class, to the students’ vast delight. “Are you going to take five points off her quiz, Ms. Zemach?”

The minimal pairs episode: Kenta’s favorite English phrase was “No fair!,” which he used liberally and often. I’d announce a quiz the next week: “No fair!” Some homework for that evening: “No fair!” A multidisciplinary project: “No fair!” Some group work: “No fair!” Ignoring it, challenging it, and questioning it did nothing to discourage him. Finally I used the five-points threat, which worked. But he stayed after class shortly after to ask me what was wrong with saying “No fair.” I told him using the phrase was whining, blaming someone else for his own failure to take responsibility.

He looked confused. “But then why is it OK for Americans to wear it on their shirts?” (Our school’s dress code forbade offensive language on shirts.) “I don’t think anyone has that on a shirt.”

“They do, lots of them,” he insisted. He pointed to an older boy walking by outside. “See the back of his shirt?” In large letters, it said “No fear”—the brand name and slogan of a popular clothing company that sold surfing gear. Here was a teaching moment in both pronunciation and attitude, and after five minutes of drilling, I gave Kenta permission to say “No fear!” when I announced an assignment.

Here are the lessons I learned from these episodes:

- Expect the unexpected. You may be (or seem to be) the only resource the students have.
- If you’re writing a worksheet (or a textbook), and you must use a short name in order to save space, try Rick or Nick or Vic. But not that other one.
- The threat of losing points on a future quiz is a pretty good tool for behavior modification. However, you can only control your own classroom, not the world outside.
- Things aren’t always what they seem. Before you assume a student has an attitude problem, take the time to talk with him or her.

And never forget the power of extra credit. 

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During my second semester in the TESOL program at California State University, Sacramento, I discovered Stephen Krashen. His set of five interrelated hypotheses (1985) on second language acquisition (SLA) was so intuitively appealing that I couldn’t help but be amazed.

Here’s the story of why I grasped onto his ideas so quickly, how I subsequently became disenchanted, and how I eventually came to a theoretical and pedagogical reconciliation with his ideas.

Unconscious Acquisition
According to Krashen’s theory, language acquisition is a subconscious and intuitive process of constructing the system of language. It’s how children seem to pick up a language without effort. On the other hand, attending to form—figuring out rules and becoming aware of one’s own language processes—is characteristic of language learning. One is subconscious and easy, and the other is self-conscious and difficult.

Buttressing this theory with Long’s (1985) interaction hypothesis, which states that comprehensible input is the result of modifications native speakers and others make to render their messages intelligible, I was nearly instantly convinced of its validity. In his acquisition-versus-learning dichotomy, I could find no fault. I became, although I wouldn’t hear the term for many years, a Krashenite.

The Monitor
The monitor, the second part of Krashen’s five-pronged theory, which states that learners consciously examine their own
speech only when physically and mentally able, made logical sense, too. I had, after all, monitored my own speech in a second language, and, frankly, it was exhausting. Even thinking about shaping and refocusing sound in an area of the mouth that I was not used to using—changing my facial and mouth muscularity—made my face hurt. Each time I recalled all my conscious monitoring of my own output, my learning/acquisition dichotomy seemed to make more sense.

The Natural Order of Things
That people acquire language in a predictable or natural order was appealing in a very natural way. The memory of my little sister’s emerging speech seemed to agree with Krashen’s natural order hypothesis. The more I read and reflected on my own experiences with SLA, the more convinced I became. “Here was the answer!” I thought.

i + 1
The fourth part of Krashen’s theory of SLA is the input hypothesis. If acquirers are at stage or level i, and the input they receive is just a bit beyond their current level (i +1), then they will comprehend most of the message they are receiving (either via spoken language or print media). At i +1, acquirers will be challenged just enough to make progress in the language, and they will eventually become communicatively competent. My own experience with people who had spoken to me in this fashion (at i +1) in a new language confirmed this theory while Long’s (1985) hypothesis seemed to vouchsafe it all.

At this point, I should have run for president of Krashen’s fan club.

The Affective Filter
In the last part of his theory, Krashen again articulated what I had personally experienced on a number of occasions. Simply put, when defensive or anxious, you’ll find it hard to understand or acquire anything. He called this the affective filter hypothesis.

Now, not only did I have a theoretical explanation for those times when I couldn’t understand, but I also had an excuse for the future! “My affective filter was high, you see. That’s why I didn’t get it.” Krashen put words to what I had experienced, and I ate it up.

A Sin of Omission?
My status as a self-proclaimed Krashenite spanned two continents and a couple of years of teaching experience. By providing ESL students with large amounts of unstructured comprehensible input, reducing form-focused language instruction, avoiding corrective feedback, and focusing on meaning, I made sure his hypotheses informed my classroom practices. Not until my second-to-last semester in my TESOL program, when I read the first heading of the class syllabus, “The Failure of Input/Interaction,” did I begin to suspect that Krashen had committed the sin of omission.

Swain’s (1985) study on the role of comprehensible input and output on the development of communicative competence was like a slap in the face. I didn’t want to believe that comprehensible input wasn’t enough because if I did, then I’d have to rethink my whole teaching philosophy. Other SLA research I read at the time only deepened my growing concern.

Taking Inventory
I couldn’t avoid the inevitable: I had to take stock of Krashen’s five-pronged input hypothesis by articulating (1) the reason he had argued that teaching grammar was not necessary, (2) the validity of those arguments, and (3) the evidence that comprehensible input and communicative interaction alone were not sufficient to push SLA to high levels. Sato’s (1986) look at the role of interlanguage in SLA and Schmidt’s (1983) notice-the-gap theory pointed toward a possible sin of omission. Could I have been deceived?

Begrudgingly, I began the examination. The much-echoed criticism of the input hypothesis that I read was that comprehensible and communicative interaction were not enough to push SLA to high levels. Reflecting on my own experience teaching ESL students who were born and raised in California (Generation 1.5 students) yet lacked the necessary writing skills to succeed in college supported this criticism. With all of the prerequisites for SLA in place, what could explain their poor writing ability? Here was a clear gap between the input hypothesis and reality, and the beginning of my transformation from ignorance to knowledge.

Using TESOL Quarterly’s guidelines for quantitative research (TESOL 2003), I revisited Swain’s (1985) study of the acquisition of French by Canadian children in elementary school immersion classrooms. Because her participants had had seven years of comprehensible input, they seemed ideal candidates to answer the question, Is comprehensible input enough?

The immersion students’ achievement scores on tests of math, science, history, and other subjects were just as good as those of students enrolled in the regular English curriculum. This seemed to prove that the input was comprehensible. And because Swain’s participants were not exposed to French outside of the classroom, she was able to control for other variables that would reduce the robustness of her results.
Swain’s conclusions followed logically from her needs analysis, design, and methods. She concluded that comprehensible input and communicative interaction alone were not enough to push SLA to higher levels. She found that the students were similar to native speakers in terms of discourse competence but not in their grammatical and sociolinguistic competence (although their scores were relatively high for both of these domains). This finding was, in fact, congruent with Long’s interaction hypothesis but was not sufficient to explain the students’ lack of nativelike proficiency.

The answer became obvious: comprehensible output plays as big a role in the SLA equation as communicative interaction and comprehensible input do. Any model that ignores or denies the importance of one of these three components is not looking at SLA holistically and is, in fact, missing a key variable in the SLA equation.

**The Unraveling**

My days as a Krashenite were over. I had been willingly misled! Like an ex-smoker critical of those who still smoke, I became wildly intolerant of Krashen and his ideas. I became a Krashen basher. To me, his input hypothesis was riddled with fast-and-loose definitions and oversimplifications, and was based on a false dichotomy. His definitions of acquisition and learning, of conscious and subconscious, were fuzzy at best.

I found others who agreed with me. McLaughlin (1990), for example, agreed that these terms “were too laden with surplus meaning and too difficult to define empirically to be useful theoretically” (p. 627). Krashen had built the false dichotomy of the input hypothesis on the basis that acquisition was subconscious, that learning was conscious, and that there was no overlap between the two. By stating that comprehensible input was the single cause for SLA, Krashen oversimplified the complexity involved in acquiring a second language.

And now I come to the near present. A few days before writing this article, I received the reading for the first part of the comprehensive exam in TESOL (which is required for graduation). We graduate students were supposed to read it critically and prepare as best we could for what we thought would be asked of us. On the following Friday, we would have three and a half hours to respond.

The reading was a chapter from a book by Krashen. Apparently, my transformation from ignorance to knowledge was incomplete. To prepare for the exam, I had to reconcile my differences with Krashen’s theory of SLA by giving credit where credit was due. This article is my tribute to his ideas and how they have influenced my pedagogical decisions.

**Acquiescence and Gratitude**

I have to admit that some of Krashen’s ideas still inform my approach to teaching. They have, however, been somewhat tempered. Rather than engaging in real-life, authentic language in the classroom to the total exclusion of any potentially helpful controlled exercises, grammatical pointers, or other analytical devices, as I tended to do before, I have incorporated them into a part of my approach. I understand now that “teaching is not only a matter of providing the learner with the right data at the right time, of teaching him how to learn, but of developing in him appropriate learning strategies and means of testing his hypotheses as well” (Corder 1973, 133).
Like many others in my field, at the outset of my career I longed for something simple on which I could base my methodology. Krashen’s theory seemed to reflect established principles. His ideas were appealing, and from some footage that I’ve seen, he was a powerfully persuasive speaker. His theory was the first seemingly coherent picture I had of how people acquire second languages. Like the many researchers he lit on fire with his overreaching claims, I looked carefully at what was known, what the research evidence was, and what the plausible alternatives were.

Even today, with most of us teachers adopting a cautiously eclectic, integrated approach to SLA that balances input, output, and interaction, some of the ideas that Krashen synthesized will live forever, and for that we should be grateful.

References


Baxter Jackson works for Microsoft Corporation as a language specialist in support engineer accent reduction, in India.
Two ESOL teachers, a curriculum coordinator, and I—a teacher educator—were brainstorming ideas for kicking off an in-service program for a local high school’s content area teachers. The topic: linguistically appropriate content area instruction for English language learners. Our audience would be harried teachers in the middle of a busy spring semester. The four of us had worked hard to secure two hours of in-service time, and we wanted to start off on the right foot. That meant grabbing the teachers’ attention and opening our conversation on teaching with English language learners on a positive note. The question was, how could we do that?

Starting off with statistics, as one of our team suggested, was one way to go, and I had used that tack before in in-service programs. The numbers were certainly attention grabbing. This school, a small city high school in the southern United States, had seen the number of English language learners double in the past year, and the state had experienced a 315 percent increase in English language learners over the past decade (National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition 2004). A neighboring state had gone from 10,000 to nearly 60,000 English language learners in the same time span. And census projections were for future immigration increases (U.S. Census Bureau 2004).

These statistics had good shock value, and the implications were clear: if teachers had not yet had English language learners in their classrooms, they would soon, and in ever-increasing numbers. I had recited similar statistics before, supporting the numbers with helpful charts and graphs. Sharp intakes of breath and expressions of surprise among my audience members told me the technique had worked. But I began to wonder, at what price?

