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FROM THE EDITOR ........................................3
PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE ..............................5
COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE
Circle Time: The December Dilemma and English Language Learners .........................6
by Judie Haynes
Home Room: Collegiality: What It Is, and What It Isn’t ............................................7
by Jim Hughes
The Road Taken: I Can’t Go to College! .............9
by Debbie Zacarian
Multilingual Momentum: CALL, Convergence, and Worldwide Collaboration (Part II) .................10
by Ke Xu
Teaching with Technology
Embracing the fact that he is teaching the net generation, Philip Lismore describes the technology-enhanced tools and methods he uses with his students.

From A to Z: Thank You, Mario Pelusi ..........12
by Dorothy Zemach

OUT OF THE BOX
A Foreign Language for a Foreign Affair ..................14
by Elena Webb

For Immigrant Students, the ESOL Glass Is Half-Full ................................17
by Sarah J. Shin
Language Acquisition through Intercultural Learning
As a group leader in an intercultural youth project, Neslihan Gundogdu helped young people from various countries develop a common language by discussing social and cultural issues.

The Courage to Hand Over Classroom Control ..................20
by Phyllis Wachob

Microteaching with a Reflective Twist ..........23
by Natalia Orlova

PORTAL
What Makes “Real” Spoken English Real? ..............26
by Nina Weinstein
Using Business Case Studies as a Tool for Reading Analysis ..................30
by Kathy L. Brenner
An Online Writing Studio Creates a Community of Writers ..................33
by Wendy M. Gough
Reading to Talk ........................................36
by Thomas Baker
Learner-Made Vocabulary Cards in the EAP Classroom
Seeing vocabulary as a key predictor of academic language success, Dawn Rogier and Beth Coleman decided to incorporate a useful, convenient, and student-approved resource in their classroom.

REFERENCES & RESOURCES
Action Research (Julian Edge, Ed.) ..................39
Reviewed by Chuang Wang
English in the World: Global Rules, Global Roles (Rani Rubdy and Mario Saraceni, Eds.) ..................39
Reviewed by Pornsawan Brawn
Who Owns English? The Indian Context
N. S. Gundur examines how dominant and subordinate cultural influences have interacted with English, contributing to its status as a global language.

Have Fun with English! 2 ..................40
Reviewed by Christine Meloni

A Writing Book: English in Everyday Life, a Teacher’s Resource Book (2nd ed.) (Tina Kasloff Carver, Sandra Douglas Fotinos, and Christie Kay Olson) ..................41
Reviewed by Jan Stoehr

ASSOCIATION NEWS ..................42
TESOL Collaborates to Launch Online Tapestry and Research Agenda.
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It is with great excitement that I start my term as interim editor of *Essential Teacher*. My history with this publication goes back to its inception in 2003, when I first became a member of TESOL’s Serial Publications Committee. As I read each writer’s work, I soon became familiar with each section and the flow of the publication. Three years later, I took the leap and became section editor of Out of the Box. Participating in *Essential Teacher* since its infancy, and having helped it morph into adulthood, makes for a natural transition into editing. I have watched the transformation from fledgling idea to sleek publication, and like any parent, I am proud of what *ET* has become—the flagship publication for about 14,000 TESOL members in 159 countries.

I want to thank a couple departing members of the *ET* team. Their service to the publication and to TESOL has been notable, and *ET* has become a better publication as a result of their influence. I give a big thank you to Tim Stewart (editor) and Bill Perry (Portal editor) as they go on to other venues.

This issue offers a variety of features that address timely issues such as best practices for students, the roles of educators as teachers and colleagues, and resources for more effective language instruction. The contributors showcase unique perspectives on learning, while interconnecting classroom practice.

- **Communities of Practice:** Judie Haynes (Circle Time) tackles the dilemma of how to deal with competing holidays in U.S. schools. Jim Hughes (Home Room) writes about the true meaning of *collegiality* among educators. Debbie Zacarian (The Road Taken) points out the obvious—that ESOL teachers play roles far more important than just teaching English as a language for communication. Ke Xu (Multilingual Momentum) continues his interview with CALL experts. Dorothy Zemach (From A to Z) provides her own view of the true meaning of buying into learning for the pure enjoyment of learning.

- **Out of the Box:** Elena Webb delights us with her story of mixing romance and language learning. Sarah J. Shin shares her experiences with immigrants learning English while maintaining their true culture. Phyllis Wachob details her struggles against deep cultural patterns in trying to get student teachers in Egypt to learn autonomously. Natalia Orlova describes the difficulties of trying to provide authentic conversation practice in the Czech Republic.

- **Portal:** Nina Weinstein talks about the difficulties related to learning reduced forms in English. Kathy L. Brenner describes using business case studies to teach international business consultants. Wendy M. Gough discusses using an online writing studio to help Japanese students create a community of writers. Thomas Baker offers a glimpse into his classroom in Chile and explains how he incorporates literature to inspire students to really converse.

- **References & Resources:** Chuang Wang provides a thorough review of action research for teachers. Pornsawan Brawn reports on a resource of reproducible masters for over 100 everyday writing resources for ESOL teachers. Christine Meloni reviews an extracurricular blog that provides students with an interactive outlet with which to communicate in English. Jan Stoehr reviews essays on different theoretical viewpoints about norms of English for nonnative speakers.

- **Compleat Links:** Philip Lismore offers an interesting take on how technology has replaced the textbook. Dawn Rogier and Beth Coleman show how students can learn vocabulary by creating detailed note cards. N. S. Gundur talks about English as a global language, specifically in India. Neslihan Gundogdu relates a story of intercultural learning in European Union youth projects and suggests ways that teachers can apply similar projects in monolingual classes. In Grammatically Speaking, Richard Firsten sheds light on the mysteries of grammar.

Eileen N. Whelan Ariza  et@tesol.org
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“I joined TESOL last night, and had an opportunity to peruse the TRC. There are many lessons, talking points, links, electronic link-ups from academy classes, etc. It really is a wonderful site.”

Marianne Hayes,
Fairfax County Public Schools;
Literacy Doctoral Student,
George Mason University, Springfield, VA

This quote is posted on the home page of the TESOL Resource Center (TRC). Thank you, Marianne, for joining TESOL and for making immediate use of the TRC on TESOL’s Web site. The TRC, launched in February 2007, is an online center where TESOL members can find and share a variety of resources. The resources include lesson plans, activities, quizzes, and practical tips as well as professional papers and presentations. Many TESOL members have contributed to the TRC, and the number of resources is growing.

Earlier this year I submitted two resources to the TRC, and I recently spent some time browsing through the site. In particular, I appreciated the box on the home page that links directly to the newest resource. The day I was on the site it was an excellent listening lesson for beginning adults called “The Garden Song,” submitted by Patsy Vinogradov. The home page also provides visitors with all the information needed to navigate and utilize the site. Visitors can view a PowerPoint overview of the TRC, submit a resource online, volunteer to be reviewers for the resources that have been submitted, and browse what is available. Visitors can browse by date of submission, resource type, content area, audience, interest section, language skill, subject areas for professional papers, or geographic relevance. TESOL is also developing a keyword search capability to make it easier for TRC users to find resources.

In addition to the resources submitted by TESOL members, the papers from the many international TESOL symposia are available on the site. The PowerPoint slides, write-ups, and virtual seminars that have been presented on the Web site in the past are accessible as well. When I was on the site, I read Jun Liu’s paper, “Empowering Nonnative-English-Speaking Teachers Through Collaboration With Their Native-English-Speaking Colleagues in EFL Settings,” from the TESOL Symposium on English Teacher Development in EFL Contexts held in Guangdong Province, China. I also viewed the 2006 TESOL Virtual Seminar presented by Lía Kamhi-Stein and Ahmar Mahboob on teachers’ language proficiency in English language teaching. They were both very insightful, and I recommend both of them.

The TRC is a work in progress; if there is something that you would like to submit, but you don’t see an appropriate category or template, you can send a message to resourcecenter@tesol.org. Minoo Asdjodi, the professional development specialist in the Education Programs Department at TESOL Central Office, will get back to you shortly to help you figure out how to make your idea work.

I hope that you will take time to browse through the TRC at http://www.tesol.org/resourcecenter and consider being a reviewer or submitting a resource. Those of you who are presenting at the 2008 TESOL convention in New York may want to consider submitting your paper or other type of resource to the TRC following the convention. I hope to see your resource on the TRC; the more resources we, as educators, have access to, the further we can push ourselves and our limits.

Sandra J. Briggs
President, 2007–2008 sjbfb@earthlink.net
Hyungsoo, a 2nd-grade student from Korea, sat across from me at the table in my ESL class with a pained look on his face. “Santa didn’t come to my house!” he complained. “I didn’t get any presents.”

I knew the source of his disappointment. Many young public school students in the United States spend a good part of December discussing Santa, elves, and presents. They listen to stories about Santa, make presents for their parents, and exchange gifts with their classmates. Hyungsoo’s family is Christian, and for them Christmas is strictly a religious holiday. His parents did not realize that most of his classmates would be receiving gifts from Santa, and they were not aware of how left out he would feel.

Unfortunately, most elementary schools give little thought to the children who are looking in from the outside during December.

Another of my students, Priya, told the class, “I am Hindu and I don’t celebrate Christmas. Santa doesn’t come to my house.” Priya’s family celebrates Diwali in September.

Herein lies a dilemma faced by public schools in the United States. Every December the elementary school becomes a battleground. A war is waged over what should be taught, what symbols can be displayed in the school hallways, and what music is sung at the December concert. Emotions run high. Christian parents do not want the mention of Christmas to be banned in schools, and parents from other religious backgrounds don’t want their children to be inundated with Christmas festivities. Teachers and administrators walk a tightrope in between. We are so worried about offending someone that public elementary schools are not teaching about any religion at all.

The First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution calls for the separation of church and state. Government agencies and employees, including public school teachers, are not allowed to promote one religion over another. Schools must approach religious holidays from an academic viewpoint, not a spiritual one, which means that we can teach about diverse religions in school, but we may not celebrate religious holidays (Imber 2003).

That seems clear enough, but the interpretation of the First Amendment is complicated by the fact the courts have deemed, and many religious leaders agree, that some of the Christmas holiday symbols have become part of the secular celebration of Christmas (Lombardi 2006). As you walk along the hallways of many public elementary schools in December, you will see a plethora of Santas and Christmas trees on bulletin boards. Are Christmas trees and Santa truly secular symbols? It depends on whom you ask.

As I looked at my group of 2nd-grade ESL students, I realized that all of these students were on the fringes of school life during December. Although it can be argued that no religious symbols are displayed at our school, the bulletin boards abound with fir trees, reindeer, and especially Santa. In our front lobby there is a menorah and a “holiday tree” decorated with student-made ornaments. There is also a Kinara, a candleholder with seven candles that is a symbol of Kwanzaa. This is an effort to give equal time to other celebrations. Many students, however, observe holidays that are never represented in the front lobby.

Let’s go back and look at the rest of my ESL class. One of my students, Marina, is Russian, and her family is Jewish. They celebrate Hanukkah in December, but Yom Kippur and Rosh Hashanah are much more important religious holidays for them. Karim is Muslim, and his family celebrates Ramadan in September. Rei is Japanese, and his family is Shinto. They celebrate Oshogatsu on January 1. Hui is Taiwanese, and his family is Buddhist. They celebrate Buddha’s birthday in May. Except for the recognition of Hanukkah, none of these holidays is part of our school curriculum. The majority of the students in my school are Christian, but this ESL class of six students represents all of the major religions in the school population.

The biggest issue of the December wars is the traditional school concert that is at the heart of the celebration of
Christmas. The dilemma arises when deciding what music to sing. The question is whether a school concert can include religious Christmas music without promoting a particular belief. The courts have decreed that some religious music may be included if the purpose is to teach about a particular religion and the program is balanced (Anti-Defamation League 2004).

In reality, however, if the program includes a variety of music from various religions and cultures and secular Christmas music (involving Santa and reindeers), Christian parents complain. If religious Christmas music is the bulk of the program, parents representing other religious groups complain. One of my Jewish colleagues told me that she spent all her years in school singing Christmas songs, which made her feel very marginalized. She dreaded December and how it made her feel like an “outsider.” I wonder if my students Hyungsoo, Priya, Karim, Marina, Rei, and Hui feel the same.

We all have to work to make our schools more inclusive. Our job is to protect the religious rights of all our students. I think the onus should be taken off of December. Let’s solve the December dilemma by learning about Diwali and Ramadan in September, Rosh Hashanah in October, and Christmas in December. Let’s explore the secular holidays such as Chu suk, a Korean harvest festival; the Chinese Moon Festival; and Holi, a Hindu spring festival. We should not overemphasize one particular holiday, and the students in my 2nd-grade ESL class should not feel that they are on the outside looking in.

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HOME ROOM

Collegiality: What It Is, and What It Isn’t

by Jim Hughes

Kathy Weed, founding editor of Essential Teacher, named my column. To me, “Home Room” denoted a middle or high school class in which attendance was checked and announcements made. But I taught third-grade students.

“Don’t you make a second home?” she asked.

So that was it! Kathy saw my practice as endeavoring to create an ideal home in which healthy relationships nurtured children’s emotional, social, and cognitive development.

My students were at an age when most wanted to sit next to me on the rug. Once, after I had finished reading aloud there, Sonia and Darius leaning against me, Ubaldo raised his hand.

“Can I drink water, Mom?” he asked, then blushed with embarrassment.

It was, perhaps, a telling slip of the tongue, occurring in part because of the mutual relationship of caring and trust that I tried to cultivate. For me, such a relationship was a precondition for students’ being receptive to my teaching. Also, it was the basis for my coming to know their cultural backgrounds, learning styles, and developmental levels.

Of course, my home room could not match my ideal. Sometimes, I was out of sorts. At other times, students acted up, incurring my wrath. Mostly, however, we forgave each other, reestablishing affection and trust.

The notion of home room was not as easily extended to meetings among the staff. When Todd, our progressive principal, suggested calling groups of grade-alike teachers “families,” most opposed it because the metaphor connoted either dysfunctional ties or relationships that were inappropriate among colleagues. Who were Mother and Father? Were the rest of us the children? I had no desire to be Grandpa.

But the staff would prosper, we agreed, from mutual trust and support. We decided to strive not for family, but for collegiality—the equal sharing of authority and power. Take, for example, our planning for a holiday celebration.

“Shouldn’t we plan for Flag Day?” asked Rose at a staff meeting.

“Let’s not have it,” declared Jan. “Several of us don’t participate anyhow.”

“But it’s one of our school’s traditions,” contended Rose.

Todd remarked that many of us of the Vietnam War generation believed...
that conservatives in U.S. politics had appropriated the flag as their symbol.  

“Last year, Jim,” ventured Charlotte, “you did that Statue of Liberty poem: ‘Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses . . . .’”  

“Let’s celebrate freedom and justice!” exclaimed Kathy.  

Kamilah said excitedly, “My class could sing ‘If I Had a Hammer!’”  

Lucinda and Ruth broke into song: “‘I’d hammer out love between my brothers and my sisters . . . .’”  

I suggested Todd accompany them on guitar.  

“Why not invite district officials, even the mayor?” proposed Todd.  

Flag Day, then, was imagined in a new light, one that accommodated various views. This was shared decision making, or collegiality. Negotiating our differences, we compromised here, tolerated there. We listened to each other’s truths, expanding and refining our own, maybe even changing our minds. The key was assuming that we all meant well.

Collegiality wasn’t so easy. It fell apart when the staff couldn’t achieve consensus. It suffered when personalities clashed or passions became inflamed. It became impossible when later principals based their leadership on status or position and deference to district officials rather than natural skills and the support of our school community.

Indeed, as the era of high-stakes testing and scripted adoptions unfolded, district, state, and federal authorities as well as private consultants assumed increasing power over the school’s affairs. For them, collegiality among teachers consisted not of shared authority but of shared responsibility for implementing their generic directives.

Collegiality, however, did not correctly describe teachers’ participation in this power hierarchy. Administrators and consultants now spoke of collaboration. Principals exhorted teachers to be team players and couldn’t understand why so many resisted working together to achieve district, state, and federal goals.

Didn’t the staff of a “low-performing” school want to close the achievement gap? The question was more complicated than it appeared. We taught culturally and linguistically diverse students from low-income families. Teachers were skeptical of a gap that was measured by the results of standardized tests, which weren’t fair to English language learners and contained cultural biases. We had additional, important goals, such as building community, providing ESL for parents, and motivating students, even instilling in them a love of learning.

Also, without school autonomy and staff collegiality, we weren’t leaders in the school’s affairs. Under these circumstances, collaboration had a darker meaning, namely, cooperating with an enemy invader—the outside powers that were so insistent about what was good for us. As an alien learning environment encroached upon our classrooms, my students and I felt less and less at home.

During these bleak times, I had the good fortune to be a member of teams whose leaders valued collegiality as sound decision making. One was our district’s Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment Leadership Team. When its codirectors, Ida and Tianna, were asked whether the team’s purpose was advisory or decision making, they answered, “Both.” Together we developed a mentoring and credentialing program for new teachers in accordance with the California Standards for the Teaching Profession (State of California 1997), which embraced practices that were far more progressive than current ones.

Ida and Tianna took steps to promote collegiality. They selected compassionate, insightful members for the team. Of course, no one could display those qualities fully and at all times, so it was essential that the codirectors set a collegial tone. They modeled norms for working together and created activities that elicited our best, authentic selves. We shared, for example, what school was like for us when we were the age of the students we now taught. This introduced a discussion of identity safety and cultural responsiveness. Also, when we reached consensus, Ida and Tianna demonstrated that this team had authority and power by implementing our decisions.

I loved these meetings. They validated and encouraged me, boosting my spirit. They demonstrated that autonomous, shared decision making nurtures a healthy climate and best practices. Collegiality would indeed benefit my school. In fact, my students and I might even feel at home again!

**Reference**


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"I went to take the SATs and was told that I came too late and could not take them! I cannot go to college now," Tom had sobbed over the phone to his mother. He had rushed to take public transportation to his school and had been fifteen minutes late because the public bus did not use the same schedule or stops that the school bus did.

The exam was part of Tom’s plan to be the first in his family to graduate from high school and go to college. This plan was now ruined, he thought. The school’s Open House was the following Tuesday. He begged his mother to go to it to help him figure out what to do.

The Open House occurred each fall, and this was the first time that Mrs. Som would be attending. She worked nights and was afraid to take time off from work, but this time she bravely arranged to arrive late to work so she could attend the Open House and speak with Tom’s teachers.

On the night of the Open House, parents gathered in the school’s lobby around 7:00 p.m. and stood in different lines depending on what letter their last name began with. They were greeted by their child’s guidance counselor and given a copy of their child’s school schedule. At 7:15, the school bell rang. Over the loudspeaker, the school principal told parents to go to their child’s first class, which would begin promptly at 7:20.

Mrs. Som went to her son’s math class. When she arrived, she noticed that the other parents had taken seats. She followed suit. At 7:25, the school bell rang again, and the school principal announced, “The first period has begun. Parents, please take your seats.” Laughing, he added, “No late passes will be given.”

Tom’s math teacher greeted the parents and began to describe his math class. He handed out several pieces of paper: the course syllabus, the school calendar, the trimester schedule, and his contact information.

“If you wish to reach me, I am accessible by e-mail,” he told the parents.

Most of the information he presented was confusing to Mrs. Som. She was not familiar with how to use e-mail and didn’t understand the papers that he had provided. She politely waited to seek his advice about her son.

After a few short minutes, the math teacher asked parents if they had any questions about his class. A few raised their hands.

“How much homework do you assign each night?” one asked.

“How will my child be graded?” asked another, without waiting for the teacher to respond to the first question.

“Is this a college-prep math class?” a third asked.

After the math teacher responded to one of the questions, the bell rang and the principal’s voice was heard a second time: “Parents, I hope you have enjoyed your child’s first class. Please go to the second class. It will begin promptly at 7:30. Please walk as quickly as you can.”

Rushing out the door into the hallway, Mrs. Som tried to attract the math teacher’s attention. Unfortunately, he was surrounded by other parents. So she made her way to Tom’s next class: social studies.

The social studies teacher, like the math teacher, began with a quick greeting and a description of the course and disseminated several pieces of paper. As before, Mrs. Som was not familiar with the meaning of the papers. She waited to ask her question.

Within minutes, the school bell rang again and the school principal announced, “Parents, I hope you have enjoyed your child’s second class. Please go to the third class. It will begin promptly at 7:35.”

Hoping to speak with the social studies teacher before rushing to Tom’s science class, Mrs. Som caught up with him.

“Mr. Emeis?” she politely asked.

He corrected her by responding, “Hello, my name is Mr. Ellis. Whose mother are you?”

“Tom’s,” she responded.

“Hello, Mrs. Som. You probably want directions to Tom’s next class. Let me see his schedule.”

She reluctantly handed him the schedule and was politely rushed to the next class. She sat through Tom’s science class, listening to similar information that she had heard in the other classes. The teacher asked if there were questions, but Mrs. Som figured that there would be no time to get an answer to her important question. As
she suspected, the science teacher had time to respond to one question before the school bell rang a fourth time.

She hurried to Tom’s ESL class. The ESL teacher followed the same format that her colleagues had followed. A few minutes later, the school bell rang.

“Parents, it is 8:00,” the principal announced. “The Open House has concluded. Thank you for attending. We ask that you leave promptly so that your child’s teachers can prepare to teach tomorrow. Thank you and good night.”

Although Mrs. Som normally would have followed the rules, she knew Tom was waiting anxiously for an answer. Reluctantly, she spoke with his ESL teacher.

“Mrs. Snow,” she said, “My son came to take the SATs fifteen minutes late. He took town bus, and it did not stop near school. He ran to school and was late. He not allowed to take exam. He will not be able to attend college. What will he do?” she asked.

“Oh, that’s okay,” Mrs. Snow said. “He can take the exam in another school district. Let me find out the schedule, and I will let you and Tom know where and when it is being offered.”

“How will he get to another school?” Mrs. Som asked.

“I will see if we can find another student who is attending. I will call you tomorrow, and I will also speak with Tom about it,” Mrs. Snow said.

Reaching out to parents of secondary students, during a time when children are seeking independence, is challenging. In this case, Tom believed that his life plan had evaporated before his eyes. Thankfully, his ESL teacher was able to secure a ride for him to an alternative exam site. He completed the exam successfully and is now attending a state university. Imagine what might have happened had Tom’s mother not advocated for her son. More important, imagine how much easier it might have been for Tom had he known all of the options that were available to him.

KX: What do you believe are the most important issues related to integrating technology into ELT classroom practice now: theory, technology, pedagogy, or methodology?
Mark Warschauer (MW): I don’t think you can separate them. Obviously the way you integrate technology into instruction depends on what kinds of technology are available to you. But your pedagogical approach, methodology, and theoretical framework will all make a difference as well. I guess I’m a believer in what H. Douglas Brown has called cautious, enlightened eclecticism. Feel free to draw on a number of theories and approaches.

PH: There should be an integration of these because they’re all important, but I think methodology is an area getting less attention than it should. Sometimes methodology almost fades into the background—a technology is used because it’s there, without a lot of reflection on whether or how its use connects to learning processes and objectives. We have to recognize that it takes skill, practice, and training to learn to use technological tools effectively. Methodology should start with an understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of a given technological application, and then use theory, and the research that supports it, to inform the pedagogy. Too often we use a new application without really gaining conscious control of it or even understanding the full range of its capabilities. This is true not only for software developers and teachers planning CALL tasks and activities, but also for the students using CALL on their own.

Peiya Gu (PG): I believe pedagogy of integration is a key issue here. There are already many new theories and technologies available for CALL practice, but what classroom teachers need most are those theory-based “tips” with examples, in addition to administrative, technical, and community support. Also, technology integration should take into full consideration the local settings of different countries and regions. More EFL-specific pedagogical and methodological options should be made available to teachers worldwide.

Sandra Wagner (SW): To me, important issues include teacher development; teacher/practitioner buy-in; administrative support; knowledge about the limitations of specific technologies; alignment of capabilities with SLA theory, strategies, and best practices; transition from traditional to proactive ELT methods that make effective use of technology; and use of technology to serve rather than dominate instruction. CALL should be aligned to curriculum standards and used when appropriate to promote the development of ELT skills. Technology should be integrated into language instruction and used for both teacher and student applications, when appropriate. Care should be used in the selection of software, Internet content, and learning management systems so that the requirements of the curriculum and state/federal mandates are met.

Ron Lee (RL): Three issues. First, teachers need to learn how to use computers. Computer literacy is a problem not only for ELT students, but also for teachers. Second, we need more online resources that are better planned and organized. Third, we need to make use of new technologies, such as 1-Click Answers from answers.com, which can speed up students’ reading process by providing definition and pronunciation audio of each word on the screen when they are clicked. EFL teachers and students from non-English-speaking countries benefit most from technologies like this.

Technological convergence—the synergistic combination of audio, video, and data onto a single network—has ushered in a new epoch of multimedia that is creating new efficiencies and providing tremendous opportunities and impetus to boost CALL applications worldwide. It has meanwhile posed new challenges for ELT professionals. Despite the lack of general consensus among researchers and practitioners about the core components of the theoretical framework for CALL, several issues have emerged as important in meeting challenges, including the pedagogical and methodological concern of CALL development and integration, teacher development, and administrative support. These challenges call for worldwide collaboration among ELT professionals.

See also “Teaching with Technology,” http://www.tesol.org/et/.

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I hope you’ll forgive me if I tell you a story that is not about ESL—at least not directly. I intend to get there in the end, but I’m going to start with something more general, namely the Meaning of Education.

As an undergraduate, I took some courses in music theory and composition. For one class, our final assignment before the semester break was to write a keyboard sonata. It was a somewhat formulaic assignment, but with room for some creativity as well. I ran into my theory professor in the coffee shop shortly before the assignment was due, and he asked me how it was going.

“Well, I’ll finish it in time, but I won’t like it,” I sighed.

“You won’t like it?” He looked distressed, and I assumed he was worried I’d turn in something awful.

“Oh, it’ll be correct, don’t worry,” I reassured him. He still didn’t look happy, and he asked what it would take for me to create a composition that I did like.

“About three days of sleep!” I joked. He then asked if I was going home for the break. When I said that I was, he insisted that I not turn in the assignment was due, and he asked me how it was going.

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“About three days of sleep!” I joked. He then asked if I was going home for the break. When I said that I was, he insisted that I not turn in the composition before I left, but rather that I go home, get my three days of sleep, and then write a composition that I did like and not turn it in until I was happy with it.

I don’t know if it was what he said or how he said it, but at that moment, the clouds parted for me, and I truly got the point. The only person who could possibly care about my sonata was me—and if I wasn’t writing it for myself, then I was wasting my time and effort.