Is Fear Productive?
I could not shake a feeling of unease with a statistics-based conversation opener. In examining the kind of attention the recitation of newcomer statistics stirred in the audience, I realized that no small part of the reaction might be fear. The teachers were already feeling some discomfort in the face of the inclusion (or impending inclusion) of English language learners in their classrooms. This discomfort had, in fact, been instrumental in winning us the in-service time. English language learners were a new kind of student for this district, and anticipating the changes these students would bring was unsettling to many in our audience.

Would the recitation of English language learner statistics, accurate as they were, be a productive way to open our conversation? Not if it tapped into a discourse of fear that was already apparent...
in the region and the nation as a whole: the fear of an immigrant invasion.

Finding evidence of that fear is not difficult, and the news media are a good place to begin the search. The language used in the media to describe the recent increases in the immigrant population commonly suggests that the United States is in the midst of a full-fledged invasion. Tuning into cable and network news broadcasts, you are likely to hear about the influx of immigrants, the flood of illegals across the U.S.-Mexican border, and the inundation of U.S. schools by non-English-speaking students. Such language conveys images of teeming hordes of outsiders pouring into the country, laying siege to U.S. language and culture.

The rhetoric might stir up already-simmering anti-immigrant sentiment or plant the seeds for it, but it would not open a conversation with content teachers on the productive note we were striving for. We could easily lose an already skittish audience of teachers to the discourse of fear that shock-and-awe statistics could produce. The beginning of our conversation with content area peers ought to bolster their confidence in their ability to include English language learners in content learning, and reduce the distance between these learners and their content teachers. Perhaps the conversation we started at this in-service could help subvert, or at least throw into question, local and national narratives of fear.

Principles for a Productive Dialogue
How, then, could we open a productive dialogue? In this article, I offer three principles to guide you as you initiate conversations with content area peers: make it personal, make it positive, and make a connection.

Make It Personal
Telling content area teachers about English language learners’ lives is one way to facilitate the inclusion of these learners. In my experience in schools with small or emerging English language learner populations, many teachers know little about learners’ experiences as linguistic and cultural outsiders. Teachers may have little experience as second language learners, for example. Helping teachers see through the eyes of English language learners may deepen their empathy for newcomers.

A language submersion activity can be an effective way to personalize the experiences of English language learners. This activity has the advantage of capturing the audience’s attention as well as focusing that attention on the often frustrating experience of learning content in a second language. In other words, in a language submersion experience, you put teachers in English language learners’ shoes.

Our team chose this approach to starting a dialogue with content area teachers. One of our team members, a fluent Spanish speaker, volunteered to be a Spanish language content instructor. During the submersion experience, she delivered a short lecture on Central American social class structures entirely in Spanish. The lecture was devoid of context clues as to its content: no pictures, no examples, no repetitions, and no clarifications of any sort. Most of the teachers struggled to make sense of the lecture, and a sense of frustration quickly set in. Groans, nervous laughter, and, eventually, grumblings in English broke out among the teachers. On the mock quiz following the lecture, our audience, with the notable exception of the Spanish language teachers, performed quite poorly.

The lecture was given again, this time with pictures, repetition of important words, emphasis on cognates, and opportunities for students to interact. On the second quiz, the teachers performed much better. Surprised by their ability to understand some of the sheltered lecture in Spanish, many of the teachers reported finishing the activity with a new sense of what it might be like for the English language learners in their classrooms.

As a conversation opener, the activity was a big success. It grabbed the audience’s attention, made the content-learning experience of English language learners personal to the teachers, and led smoothly into a discussion of sheltered instruction techniques. (For similar activities conducted with English language learners’ mainstream peers, see Kubota et al. 2000 and “I Was Lost before the End of the First Minute,” Essential Teacher, Summer 2004.)

Make It Positive
The difficulties of English language learner inclusion, particularly at the secondary level, were well known, or at least well rumored, within our content teacher audience. But tales of hardship are not the only stories about inclusion. Success stories are relatively easy to come by, and sharing them is another avenue for starting a conversation on a positive note. }
Locals stories of success with English language learner inclusion will likely prove most effective. You can collect testimonials from teachers and English language learners in print or video format before in-service meetings. For an even more powerful punch, have speakers relate success stories in person. In a pinch, you can find success stories in much of the recent TESOL literature, including this magazine. See also Cary’s (2000) Working with Second Language Learners: Answers to Teachers’ Top Ten Questions for vignettes of success with K–12 English language learners; for a detailed case study of a multilingual elementary school, consider Schechter and Cummins’ (2003) Multilingual Education: Using Diversity as a Resource.

Make a Connection
For TESOL professionals, making connections with English language learners and establishing working student-teacher relationships may seem quite simple and straightforward, even old hat. Content teachers who are new to English language learner inclusion, however, may find this a challenge.

In my experience with content teachers, one of the most frequently mentioned concerns is the size of the language and cultural barrier separating them from English language learners. Teachers’ perceptions of the barrier may exaggerate its size, but, real or imagined, the barrier can stymie teachers’ efforts to establish a productive student-teacher relationship. You can help shrink the distance between English language learners and their content teachers by encouraging a connection between the two.

Perhaps the most obvious way to foster this connection is to bring English language learners and teachers together. You may not be able to do this within the time and space of an in-service program, but there are other ways to lay the groundwork. A conversation opener that fits the constraints of in-service programs is the presentation of student-produced videos. Through this medium, English language learners introduce themselves to teachers and tell what they need in content classrooms. Producing a video may provide rich language learning opportunities for English language learners; you could even point out this benefit.

Technological innovations such as e-mail, Web-based chats, and online discussion boards can also facilitate a connection between English language learners and teachers who are at a distance, whether literal or figurative. Online discussions, in particular, can be effective in getting English language learners’ voices heard above the cacophony of traditional, face-to-face class discussions that are, more likely than not, dominated by native English speakers. Teachers may well be surprised by the participation of English language learners, whose silence they had thought to be a sign of disengagement.

In addition to helping teachers connect with English language learners, you could also pay attention to the link between newcomer and veteran teachers of English language learners. When veteran teachers are not on-site, you can again turn to technology to make this connection. An electronic discussion list, such as the Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages Electronic Lists (TESL-L; see http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/~tesl-l/), is one connection-making forum.

Deal with the Numbers
Choosing to start your conversations with content area teachers without shock-and-awe statistics does not mean that you should ignore the numbers. In the past twenty-five years, the United States has undergone an immense immigration boom, and schools are enrolling record numbers of students who speak a first language other than English. Local and national newcomer statistics are relevant to teachers’ work, and teachers will benefit from an awareness of the shifting demographics in their schools. Providing this information in thoughtful, nonsensationalizing ways is essential as you initiate productive conversations with content area peers.

Frank discussion of newcomer statistics can be accompanied by frank discussion of anti-immigrant sentiment, English-only ideologies, and the receiving society’s fears. As your conversation with content peers progresses, discomforting discussions of fear, racism, and xenophobia may arise; therefore, establishing a productive dialogue from the beginning is essential.

Considering the importance of the relationship between ESOL professionals and content teachers, it is critically important to consider how you engage colleagues in conversation about effective English language learner inclusion. If you open your conversations with content area peers in a positive way, it will set the tone for harmonious, mutually beneficial relationships to follow.

References


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When I first began teaching English to speakers of other languages, most language teachers worked hard to keep those other languages out of the classroom. We worried that students who spoke community languages, such as Urdu or Hindi, when they were not in school were disadvantaged.

We encouraged parents to use English at home—even if they barely spoke it themselves—and we chastised students if they “slipped” into using their own languages in class. Some of my colleagues who spoke a community language pretended not to understand students who spoke the same language. Many ESL teachers made students pay a small fine each time they used their own language in class.

Even today, schools serving multilingual communities in Canada and the United States generally do not place a high value on students’ languages. In most multilingual schools, only the students are multilingual. After they have gone home, little evidence remains of the many linguistic communities they come from.

While English language learners need frequent opportunities for interaction in English, maintaining the first language (L1) is not a disadvantage in learning another. Quite the opposite is true, in fact. Many academic and social benefits are associated with continued development in L1 during the learning of English (Cummins 2000; Cummins et al. 2005; Thomas and Collier 2002). In this article, I offer a rationale for incorporating students’ languages into the school environment and suggest some ways you can do so, even if you don’t speak any of the community languages.

Why Support Community Languages?
Schools should encourage L1 maintenance and continued development for these reasons:

- A strong foundation in the L1 supports the acquisition of English. Successful second language acquisition depends on a variety of factors, one of the most important being the level of development in the L1. For example, literacy skills developed in the L1 can be transferred to the second language (L2) (Cummins 2000).

- Continued development of the L1 contributes to academic success. English language learners need access to the L1 as a tool for learning, at least until their proficiency in English is adequate for academic tasks. Indeed, the strongest predictor of academic success among English language learners is the level to which their own languages continue to develop (Thomas and Collier 2002).

- Students’ languages support their sense of identity and help maintain effective communication within the family and the community (Cummins et al. 2005). Loss of the L1 can have negative effects on students’ relationships with family and other members of their cultural community (Wong Fillmore 1991).
What about Bilingual Education?
Studies have shown that a well-developed program of bilingual education offers the best chance for English language learners to meet curriculum standards (Thomas and Collier 2002). However, bilingual education may not be a practical option in many multilingual schools and school districts. For example, students in Toronto, Canada, public schools speak more than one hundred languages, and forty or more languages may be represented in a single school. In such situations, schools must find other opportunities to honor and support students’ languages.

Making Space for Other Languages
You can turn linguistic diversity into an asset by acknowledging and celebrating it throughout the school environment, by providing opportunities for students to use their own languages and learn about other languages in the classroom, and by using community languages to work with parents.

Advertise Your Multilingual School Environment
A multilingual school is an enriched linguistic and cultural environment, and this should be evident to all who walk through the hallways, visit the library, listen to the public address announcements, or attend special events.

- With a group of students and parents, create a multilingual “Welcome” poster in the front entrance. Think about other signs and notices that you could display in more than one language. Perhaps students could deliver some of the public address announcements, such as a Thought of the Day, in community languages as well as in English.

- Display material that communicates positive attitudes toward linguistic diversity, such as a graph showing the linguistic and cultural backgrounds of the students in the school.

- Enhance peer and cross-grade tutoring programs by recruiting and training tutors of various language backgrounds, who will use their shared L1 to explain concepts to new English language learners before transferring to English.

- Train student ambassadors of various language backgrounds to assist in the welcoming and orientation of new students and their parents.

- Encourage students to use the L1 when natural and appropriate. For example, it would be unnatural for a group of Korean speakers having lunch or working on a project together to use English. Work with students and parents to develop some guidelines for appropriate language choices in various situations.

- Collect library materials in various languages. Community newspapers are often readily available, and parents can help you find materials in community bookstores. Several publishers produce dual-language children’s books. In secondary schools, provide reference dictionaries for the languages of the school.

- Post information in community languages on the school’s Web site. Students and parents could write some sections, such as an orientation for newcomers.

- Bring students’ linguistic worlds closer together. Many students take heritage language classes outside school. Invite them to bring in some of their work from these classes. In secondary schools, think about which languages should be taught in the modern languages department. In some communities, Korean or Urdu may be more appropriate than some of the languages currently offered in the school.