That sounds like such a simple concept, and yet at that point, I’d been in school continuously for fifteen years, since age four. I’d attended more than twelve schools in six countries and had studied under scores of teachers and professors, most of them quite good. And yet somehow I’d gotten to be a junior in college without truly understanding that my education was supposed to be meaningful to me.

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Teachers might assign papers and ask questions and distribute grades, but those were just tools they were offering me so that I could progress. Even teachers themselves were tools for me, and I am to this day grateful for that music professor who cared enough about me to get me to care about myself.

When I started teaching, then, I dreamed of leading my own students to similar realizations. But it wasn’t that simple. Unfortunately, you can’t just tell a class, “Hey! This is the meaning of education!” and have them get it. Not that I didn’t try.

A student would say, “Thank you, teacher, for giving me an A!” and I’d say, “I didn’t give it to you—you earned it.”

“Yes, thank you, teacher”—but no light in the eyes.

Once or twice I even tried relating my experience with the sonata, but students always drew the wrong conclusion: “You mean our paper is not really due on Friday?”

So I shifted from trying to explain the overarching purpose of education in general to explaining the aim of much smaller details, such as what we are learning in each chunk of class time and why we are learning it in a certain way.

I keep my explanations short and sweet:

Why work in pairs? So students can practice both question forms and answer forms.

Why study topic sentences? Because the sample essays showed that most
students didn’t write strong topic sentences, and I know they’ll need this skill in their college classes.

Why skip chapter 7, the process essay? Because we don’t have time to cover all of the chapters, and I feel the others are more useful.

Why play a vocabulary game? Because students seem tired, it’s a rainy November day, and I want to practice the material in an enjoyable way.

Some of this no doubt seems very elementary; we’ve been putting students in pairs for so long that we don’t necessarily stop to think about why we do it. But students may genuinely have no idea why they’re practicing in this way. Our thousandth English class could still be a student’s first.

I like to think that articulating this level of purpose helps my students. I know it helps me. It was exhausting at first to try to justify everything I did. However, I found myself making better choices. After all, if I can’t think of a good reason to do something, then I probably shouldn’t be doing it. And in time, it became much easier to explain my choices and actions to myself and my students.

From time to time, I also add short explanations to questions of larger scope: Why study how to read in English? Why use process writing? Can listening strategies really make a difference? And I weave into my classes opportunities for students to discuss broader purposes: What do I want from my education? How will knowing English help get me there?

I honestly don’t know if these techniques get more students to see the light. I do think it makes my classes clearer for students, and it definitely makes classes easier to teach, so I would recommend the practice to anyone. I know, though, that at age nineteen, although I could acknowledge to myself that I finally got the point of education, it didn’t occur to me to let my music professor know this, even though I studied with him for another three semesters. He’s probably still teaching somewhere, unaware of how much impact he had on my education, my career, and my life—just as your students may not be telling you about the impact you’re having on them. Who knows? Perhaps in twenty years, you’ll be reading an article like this about yourself.

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TESOL's 2008 Annual Fund
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- **Awards and Grants**—Recognize members for professional achievements
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The giving of love is an education in itself.
—Eleanor Roosevelt

During my intensive language training in the State Pedagogical University in Siberia, Russia, I made extra money by translating documents into English. For many English language specialists in Russia, teaching and translating often go hand in hand. As students and clients gain confidence in your work, they may later introduce you to other opportunities.

One day, my neighbor, Lyudmila, asked me to translate some materials for her new Web site, which she planned to maintain in Russian and in English. As it turned out, the Web site was an online dating service for Siberian women who wanted to build relationships with foreigners, especially Americans. After I completed this translation job, it quickly became just a memory, together with the image of my energetic neighbor, who moved soon thereafter.

A year later, I found myself squashed next to her in an overcrowded bus during rush hour in downtown. She told me that she was up to something exciting and that I was just the right person to help her achieve her goals.

EDP: English for Dating Purposes

At Lyudmila’s office the next day, she suggested that I create and teach an English course, an unusual proposal for a senior EFL student. Yet the planned course was entirely out of the box. Intended for single or divorced young females, the course would be designed to increase writing and speaking skills for communication through Lyudmila’s matchmaking Web site.

Lyudmila expressed her dissatisfaction with the grammar-driven methods commonly used for English instruction in Russian secondary schools. Most women who wanted to enroll in the course already had taken several years of English at the high school level, which resulted in limited communication skills. Some were able to read and understand text of intermediate difficulty, but they could not express themselves even in simple conversations. Lyudmila offered those women comprehensive English instruction in exchange for their commitment to the agency’s matchmaking services.

Lyudmila had in mind supported her dating-service business, but it also reflected her adventurous spirit. The agency already generated revenue from women paying for professional photography and for the posting of their profiles online, but the responses from potential grooms were not plentiful enough at first. However, when e-mail started to become a more accessible form of communication, the women began to receive dozens of interesting messages in their own or the agency’s inboxes. Most women were excited yet overwhelmed because their English skills were not strong enough for them to respond in writing, never mind speaking with potential partners on the phone. Lyudmila realized that the only way for her clients to communicate (and for her business to succeed) was to bring English classes right into the agency.

Already excited to see myself in a new role, I carefully listened to the proposal. Lyudmila wanted me to quickly design and teach a ten-week course that I jokingly came to call EDP (English for Dating Purposes). But
there was no time for joking. The group was already formed, and we were to have our first class on a Saturday, right after the New Year holidays. That only left me two weeks to plan. In retrospect, I realize that the stress of the deadline, together with my excitement about the new responsibility, made me think more creatively.

Needs Analysis
I decided that before I looked into the appropriate methodology for an adult course of that duration, I should put myself in the place of those women, who were divorced, like my mother, or single, as I was at the time. What did my students want to gain from their new Internet relationships? Maybe they dreamed of a soul mate, but I also imagined that they wanted a taste of romance; otherwise, they would not be spending a great portion of their monthly earnings on all those photos and profiles.

Similar questions made me recall my best experiences when dating. What had I talked about with men? In what sequence did I present personal information? How did I know not to reveal too much or too little? Topics, themes, and ideas danced in my head as I jotted down possible units and the target skills that would go best with each thematic component. Modules with titles like Introduction, Likes and Dislikes, and Family Life may have sounded quite traditional on paper, but I created every one of them for the sole purpose of helping Lyudmila’s clients communicate with someone on the other side of the world.

Materials Development
In retrospect, I felt exhilarated at the thought of teaching this class. An hour before the lesson began, though, I felt panic. It was the first time I faced the challenge of designing a course curriculum and actually putting it to work. What would it be like?

Euphemistically speaking, it was like any unguided experiential learning or, more accurately, like baptism by fire, which is how I felt after giving the first lesson. Energized as never before, I was also hurting inside because I realized how imperfect I was as a language instructor. While the vocabulary that I had prioritized appeared useful to the learners, I struggled through the explanations of grammatical constructions, which some of the women had already mastered in school. I had just ten weeks to make things work for all of them. One strategy was to put doubts aside and begin creating differentiated worksheets; another was to supplement instruction with a good book that students could refer to independently. Eventually, I did both, but it took some time for those components to find their place in the course.

From my previous, unsuccessful searches of good Russian language learning materials, I knew that theme-based books with units like “Tower Bridge and the Thames” would not work in the context of my course, and grammar-driven editions were too heavy for the ten-week crash program. Although textbooks and workbooks by U.S. and British publishers were available, they were expensive and were intended for longer courses.

Finally, I stumbled on a pocket-sized self-study English grammar guide. It demonstrated basic grammatical constructions in various contexts with many examples. All I needed to do was adapt the examples to be more
meaningful for my students. I stripped the grammar drills of impersonal words and inserted the ones my students could use in real conversations. Questions like Do you want to play soccer? gave way to more personal exchanges, such as Do you want to have children? The more tailored the examples and discussions became, the smoother our lessons flowed. “The approach worked most of all because it developed out of a natural reason and context for using English” (Burton and Daroon 2003, 159).

Correspondence Interludes
A teacher’s greatest reward is when students use the knowledge they have gained in a course and continue building on it without the teacher’s supervision. As the course progressed, most of my misconceptions about adults’ linear learning gave way to an understanding that “communication in a foreign language is complex, influenced by factors such as prior knowledge . . . and motivation to communicate, as well as by the communicative context of the situation” (Burton and Daroon 2003, 143).

Eventually, our sessions became conversational contexts because during class some women shared rough drafts of their letters to faraway friends and began perfecting them. They asked about idioms and colloquialisms found in their pen pals’ messages as they tried to read between the lines in the letters. Although these correspondence interludes were unplanned, they provided the class with an authentic component and brought the foreign language home to the students.

One student, Marjana, asked me to help her communicate with her new male friend over the phone. During his third or fourth call, he suggested meeting her in Europe, but she began mumbling that her father would not let her go and that it was hard for her to take vacation time. The determined gentleman suggested that he apply for a Russian visa and come to visit Marjana as soon as possible, but she gave more reasons why it would not be the best idea. Actually, Marjana was scared of the new relationship and what it might entail if she became seriously involved. In spite of her dreams, she was completely unprepared for the actual steps of tying the knot with a foreigner; he never called her again.

Intercultural Issues
For most of the women, the motivation to find a person from the other side of the world was real; it came from within, and it spoke of a desire to be in control of their own destinies. Although I knew a lot about English-speaking countries, answering their questions about certain U.S. traditions and beliefs or explaining something as incomprehensible as the American mentality was not enough. By researching the cultural component for my classes, I learned about the country I would later call home, the United States. I discovered things so alien to me that I wondered how people managed their lives: thirty-year mortgages, a thirteen-year general education cycle, drive-throughs, takeout, doctor visits by appointment only, and gigantic medical bills.

After functioning in U.S. culture for five years, I can defend the system and rationalize almost anything. At one time, just like most of my students, I was willing to overcome the initial feeling of alienation and to accept the United States as it was. The cultural component of the program was not something I planned; it was generated by the students’ need to make sense of their learning and to feel prepared for future changes.

A Fascinating Practicum
As the course closed, I saw outcomes in my students’ learning and their international prospects. Most of the women gave up multiple online relationships, focusing on communicating with one person instead. Two younger women changed their minds about marrying away but attended class for the sake of learning English. Several dating relationships evolved into face-to-face meetings, introducing my students to fascinating international experiences. For me, the course proved to be a good teaching practicum and a confidence booster. It served as a rite of passage, welcoming me—in its own special way—to the field where I could truly give without losing.

References

After working as a language assistant for Russian adoptees in Florida schools, Elena Webb completed her graduate degree in curriculum and TESOL and works as an elementary school teacher in a culturally diverse classroom.
For Immigrant Students, the ESOL Glass is Half-Full

As part of an ESOL reading methods course I teach in an MA TESOL program, I have the prospective teachers practice writing different types of comprehension questions. To do this, I have them first read a poem titled “Foreign Student” (Robinson 1976). Written from the perspective of a teacher, this poem describes the changes that a newcomer Taiwanese student to the United States goes through as the school year progresses.

Adaptation or Americanization?

After the prospective teachers and I read the poem together, I ask them to generate both factual and inference questions to check their comprehension of the poem. One of the inference questions that almost always comes up during this exercise is “Why do you think Si Lan’s teacher is happy about the changes she saw in her?” We then some possible student answers, such as “because Si Lan is probably happier and less lonely, and that makes the teacher happy; because Si Lan has adapted well to life in America.” Usually most people in the class nod, confirming that these are acceptable student responses, and move on to the next activity.

But one time, an ESOL teacher in the class, herself an immigrant from Egypt and former ESOL student, looked troubled and said she was offended by the poem. She said, “The fact that the teacher was happy about the change tells me that she wanted the girl to change, to shed her former identity and become a different person. It’s as if the teacher expected the girl to change and would have been unhappy if she didn’t. Even if Americanization is inevitable, the fact that the teacher was happy about it makes me angry. Why can’t we accept our ESOL students as they are and not try to force them to become American?”

What a different interpretation! Reading the same poem, this teacher saw what the other teachers in the

Foreign Student
by Barbara B. Robinson

In September she appeared row three, seat seven, heavy pleated skirt, plastic purse, tidy note pad, there she sat, silent, straight from Tai Pei, and she bowed when I entered the room. A model student I noticed, every assignment complete, on time, neat, and she listened when I talked.

But now it’s May, and Si Lan is called Lani. She strides in with Lynne and Susan. Her gear is crammed into a macrame shoulder sack. And she chatters with Pete during class and I’m glad.
The comment by the teacher in my class made me think back to my own experience as a newcomer from Korea many years ago. I knew why for so long I pretended that I didn’t know my native language and tried desperately to act and sound American. As a newcomer, I understood school to be a place where everything other than the English-speaking mainstream was treated as a nuisance and as if it were the “other.”

In school, I knew I had to speak English or else risk being placed in remedial classes with the troubled students. It didn’t matter if I had been a good student in my home country. As long as I still looked and sounded foreign, I would be thrust in the same classes with other newcomers and native English speakers who didn’t care much about being in school. I felt I was constantly judged by my accent and appearance, and I knew I had to change, even if it meant severing ties with certain parts of me that were foreign. Letting go of my old ways was my ticket to survival because I knew the school didn’t value them. Perhaps this is how Si Lan felt.

I have come a long way since my arrival in the United States as an immigrant teenager. I was very fortunate to have made the transition to English with a strong academic background and to have received a great deal of support from my parents and teachers to learn both English and content. I studied hard, went to college, finished graduate school, and became a university professor. My limited-English-speaking mother marvels about how I am able to train “American” teachers to teach English, when I have learned it as a second language, as a “foreigner.” To the outside world, I am a success story, a “model minority” who worked hard and achieved the American dream.

But it took me a long time to come to terms with who I am and to view my immigrant background as an asset and not a deficit. Even throughout my college years, I could not break free from the inferiority complex that kept nagging at me, insisting that I could not compete on an equal footing with mainstream Americans (see also “Fair Opportunity for Nonnative English Speakers in TESOL,” Essential Teacher, March 2007). Many times I wished that I had been born and raised in the United States, speaking only English. Even though I was deemed good enough to be admitted to college, I still didn’t speak or write English as well as my American peers, and I lacked the cultural background to appreciate the jokes and subtle nuances made by my professors.

The fact that I had come from a low-income, inner-city environment made matters worse as I found little common ground with my college classmates, many of whom had grown up in affluent suburban neighborhoods and had experiences that were worlds apart from those I knew. For example, I had never seen a lacrosse game (or was even aware the sport existed) until I went to college. When my parents and I drove up to campus at the beginning of my second year, I ducked down in the backseat of our beat-up 1975 Buick when I spotted some of my friends unloading their belongings from their plush BMWs and Audis. My dad just laughed it away, but I knew he felt embarrassed about our family car; I took the Greyhound bus whenever I could from then on.

Now I realize how immature I was, but back then I couldn’t help but feel handicapped by my poor immigrant background. Compared to my peers, I was always lacking—my glass was half-empty. It never occurred to me to consider what I had that others didn’t.

Glass Half-Full

When I entered graduate school to pursue a degree in linguistics, I realized for the first time that my experiences as an immigrant and second language learner of English were a valuable asset. For example, my knowledge of Korean gave me a huge advantage when I studied other Asian languages such as Chinese and Japanese. Furthermore, I was already an expert in my native language. Since advanced knowledge of other languages comes in quite handy in...
linguistics, I felt I was ahead of the game, compared to some of my native-English-speaking peers in the program. It was liberating to learn that language systems were arbitrary and that no one language was better than the rest. I was fascinated by sociolinguistics and wrote a dissertation about bilingual Korean children growing up in the United States. I believed I had some useful things to say about the process of growing up bilingual and about the use of two languages in a bilingual situation. For the first time, I could see in concrete ways how my immigrant and language learning experiences could be relevant not only to me but also to other language learners, teachers, parents, researchers, and policy makers.

I also had the opportunity to teach ESL courses in pronunciation and academic writing to international students while I was a graduate student. I was glad that I could identify with my students’ difficulties and serve as a model for what nonnative English speakers could accomplish in English. Reflecting on my own language learning experiences, I could understand why some of my students made the language errors they made, and I could share some of my own strategies for improving language skills. I felt gratified and empowered to be making a positive contribution to other people’s lives through my work. Most important, it was wonderful to come to the realization that my glass had been half-full all along and was becoming fuller each day.

**Stress What They Can Do, Not What They Can’t**

What are the benefits of considering immigrant perspectives in working with ESOL students? I believe teachers play a vital role in acculturating ESOL students. What teachers do, as well as what they don’t do, can make a world of difference in how students see themselves. For example, I don’t think it’s enough for teachers to merely tolerate the presence of immigrant students, their languages, and their cultures. Students whose home language and culture are never talked about in school get the message that their experiences really don’t matter and may be ashamed of them. The students are identified by what they can’t do rather than what they can and always fall short when measured against mainstream peers.

On the other hand, teachers who openly acknowledge students’ home languages and cultures and actively promote the understanding of diverse perspectives empower students to build on what they already know (Cummins 2000; Igoa 1995). Students feel proud to be who they are and are sufficiently challenged with rigorous academic content that is sensitive to cultural and socioeconomic differences. These teachers see their ESOL students as individuals with full potential to succeed, look at their students in terms of the resources they possess and the **funds of knowledge** they bring from their lived experiences (Gonzalez, Moll, and Amanti 2005), and work to build a school culture where minority languages and cultures are valued not only by the ESOL program but also by mainstream teachers and students (Ariza 2005).

They may bring a broader worldview to the language classroom and the sociopolitical implications of learning and using English as a language that belongs to both native and nonnative speakers for communication in an increasingly global world. But I believe teachers who do not share their students’ cultures can provide culturally compatible instruction if they have the will to do so. All it takes is a change in perspective: is the glass half-full or half-empty?

**References**


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See also “Language Acquisition through Intercultural Learning,” http://www.tesol.org/et/.
I believe that most teachers want to inspire autonomy in their students so that they learn how and where to find the answers they need to continue learning the language by themselves. But exactly how to inspire my students’ autonomy continued to elude me, slipping away every time I thought I had nailed it down.

I found an opportunity to put my ideas into context in the spring of 2006 in a Business English course for the master’s program in TEFL at the American University in Cairo. When I met the prospective teachers in the class, I asked them if they felt up to the challenge of researching the concept of autonomy by designing their own group project related to business communication.

They agreed, thinking that it was a challenge they could handle. I allowed them to choose and design their project, design rubrics for evaluation, and give themselves a grade. I kept a journal, noting my own thoughts, incidents in class, and private conversations. The teachers in the class wrote reflection papers at the end of the course. All of these, along with the rubrics created by the teachers and their interpretations, became data on which I based my study of how to inspire autonomy.

**Group Work and Individual Empowerment**

Learner autonomy is acceptance of responsibility for one’s own learning; the development of learned autonomy depends on the exercise of that responsibility. (Little 1999, 11)

As Little indicates, autonomy is a two-step process: a cognitive one of acceptance and a second one of experience. It is not a neat and tidy, lockstep process but a continuum from dependence to autonomy (Vieira 1999). The teachers in my class, I believe, understood the concept; they were enthusiastic about it, but they lacked the experience as learners they needed to act autonomously.

One of the greatest hurdles they faced was their Egyptian culture, especially classroom culture, which they described as one of dependence. This culture can lead to fear of the unknown and a rejection of responsibility. It also affects teachers. If teachers fear letting power shift, how can students gain the confidence to take control? The teachers in this class had been working in groups in other courses to build cooperative skills. In this course, I hoped that group work would lead to individual empowerment and allow the teachers to negotiate new roles between students and teachers within the classroom.

I designed and implemented the course and the project so the teachers would (1) learn how to be autonomous, (2) acknowledge and overcome affective factors, (3) use group dynamics in the process, and (4) extend the theory and practice of being an autonomous student to become an autonomous teacher.

**Cases, Reflection, and Evaluation**

Five young women had enrolled in the course. All were experienced teachers who were in at least their third semester of the program. The course used traditional topics and methods as well as peer teaching and peer feedback. For their project, the teachers chose to write business communication cases, with each teacher responsible for writing one case. Later, the group would review the cases extensively. The grade would consist of 70% for the case and 30% for group participation.

I attempted to “teach” learner autonomy to the teachers by asking them to experience it for themselves. To internalize the concept, they needed to have a dual perspective, that of an autonomous student and an autonomous teacher. My aim was to gradually lead the teachers from dependence to autonomy. This was done through actions (the project), reflection (the end-of-class reflection paper), and evaluation (assessment of other group members and the reflection paper).

**Learning Autonomy**

**Learners Accept Control**

As the class instructor, I sat in and took notes on the first group project meeting. The class held other meetings during other class sessions and over the Internet, but with one exception, I did not attend them. This absence was
deliberate on my part, as I wanted the teachers in the class to take control. The teachers, by their own request, gave grades on the other four participants only, and they submitted the grades directly to me so I could add them to the other grade components.

In their reflection papers, the teachers noted that the project left “room for creativity” and “broadened my scope and allowed me to learn away from any pressure.” One teacher described the process this way:

We could have been “taught” how to write cases and have you as a professor just grade it, but the fact that you left that to us seriously impacted the way we learnt and how long that learning will stay with us rather than disappear as soon as we left the classroom.

One teacher came to consult me as a representative of the group to clarify some points. During the chat I brought up the concept of culture and autonomy. Afterwards, I wrote in my journal,

I mentioned that perhaps Egyptians couldn’t “do autonomy” and she agreed wholeheartedly that it was an Egyptian “failing” to think that they can’t do it themselves. I said that of course Egyptians can do autonomy; they need the experience and then they can apply their knowledge. I think my job here is to be subversive. Teach Egyptians to be autonomous teachers and critical thinkers.

**Affective Factors**

One of the most significant topics involved the affective dimension. The teachers used phrases such as “not an easy task,” “feelings that I was a bit lost,” “I felt more responsibility . . . because my professor has trusted me and that puts a lot of pressure on a student.”

I noted that the teachers “are afraid of grading each other,” and they occasionally felt overwhelmed. One teacher said, “It felt scary, but good.” I noted that in a class discussion about grading, “At one point, someone suggested they hand it back to me. I refused! The student said, ‘Can’t we just be children? I don’t want to assess myself.’”

I, too, felt the fear. In my journal I wrote, “What if it is a TOTAL disaster?” “Do I have the courage to step back and let the students have control of their own grades?” And I had mixed feelings: “I’m excited, challenged, very scared at times.”

The teachers in the class also had positive emotions, writing, for example, “Enjoyed the experience” and “thank you for allowing us to enjoy such a learning experience.”

Research on autonomous learning does not explore this affective factor, so I was unprepared for my own fears and those of the teachers in my class. The question asked in class, “Can’t we just be children?” while made in jest, revealed an underlying reluctance to violate cultural norms by having the members of the class take over a classroom. Even though the people in the class were themselves experienced teachers, the new role did not sit comfortably with them. I felt conflicted at times about the shift in power relationships and whether it was being handled appropriately.

**Group Dynamics**

Culturally, the group in Egypt is a touchstone, a support network of family and friends, so that these teachers understood the positive and negative aspects of groups and how to manage themselves in one. Also, being somewhat homogeneous helped initially in comfort and ease. But the cultural trait of avoiding critique and evaluation still operat-
ed on a certain level and prevented some of the teachers from reaching further toward autonomy.

**Extending the Concept to Teaching**

One of the main points of teaching autonomy through doing is to allow the teachers in the class to experience autonomy so that they would know what it felt like to be autonomous, thereby giving them the vision of how to apply it in their own classes. In other words, how could they become autonomous teachers?

The reflection paper asked whether they were ready to apply autonomy in their own classes. Some were still quite hesitant: “It depends on who my learners are . . . .” “I realized that freedom or autonomy could be given to the learners once they are found to be motivated and responsible.” Yet autonomy is one way to motivate students, as they themselves found out. Again a teacher reported, “This semester made me realize that I could not have appreciated autonomy my first semester in the TEFL program, however, now that I have seen how much a student can learn by being autonomous, I fully support it” and “I am definitely ready to begin implementing this with my students.”

I also struggled with the notion of being an autonomous teacher. “If we are truly educators interested in autonomy, then we need to really let them make mistakes—the real ones—not just a few choices of what to write about.” “We tell our students, ‘You cannot learn unless you make mistakes.’ Will they forgive us if we make mistakes?” “I hope they share my vision, my trust.” In one of the last entries, when it was obvious that the teachers had done well, I wrote, “I think it was a marvelous thing—but I need to beware of hubris!” I learned that I needed to temper my enthusiasm with the reality that not all students would understand or perform as autonomous learners.

I wrote in my journal, “If I am true to my vision of autonomous learners, then I must give up control—let them make their own mistakes.” Thavenius (1999), in her list of things autonomous teachers must be willing to do, includes “change the power balance in the classroom” (p. 161). It takes courage to hand over control to the students and then wait for the inevitable mistakes. It takes courage to reflect on the development of your own autonomy as a teacher.

**The Fear Factor**

A significant part of becoming autonomous is overcoming the fear factor, as well as other issues. Powerful emotions can inhibit both learners and teachers in the quest for autonomy. Another issue is the follow-through needed to carry on the process of becoming autonomous. “The teacher’s commitment to the idea of autonomy and professional skills will be a crucial factor in the effectiveness. As yet, however, we have few accounts of teacher education programs directed at teacher autonomy” (Benson 2001, 176).

The difficulties of trying to make learners autonomous multiply in trying to make teachers autonomous, too.

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Phyllis Wachob joined the faculty at the American University in Cairo in 2005 after working for almost twenty years in Australia, China, Japan, Singapore, and Taiwan.
Nonnative-English-speaking student teachers encounter numerous challenges in the EFL context. They constantly have to work on their communicative competence in a foreign language, strive to engage students in meaningful communication during a short lesson period, cope with fairly large classes, and learn classroom management, among other skills. In spite of these important pedagogical abilities, I regard learning how to reflect on their own teaching as the biggest challenge prospective teachers have to face.

Reflective teaching as a key to lifelong professional development (Wallace 1998) should be encouraged at an early stage of teacher education. As self-awareness and self-observation “are essential ingredients, even prerequisites, to practicing reflective teaching” (Bailey, Curtis, and Nunan 2001, 22), prospective teachers need to be encouraged to think critically about any teaching performance long before they acquire firsthand experience.

Because prospective teachers need opportunities for professional reflection and nonthreatening authentic experimentation, practical classes in methodology involve microteaching. This popular and well-established teacher education technique “denotes a training context in which a teaching situation has been reduced in scope and/or simplified in some systematic way” (Wallace 1991, 92).

But shortly after one episode of microteaching (a minilesson of up to fifteen minutes), silence prevailed during the discussion stage. It dawned on me: What are the constituents of a real class? The teacher and the students. These two parties are present in my classes, so why not let them analyze my actions in their classroom?