- Include community languages when you plan special events such as concerts or open houses. For example, feature some songs in languages other than English in concerts; parents can translate them into English. Ask students and parents to help create signs and printed programs for open houses and other events. Acknowledge festivals and other significant days, and draw on the expertise of students and parents to create multilingual display material (see “Building Self-Esteem through Cultural Pride,” Essential Teacher, December 2005).

- Consider proficiency in a community language when hiring teachers and other staff.

Create a Multilingual Classroom Environment
Within your classroom, you can create a learning environment where all students’ languages are valued.

- Learn a little about your students’ languages. For example, knowing something about the script system may help you understand learners’ difficulties with learning to write in English. You don’t need in-depth knowledge: The students are the experts, and you can prompt...

Learn some expressions in the students’ languages. The students will greatly appreciate your efforts even if you learn only a few simple greetings.
discussion and comparison by asking some generic questions such as “What is the direction of print?” or “Is there a printed and cursive form?”

- Learn some expressions in the students’ languages. The students will greatly appreciate your efforts even if you learn only a few simple greetings. Just learning to say hello or good in a few of your students’ languages will enhance the multilingual climate of the classroom and demonstrate commitment to the concept of a multilingual society.

- Encourage students to learn some words and phrases in each other’s languages. For example, a group of Farsi-speaking students could teach the class some greetings and polite expressions that everyone will use for the rest of the week or month.

- Encourage students to produce dual-language assignments. For example, creating dual-language books is a literacy activity that can be adapted for all ages and subjects (for some online samples, see The Multiliteracy Project n.d.; Thornwood Public School 2001).

- Give students the opportunity to work with same-language partners from time to time. This may enable students to be more successful on challenging tasks than they would if they were required to use English only. Give them extra time to switch to English before showing their work.

- Develop some multilingual projects (see Edwards 1996; Cummins and Schecter 2003). For example, students can compare how different languages express concepts such as numbers, proverbs, and names. Encourage parents to get involved.

- Provide opportunities for English language learners to develop ideas in the L1 (e.g. produce their first writing samples; clarify concepts; discuss problems; plan group tasks; write notes, outlines, and first drafts). This will be a preliminary step toward producing work in English, and it will ensure a better product in the end.

- Encourage beginners to write in the L1. For example, they could write their first journal responses in the L1, or they might insert words in the L1 when they don’t know the English word. If another student or a colleague can help with translation, you may be surprised by the quality of the students’ writing compared with what they can produce in English.

- Demonstrate ways for English-speaking students to help classmates who are learning English—for example, by repeating, rephrasing, or using gestures and drawings.

Make Connections with Parents

Parents and guardians who do not feel confident in the language of the school are less likely to visit or become involved in their children’s education. Using community languages to reach out to parents encourages and enables them to participate in and contribute to the life of the school and to help their children at home.

“Successful second language acquisition depends on a variety of factors, one of the most important being the level of development in the L1.”

- Develop networks of parents who speak the same language. When parents enroll their children, put them in touch with someone who can provide orientation, answer questions, and help with translation and interpretation.

- Seek the help of parents and other community members in finding material in their languages, and involve parents in creating children’s books.

- Give children activity materials to take home, with instructions for parents in the languages of the school community.

- Explain to parents the value of maintaining the L1, and encourage them to enroll their children in heritage language programs. Parents can also create a rich language environment by telling stories and reading to their children, by involving them in formal and informal community events, and by discussing programs on community TV or items in community language newspapers.

- Give parents a role in the classroom. Parents who may not feel confident in English can use their own language to help newcomers or help create resource material, such as dual-language glossaries and picture dictionaries. Some parents may enjoy reading aloud, telling stories, or teaching songs in their own language.

- Use community languages for outreach to parents. Have important communication, such as report cards, newsletters, and consent forms, translated into the languages of the community. If professional services are not available, parents may be able to help. Parents who are proficient in English as well as a community language can help set up meetings, welcome parents to the school, and serve as facilitators for small discussion groups. However, be sure to use bilingual educators or professional interpreters in meetings with an individual student’s parents, especially if you are discussing sensitive or confidential topics.
Tap the Potential
All students can benefit from immersion in a multilingual environment. Celebrating linguistic and cultural diversity at school can foster more open attitudes among various cultural groups. Also, monolingual English speakers in a multilingual school may be encouraged to learn other languages, which will benefit the individual, the community, and the nation. Most importantly, a rich multilingual environment will help ensure that all members of the school community feel valued, welcomed, and included.

References

When I came to the United States in 2004 as a doctoral student in language education, I was prevented from working as an ESL instructor, being informed that the position was open only to native speakers of English. As an EFL teacher with seven years of experience in my own country (Korea), this rejection both confirmed my deficiency as an English language teacher and deprived me of financial opportunity based on my identity as a nonnative-English-speaking teacher (NNEST). What, then, is my standing in this profession?

As a NNEST, I have always faced the dilemma of teaching a language that I am not fully proficient in. I feel guilty when I cannot provide students with the nativelike pronunciation of a word or when I come across a cultural barrier that even I, as a teacher, cannot fully comprehend. This identity as a deficient NNEST is further strengthened by students’ and employers’ perceptions of NNESTs in the English language teaching profession. However, I was confident that I had been making a difference to the students I taught and was helping them learn English, which was so important to their future careers. So my rejection was hard to accept.

Although they do not usually say so openly, most English teachers and students seem to perceive the native-English-speaking teacher (NEST) as superior to the NNEST. But has the time come to change this perception? What, exactly, are the relative benefits and drawbacks of having a NNEST in the EFL/ESL classroom?

The Struggle for Equal Treatment

English has become the lingua franca of the twenty-first century, and many students whose native language is not English feel the need to learn it. As a result, NNESTs have grown in number in the United States and in many non-English-speaking countries, and in the past fifteen years, the issue of discrimination against NNESTs has taken center stage for the English language teaching profession. In 1991, TESOL provided the following statement on nonnative speakers of English and hiring practices:

TESOL shall make every effort to prevent such discrimination ...[and shall] work towards the creation and publication of minimal language proficiency standards that may be applied equally to all ESOL teachers without reference to the nativeness of their English. (p. 1)

Whether this statement has had any effect on hiring practices is not known. However, many employers still openly prefer and advertise for native speakers only.

The majority of English teachers in the world are not native speakers of English, yet NNESTs continue to struggle for equal treatment in the profession. The desire of students to learn from a native speaker of English strengthens and justifies employers’ prejudices. TESOL’s statement provided a meaningful start to the debate, but many other issues need to be resolved in order to change student perceptions.
Issues within the Controversy

Is the Dichotomy Useful?

Even though there have been arguments against the dichotomy of native versus nonnative speaker, language teachers and researchers use the terms as widely as ever. Some argue that nonnative speakers can never achieve a native speaker’s competence, and many believe that nonnative speakers can never be as linguistically creative or original as native speakers can. Johnson (2002) showed that nonnative teachers themselves generally lack self-confidence and focus on teaching what they know they are best at.

A good way of distinguishing who is and who is not a native speaker of English is through self-definition (Lazaraton 2003). I myself do not want to be called a native speaker. I am aware of the differences, and obscuring the dichotomy is not what I want. However, I am opposed to being judged as incompetent solely on the basis of being a nonnative speaker. Even NNESTs may hold this view of inferiority: the NNESTs in a teacher training course in Hong Kong believed that NESTs were superior to them in speaking (100 percent), pronunciation (92 percent), listening (87 percent), vocabulary (79 percent), and reading (72 percent) (Tang 1997).

Who Is the Better Teacher?

A statement composed at the 1961 Commonwealth Conference on TESL in Uganda held that the ideal teacher of English was a native speaker. Native speakers were felt to be better qualified because they could better demonstrate fluent, idiomatically appropriate language, the cultural connotations of the language, and acceptable forms.

Since then, many studies have compared the teaching styles, competence, and perceived and actual differences in teaching behavior of NESTs and NNESTs (see, e.g., Medgyes 1994). Most of this research has focused on the relative advantages of NNESTs as English learners, they can serve as imitable models of successful learners of English, teach learning strategies more effectively, provide learners with more information about the English language, anticipate language difficulties, have more empathy for the needs and problems of learners, and share the learners’ mother tongue. I would add that NNESTs often have an intimate knowledge of the learners’ cultural background and expectations and that they have inside knowledge of institutional culture and goals in their country or local context.

Knowledge about language use and culture are two areas in which few NNESTs can compete with NESTs. Although this knowledge may be limited to one culture or one English-speaking country, it is a very powerful advantage since a NEST can rarely achieve such a high level of cultural competence (Lazaraton 2003). Another advantage of hiring NESTs is that the presence of native speakers in a school can broaden the horizons of the other teachers as well as of the students.

Teacher collaboration can maximize the strengths of both NESTs and NNESTs. Native-English-speaking colleagues of mine have explained how they have gained insights from NNESTs on the difficulties their students face. The two groups can benefit from each other by conferring on teaching practices and through collaborative teaching.

According to Phillipson (1992), “the untrained or unqualified native speaker is in fact potentially a menace because of ignorance of the structure of the mother tongue” (as cited in Medgyes 1992, 14). This statement supports the contention that the distinction should be not between NESTs and NNESTs but between qualified and unqualified teachers. Unfortunately, in many parts of the world, including my native Korea, teachers are employed based on their native language and not their qualifications.

Can Nonwhites Be Seen as Good English Teachers?

The race and identity of the NNEST raise complex problems of diversity. The English-speaking teacher is generally considered to be white. Even if a teacher has the necessary teaching competence and is a near-native speaker, being Asian or otherwise nonwhite may prevent that teacher from being seen as a good English teacher. The following claim by Lee (2000) vividly illustrates the issue of acceptance:

In the college where I am teaching, I am the only Asian in the ESL department. In my first encounter with students, I have been asked such questions as: “Are you a volunteer?” “What are your qualifications?” . . . . Now I have become more conscious of this urge to be good, because I know that it...
requires much more effort to convince students that NNS teachers can be equally good, if not better, English teachers than their native speaker counterparts can. (p. 1)

How can the English language teaching field address these concerns? First, TESOL and other professional bodies should publicly define the terms native and nonnative to show that there is no intrinsic connection between race and ability in English. And in the classroom, teachers should address language learners’ assumption that nonwhite people cannot be authentic English speakers (e.g., by discussing with students their experiences with English teachers of different races, and comparing students’ language goals and ways teachers with different cultural backgrounds can address them). The qualities that effective teachers should embody do not depend on their race or language background but on their motivation and zeal to become good teachers.

**Changed Perceptions Are the Key**

NESTs and NNESTs clearly differ in culture and language. Native speakers can provide students with knowledge of English pronunciation, culture, and vocabulary. Nonnative speakers can give students knowledge of English learning strategies and explain difficult concepts through the mother tongue they share with the students. NNESTs can also serve as empathetic listeners for beginning and struggling students, needs analysts, agents of change, and coaches for public examinations in the local context.