Microteaching for the Practicum

The prospective EFL teacher education program at the University of J. E. Purkyne in Usti nad Labem, Czech Republic, where I currently teach, includes compulsory courses in English language teaching methodology. The courses highlight important issues in the history of language teaching as well as new trends and innovative ways of EFL learning and teaching. The classes in methodology that our prospective teachers take prepare them for the practicum, which is a very important component of the program and includes microteaching.

Ideally, microteaching should take place in a school setting where trainees monitor (or self-monitor if the lesson has been videotaped) and constructively critique one another. If microteaching occurs in a contrived setting as part of a practical methodology class, its effectiveness diminishes significantly because the audiences for this technique consist of fellow trainees who are enlisted to play the roles of schoolchildren. This method is a common practice at many EFL teacher education programs in my area of the world.

This format for microteaching traditionally includes these stages: the briefing, “the teach,” the critique (though I personally prefer the term discussion), and “the reteach” (Wallace 1991, 93). Each stage has a clear-cut aim and design. Thus, during the first stage, a preservice teacher has to outline the objectives of the teaching fragment, or minilesson. The “teach” that follows serves as the practical realization of a trainee’s plan. The discussion stage encourages trainees to critically and constructively discuss the minilesson, emphasizing its positive sides. The term “the reteach” speaks for itself, and it presupposes that the prospective teacher needs to make certain improvements based on the suggestions of the instructor and peers.

The Limits of Microteaching

Although I incorporate microteaching in my seminars and regard peer teaching as a valuable and useful tool, I am convinced that it is quite conventional. My main doubts and concerns arise from aspects of the second and the third stages of the microteaching lesson. Time and again I have observed prospective teachers’ helpless attempts to pretend that they are beginning-level students who have just taken their first steps in language learning. They switch to their native language (Czech), thus signaling the teacher that they can’t understand the lesson (though I personally prefer the term discussion), and “the reteach” (Wallace 1991, 93). Each stage has a clear-cut aim and design. Thus, during the first stage, a preservice teacher has to outline the objectives of the teaching fragment, or minilesson. The “teach” that follows serves as the practical realization of a trainee’s plan. The discussion stage encourages trainees to critically and constructively discuss the minileesson immensely, the former because they were the focus of everyone’s attention, feeling quite important and useful, and the latter because they could enjoy the interaction with the students and witness the immediate
success or failure of their instruction. Unfortunately, the logistical problems encountered do not permit inviting real English learners to a university class regularly, so such classes are the exception rather than the rule.

Uncomfortable Feedback

The critique stage of microteaching, during which the observers discuss, analyze, and perhaps evaluate the minilesson, is also far from ideal. The ages of the prospective teachers usually range from nineteen to twenty-six. However, recent high school graduates constitute a substantial proportion of the class. Though peer approval is not as important to them as it was in their adolescence, quite often the discussion stage of microteaching is limited to either an account in glowing terms or an embarrassing silence when the trainees try to spare a classmate feelings of embarrassment or failure.

Learners Become Observers

In an attempt to develop the prospective teachers’ critical thinking, I set out to raise their awareness of my teaching practices. To this end, I decided to encourage them to analyze fragments of my teaching in the seminars that we had together within the framework of methodology courses. At seminars, after completing a certain task, I asked the prospective teachers to reflect on my teaching and speculate on the objectives of the activity I had assigned them. Thus, my trainees had to step out of their student role and into the roles of lesson observers and analyzers.

For instance, after conducting a discussion of a reading that I had assigned as homework, I asked the prospective teachers to reflect on the types of elicitation I had used to cue utterances from them. Had they been short- or long-answer elicitations? If the latter prevailed, had they been inverted who-questions, inferential questions, or something else? What were the reasons behind their use? While dealing with a short excerpt for reading during one class, I asked the prospective teachers to define what particular strategies for checking comprehension I had employed and whether they had been appropriate for the text in question.

After a minilecture devoted to the characteristics of young language learners, I requested that the class members work in pairs and look through different children’s textbooks by various publishers to select an appropriate one. When the class had finished the assignment, I asked the prospective teachers to speculate on the objective I had in mind while assigning this work. I was rewarded when some of the class members answered that the objective was to consider whether textbooks really take into consideration characteristic features typical of certain ages.

Giving clear and comprehensible instructions presents quite a challenge for nonnative-English-speaking teacher beginners. Though resource books for prospective teachers include different samples of classroom instructions for analysis, their pros and cons are better realized when trainees have firsthand experience as learners. In one of my classes, I intentionally articulated an instruction that was too wordy and complicated. After some silence, the natural result of such instruction, I asked the prospective teachers to speculate on why my articulation had been unsuccessful. Subsequently, I encouraged class members to produce their own versions of clearer instructions, and the class later selected the best one.

These are just a few of the techniques I used to develop the prospective teachers’ ability to think critically about instructional practices. Afterwards, some trainees confessed that they had started speculating on their teacher’s patterns of classroom behavior. On the one hand, they felt a certain amount of discomfort while discussing their teacher’s behavior. On the other hand, they felt a temptation to prove they could do better.

The Role Shift Pays Off

This role-shifting technique had several outcomes. The first and most important relates to the affective domain. Later, while visiting the prospective teachers during their teaching practice, or practicum, I found more positive attitudes toward after-class discussions and analyses because they had practiced analyzing my teaching. They also liked being on an equal footing with their teacher, and they realized that I would have a better understanding of their problems after being in their shoes.

Prospective teachers need to be encouraged to think critically about any teaching performance long before they acquire firsthand experience.
In addition, the prospective teachers became more thoughtful and constructive while analyzing their peers’ microteaching and refrained from banal platitudes they had initially been inclined to use, like “It was good” or “I think children will like it.” Finally, this technique contributed to my own professional development, as I tried to be more inventive and resourceful while incorporating activities for the prospective teachers’ analyses into my teaching.

Developing the prospective teachers’ critical thinking as a necessary bridge to reflective teaching has me convinced once again that teaching is quite similar to an iceberg, seven eighths of which is normally under the surface of the water. The tip of the iceberg—a class period—does not reflect the long hours spent thinking about and preparing for a class. While the peak of the iceberg—a lesson—is visible, the hard background work that remains unseen shapes classroom interaction. Under the surface of our classrooms are issues of teacher development.

Teachers have to be dedicated to reflecting on their teaching in order to adapt their practice in new ways irrespective of their age, professional status, experience, and educational context. By opening up my own practice to critique by my learners, I have found a new path to my own professional growth and development.

References

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Out of the Box

My trainees had to step out of their student role and into the roles of lesson observers and analyzers.
Thirty years ago, I’d just finished my TESL certificate and was teaching a multilevel, multicultural, beginning-level adult school English class when I realized I was already making a huge pedagogical mistake. The lesson was on the future tense with *to be going to.* I’d spent the entire week going over this form and having my students practice all of the appropriate common usages. We’d done everything you could legally do with *to be going to.*

The following Monday, one of my students came up to me before class. He looked perplexed. He’d heard something outside of class and didn’t have any idea what it meant. He’d heard *gonna. (In this article, I use an asterisk with all reduced forms to show that they’re representations of spoken English.)

It became obvious to me that I was teaching only one-half of the story—the written half. I hadn’t addressed the spoken English counterpart or, most important, how to understand it.

For most of my teaching career, which has taken place predominantly in the United States, not only have students preferred to understand real spoken English, but in an English-speaking environment or with students who have contact with English speakers, their ability to achieve their goals has depended on it. Like teachers, however, students often questioned *real* English.

What Is Real?

Helping students accurately hear spoken English requires an understanding of the extensive role of reduced forms in spoken language. Reduced forms are the spontaneous pronunciation changes in adjacent words or sounds spoken at a *natural* speed (Weinstein 2001). Some common examples are *Whaddaya (What do you, What are you), *wanna (want to), and *gonna (going to + verb; Bowen 1975).

Some thoughtful and useful research studies describe reduced forms in English and other languages and discuss the efficacy of teaching reduced forms as part of listening comprehension (Brown 2006). The data for an early study of mine (Weinstein 1984) consisted of recordings of six highly educated American English speakers. I recorded each of the subjects in two unscripted situations totaling seven hours: giving a classroom lecture (formal) and being interviewed (informal). The objective of the study was to test the causes of reduced forms and to learn more about them. I found statistical significance for speed of speech as a cause of reduction in English. That is, the faster the speech, the more reduction.

The three most common reduced forms in my data were *wanna, *gonna, and *hafta. By counting the occurrences of these forms, one of which the speakers said about every two minutes, I found the level used the most by native speakers of American English to be Level 3, the fastest speaking speed (Weinstein 1984; see How Speed of Speech Changes Pronunciation).

How Speed of Speech Changes Pronunciation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Speed of Speech</th>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Times Used in Seven Unscripted Hours</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Slow</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>want to</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faster</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>want *ta</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fastest</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>*wanna</td>
<td>258</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Step 1: Teach the Rules

Because reduced forms are rule based, students can learn the rules first, then practice hearing the forms in simple, contextualized, natural spoken English dialogues. I emphasize to my students that I’m not teaching them to say these forms. Rather, I’m teaching them to understand the reduced forms when native English speakers say them. By explaining it this way, students easily see the importance of understanding the way native English speakers really speak.

For a nontechnical, contextualized, simple approach to understanding reduced forms, I use Whaddaya Say (Weinstein 2001). The book’s thirty units teach simple, research-based rules for the reduced forms (e.g., want to ➞ *wanna, going to + verb ➞ *gonna) and then give practice understanding them in common contextualized conversations. The reduced forms are spiraled so that the conversations in each unit consistently and automatically review the reduced forms previously learned. In that way, as Whaddaya Say progresses, the conversations sound more and more like the ones students will hear from native speakers of American English. The spellings of the reductions come from an extensive sampling of English dialogue in written form (i.e., comics in newspapers).

After learning *Whaddaya and *wanna, English learners have an extremely common spoken English phrase: *Whaddaya *wanna . . . . If the students have access to native English speakers, I give them sample sentences containing the target reduced forms along with the places they’ll most likely hear them. One of the easiest places to hear *Whaddaya *wanna is in a restaurant. At the next class, I ask them if anyone heard *Whaddaya or *wanna outside of class. I ask them to tell me what they remember of the situation and the sentence. I tell them that each time they hear a reduced form in a real situation outside of class, they’ve moved forward in their listening comprehension.

Step 2: Help Students Hear the Forms in Unscripted Speech

Once the students learn the reduced forms, I choose a listening book with real spoken English for additional practice. I reinforce that learning the rules for the most common reduced forms is Step 1. Step 2 is being able to hear the reduced forms when native English speakers use them in real conversation. In thirty years of teaching listening comprehension, I’ve found that it’s extremely difficult for all but the most advanced students to skip Step 1.

It’s easier to understand an interview-type discussion with two speakers than a discussion with three or more speakers. Generally, the more speakers, the more difficult the listening material. When I find a possible listening book that includes authentic listening material with two speakers, I play a sample for myself. Does it include reduced forms? Does it sound natural? Natural spoken English includes false starts, pauses, repetitions, asides, explanations, pause holders, and so on (Krashen and Terrell 1983). I call these vocabulary and tempo changes found in spoken but not written language conversational strategies. Real Talk: Authentic English in Context (Baker and Tanka 2006) is an example of an authentic listening book.

Success = Improvement

Because you are dealing with real spoken English, English learners don’t need to hear it perfectly to be successful. You can measure success in improvement. Pre- and posttest scores that show dramatic improvement constitute successful mastery of real-world listening material. Students in one twenty-hour intensive listening program took a pretest that measured

Techniques to Make Unscripted English Easier

Play the material in logical chunks rather than playing the whole passage.

Ask the students whether the chunk gives them a positive or a negative feeling and why. Have the students guess what it means in the most general sense.

For each chunk, ask basic who, what, and where questions.

Play the chunk again, expecting more precision in comprehension. Replay difficult sentences. Do the students hear any reduced forms? If so, repeat, or have the students repeat, the form, and reinforce what it means.

If there’s a word or words the students don’t understand, ask them to reproduce any sounds they can. If it’s a reduced form, write it on the board, or say it after them.
their understanding of real spoken English. They took another test after learning to understand reduced forms, as described in Step 1, and learning to understand unscripted, real spoken English material set up in a graduated cloze format (Step 2). Increases in understanding of real spoken English for these students ranged from 13 percent to 42 percent.

For you, this result indicates that you can reduce the time spent on teaching the components of spoken English (e.g., reduced forms, conversational strategies) when students can understand a discussion without your pointing these out to them. When learners don’t understand a discussion, however, they have a powerful tool to figure it out.

**Should You Teach Students to Use Reduced Forms in Their Own Speech?**

I’ve been asked this question frequently over the past thirty years, and I used to answer it differently than I do now.

**Then: Don’t Teach Them to Use Reduced Forms**

Thirty years ago, as now, the subject of reduced forms in spoken English was controversial. Many teachers could agree that they needed to teach students to listen to English as it’s really spoken and that to do otherwise was to put students at a disadvantage. However, at that time, I would have said that students should not use reduced forms in their own speech. In my teaching experience, it sounded odd when students tried to say the reduced forms, though I wasn’t exactly sure why.

While working on my thesis on reduced forms (Weinstein 1984), I discovered the reason students’ rendering of reduced forms had often sounded so odd. As I mentioned earlier, I found statistical significance for speed of speech as a cause of reduced forms. Specifically, the speed that naturally creates reduction can be twice as fast as that of fully pronounced, slow English. (Speed here means the speed at which the word or words are said, not necessarily the speed of the whole sentence.) In any event, students have difficulty reaching the speed in English at which reduced forms occur naturally; thus, they don’t sound natural.

**Now: Teach Them to Use the Three Most Common Ones**

Now, however, I’ve reconsidered this issue. Often, my students want to sound more natural, and it’s clear that there are two systems of English. Why would I want to make students sound unnatural? How can they sound natural when their speech isn’t generally fast enough to cause reduction naturally? There’s an instant way to satisfy the need for students to sound more natural without having them adopt pronunciations that do just the opposite.

I found that *gonna, wanna,* and *hafta* were the three most common reduced forms (Weinstein 1984). One of these three forms occurred about every two minutes. These three forms are so common that each is pronounced like a chunk, as if it were a vocabulary word rather than a pronunciation change caused by speed of speech. Because of this, they’re relatively easy for English learners to pronounce naturally. Since one is used approximately every two minutes, English learners who use these three forms sound like they’re using a lot more. This quick and easy approach “naturalizes” students’ speech without raising pronunciation issues.

**References**


**Nina Weinstein has taught ESL for thirty years, during which she’s written numerous articles and textbooks.**
TESOL 2008
Worlds of TESOL: Building Communities of Practice, Inquiry, and Creativity

Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages
42nd ANNUAL CONVENTION AND EXHIBIT

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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What is the theme?
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The Advance Program, which is mailed in late August, contains all necessary registration forms and will be mailed to all members. If you are not a member and would like to receive a Program, please e-mail info@tesol.org.

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Housing for the convention will open in early December 2007. For a list of convention hotels, please consult the Advance Program.

What is the convention schedule?

**Tuesday, April 1, 2008**
Registration: 3-6 pm
Preconvention Institutes

**Wednesday, April 2, 2008**
Registration: 7 am-7 pm
Educational Visits
Preconvention Institutes
Committee Meetings
Interest Section and Affiliate Leaders’ Workshops
Opening Plenary 5 pm

**Thursday, April 3, 2008**
Registration: 7 am-5 pm
Job MarketPlace: 9 am-5 pm
Exhibits: 9 am-5 pm*
Sessions and Workshops

**Friday, April 4, 2008**
Registration: 7 am-5 pm
Job MarketPlace: 9 am-5 pm
Exhibits: 9 am-5 pm*
Sessions and Workshops

**Saturday, April 5, 2008**
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*All times are subject to change.

Where do I get more information?
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Imagine an innovative, ten-week business English program structured around Harvard Business School (HBS) case studies. Add twenty-eight students who are management employees from a leading Asian company, most of whom have never before seen or read an HBS case study. Now add EFL teachers who provide content-based instruction and an international group of business consultants who lecture on each of the HBS case studies’ key concepts and ideas. Picture the students confronting the linguistic challenges associated with this complicated content as they engage with a wealth of new vocabulary, figurative language, and syntactic intricacies.

As an ESOL teacher in this teaching situation, I had some questions to consider: How do I create materials that support students’ learning of this difficult content? What tool can I utilize to analyze each case study in the same way? To respond to the needs of the students, my colleague and I created a reading analysis template. This template is a pedagogical framework that facilitates the creation of classroom course book materials and helps ESOL instructors successfully teach integrated language and content instruction.

The reading analysis template serves as a graphic organizer that structures the activities and exercises to scaffold (Snow and Brinton 1997) the students’ understanding of complex material. The aim of the template is to control frustration and anxiety and promote interaction among students in class while increasing the accessibility of the subject matter. This kind of scaffolding allows students to move from the inside to the outside of the scaffold; learners take over the subject matter and then take control of their learning (van Lier 2005). The template provides a daily ritual of continuity, structure, and predictability and, consequently, a nonthreatening framework for developing learner autonomy.

The Students and Their Needs

Program and corporate expectations for student success are extremely high. Successful learners in this program develop reading analysis skills for critical thinking, participate in heightened levels of interactive communication, and are expected to conduct business negotiations in a cultural setting outside their country. Moreover, the students are required to utilize a sophisticated level of vocabulary and figurative language drawn from the case-study content as well as develop and deliver effective, Western-style presentations that engage the audience.

My coteacher and I tested the reading analysis template in a pilot program that consisted of twenty-eight students who had levels of proficiency varying from low intermediate to advanced. They were divided into four classes, each class having from six to ten students. We shared the advanced class of ten students, who were in their thirties and forties and had various levels of responsibility for company management. Two students had doctorates from the United States, and several were senior managers who had already spent much time overseeing operations in different countries.

Prereading Preparation

Before students read the case study, I introduce brainstorming questions that connect to the topic. The brainstorming generates background knowledge and activates schema for communicative interaction.

For the Black and Decker case study, which focuses on the power tools market, here are some sample brainstorming questions:

- What do you do when you need repairs done in your home?
- If you have bought tools, what brands do you like?
- What role does color play when you purchase an item?

With approximately ten brainstorming questions per case study, students engage in conversation that spurs interest in reading the text.

Language Workshop

After they have read the case study, the language workshop component focuses the students’ attention on new vocabulary, figurative language, and a language structure from the text.

New vocabulary expands the students’ ability to communicate ideas better, and figurative language activities help them examine and understand the use of words in a way that does not reflect dictionary definitions. Learners become familiar with the different ways that authors use poetic license and metaphorical language. For the final category in this component, we select a language structure that targets a specific language point (i.e., syntax, a Latin reference, uncommon punctuation, word usage) from the case.
Postreading Preparation for Lecture

The postreading preparation component aims at context and content comprehension of the case study. Continuing with the Black and Decker case study, here are some sample contextual analysis questions:

The second sentence in paragraph 22 states, “This belief was tested in two ways . . . .” What does “this” refer to? In paragraph 36, the last word is lemon. The word lemon is an example of a metaphor. Explain the metaphor.

Next, each student selects an activity from the graphic and a statistical data category for a class presentation. Time permitting, a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) analysis completes the case study preparation (see “SWOT Analysis” n.d. for a more detailed description). The next step in the process is the case-study lecture, which is given by a business consultant.

Lecture/Reading Debriefing

After the lecture, students return to the language support class to continue discussing the case and complete the lecture/reading debriefing component. Students participate in simulated dialogues that recreate particular scenarios from the case study. For example,

In pairs, role-play a dialogue between the vice president of sales and marketing in the power tools division and a sales person from a hardware store. Discuss Black and Decker products that are both popular and unpopular with professional tradespeople. Make sure that you bring competitors into the conversation and discuss how these competitors affect sales of certain products.

For the final, “going-beyond” activity, students move outside the realm of the actual case study into related material that connects to the real world. Again, using the Black and Decker case, I assign two Internet tasks. In the first, students research four major power tools suppliers and compare their Web sites, product availability, services, locations, promotions, and prices. The students use the Going Beyond chart to document and organize their answers.

The second task asks the students to investigate the psychology behind color in marketing through information discovered on various Web sites and answer questions such as these: How does color influence our purchases? Why are products packaged in a particular color? The students then share their answers and new Web site discoveries with a partner or the whole class. Upon completion of this activity, preparation for the next case study begins.

Student Response

Introducing the Template

My coteacher and I were confident that our reading analysis template would put the students at ease. We explained the layout of the template and the justification for all categories and components. In the beginning, we took it slowly and methodically. After reading and analyzing the first week’s cases, the students were a little less stressed and were more familiar with what would become the daily ritual of case-study analysis.

More Time for Vocabulary

Initially, there was no language workshop class. Vocabulary and figurative language were covered as part of the two-hour case study preparation.
class that examined context and content. Students made it clear that not enough time was focused on business case terminology; hence we changed the program curriculum immediately to create a separate class that would emphasize learning and understanding vocabulary and figurative language. The additional time spent with vocabulary greatly satisfied the students since most had documented vocabulary expansion as one of their program goals.

Student Level Dictates Need

The reading analysis template was so thorough that it ultimately overprepared the advanced-level students. That is to say, the business consultants commented that more emphasis could be placed on key concepts and ideas from each case study. However, the learners with lower English language proficiency needed the template format for better, in-depth understanding and comprehension.

Time Is Always an Issue

For students and teachers, time is always an issue. With longer and more complicated cases, the students requested more time for contextual and content analysis, leaving less time for the other necessary activities, such as presentations, simulated dialogues, and “going beyond.” The students were more concerned with in-depth knowledge of a case study, which would better prepare them for subject matter in the case study. Following these lectures, students entered the postlecture debriefing class with noticeable enthusiasm and, without realizing it, took control of the class by applying their own versions of the template’s debriefing activities. With or without the actual course book debriefing activities, the template maintained its ritual form and presence.

The Ultimate Test

In Week 9, the program scheduled an Advanced Management Module taught by the faculty of a U.S. graduate school’s master of business administration program. In preparation for this week, we assigned each student the task of presenting one case study. After several weeks of teacher modeling and daily use of the reading analysis template, we gradually handed over responsibility for case studies to the students. In this way, each student would be better prepared for the task of presenting an entire case study.

Stressed and overwhelmed by the program workload, the students were better able to complete this time-consuming project because of the ritual use of the template. The template served as a catalyst to kick-start the task and established a comfort zone while the students produced the finished product. Without a doubt, the template made planning and preparing for this assignment much less stressful for the students. The template clearly facilitated the process of students taking responsibility for their own learning.

Student Learning, Teacher Creativity

The template served a twofold purpose: it fostered student learning and teacher creativity. As the template guided the students through the content, they were directed to the areas where they needed to concentrate in order to understand the subject matter in depth and build reading analysis skills.

Furthermore, the template became a road map to facilitate the writing of the appropriate activities and exercises for better understanding of the reading material. My coteacher and I were free to manipulate the components in a variety of ways. The template components and the variety of activities and exercises provided an assortment of angles for the students to approach the content as well as an abundance of ideas and possibilities for materials in the classroom.

References


Kathy L. Brenner teaches in the English for International Teaching Assistants Program at Brown University, in the United States.
The higher-level students at my college in Japan study academic English, many with the goal of studying abroad. To help them prepare better, I decided to create a writing community among my Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL)/academic writing students by combining the Internet and a traditional classroom situation. This community would become a social area to share their ideas, have exposure to writers around the world, and receive guidance, all of which would help the students improve their writing skills and motivate them to become better writers.

Using the Internet can motivate students since they feel they are writing for a real audience; they can receive a wide variety of input about their writing as well as have access to resources to help them develop ideas and improve their overall writing skills (Pennington 2003). Therefore, I decided to create a writing class that integrated a traditional classroom setting with a class page on the Colorado State University (CSU) Writing Studio (Welcome to Writing@CSU, http://writing.colostate.edu/).

Although using an English-medium Internet resource was difficult for the students at first, by the end of the semester their confidence and writing skills had improved. The combination of a variety of resources and traditional instruction seemed to pay off. The students also formed closer bonds of friendship through reading and reacting to each other’s texts and working together to understand how to use the resources.

What Is the Writing Studio?
The Writing Studio, created by Mike Palmquist and others, is the online learning component of the CSU Writing Center. Its aim is to create a community of writers by allowing people from anywhere in the world at all skill levels to use the writing resources compiled on the Web site to explore the writing process. The Writing Studio does this by providing the world’s largest online resource for writers through a substantial archive of guides, links, and interactive activities for writers and writing instructors. The Writing Studio is typically used by university students and instructors in the United States, but access is free to anyone, and thousands of writers all over the world also use the site (Bohlander 2003).

My students’ English level was high enough to understand the content on the Writing Studio page, and when I introduced the idea of using the Writing Studio, they seemed excited. While the school’s director embraced the idea of exposing the students to resources outside of Japan, she cautioned me that the students might find using the Writing Studio too difficult since many lacked computer skills.

Developing the Online Community

Setting Up the Web Page

Setting up a class-specific Writing Studio Web page was easy (see Creating a Class Page on the Writing Studio). At the beginning of the course, I created Writing Studio accounts for the students and then made a Writing Studio class page that incorporated a simple background and easily recognizable links to the tools we would be using: a class calendar, assignments, course materials, forums, file folders, a class e-mail list, and a grade book. I also hid the links to the tools we would not use to help avoid confusion and make the page easier for the students to navigate.

Creating a Class Page on the Writing Studio

1. Go to Welcome to Writing@CSU (http://writing.colostate.edu/), and create a Writing Studio account.
2. Send an e-mail requesting to be added to the instructor list.
3. Create a Writing Studio Class Page using any of the resources and tools available. Here are some examples:
   - syllabus
   - class calendar, assignments, and materials, which allow you to post links to information related to day-to-day class activities or resources
   - file folders where you can create folders for students to turn in their assignments and students can view their classmates’ work at any time
   - forums, chat rooms, and blogs, which you can use to get the students communicating with each other by writing to each other, writing journals, or responding to questions you post
   - grade-book, teaching-notebook, and manage-comments tools that help you manage the class

You can easily add students to a Writing Studio class page if you create an account for each student and enter the account information in the class roster. Any student who is on the class roster then has access to the class page.
Then I created an instruction sheet, which explained how to log onto the Writing Studio and how to use each of the tools. To avoid confusion, the instruction sheet also gave the students a list of Internet-related vocabulary that would be used in the online portion of the class.

Integrating the Physical and Virtual Classrooms

On the first day of class, we met in the computer lab for an orientation to the Web site. Some students had looked at our class page earlier and helped me explain how to navigate the site and use the tools. This was very helpful because we were able to divide the class into groups and help the students who were having individual difficulties.