The key to gaining acceptance for NNESTs is to change English learners’ perceptions of them. And these perceptions will change only when there are more NNESTs and when they become the norm rather than the exception (Lee 2000). That can happen only when hiring practices in the ESL/EFL profession are influenced by research. For example, in Korea, the Ministry of Education advised in its 2001 national curriculum that NESTs should be hired for conversation classrooms in middle and high schools. Such decisions can lead to the marginalization of local NNESTs and to the hiring of unqualified native English speakers.

In the late 1990s, TESOL established the Nonnative English Speakers in TESOL Caucus, and as its membership grows, the issue of the legitimate place of the nonnative teacher in the profession is becoming more widely recognized and discussed. I hope voices like mine will help bring about equity in English language teaching practice so that teachers are judged not by their race or nationality but by their ability. Ideally, changes in perception will lead to more nonnative teachers in the field, and, eventually, to a level playing field for NNESTs.

**References**


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**What, exactly, are the relative benefits and drawbacks of having a NNEST in the EFL/ESL classroom?**

Out of the Box is edited by Phil Quirke (pquirke@hct.ac.ae). See http://www.tesol.org/ for submission guidelines.
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WHAT’S NEW FOR THE 40TH?
Visit http://www.tesol.org/ and check out TESOL’s 40th Anniversary Web page to learn about the latest anniversary events and celebrations.
ESL/EFL teachers try to maintain a balance between offering students language input (reading, listening, and studying) and giving them opportunities for output (structured and communicative activities in which students speak and write in English) (Brown 2000). For most teachers, giving access to input is relatively simple: just provide appropriate reading and listening material. Opportunities for output, however, may not be so simple to create, and many teachers spend a great deal of time designing speaking and writing activities for students.

If you and the students you teach have access to computers and an Internet connection, you can help balance the input/output equation through Web resources that take advantage of new computer technologies, such as artificial intelligence, text-to-speech, and speech recognition. Students can carry out ready-made structured and communicative output activities. Once you are comfortable with the technology, you can create your own.

Two online activities that have helped improve the communication skills of the students I teach are participating in an online ESL community and chatting with an online language robot.

ESL Chat Communities
Learners in countries where the main language is not English often have trouble finding someone with whom to practice speaking English. Online communities can address this problem by connecting learners over the Internet.

In 2002, I discovered numerous online chat groups but few that catered to ESL learners. Dave Sperling’s Chat Central (http://www.eslcafe.com/chat/chatpro.cgi), the first chat room dedicated to English learning, attracts ESL learners and teachers worldwide. Another popular ESL chat room is EnglishClub.com’s ESL Chat Room (http://www.englishclub.com/esl-chat/). Both sites require you to register, which makes the chat room safer but causes some inconvenience to users who have trouble remembering passwords. One site that does not require user registration is 1-language.com’s ESL Realtime Chat (http://www.1-language.com/chat/), where you need only give yourself a nickname to enter.

From Text to Voice Chat
The chat sites I’ve mentioned are limited by the software they use, and you can chat only by typing text. Unfortunately, many ESL learners type slowly, and a chat room is not a good place for them to practice. And most users I’ve encountered in ESL chat rooms are not ESL/EFL learners but teachers discussing teaching or other visitors who simply enjoy chatting. In the hope of attracting more ESL learners to online chat, I created an ESL community (the ESL Online Talk Community, http://www.rong-chang.com/guest/talksign.htm) where users can talk through computer microphones as well as write to each other.
Chatting Basics

To participate in the ESL Online Talk Community, students need access to a computer with a microphone and an Internet connection. A computer-mounted video camera (a Webcam) is useful but not necessary. For software, I chose MSN Messenger. To join, students do the following:

- download and install MSN Messenger (http://messenger.msn.com/)
- open a free, Web-based e-mail account at MSN Hotmail (http://www.hotmail.com/)
- sign up at http://www.rong-chang.com/guest/addguest.html by entering their name, their e-mail address, and a brief self-introduction

Using a guestbook program, I post all the members’ self-introductions online. To find a chat partner, students browse the guestbook and add the Hotmail addresses of the members they are interested in chatting with to MSN Messenger’s Contact List.

The program signals the student when a person on the Contact List is online. The student then invites the person to talk, and, if the person accepts, the two can speak to each other through their microphones. If both students have Webcams, they can have face-to-face conversations by clicking on a button within MSN Messenger.

Orientation to Online Chat

As an introduction to online chat, I bring the students into a computer lab and show them how to add potential partners to MSN Messenger’s Contact List. Nowadays, software installation from the Web is fairly straightforward. If students need to install MSN Messenger on their own machines, I direct them to the Web site, and they are usually able to download and install it without help.

Another important part of this orientation is an introduction to the use of microphones. If a microphone does not work, often it is either muted or plugged into the wrong socket. In the computer lab, I show the students how to troubleshoot these problems. Some students initially have difficulty using microphones and end up chatting by typing instead of speaking. With time, students become more comfortable using microphones and videoconferencing. And with the increased availability of broadband Internet connections, audio quality has improved.

Chatting by Assignment

Every semester, I have students find a chat partner through the ESL Online Talk Community. Because students choose their own partners, I cannot monitor their communication directly, but I ask them to send me at least one e-mail in which they tell me about their e-mail exchanges. I reply to their message with encouragement and with some online chat safety tips (e.g., do not use your real name; do not give out your telephone numbers and addresses; end the conversation if you do not feel comfortable chatting with someone; do not arrange to meet anyone from a chat room).

Having an online chat partner has improved the English language skills of the students I teach and has helped them make friends around the world.

Human: Hi, Alice.
ALICE: Hello there.
Human: What are you doing?
ALICE: I am just killing time.
Human: What kind of books do you like to read?
ALICE: International bestsellers are usually the best.

Online robots learn with experience. They record all the questions being asked, and the creator can study the conversations to develop better responses.
A.L.I.C.E., the Chat Robot

Computers cannot yet think like humans, but thanks to the Artificial Intelligence Foundation’s Artificial Linguistic Internet Computer Entity (A.L.I.C.E.; http://www.alicebot.org/), computers can now chat well enough to hold simple conversations with humans online.

Like humans, online robots learn with experience. They record all the questions being asked, and the creator can study the conversations to develop better responses. When students repeatedly practice conversations on a specific topic, the robot develops a huge database. It can respond to one question or remark with various appropriate responses, which is what happens in real life.

How Does A.L.I.C.E. Talk to Students?

Programmed with Artificial Intelligence Markup Language (AIML), A.L.I.C.E. can form responses to questions and other input based on a database with thousands of grammar and logical inference rules (Wallace, Tomabechi, and Aimless 2003). As the leading open-source conversational system on the Web, A.L.I.C.E. has won the Loebner Prize three times for producing responses that are indistinguishable from a human’s (see Loebner 2003).

A.L.I.C.E. speaks to users through a technology called text-to-speech, a form of speech synthesis that converts text into spoken voice output. The voice is computer synthesized, but, in my opinion, it is good enough for language learning practice. The three-dimensional character, smooth animation, and lip synchronization make students feel as if they are actually talking to a human. Although A.L.I.C.E. is not intended for learning English and the robot’s remarks aren’t always appropriate, talking to A.L.I.C.E. gives English learners an enjoyable way to practice speaking.

By configuring their computers to use speech recognition software, students can chat with A.L.I.C.E. by speaking into their microphones. If you use Windows XP, you already have a speech recognition engine installed on your computer. To configure it, go to the Control Panel and click on the Speech icon; you should see Microsoft English ASR Version 5 Engine. Close the Speech window and click on the Regional and Languages Options icon. Select the Languages tab, and then click on Details. Choose to add Speech Recognition and show the Language Bar on the desktop. After you restart the computer, you will see a microphone icon on the desktop. When you speak into the microphone, the software will convey your speech.

Speech recognition technology has made amazing progress over the past few years, but it is still not perfect. An ordinary microphone works, but not very well; a better choice is a high-quality, unidirectional, noise-cancellation microphone. And students can improve the accuracy of the software by training it to recognize their voice and adapt to their pronunciation—for example, by reading paragraphs into the microphone in a normal voice.

Ready-Made Chat Robots

From the A.L.I.C.E. Artificial Intelligence Foundation’s Web site (http://www.alicebot.org/), students can access the free chat robot, or they can subscribe to three other bots for US$9.99 a month or US$99 a year. The free and paid bots use the same database and respond to typed orspoken input. In the free version, the robot responds via written text; in the paid versions, the robots respond with a computer-synthesized voice.

Build Your Own Language Bot

Part of the reason for the popularity of A.L.I.C.E. is that its programming language, AIML, is as easy as HTML. Once you have mastered AIML (a primer is available at http://www.alicebot.org/), you can create your own robot. If you don’t want to take the trouble to learn AIML, you can use online authoring tools, but learning AIML will give you more power to customize your robots.

Pandorabots (http://www.pandorabots.com/) is a robot-hosting service that allows you to create, design, and publish software robots. All you need is a computer with an Internet connection and a Web browser. To create a robot, sign up for a free account at Pandorabots. Log in with your user name and password, and click on Create a Pandorabot. You can
choose whether or not to include a ready-made set of AIML content in your new Pandorabot. Give your robot a name. Then add content to your robot with the authoring tool or through AIML programming.

A Robotic ESL Tutor
To help my students practice English, I created a robot called ESL Tutor (see http://www.rong-chang.com/esltutor.htm) that uses A.L.I.C.E.'s huge database. When visitors chat with the robot, the conversations are recorded in a log, which, as the creator of the robot, I can check. If I'm unhappy with one of the robot's responses, I click on the Modify button and type in the response I prefer. Then I save and reload the program. The next time the question is asked, the robot will give the new response.

As optional homework, I ask my students to chat with A.L.I.C.E. fifteen minutes a day. If speech recognition doesn't work well for them, they can chat by typing. I check the chat log to see what kind of questions my students are asking and what the robot's responses are. From the chat log, I can see what kind of errors my students are making, which helps me adjust my teaching.

My experiment with this robot demonstrates that ESL teachers can use artificial intelligence technology to create online ESL tutors and other teaching assistants. For example, you might create a robot to answer students' grammar questions or a conversation robot to teach students what to say in different situations. You might even create a family of online ESL robots, each an expert on one topic, such as shopping, traveling, or seeing a doctor.

Let the Technology Serve You
New computer technologies can help English learners develop communication skills in new and exciting ways. If you learn to use these technologies, or even to use tools others have created with them, you give your students more opportunities for output.

References


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RECENTLY I HAD A FREE HOUR BEFORE A GRAMMAR CLASS. I HAD PREPARED A LESSON ON THE PAST FORMS OF THE MODAL SHOULD: SHOULD HAVE AND SHOULDN'T HAVE, BUT I WANTED TO CONNECT THE GRAMMAR POINT TO SOMETHING IN THE REAL WORLD. I WAS THINKING THAT ENGLISH SPEAKERS USE THESE MODALS TO EXPRESS REGRET, AND WHAT BETTER SOURCE OF REGRET THAN A LOST LOVE? I OPENED MY INTERNET BROWSER AND TYPED “SHOULDN’T HAVE”, “SHOULD HAVE”, AND LYRICS IN THE SEARCH BOX.

Songs are a rich and compelling source of natural input for the language classroom. While evoking emotions and awakening interest, music can be used to teach structure, vocabulary, or pronunciation; for listening practice; or as a general warm-up activity for a discussion topic. Music is also closely tied to culture, and the variety of musical genres in the English-speaking world expresses the wide cultural diversity. Indeed, the extensive variety of music and the ever-increasing catalogue of songs available can be overwhelming.

I have found the Internet to be an indispensable tool for quickly and efficiently sorting through, locating, and downloading appropriate songs for the classroom. You can put together a song-based, grammar-focused lesson in less than one hour, including searching for the song, downloading it over the Internet, converting it to a classroom audio format, making a lyrics handout, and planning grammar activities based on the song.

THE IDEAL SONG
Not every song is ideal for the classroom, and it takes some searching to isolate appropriate ones. When choosing a song for the classroom, ask yourself: Is the topic or language potentially offensive? Is the song’s theme too mature for my students? Too immature? Will my students enjoy the song, or is it merely something I like? Is the language too obscure? Too simple? Is the song short enough? Do I have enough time in class to play the song three, four, or five times? Will the students get bored with the song before they even finish the activity? Is the song’s tempo too fast for my students to comprehend the lyrics? Are the words sung clearly enough?

The ideal song is short, slow, and clear; repeats key phrases; attracts students’ attention; and teaches some natural, interesting language without offending anyone.

FINDING AND BUYING THE LUCKY HIT
In the search described at the beginning of this article, putting key phrases within quotation marks ensured that the search engine would find only Web pages with those exact phrases intact. Adding the word lyrics helped limit the search to lyrics pages. Surfing through a number of lyrics pages and scanning the words is a fast way to find a song that might work.

The Internet contains literally hundreds of thousands of lyrics pages. Many are supplied by volunteer transcribers and corrected by input from readers. One of
the first hits in my search results was a page from Lyrics Depot (http://www.lyricsdepot.com/) with the lyrics of the song “All the Things I Should Have Known” by the rhythm and blues (R&B) duet K-Ci and Jojo.

Scanning the lyrics told me it had plenty of potential. It had twenty examples of should have or shouldn’t have and even used the word regret, a key vocabulary term for my lesson. Best of all, the song included this delightful phrase: “all the should’ves in the world, they won’t bring you back.” I copied the lyrics and pasted them into my word-processing application (see the box for a caveat on downloading and copying lyrics and music).

Then I searched for the music. I logged onto Apple’s iTunes Music Store (http://www.apple.com/itunes/store/) and found the song in its collection. I listened to a thirty-second sample and decided that the song was appropriate for the students. The pronunciation was clear enough, and it was relatively slow. I purchased the song in MP3 format for 99 cents and downloaded it to my computer. (The MP3 format compresses an audio file to a relatively small size while maintaining nearly perfect sound quality. In most cases, one minute of music is one megabyte [MB] in size.) The MP3 file for this song was around 7.5 MB in size and took only a couple of minutes to download over a broadband connection.

The iTunes Music Store is only one of many sources for MP3 music downloads. Microsoft has its own store, called MSN Music (see http://music.msn.com/), with similar offerings and prices. Some retailers, such as Wal-Mart (http://www.walmart.com/music_downloads/introToServices.do) and Best Buy (http://www.bestbuy.com/), have their own online music stores. Each site has its own peculiar set of restrictions and rules, and it pays to look around to find the music store that meets your needs and your computer’s capability before setting up an account. I use the iTunes Music Store because it has over two million songs and the most liberal rules of use. It’s also very easy to use and works with both Macintosh and Microsoft Windows operating systems.

A Caveat on Copyright and Fair Use

The relative ease of obtaining and reproducing lyrics and music from the Internet does not mean that their classroom use is always legal. Before selecting lyrics and downloading music, you should educate yourself on copyright and fair use policies.

One good source is the University of Maryland University College’s (2004) “Copyright and Fair Use in the Classroom, on the Internet, and the World Wide Web” (http://www.umuc.edu/library/copy.html). See also the Compleat Links article, “Is Every Educational Use a Fair Use?” in the Essential Teacher section of http://www.tesol.org/. And be sure to check the guidelines set out by your own educational institution.

Copying lyrics:

- The song lyrics on my handout came to fewer than 250 words.
- I included the copyright information on my handout.

Downloading music:

- I had paid for the song.
- I used it only once in class.
- I used it for noncommercial, educational purposes.

On the handout, I included information on how to purchase the song or CD. I feel this promotes the artists. Language students often want to know how they can get their own copy of a song once they have studied it in class, and in this case some of my students went out and bought the CD the same day.
Double-Checking
As soon as I had downloaded the MP3 file, I listened to the song and double-checked the lyrics I had copied into my word-processing application. Since lyrics Web pages are unofficial and usually fan-supplied, do not assume that the lyrics provided are correct or even match the version of the song you have.

In my case, there were a number of errors to correct. The transcriber didn’t like using the shift key, so the lyrics were all in lowercase. I made some adjustments in spelling as well. I glossed relaxed speech such as wanna (want to) and gonna (going to) by putting the standard speech equivalent in parentheses. I also glossed the abbreviated -ing verbs kissin’ (kissing) and holdin’ (holding). I indicated that the oooohs and wohhhhs were sounds, not words, so that the students wouldn’t waste time looking these sounds up in their dictionaries.

I burned the song onto a CD and tested it. I usually use CDs because they are the fastest medium to produce and the easiest to use in the classroom. You can also copy the music file to an audiocassette or MiniDisc (MD) by connecting your recorder’s auxiliary port to your computer’s speaker port using a double minijack cable. MDs, which use a digital compression technique to store music, are useful because you can create separate tracks within a song, making it easy to advance, replay verses, or quickly find a place you want to highlight in a song.

I then spent time making photocopies of the lyrics and deciding what to do with the song in class. Since the song was quite long, I didn’t want to have to play it too many times—the way I would if I were doing a cloze listening activity. Instead, I decided to give the students a handout with all of the lyrics. The entire process took less than an hour.

In the Classroom
Before playing the song in class, I handed out the photocopies of the lyrics and had the students locate and highlight all the uses of should have and shouldn’t have. They then listened to the song and noted the pronunciation of the modals. Finally, I had the students do an exercise in which they had to deduce what the singer had done or had not done, based on what he said he should have or shouldn’t have.

The ideal song is short, slow, and clear; repeats key phrases; attracts students’ attention; and teaches some natural, interesting language without offending anyone.
shouldn’t have done. For example, “I shouldn’t have let my sweetie go” means the singer did in fact let his sweetie go. “I should have cared just a little bit more” means he didn’t care enough.

We finished up the lesson with some small-group storytelling. Volunteers were encouraged to tell personal regret stories using the target modals. These were generally hilarious, and the students enjoyed hearing about their classmates’ past woes. I assigned each student to write a short regret story for homework.

Grammar Comes Alive
The students thoroughly enjoyed this song and the accompanying activities. Current R&B is a popular genre with the students, but few knew of K-Ci and Jojo or had heard this song before. Seeing the focus language point set in a song made the grammar come alive for them. Using the Internet to sort through and locate appropriate songs, find the lyrics, and download the corresponding audio files can save time and help you expose students to a ready source of natural input.

Reference

Sylvan Payne has taught English in Canada and the United States, and currently teaches at International Christian University, in Japan.

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Thus begins my introduction to an online pen-pal project that will consume the high school students I teach at the Instituto Tecnológico y Estudios Superiores de Monterrey, in Hermosillo, Mexico, for the final seven to eight weeks of the semester. They are curious about what I have in mind for them.

“What would you do if you were blind? How would you get to know a person you couldn’t see?” They think about that possibility, and the ideas start to come.

“I’d ask them what they looked like.”

“I’d ask how old they are.”

“I’d ask to touch their face.” Soon a list of ideas is on the board.

The students then list ways they would describe themselves to someone else. They turn this list into an introductory e-mail in English to a student in another part of the world whom they have never met.

The students are intrigued and a little apprehensive about communicating with someone who is totally unknown to them. Through this project, they will learn about people in another part of the world, gain exposure to new ideas, and learn about new technology. They will learn how to handle frustration and solve problems. They will see how they and their partner are different and how they are alike. In short, they will take one step closer to becoming citizens of the world.

A School for Future Leaders
Located about a three-hour drive from the U.S.-Mexico border, Tec (as the school is affectionately known) is one school in a network of thirty campuses with headquarters in Monterrey. Tec has been operating for about sixty years and is considered one of the leading educational institutions in Mexico. The school incorporates both high school and university studies, with an emphasis on technology. Students are required to have access to the Internet, either in their home or through a laptop that they can plug into one of the myriad outlets available on campus. As a former computer systems analyst and programmer in a second career as an ESL teacher, I now teach ESL writing classes in the high school.

Online Pen Pals with a Purpose
According to its mission statement and goals, Tec seeks to make its graduates the national and international leaders of tomorrow. I took the school’s mandate seriously and decided to introduce the students to people in other parts of the world through an online pen-pal project.
Undertaking a project like this involves planning before the course starts and flexibility throughout the semester. Although the students write the first e-mail to their partners well after the semester has begun, I start making the necessary contacts and work out the details of the project much earlier. After running the project for several semesters, I have come up with a flexible checklist that helps me organize the project and have a more successful outcome (for some key recommendations, see the box).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Find the Right Partner Class</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The first step is to define the general demographics of the desired partner class and the scope and objectives of the project. You can choose a partner class located in any part of the world, and making a decision is much easier if you ask yourself a few simple questions at the beginning of the semester:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- What age should the students be? I have successfully matched high school students with high school students, community college students, and university students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- What language will the students correspond in? Will the project be in English, or will it be bilingual?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Is a specific level of language proficiency necessary?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- What culture or country is desired? Is one specific geographic location better than another? Diverse time zones can affect the communication process negatively.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tips for a Successful Online Partner Project

- Start early. Give yourself plenty of time to plan and work out problems.
- Communicate often with the other teacher. Make sure you both know exactly what you expect of the students.
- Use e-mail for initial student introductions.
- Create a chat room to give students another way to communicate.
- Assign similar projects in both classes. The more alike the assignments are, the more likely the students are to meet all the requirements on time.
- Be aware of holidays, vacations, breaks, and exam periods. There is nothing worse than finding out that the students haven’t heard from their partners because of a vacation you didn’t know about. Make a schedule of special days, and give it to your partner teacher.

Once you have answered these basic questions, you can search for a partner class. Many sites on the Internet, some individually sponsored and others set up by schools, offer a pen-pal service. The two sites that I have used most often, ePALS Classroom Exchange (http://www.epals.com/) and Teaching.com (http://www.teaching.com/), have services that link teachers looking for partners. I search through other teachers’ postings for a class that fits the criteria I have established based on the questions above. If I find a few possibilities, I send e-mails to the teachers who have posted the notice and explain what I am looking for. I also create a posting of my own so that other teachers can find me.

Within a few days, I typically have four or five replies, and I start narrowing the search. Class size has turned out to be the most important delimiting factor. Projects seem to work best when the ratio of students in my class to students in the distant class is as close as possible to one to one. If I have a specific project in mind, I give as much information as I can to the other teacher. An excellent source of engaging project topics is Dave Sperling’s Internet Activity Workbook (1999). Many of these can be adapted to assignments that get the students talking. 