During the semester, the students attended regular weekly class sessions to receive instruction on different types of writing. They used the Writing Studio to find information about their assignments; submit their writing; participate in peer review activities; and discuss writing, school, and life-related issues.

The combination of a traditional approach with online learning created an effective community environment in several ways. First, since we met weekly in the classroom, I was able to make sure the students understood global parameters such as paragraph and argument structures and give the students feedback while they worked on textbook and brainstorming activities. We also did activities related to local issues, such as grammar and word choice, that had arisen in the drafts submitted through the Writing Studio.

Community Feedback

With a good grasp of what was expected, the students went into the online environment, where they experimented with their writing style, received information about and submitted assignments through our class page, and received individualized feedback from their group members and me. Feedback from a variety of peers created social interaction in which students helped each other develop language skills. Since feedback from more than one student often tended to relate to the same points, it focused each writer’s attention, reinforcing ideas and opinions as well as developing a sense of community.

When using our class page, the students used the writing community to help each other in several ways. First, they did occasional peer review assignments commenting on global issues in their group members’ papers. In addition, since all homework assignments were posted in the file folders for the entire class to see, the students naturally tended to read each other’s work and provided feedback on their own as well. I often heard students discussing their writing assignments while we worked in the classroom. At the end of the semester in their reflection papers, students mentioned the usefulness of the Writing Studio with comments such as these:

I could read journals or essays of my classmates and I could know their opinions and ideas.

There were meaningful opinions and they brought inspiration and delight for me.

Having the opportunity to see a wide variety of writing helped the students improve their style, come up with ideas for their own writing, and gain more confidence in their writing skills.

Aside from feedback on writing-related issues, the students used the online writing community as an avenue to discuss and respond to others’ problems. For example, when one student wrote in his journal that he was not sure if he wanted to study in the United States after graduation or pursue his original goal of going to Russia to study, several other students who had read his journal responded to his problem. Later on, he told me that he felt more...
confident about making a decision after reading his classmates’ advice. He hadn’t felt comfortable talking to his classmates in person, so writing about his feelings and reading their responses was a good way to communicate.

Reactions to the Writing Community Experience

At first, some of the students were nervous about using an all-English Internet environment, but those who were more familiar with the Internet helped classmates who were apprehensive. At the end of the semester, one student who was not sure about using the computer for so much of her class work wrote:

There was considerably resistance in my studying with a PC at first because I had rarely used a PC until that time. However, it was not so difficult to study with it when I tried to do it once.

Aside from getting used to using a computer, the students felt that the Writing Studio was valuable both as a learning and a social experience. One student noted,

I could really enjoy Writing Studio, especially journals which help me to understand others character, so I thought that if we had used Writing Studio earlier, we could have become friendly faster.

I encouraged some of my students who were using only our class page to search through the Writing Studio’s resources for additional information about various types of writing. I also encouraged them to read blogs posted on the Writing Studio by university students in the United States to see writing by other college students. One of my students who regularly read the blogs made the following comment:

Reading native English speaker’s summaries was interesting because I could see how other people write and get ideas about how to write my summaries. It was really cool!

Seeing other students’ writing motivated her because she felt she belonged to a wider community of writers and learned how to improve her own writing through observing techniques used by students outside of our college.

Writing as Part of a Community

Combining the Writing Studio and a traditional classroom environment proved effective in several ways. First, the students paid more attention to local issues such as word choice, spelling, and grammar in their writing since they word-processed all of their assignments.

Also, through exposure to a wide variety of opinions, the students improved their ability to generate interesting ideas and felt more confident experimenting with their writing. When we worked in class, the students paid closer attention to explanations and activities, tried to incorporate suggestions that arose in peer review sessions into their in-class assignments, and asked more questions than they had in the previous semester. In general, they took a more active role in their own learning process and began to think critically about writing rather than simply expecting corrections from the teacher.

This change in attitude reflects the effectiveness of combining the traditional classroom and the Writing Studio: the students felt like part of the writing community, and the fact that they were writing for a real audience gave them motivation to improve their own writing.

References


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Reading to Talk

by Thomas Baker

Six years ago, a student gave me a copy of Allende’s (1995) La Casa de los Espríntus (The House of Spirits) as a gift when I arrived in Chile to begin my EFL teaching career. My students often talked to me about what I was reading both before and after class. We talked about the author, the plot, the characters, and the setting, as well as my opinion of the book. I quickly realized that I could use this natural activity in class to get my students talking more. They simply needed a book of their own to read.

My students were intermediate-level, adult learners who were learning English for both work and personal reasons. They studied English three times a week in classes lasting ninety minutes. They all spoke Castilian Spanish as their first language. In the class, there were two men and eight women, ranging in ages from twenty-one to forty-five: two retail workers, two government accountants, five university students, and a teacher of high school French. For this diverse group, extensive reading was the link to speaking. For this diverse group, extensive reading was the link to speaking. They were reading to talk.

Extensive reading means reading large quantities of readable materials on diverse, personally interesting topics. Students are encouraged to read for a general understanding of the overall text, not to understand every word or even every sentence. This type of reading contrasts with intensive reading: reading short, difficult texts with the goal of detailed and complete understanding (Bamford and Day 1997).

Why Encourage Extensive Reading?

There are strong reasons to encourage English language learners to read extensively. The benefits include developing vocabulary, coming to see reading as an enjoyable activity, and reading as a social activity—people talk about what they read. Learning vocabulary is an important benefit for English learners. Children’s books contain about one-third more rare words than even adult prime-time television shows or the everyday speech of college graduates (Hayes and Ahrens 1988). Cunningham and Stanovich (1998) found that even children who are poor readers build vocabulary through reading. These findings indicate that reading is an excellent way for students to learn new vocabulary.

Another benefit for students is the development of the habit of reading. In a virtuous cycle, people who read a lot become good readers. Being a good reader makes reading an enjoyable activity. The enjoyment of reading leads to more reading, as it is a pleasurable activity (Trelease 2001).

Stanovich (1986) coined the term Matthew effect to describe the virtuous cycle of the good reader and the vicious cycle of the poor reader. The term refers to Jesus’s Parable of the Talents in the Christian Bible:

For to all those who have, more will be given, and they will have an abundance; but from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away. (Matthew 25:29, New Revised Standard Version, 1989)

In the Matthew effect, the good reader gets better, and the poor reader gets worse. People who fail at learning to read or dislike reading read less. As a result, they do not gain vocabulary or practice in fluent, automatic reading. Reading then becomes even more difficult with the lack of reading practice. We as teachers must therefore strive to make reading a positive experience.

Finally, reading is a social activity. People routinely discuss books they have read with family members, friends, and colleagues. They recommend books, borrow and lend books, and give and receive books as presents. Sometimes people even decide to write a book after being motivated by something they have read and talked about. Thus, reading provides a natural springboard for talking.

Seven Principles for Reading to Talk

In my class, I set aside ten to fifteen minutes to discuss the books that the students are reading. The activity is always a highlight of the class. We continue to discuss books they are reading in their final course at the upper-intermediate level. The reading discussions follow seven principles specifically designed for this reading-to-talk activity. The process of reading to talk gives autonomy to the students while ensuring that their reading experience is successful.

ONE: The Student Must Select the Book

Student selection of books to read is essential. Students choose a specific book because they have found the book appealing to them in some way and want to read it. This desire to read makes for a positive reading experience and, consequently, a student is more likely to get hooked on reading. In contrast, when students are required to read books that aren’t of interest to them, the reading expe-
experience is rarely a positive one, and their motivation to read suffers.

TWO: The Student Must Be Able to Read the Book Easily

Students read books at their own comfortable reading levels so that they can do large amounts of reading. This volume approach leads to the development of increased automaticity in word recognition (National Reading Panel 2000). When recognizing words requires very little effort, students can focus more of their energy on understanding what they are reading. When students understand what they read, they can talk about it more effectively. If reading is a positive experience, it will perpetuate itself.

On the other hand, when a book is difficult to read, the opposite is likely to be true, and reading will become a negative experience. Frustrating reading experiences are likely to have a negative impact on students’ motivation to read.

THREE: Ten to Fifteen Minutes of Class Time Are Devoted to Discussion

This time frame is an investment in the development of students’ oral skills. We usually discuss what the students have read at the beginning of the class because it provides an authentic opportunity to talk within a meaningful context at the beginning of lessons. This experience in turn gives confidence to the class as a whole and increases individual self-esteem.

FOUR: Two Books (Introduced by Two Students) Are Discussed Each Class

When I introduce this activity to students, I model how to talk about a book with a focus on reader response. I give reader response questions (e.g., Can you summarize what you read? Did anything surprise you or confuse you? What characters did you like the best/least, and why?) to each student to guide them in their responses. Literary analysis is not the focus of this student-centered activity.

These questions generate manageable language chunks such as these:

I chose this book to read because . . . .
First . . . .
Next . . . .
Then . . . .
But suddenly . . . .
After that . . . . Finally . . . .
I was surprised/confused when . . . .
The character I liked best/least was _____ because . . . .

For the discussion, the students form their chairs into a circle. One student is designated as timekeeper and announces when one minute is remaining. Each student has five minutes to talk about his or her book, followed by a three-minute question-and-answer session. Having two students prepare to discuss their books ensures that even if one student is absent, there will be a book discussion in each class.

FIVE: Students Summarize Their Reading and Share Their Reactions

The students always give their reactions to their book first; the summary comes last. I have the students follow this order to give priority to the emotional response provoked by the reading. The class listens attentively and tries to form questions and comments relevant to the speaker’s remarks. This process allows the students to personalize their reading experience by making connections related to their Chilean reality. The students often reflect on cultural similarities and differences they notice in their reading.

Students made the following remarks about Briley’s (1994) Cry Freedom, which three students in my class were reading:
I don’t like any type of racism. When I found out that the main topic was racism I was very shocked and interested. I never read anything about racism before.

I was very surprised when I read about the black townships. I never imagined a country where people were separated because of their skin color. Very surprising.

I was surprised when I saw the cover picture. Yes, I know that is an image from a movie but I suppose that it is related with reality.

SIX: Class Members Engage in a Spontaneous Question-and-Answer Session

The other students and I always wait until after the summary before asking questions. Waiting in this way allows students with lower proficiency levels to prepare and practice their contributions before class, which reduces their anxiety about speaking in class and often increases the richness of their vocabulary and grammar.

Many students have commented that their preparation helped them realize that five minutes is an incredibly long time to speak without interruption. Some students have noticed that their oral fluency during their talk was better than usual because they had practiced.

Here are some examples of questions often asked by students:

• Would you recommend this book for me to read? Why or why not?
• Did the characters in the book remind you of anyone you know?
• Would this book be a good movie? Why or why not?
• What would you have done if you were _____?
• You said the book made you feel ____. Can you say more about that?

The process of reading to talk gives autonomy to the students while ensuring that their reading experience is successful.

• What have you learned from reading this book?

SEVEN: There Are No Tests Related to the Extensive Reading

The most difficult aspect of this activity for a teacher may be the fact that the students are not tested on the reading. However, the absence of testing makes this a low-stress, low-anxiety activity. The students don’t have to worry about assessment; they are reading to talk. The students share their reading with classmates through authentic language, using all of their personal language resources. They are comfortable and relaxed when communicating their thoughts and opinions within the group in a supportive, nonjudgmental environment. It is this environment that makes the activity successful.

Modeling Readership

The success of this activity lies in the fact that it mirrors what people naturally do after reading a book: discuss it, recommend it, laugh about it, feel good (or bad) about it, and share it as a social activity. This kind of talk promotes authentic language use, which involves incidental vocabulary and grammar learning.

To implement reading-to-talk successfully, teachers must be aware of the status they have as role models for students. Teachers who read and discuss books with students are modeling the behavior they want students to learn. This modeling gives credibility and genuineness of purpose to the teacher in the eyes of the students.

References


Thomas Baker, a CELTA-qualified EFL teacher with six years’ experience in Chile, currently teaches EFL at Colegio del Verbo Divino, a Catholic high school for boys.

See also “Learner-Made Vocabulary Cards in the EAP Classroom,” http://www.tesol.org/et.
Action Research

*Action Research* is one of a series of case studies in TESOL practice. Although theory and paradigms have a place in action, action researchers tend to generalize theories through induction. The editor of this book provides various definitions and arguments about action research in theory and leaves the description of authentic action research projects to the contributors of each chapter. This book serves as a transition from the editor’s earlier work (Edge 1992) and a later publication (Edge 2005), which focus on teachers’ professional self-development.

The editor sends the message that it is time for teacher education to shift away from following an established model or applying theory to classroom practice and toward the idea that teachers themselves should respond to and investigate their professional contexts to develop personal theories.

Following the editor’s direction not to provide a model for teachers to use, the contributors present details of what actually happened in their classrooms, what challenges they met, what changes they made to the previous models/theories, and how self-reflection facilitated their classroom practice and fostered personal development. Although most contributors introduced a model at the beginning of their action research, they all adjusted the model to their specific needs and situations as well as to their social and cultural context. This gives the reader multiple choices of action research to start with and freedom to modify existing models/theories to meet his or her own needs.

The in-depth descriptions of action research projects are formatted so that readers can understand the context in which the action research was carried out, the focus of the project, processes of actions, outcomes, and reflections.

The contributors have rich experience in teaching ESOL. They share their own strategies and struggle to handle common classroom issues such as understanding the students’ culture, diversity in the classroom context, students’ questions in class, lesson planning, self-reflection about what did and did not work, and why certain plans worked in one situation but not in another. No matter the context in which they teach, readers will relate to the experiences of their colleagues all over the world, including in the United States, Britain, Germany, Japan, Brazil, Slovenia, and Thailand.