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I also consider these questions: What type and scope of project does the other teacher desire? Will the students just chat online, or will they turn in an assignment? How structured will the assignment be? Will both classes have the same assignment? Will the student partners create one final product jointly, or will they each create a separate product?

Set up the Project Structure
Once I have found a compatible class, I set up communication with the teacher using instant-messaging software, such as Yahoo! Messenger (see http://messenger.yahoo.com/) or MSN Messenger (see http://messenger.msn.com/). We agree on a time to talk and work out the details for getting started.

First, we each collect the e-mail addresses of all the students. We then divide the students into groups of four, two from each class. The groups can be larger or smaller, depending on the scope of the project, but smaller groups cause fewer problems, and all members are more likely to participate.

We also agree on when we will introduce the project to our classes—ideally, the same day for both classes. Before that day, I set up a chat room at Yahoo! Groups (http://groups.yahoo.com/) or MSN Groups (http://groups.msn.com/) where the students can chat with their partners. The group site also serves as a place to upload the final assignments so all the students can see them.

In class, each student is assigned to a group and given the e-mail addresses of the other students in that group. From their personal e-mail accounts, they write and send an introductory e-mail to their partners in the other class. Once the students have successfully made contact with their partners, I give them instructions for accessing the chat room I have set up and encourage them to experiment with other forms of communication, such as instant messaging and Web phone.

Assign the Project
The project usually consists of two parts, a getting-to-know-you part and an assignment that involves a jointly researched or discussed topic. In a recent project, I assigned a different topic (e.g., pets, art, cities, crime, food, family, marriage) from the Internet Activity Workbook (Sperling 1999) to each group. The students’ assignment was to discuss the topic as it related to their culture and explore the attitudes toward the topic in the culture(s) of their partners. The final assignment was a group Microsoft PowerPoint presentation that showed the differences and similarities between the two cultures.

Partners in Troubleshooting
During the project, I stay in close contact with the other teacher. The most successful projects are ones in which we maintain open and frequent contact. Whenever I am at my computer, I keep my instant-messaging software open so that I can contact the other teacher whenever necessary to work out problems that arise.

Nevertheless, things do go wrong. Students may complain, “I sent an e-mail, but nobody ever answered.” In response, all students must now send me a copy of
all e-mail communication. The chat technology is blocked on campus. Now students are told to set up chat times on their home computers. As each problem surfaces, I verify it, discuss it with the other teacher, and come up with a solution. My goal is to handle problems as they arise, not to have a problem-free project. Most students learn more when they overcome a difficulty or solve a technical or logistical problem.

Other, nontechnical problems arise, too. During the project, students typically go through a cycle of initial enthusiasm followed by difficulties. At first, they are full of curiosity and eagerly write their e-mails. Later, they may experience frustration when problems arise—for example, when they do not have a reply from their partner or are dissatisfied with the reply they receive. Most groups overcome the difficulties without being helped or complaining, but some do not. I tell students that they will have to overcome communication obstacles, both technical and interpersonal, and they will be graded on how well they define and overcome these problems. Knowing this empowers the students to make decisions and take chances.

**A Small Step toward Global Understanding, a Great Sense of Accomplishment**

The students may struggle at times during this difficult project, but they come away from it with a feeling of accomplishment. By working with a partner from a different culture, they have taken one step toward global understanding. For the teacher, the benefits are the same. But there can be one additional benefit: the second time around, the project is a lot easier.

Reference


Cheri Powell is an ESL teacher at the Instituto Tecnológico y Estudios Superiores de Monterrey, Campus Sonora Norte, in Mexico.
A couple of years ago, I read a comment about immigration and race in a student essay that included a reference to a Web site. The comment was not inflammatory in any way, but I checked out the referenced Web site anyway.

The site appeared innocent enough, but one remark puzzled me, so I searched further. There was no “About Us” page or mission statement at the site, so my only recourse was to delete some of the subdirectories in the URL to see what turned up. At the home page I was disturbed to see links to hate groups. Later, when I asked the student whether she realized that her reference had connections to hate organizations, she appeared genuinely shocked.

This incident highlights a growing concern among second language teachers. As the Web gradually becomes the primary source of information for many people, teachers need to help students develop a heightened critical filter when they use content from Web sites. This is especially the case for second language learners. When they arrive at a Web site after a key-word search, they may focus more of their energy on decoding the language than on evaluating the quality of the source.

When learners search for information on the Web, they need skills in three areas: choosing and using a search engine, examining the Web site’s genre and layout, and evaluating the Web site’s content.

Teach Some Search Engine Skills
Sometimes I get the impression that students think search engines are equivalent to library databases. While search engines often produce uncannily accurate results, they have their own nuances, and some basic knowledge about search engines will help students understand their limitations in generating high-quality results.

Key-Word Skills
Choosing key words is a skill in itself. Here are three basic suggestions you can offer to students:

■ Choose multiple words that most closely capture the subject matter you are looking for. For example, a student was writing a term paper on the use of silence in Chinese culture. Her key-word search using the words silence and Chinese turned up some useful links; however, a search for silence, communication, and Chinese turned up many more useful links.

■ Avoid entering articles, prepositions, and other high-frequency words that are not directly relevant to the topic.

■ Use the advanced searches offered by major engines. Advanced searches can look for exact phrases or avoid false hits (e.g., making sure that the key word Dolly leads you to sites discussing cloning rather than ones about a country singer).

Popularity Is Not the Same as Quality
Once you enter key words, a search engine looks for matches in the titles and first few paragraphs of up to nineteen billion sites on the Web (CNN/Money 2005). If the search engine finds many matches, the results pages (usually with ten or twenty links per page) may show where these key words appear most often. Search engines may also return results based on the frequency with which pages are linked to each other (The Economist 2004). In other words, if
a site is very popular, it has a greater chance of appearing on the first page of results.

Both methods mean that Web page makers can manipulate content in order to appear on that key first page. (According to McLaughlin 2002, 70 percent of viewers do not go beyond the second page of search engine results when looking for information.) Naturally, popularity is not necessarily a good indicator of quality, and if content is manipulated to attract visitors to a site, this further compromises its value.

While you don’t need to explain search engine algorithms, learners need to be aware that search engines do not always generate reliable links. Any large organization with an agenda to influence public opinion may optimize its Web site so that certain key words result in its appearance on the first page of results.

Choose the Right Search Engine

Many students I have taught assume that the big portal engines, such as Google (http://www.google.com/) and Yahoo! (http://www.yahoo.com/), are the only ones in existence. However, many online newspapers offer free use of their engines to search the Web, and the links that these searches generate are generally reliable. Newspaper searches are useful for researching current events. For example, if a student is looking for information on the issue of whale hunting, The New York Times (http://www.nytimes.com/) and Japan Times (http://www.japantimes.co.jp/) search engines offer precise links on entering the key words whale, hunting, and meat.

For more serious, academic searches, students can use Google Scholar (http://scholar.google.com/) or Scirus (http://www.scirus.com/srsapp/), which limit searches to academic and other scholarly sources (for a review of Google Scholar, see Essential Teacher, December 2005).

Is the Site Selling or Informing?

Web site genre usually refers to the main domain name suffix (e.g., .com, .org, .gov). In isolating the genre, you are trying to learn whether the site is selling something, pushing an ideological agenda, or simply informing the public, among other purposes. Be aware, though, that the domain name suffix does not always accurately tell you the genre. For example, a URL containing geocities.com often designates a personal Web site. (Yahoo! GeoCities is a company that hosts Web sites for individuals and organizations.)

In any event, domain name suffixes can sometimes be good indicators of genre. For instance, if a learner is looking for statistics about a country, a site with a .gov or .go (government) domain name suffix is probably reliable and up-to-date. On the other hand, information derived from a personal site requires more scrutiny.

Warn students to view even sites of well-known universities (with main domain names ending in .edu or .ac) with caution. Some students and teachers upload working papers or lecture notes on servers that are attached to their university’s domain. The quality of such sites can range from admirable to abysmal. Encourage learners to look closely at the URLs in the search engine results (which appear, for example, in green on Google’s results pages) and judge accordingly.

Does the Site Tell You about Itself?

By layout, I refer not to the appearance of the site but to the use of standardized features: the date (Last Updated), the Webmaster or author, and the purpose (About Us or Mission Statement). Looking at these features is helpful but not sufficient. For example, some mission statements have transparent descriptions of the site’s purpose while others are cloaked in vague terms and high-minded language. Even extremist groups can claim that their goal is to “educate the public with facts about . . . .”

Nevertheless, in general, these standardized features are another way to judge quality. When they are absent, encourage students to delete subdirectories in the URL, if they exist, in order to explore the site (e.g., in the URL, start at the end and delete the material back to the next slash, then the next, and so on).
Evaluate the Content

The most important aspect of a Web site is its content, and some key indicators are helpful in evaluating quality.

Don’t Be Fooled by Appearance

On arriving at a Web site, you are greeted by the design, including colors, fonts, photos, and graphics. With the availability of increasingly sophisticated, user-friendly software, almost anyone can make a decent-looking Web page. The problem is that viewers (including students) may find it difficult to assess a site’s quality by its appearance. Individuals with an ideological agenda can create a reasonably good-looking site, and well-funded organizations can employ Web designers to make their sites look very professional. The bottom line is that using appearance as a guide to the quality of Web content is less and less reliable.

Examine the Text with a Critical Eye

Evaluating the quality of a Web site’s content is not much different from evaluating a book or magazine. Although the same principles apply, you need a higher critical filter because, unlike most books, most Web sites do not have to pass through several screenings by editors, reviewers, and publishers. Here are some aspects of the text that students should be aware of.

Language: Use of language can often be a good indicator of the quality of the information at a Web site. For example, emotionally charged language can signal excessive interest in a certain belief. Terms such as shocking and heartbreaking sometimes show an overly emotional attachment to a topic and should be viewed with some suspicion. Likewise, encourage students to view vague, unsubstantiated assertions, for example, “the majority of Americans believe . . .,” with some doubt. They should also be skeptical of sarcasm, another emotionally laden way to express a viewpoint.

Arguments: Fallacies, or poor reasoning, are another feature to be wary of (for examples of common fallacies, see textbooks on writing and critical thinking, e.g., by Ramage and Bean 1999). Some of the more common types include red herrings, which try to divert the reader’s attention to an unrelated matter; straw person arguments, which greatly oversimplify any counterarguments; and slippery slope arguments, which assume that any step in one direction will result in extreme consequences (e.g., marijuana smokers will inevitably end up using . . .).
heroin). Many touchstone controversial issues discussed at Web sites, such as same-sex marriage or gun control, often use appeal to emotional premises arguments. Such issues also seem to include many hasty generalizations, or the use of one isolated example to represent the norm.

**Statistics:** Information on Web sites often includes supporting statistics. Normally, readers respect numbers as objective and unassailable, and often they are. But learners need to view such figures with a healthy dose of skepticism if no source is shown or if they appear illogical. One example is the now infamous claim that 150 people a year are killed by falling coconuts, which was based on unsubstantiated research and circulated on the Internet by a travel company (see Adams 2002).

**Photos and graphics:** Make students aware that photos can be used as persuasive tools. I recently visited a Web site with an environmentalist agenda that showed a photo of a bloodied whale being pulled aboard a factory ship. When I visited a pro-whaling site, I was greeted by a smiling, animated whale. The difference in mood conveyed by the two visual images was stark.

**Balance:** Finally, encourage students to look for balance. Sponsors of reputable Web pages usually make some effort to include links not only to pages with ideology sympathetic to their own but also to those with opposing views.

**Breadth, Depth, and Pitfalls**
In the end, you and the students you teach should be aware that the Web represents a still-burgeoning medium that is awesome in breadth and depth but offers many pitfalls for the naïve user. For Web content evaluation forms and guidelines that you can adapt to students’ needs, see Stapleton and Helms-Park (forthcoming) and Widener University (2003). By teaching students to look at Web sites with a critical eye, you can help them avoid being taken in by fallacious information on the Internet.

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**References**


Paul Stapleton is a professor at Hokkaido University, in Japan.

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Portal is edited by Mercedes Rossetti (marossetti@prodigy.net.mx). See http://www.tesol.org/ for submission guidelines.
Teachers of advanced ESL/EFL students in academic preparation classes face a challenge: finding compelling materials that bridge the gap between what the students learn in lower levels and the critical thinking, reading, and writing skills they need to develop for university classes. *New Directions* provides a useful framework for helping students acquire these skills. It includes an engaging array of thematically based readings as well as discussion, writing, and vocabulary activities that are appropriate for young adults. Each chapter also contains a unique writing emphasis.

To this text’s second edition, the author has added a timely chapter on the mass media and technology, many new and updated readings, and several helpful exercises, including a note-taking task that encourages students to read actively. Best of all, this edition includes a comprehensive new reference section, “Essentials of Writing,” which thoroughly and systematically lays out all the stages of the writing process.

Leslie Greffenius is president and codirector of the Olin Center, in the United States.

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*Breaking Through: College Reading* is designed to help entering college students gain the reading strategies and study skills they’ll need in typical freshman classes in different departments, including business, history, political science, and psychology.

Each chapter focuses on a different skill, such as guessing the meaning of new vocabulary from context, increasing reading speed, and making inferences. There are typically several exercises to practice the skills on brief excerpts from different textbooks. This is followed by a few longer passages of two or three pages. Each of these ends with a list of Web sites for further reading.

Unfortunately, at a little over sixty dollars and a little under 600 pages, *Breaking Through: College Reading* is simply too expensive and too heavy for some students. (One student split it in half, which at least solved the second problem.)

On the whole, though, my classes have been quite happy with the book. They find it highly motivating to use an authentic book (i.e., one not designed specifically for ESOL students), with the type of vocabulary and structures they’re likely to encounter in their future studies.

Catharine Hannay teaches in the Intensive English Program of the Center for Language Education and Development at Georgetown University, in the United States.
If you listen carefully, you can hear it. Students from all over the world are grumbling, and some are even panicking, as they prepare to take the new Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL). No longer will their noncommunicative test-taking strategies of memorizing vocabulary words and grammar rules work. In September 2005, Educational Testing Service (ETS) began administering a new and improved TOEFL known as the TOEFL iBT (Internet-Based Test). This isn’t just the previous test put on the Internet; it represents a complete overhaul of the entire test. This revision, which is being unveiled in stages around the world (China, Japan, and Korea will change over in May), is supposed to more accurately predict students’ communicative competence in an academic context.

The buzzword for the TOEFL iBT is integrated. Instead of independently assessing discrete skills in listening, grammar, and reading, the new test requires students to combine skills just as they would in a real academic context. The new test takes several leaps up Bloom’s taxonomy. No longer just testing knowledge and comprehension, the test now requires application, analysis, and synthesis.

The TOEFL iBT site devotes hundreds of pages to the TOEFL iBT, including standard-setting materials with comparison charts, the speaking and writing rubrics, and details of the development of the test and the piloting process. The site also includes a free practice test and a seventy-one-page brochure called TOEFL iBT Tips, which students can download or request by e-mailing toeflnews@ets.org.

Whether or not the TOEFL iBT really predicts students’ academic readiness remains to be seen. What is certain, though, is that you’ll never again have students skipping their academic speaking class because they were home studying for the TOEFL.


Whoopi Goldberg’s hit movie Sister Act is an amusing crime caper that can serve as the basis for a variety of enjoyable activities for ESL learners. In this modern-day fairy tale, Goldberg plays a flamboyant Las Vegas lounge singer who goes into hiding in a cloistered convent after witnessing a murder orchestrated by her mobster boyfriend. A beginning-level class might focus on the colorful, visual side of Sister Act. Intermediate-level classes can cover the plot, music, and characters. More advanced-level learners might focus on the idiomatic language and jokes and compare this film with other pop-culture stories that carry a moral.

Musical films provide the added benefit of songs and lyrics that can enhance learning. The Sister Act soundtrack includes a number of tunes with easy-to-understand lyrics and a rock-and-roll rhythm. The lyrics to these catchy songs can be found at SoundTrack Lyrics (http://www.stlyrics.com/; for a caveat on downloading and copying lyrics, see “A Song-Based Grammar Lesson in Record Time,” in this issue).

ESL teachers can incorporate Sister Act into instruction in many ways. For instance, the film complements thematic units on crime, religion, and urban living. Students may also enjoy acting out or writing about the comical scenes and stereotypical characters. In addition, students can brainstorm alternative story endings or write their own reviews of the film in the style of a magazine or newspaper.

Barbara Schroeder Jensen, outgoing chair of TESOL’s International Teaching Assistants Interest Section, teaches at Princeton University, in the United States.

Abigail Bartoshesky is a visiting assistant professor of teacher education and anthropology at Southern Methodist University, in the United States.
Software Thumbnails


Speech Works: Personal Version, available for Windows or Macintosh operating systems, is designed to help students modify and improve their English pronunciation. The Teacher Version gives you the opportunity to personalize the lessons and interact with your students. It is designed for individual work but allows for student-teacher interaction. It would not be particularly effective for group work.

This well-organized program is divided into twenty-four units. Each unit includes Discriminating Sounds Exercises, Word Pairs Drills, Sentence Exercises, Professional Vocabulary Exercises, Workplace Practice Exercises, and Extra Practice. The visual clues in the exercises are effective in aiding navigation. A particularly useful feature of the Personal Version is its presentation of three modalities for students to use in processing the information: print, audio, and visual.

In Speech Works, students work with various kinds of information and then perform a variety of tasks at different levels of difficulty. Students can build their own connections in exercises that ask them, for example, to think of a word they use in the workplace. The student must then use the word in the exercise, thus personalizing the information.

Two activities are particularly useful. In one, students listen to two sounds in English and decide whether the second sound is the same as or different from the first. In another activity, students listen to a model voice and record their own attempt, which is then compared with the model.

The Teacher Version adds the following features to the Personal Version: probe quizzes that assess students’ specific pronunciation problems, diagnostic tests to determine which units will be the most useful for individual students, a tracking feature that allows you to keep score while the student works at the exercises, an instructor’s program that creates files on the progress of individual students and stores data from their work, and personal practice files that allow you to create specialized exercises.

The Personal Version is very reasonably priced at US$79.95, which is much less than many other similar programs. The Teacher Version costs considerably more (US$395.00), but it has many more functions. The Teacher Version can also be used by students since it has the same exercise functions as the Personal Version.

Kaley Bierman is a teacher and program adviser in the Intensive English Program at Brevard Community College, in the United States.

Activities By Teachers, For Teachers

The popular New Ways series offers language teachers effective classroom techniques and activities. This 18-volume series includes topics such as authentic materials, communicative games, English for specific purposes, English at the secondary level, content-based instruction, reading, speaking, and many others.

Kaley Bierman is a teacher and program adviser in the Intensive English Program at Brevard Community College, in the United States.

Home and Other Pages is edited by Christine Meloni (meloni@gwu.edu). See http://www.tesol.org/ for submission guidelines.
Stoynoff and Chapelle introduce teachers and administrators to the PRINCIPLES, METHODS, and VOCABULARY of language assessment.

Twenty-one experienced ESOL test reviewers consider how to evaluate tests and testing manuals, and they discuss test purpose and method. Practitioners learn how advances in measurement theory and language testing research have changed the assessment landscape.

The sequence approximates how teachers and administrators might evaluate a standardized test.

Preview the overview chapter and two sample tests at http://www.tesol.org: Books: Assessment

Order online at http://www.tesol.org/
President’s Message

TESOL’s Strategic Plan, Part Two

In my December column, I discussed the first three goals of TESOL’s three-year Strategic Plan: (1) policy promotion for the association, (2) professional development, and (3) research. I now turn to the last three goals, with the objectives and activities embodied within each: (4) standards, (5) worldwide professional participation, and (6) organization sustainability and growth.

Goal Four: Standards

One of the most important activities of any professional association is devising and disseminating professional standards. TESOL has already been quite active in this arena. Under the Strategic Plan, one objective is to devote additional organizational resources to standards-based projects. TESOL will continue to develop and distribute publications, and hold workshops on standards as part of professional development. Connected with this effort, TESOL will explore new ways to distribute its standards-based products through cooperative arrangements with other professional associations and other entities involved in English language teaching (ELT).

A second objective is for TESOL to become a resource for developing ELT standards in new contexts. Since English teaching occurs throughout the globe, in native- and nonnative-English-speaking contexts, TESOL will draft guidelines for developing appropriate, locally relevant TESOL standards that meet the needs of a variety of ELT situations.

The third objective is for TESOL to develop and promote TESOL standards for new and emerging areas within the field. In particular, TESOL hopes to develop technology standards for use by teachers, teacher educators, and learners.

Goal Five: Worldwide Professional Participation

TESOL’s next goal is to ensure that the association assumes a leadership role in worldwide professional participation. Increasing the collaboration between TESOL and other organizations in the field will help bring about this goal. TESOL should seek out opportunities to create partnerships through regional symposia and conferences, create cyberlinks among organizational Web sites, and encourage collaboration among TESOL affiliates and between affiliates and TESOL itself.

Another objective is for TESOL to conduct research toward establishing profiles of ELT instructors worldwide. These profiles will reveal who teaches English worldwide, what qualifications are required of them, and what issues they encounter. The first activity needed to meet this objective is to create an e-instrument to collect the data to answer these questions and others. Then, TESOL needs to initiate research...
responses to help ELT professionals in diverse, resource-challenged situations.

Finally, TESOL and its affiliates need to increase their membership. TESOL plans to create a promotional DVD about the association, work with teacher education programs to help inform others on why ELT practitioners need to join professional associations, and identify and increase the number of TESOL affiliates in underrepresented areas while supporting current TESOL affiliates.

**Goal Six: Organization Sustainability and Growth**

The last goal in TESOL's Strategic Plan is organization sustainability and growth. Simply stated, if TESOL is to achieve all its objectives and deliver all its services to the membership, the association must be healthy fiscally and organizationally. TESOL leaders have a fiduciary responsibility to monitor the association's operations in such areas as budget, staffing, and fiscal policies. They must ensure that sound practices are in place to govern the association and that they are educated about TESOL's financial operation. Further, they must ensure that the goals and objectives articulated within the Strategic Plan are being fulfilled.

Another key objective is to increase TESOL's membership worldwide. All TESOL members need to identify potential members and urge them to join. TESOL needs to create new membership initiatives to interest those who are not currently involved in TESOL and explore new membership categories for those who feel excluded from TESOL. Additionally, the association needs to retain current members and make sure TESOL meets their professional needs. All of these activities will require new strategies to educate ELT professionals about TESOL.

Yet another objective in this goal is to expand nondues revenue sources to support member programs and initiatives worldwide. Since most TESOL members have limited means, the association cannot rely solely on dues for support. TESOL needs to enhance development awareness among members, analyze and expand sponsorship opportunities, and seek opportunities for financial support from individuals, private foundations, educational institutions, corporations, and government entities.

Finally, to maintain a vital, dynamic, and growing professional association, TESOL needs to continue to involve its leaders and members in the association. The association needs to seek members' ideas on how to make TESOL a better association and encourage them to assume leadership positions.

Taken as a whole, TESOL's Strategic Plan provides an ambitious but feasible road map for the association over the next three years. It sets goals and objectives for TESOL yet allows them to be modified should circumstances change. I invite all in TESOL to join in making this plan a reality.

A final note: With this column, I conclude my term as president of TESOL. I thank all who have helped me during my term. You have made me a better TESOL professional, and that will remain with me for the rest of my career. I wish Jun Liu much success as president in 2006–07.

Elliot L. Judd
President, 2005–06
The 40th Annual TESOL Convention to Be Held in Tampa, Florida, USA, March 15–18

The advance program was mailed in mid-November. Convention registration and hotel reservations began December 1. Visit http://www.tesol.org/ for updates. The TESOL home page also has the links to Laser Registration, to register for the convention, and to the Tampa Housing Bureau—Passkey, to make hotel reservations, as well as to other convention information. Look for a box titled Convention 2006.

Do you have questions on registration or want to confirm your TESOL convention registration? This year TESOL has provided toll-free numbers for callers in the United States and Canada. Please call 1-866-999-3032 for information. The fax number for registration forms is 866-614-5463. Convention attendees from outside North America should direct registration questions to Laser Registration, in Montréal, Canada, at 514-228-3074. Fax your registration forms to 514-228-3151. Please use the fax numbers provided here. Faxing your registration forms to TESOL Central Office in Alexandria, Virginia, will delay your registration.

Download Presentations from TESOL 2005

TESOL has developed an online repository of convention presentations and materials. Participants were asked to submit their materials and papers by early June 2005. Watch for information on when and how you can access these resources in TESOL Connections and at http://www.tesol.org/ : Professional Development.

2005 and 2006 Symposia

Two symposia were held in 2005. The TESOL Symposium on Dual Language Education: Teaching and Learning Two Languages in the EFL Setting took place September 23 at Bogaziçi University, Istanbul, Turkey. The featured speakers were Cem Alptekin, Istanbul, Turkey; Jim Cummins, Ontario, Canada; and Barbara Seidlhofer, Vienna, Austria. Hüsnü Enginarlar, Ankara, Turkey, provided closing remarks.

The TESOL Symposium on English Language Teaching in Resource-Challenged Contexts took place December 16–17 at the Sofitel Teranga Dakar Hotel, in Dakar, Senegal. The featured speakers were JoAnn Crandall, Baltimore County, Maryland, USA; Pai Obanya, Ibadan, Nigeria; and Brian Tomlinson, Leeds, England. Moussa Diouf, Dakar, Senegal, provided closing remarks.

The TESOL Symposium on Words Matter: The Importance of Vocabulary in English Language Teaching and Learning will take place March 27, 2006, at Dubai Men's College, in Dubai, United Arab Emirates. For more information, e-mail edprograms@tesol.org.
2006 TESOL Academies
TESOL will hold two academies in 2006, one in the United States and the other in Korea. The first 2006 academy will be held at Roosevelt University, in Chicago, Illinois, in the United States, June 23–24, 2006. This academy will feature six hands-on, ten-hour workshops. The TESOL International Summer Academy will be at the Sookmyung Women’s University, in Seoul, Korea. This academy will feature four hands-on, ten-hour workshops.

For more information about TESOL Academies, e-mail edprograms@tesol.org.

2006 Online Courses and Seminars
Learn about online professional development opportunities through TESOL, including the Principles and Practices of Online Teaching Certificate Program and TESOL virtual seminars. TESOL virtual seminars focus on key issues in ESL and EFL. Bring together colleagues at your school or organization for a live Webcast (or, when it fits your schedule, use the virtual seminar’s playback feature). Virtual seminar participants can also take part in an online discussion. For more information, e-mail edprograms@tesol.org.

Results of the Elections for the 2006–07 Board of Directors and Nominating Committee
President-Elect, 2006–07: Sandra J. Briggs

Directors, 2006–09: Joyce Kling, Gabriel Díaz Maggioli, John Schmidt, Jim Stack

New Nominating Committee Members: Khadar Bashir-Ali, Ester de Jong, Lisa Harshbarger, Constantine Ioannou, Ann Johns, Gabriela Kleckova, Susanne McLaughlin, Beth Witt

Board of Directors Approves Position Statements on No Child Left Behind Act, U.S. Visa Policy
At its meeting in October, the Board of Directors approved two new position statements. The first addresses assessment of English languages learners in the United States under the No Child Behind Act of 2001, and the second focuses on U.S. visa policy for international students and scholars. Both statements are available at http://www.tesol.org/.

Research Agenda
In October 2004, the TESOL Board of Directors approved a revised Research Agenda developed by the Second Research Agenda Task Force, which comprised Simon Borg, Andrew Curtis, Chris Davidson, Zhao Hong Han, Dudley Reynolds, and Tom Scovel (chair). The Research Agenda was created to help TESOL professionals and others organize and coordinate inquiry in the field and to promote broader awareness of what constitutes research in TESOL. Built on the broad, methodologically and topically pluralistic foundation of the first Research Agenda in 2000, this document presents TESOL professionals with priority areas for research and should help funding applicants and agencies decide what research to pursue and support. The 2004 Research Agenda includes a special hot-linked section titled “References, Resources, and Web Sites.”

To download the current agenda, go to http://www.tesol.org/ : Professional Issues : Research Agenda. A version in portable document format (PDF) is available. TESOL welcomes your comments and suggestions as well as your additions to the resources section. Please send them to research@tesol.org.

Visit the TESOL Center during the Tampa Convention
Stop by the TESOL Center (Booth 123) at the annual convention and pick up a free TESOL pen. Check out changes to TESOL's Web site, purchase a one-of-a-kind fortieth anniversary pin, review new publications, or chat with knowledgeable staff about what is going on in TESOL. There will be several author appearances with opportunities for book signings.

TESOL Awards and Grants
The generous contributions of TESOL members makes it possible for TESOL to provide sixty awards and grants each year. You can support the Awards and Grants program when you register for TESOL's 40th Annual Convention and Exhibition, when renewing your membership, or by buying a ticket at the Annual Awards and Grants Raffle (held during the annual convention). Or, if you’d like to make your U.S., Canada, and Mexico tax-deductible contribution today, visit http://www.tesol.org/ : Association : Help Support TESOL : Awards and Grants.

40th Anniversary Web Page
Visit http://www.tesol.org/ : Association : TESOL's 40th Anniversary to learn more about the celebrations and events that will mark the occasion. Among the resources now available or coming soon:

- a TESOL Timeline, marking significant events in the association's history
- testimonials from members and supporters
- a calendar of events taking place during 2005–2006
- information about the 40 for the 40th Giveaway. Check back often to see if you are one of the lucky winners of hundreds of dollars in prizes being given away each month—no entry required!
**Annual Fund**
Supporting TESOL's work has never been easier. Now you can make your contributions online. Visit the Support TESOL section of the Association page to make your U.S., Canada, and Mexico tax-deductible gift to the association. And to see how your contribution is put to work, be sure to take a look at TESOL's 2005 Annual Report, also available online. For more information, or to receive a hard copy of the report, contact Development Manager Jane Kaddouri at 703-518-2539 or jkaddouri@tesol.org.

**TESOL Connections**
*TESOL Connections* is a free semimonthly e-newsletter for members. It includes briefings about TESOL and TESOL members in the mainstream news and hot links to field-related resources. Articles and items and stories by and about members that are posted on the TESOL Web site are highlighted and linked through *TESOL Connections*. Sign up at http://www.tesol.org/:
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If you currently receive issues at your institution, consider changing your address to receive your issues at home. This small adjustment may significantly improve arrival time.

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**TESOL Quarterly Forum**
To share ideas, comments, and questions about the articles in *TESOL Quarterly*’s December issue, visit the *TQ* Online Forum (http://communities.tesol.org/). With the December 2005 issue, the forum adopted a new approach: The authors themselves suggest relevant questions, and readers have the opportunity to discuss the research with the authors. Visitors are also encouraged to post questions.

**Graduate Student Forum**
The Graduate Student Forum is a student-run miniconference. The forum provides a venue at the TESOL convention that allows MA-level students to share the results of their research, their teaching ideas and experiences, and the materials they have developed. They can also meet and network with fellow graduate students (and faculty) at other universities. This forum allows graduate students to formally participate in the TESOL convention without having to meet the early deadlines for submitting proposals or compete with experienced professionals for time on the convention program. For more information, please visit http://www.tesol.org/.
Doctoral Forum
The Doctoral Forum (formerly the PhD Forum) will be held in Tampa as part of the 40th Annual TESOL Convention. TESOL invites doctoral students to participate in this informative event. The Forum is an informal meeting that brings together doctoral students and experienced ESOL professionals who are interested in similar research topics and research approaches. The forum enables doctoral students to get feedback about current issues pertaining to their dissertation research from their peers as well as from the seasoned ESOL professionals (mentors). It is also an opportunity for doctoral students to network with one another. While this may sound formal, the event is actually a relaxed, informal gathering where the students can talk casually about their research. For more information, please visit http://www.tesol.org/.

Partnering
TESOL and the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) have partnered in the development of an ESL module hosted at http://www.ncte.org/profdev. Paula Leoni-Bacchus, an ESL/bilingual/Spanish teacher and adjunct professor for language, literacy, and culture at Lesley University in Boston, Massachusetts, in the United States, is the content leader for TESOL on this project.

The module has been developed to aid mainstream teachers in meeting the needs of today's multilingual classrooms. Components of the module include articles from TESOL publications as well as from NCTE's, reading invitations, writing engagements, and bulletin board forums.

Go to http://www.ncte.org/profdev to learn more about the CoLEARN program and how to enroll. To view the TESOL module, click through to CoLEARN TESOL.

TESOL Revises Pre-K–12 English Language Proficiency Standards
In the nearly ten years since the publication of TESOL's (1997) ESL Standards for Pre-K–12 Students, the standards movement has continued to grow and influence educational systems at all levels throughout the United States. The provisions of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) have also focused attention on English language learners’ needs by requiring each state to develop English language proficiency standards.

With TESOL's 1997 publication as a starting point, the standards were revised to reflect recent changes to the NCLB legislation. The 2006 volume also presents detailed tables that show indicators of success at different levels of proficiency. For more information on the revised standards framework, visit http://www.tesol.org/PK12ELPStandards. The published volume will be available in late March.

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