The chapters in this book include a wide range of teaching issues as well, including development of independent computer skills, use of feedback in writing, reflections through journaling to develop critical thinking skills, beliefs and attitudes about learning English, language awareness of novice teachers, use of student feedback, comparison between British and North American approaches to requests, enhancement of intercultural learning via technology, collaborative efforts to integrate computer labs into the syllabus, and communicative awareness and interaction skills in business circles.

Although the contexts in some developing countries are included, this book would have a larger impact if it included action researchers from other developing countries, especially China, where there are millions of English language learners.

**References**


Chuang Wang is an assistant professor at the College of Education of the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, in the United States.
speakers of English. The second section discusses the implications for classroom practice. Different chapters allow you to focus on issues of interest to you while contrasting the views of academics on the global role of the English language.

You may find concepts and recommendations on methodology in the second section of the book helpful, such as those in Brian Tomlinson’s paper on positive attitudes toward language and the context of learning. Nicos Sifakis’s and Ruanni Tupas’s papers also provide a starting point for teaching monolingual/multilingual/multicultural classes as they bring the learners’ sense of identity and their attitudes to learning to the fore.

One impact of the prominent role of English in language teaching and linguistic evolution is that over the past few decades, nonnative speakers of English have outnumbered its native speakers. Inevitably, the issue of language diversity is a complex one that warrants debate on issues such as what constitutes Standard English and World Englishes and what their roles are in EFL and ESL. Which model should be adopted in the EFL program—a native speaker model or a “nativized” model (e.g., a local nativized model of English such as Indian or Nigerian English)?

Discussions on the role of the English language and what it represents—power, identity, and value—are present throughout the book. Issues raised include the uncontrolled spread of a form of English among the speakers in the Outer Circle (those who have not spoken English from infancy), such as Singaporean English with *lah* as a high-frequency item in the spoken repertoire, and the role of nonnative-speaking teachers in the Expanding Circle (in countries such as Indonesia and Thailand).

This book serves as a timely stage on which academics can engage in debates about Standard English, World Englishes, English as an international language, or English as a lingua franca. ESL/EFL practitioners should find the book inspiring and helpful in defining their teaching methods and curriculum design. Interviews with Tom McArthur (author and editor, Oxford and Cambridge University Press) and Suresh Canagarajah (City University of New York) provide an approachable way to follow the books’ arguments and viewpoints.

Pornsawan Brawn is an ESL teacher and material writer for NSW Adult Migrant English Service in Sydney, Australia.

Teresa Almeida d’Eça, an EFL teacher at a middle school in Portugal, has created Have Fun with English! 2, a remarkable blog that is certain to inspire all language teachers who use or plan to use blogs.

Have Fun with English! 2 is an extracurricular teacher/student blog for fifth- and sixth-grade students who are first- and second-year EFL students. It is a two-way communication channel that is open 24/7. The blog provides students with an interactive page where they can communicate in English, practicing what they learn in the classroom in an informal way, free from the constraints of the curriculum and the physical classroom. Students and teacher can communicate with each other as well as with the outside world.

Soon after its creation, the blog became international as Almeida d’Eça is an active Webhead and her fellow Webheads visit regularly and leave comments. (The Webheads are an international group of ESL/EFL teachers who meet frequently online to discuss the pedagogical uses of technology; see the review of Webheads in Action in Essential Teacher, Spring 2004).

Click on the Clustr Map to see how far the students reach out into the world. These young children are exposed via the blog to technologies that will help them throughout their student lives. They receive guidance on how to work with some technologies, and they gain extensive hands-on experience with others. Students will find, for example, links on the site to many useful resources that they can work with independently, such as pronunciation pages based on Portuguese sounds and an audio dictionary.

More significant, this blog features an array of Web 2.0 tools, the so-called social tools. In addition to the blog itself, which the children use for written communication, the site features an embedded voicemail board that they can use for oral communication. In addition, the children create slideshows with

Have Fun with English! 2   http://fwe2.motive.com/

See also “Who Owns English? The Indian Context,” http://www.tesol.org/et/


Need to teach your class how to write a complaint about a billing error or complete a change-of-address card? Want to help parents communicate with teachers about their children’s absences, tardiness, or permission slips? This collection of reproducible masters for over 100 everyday writing activities is a welcome resource for any ESOL teacher of beginning- to high-intermediate-level students.

Most lessons are limited to one black-and-white page, making them easy to photocopy. They begin with a prewriting exploration of ideas and vocabulary and end with expansion activities. Students are encouraged to keep a notebook of vocabulary, community information, and activities. Worksheet topics range from literacy-level printing and cursive writing practice; to cloze exercises for journaling simple facts through considered opinions and lessons on composing and mailing letters, greeting cards, invitations, and thank-you notes; to an extensive selection of forms from job, credit, and driver license applications and health insurance, customs, and tax forms; and to practical topics such as shopping, banking, and dealing with rental agreements or housing complaints.

Many of the activities use cloze exercises, keying descriptions of each answer (e.g., “Today’s date”) or choices of answers (e.g., rice, noodles, potatoes, carrots) to each of the numbered blanks. This is an excellent means of overcoming students’ bewilderment at seeing a page of blanks to fill. The section on travel develops the skill of giving directions via a simple map with a carefully elaborated cloze activity. It further builds on these skills in later worksheets to evoke critical thinking.

Not only is the book’s content appealing, but the design features sufficiently large type and illustrations with lots of white space, avoiding the cluttered look of many current ESOL publications. The attractive table of contents makes it easy to find exactly what you’re looking for, so there’s no need for an index.

The book gives guidance for using the activities for the whole class, pairs, groups, and individual students and includes instructions for four class games. Each unit starts with a basic spelling rule and examples.

Designed to complement the authors’ Conversation Book series (Prentice Hall), A Writing Book is a handy adjunct to ESOL texts targeted at adult learners at beginning through high-intermediate levels in the United States.


(continued from previous page)

photos that they have taken on field trips (clear directions for creating a show are found on the blog), record podcasts in class on different topics, produce short films using the Web site Zimmer Twins (http://www.zimmertwins.ca/), and make drawings that are uploaded to BubbleShare (http://www.bubbleshare.com/).

Educational blogs such as these offer many benefits to students. Perhaps most important, they generate enthusiasm for learning, motivate students to do more and better, and promote interaction with real people to carry out real tasks in a language of the real world, thus ensuring authenticity. For more information on this topic, take a look at Almeida d’Eça’s other blog, CALL Lessons (http://call05-06.motime.com/), which complements Have Fun with English! 2.

In December 2006, Have Fun with English! 2 won an Edublog Award for the Best Teacher Blog (see The Edublog Awards, http://incsub.org/awards/). Visit Have Fun with English! 2 and delve into this world of children who are actively learning and using English in their classroom in Portugal and in cyberspace. By communicating with them, you will enrich your life and theirs.

Christine Meloni teaches ESL at Northern Virginia Community College, in the United States.
Association NEWS

TESOL Collaborates to Launch Online Tapestry and Research Agenda

On October 22, TESOL, the International Reading Association (IRA), the National Association for Bilingual Education (NABE), and the Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL) announced the launch of two resources for educators working with English language learners. The result of a unique collaborative effort among the organizations, the initiative was also supported by the U.S. Department of Education’s Office of English Language Acquisition, the National Institute for Literacy, and the National Institute for Child Health and Human Development.

The initiative was built in part upon the work of the National Literacy Panel on Language-Minority Children and Youth, whose report, Developing Literacy in Second-Language Learners, was published in 2006. Two workshop meetings were held in the fall of 2006 and spring of 2007, which convened representatives from each of the organizations to discuss some of the basic findings in the report and what knowledge resources could best serve the field.

The first resource, the online Tapestry for Teachers of English Language Learners, provides brief summaries of research findings on effective literacy strategies for English language learners. It provides research-backed strategies for four areas: foundations of emerging literacy, vocabulary development, story comprehension, and academic reading. It also offers a library of online resources, including links to clearinghouses and other organizations, and is hosted on the TESOL Web site at http://www.tesol.org/ELLTapestry.

The second resource is a research agenda that poses questions related to literacy and English language learners that merit further investigation. Using the 2006 National Literacy Panel report and the 2004 TESOL Research Agenda as background pieces, the panel at the second workshop meeting reviewed existing doctrine in the field of literacy education for English language learners and identified knowledge gaps and research needs. The resulting research agenda, Key Issues and Questions in ELL Literacy Research, is a synthesized document that considers research on second language literacy development within a multidimensional, dynamic framework. The document is available for download on TESOL’s Web site.

2008 Symposia
TESOL will host two symposia in 2008. The TESOL Symposium on Keeping Language Diversity Alive, hosted with the help of the Australian Council of TESOL Associations (ACTA), will take place July 9, 2008, in Alice Springs, Northern Territory, Australia. In November 2008, the TESOL Symposium will take place in Seville, Spain, and will be coordinated with TESOL-SPAIN.

For more information, visit http://www.tesol.org/ : Education: Symposia, and Colloquia, or e-mail edprograms@tesol.org.

2008 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.
TESOL 2008 Convention

Renew Early to Avoid Delays During the Convention Preregistration Process

If you plan to attend the TESOL 2008 convention in New York, New York, USA in April 2008, and plan to wait to renew your membership as part of the preregistration process, you may instead want to renew when your invoice appears. The convention preregistration process will no longer include the opportunity to renew membership or join TESOL. Registrants will be referred to the TESOL Web site.

Students: Members joining or renewing at the student level must provide proof of full-time enrollment at the time of joining or renewing. Students may send an unofficial transcript to students@tesol.org or fax to Student Verification, +1 703-836-6447, or submit with convention registration. No student convention registrations or memberships will be processed without this proof. This policy will be strictly enforced. If planning to register on site at the convention, proof of full-time student status will be required at registration to qualify for student rates. Without proof, full registration fees will be charged.

Job MarketPlace at the TESOL 2008 Annual Convention

Job searching? Curious about what types of positions are available? TESOL’s annual Job MarketPlace (JMP) has two components: an online job search/interview scheduling module through TESOL’s online Career Center and an on-site location at the annual TESOL convention, where employers conduct face-to-face interviews with job seekers. The 2008 JMP also includes a meet-and-greet area for top employers.

Job seekers are encouraged to apply for jobs and request interviews prior to their arrival at the convention. Set up your Career Center account and search for JMP job postings on the Career Center’s Web site (http://careers.tesol.org) after December 3, 2007. Open 9 am–5 pm, Thursday–Saturday, the JMP will be located in the Metropolitan Ballroom of the Sheraton New York Hotel.

Graduate Student Forum

The Graduate Student Forum is a student-run miniconference sponsored by Purdue University. This forum invites graduate students in TESOL teacher preparation programs to present papers, demonstrations, and posters. This forum also 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 in the convention program. For more information, please visit http://www.tesol.org.

Doctoral Forum

The Doctoral Forum will be held at the 42nd Annual TESOL Convention in New York, New York, USA. TESOL invites doctoral students to participate in this informative event that brings together doctoral students and established TESOL scholars to discuss issues pertinent to the students’ research. This forum enables doctoral students to get feedback from their peers as well as from seasoned ESOL professionals (mentors) about current issues pertaining to their dissertation research. This event is an informal gathering where doctoral students can casually discuss their research. For more information, please visit http://www.tesol.org.
TESOL Welcomes Delegates from Thailand, China, and Latvia

On September 7, 2007, Anirut Chumsawat, head of the English Education Program at Nakorn Si Thammarat Rajabhat University in Thailand, visited TESOL as part of his three-week State Department International Visitor program. The trip was coordinated by Meridian International Center. While at TESOL, Mr. Chumsawat met with Srisucha McCabe, in the TESOL Education Programs Department, to learn more about the educational offerings.

On October 9, 2007, four education newspaper publishers from China, Ying Liu, Xin Kang, Gao Chang, and Lei Wu, visited TESOL as part of a U.S. tour that included stops in Boston, New York, Arizona, and California. While at TESOL, they met with Executive Director Chuck Amorosino as well as other staff and department heads to discuss possible membership and future visits.

On October 11, 2007, six educators and their escort from Latvia visited TESOL. The educators, Ina Andina, Inta Cirsa, Ilona Ustinova, Stanislavs Jakovlevs, Iveta Sila, and Vitorija Bulavkina, met with Srisucha McCabe, TESOL’s Professional Development Manager, and James Worthen, TESOL’s Member Relations Manager, to find out about the benefits of TESOL membership and affiliation.

A Founding TESOL Member Remembers TESOL

Sumako Kimizuka, affectionately known as Dr. Kimi, died on January 7, 2006. Dr. Kimizuka, a founding member of TESOL, left a thoughtful gift of over US$5,000 to TESOL. She was Emeritus Associate Professor of Linguistics at the University of Southern California.

Gifts from members help TESOL reach out to ESL and EFL educators in all parts of the world. In 1999, the late Charles W. Seifert, a TESOL member, bequeathed a gift of US$114,000. At his request, a permanent endowment was established to assist in the teaching of EFL. Interest from the Seifert fund has provided support for the 2005 TESOL Senegal Symposium and the 2007 TESOL Ukraine Symposium.

TESOL Resource Center Contests

The TESOL Resource Center (TRC) announced in September the result of its first contest. To enter the New York contest, participants were required to submit at least two approved resources to the TRC. The first two randomly chosen names won the first prize of two free nights’ lodging in New York City during the TESOL convention in April 2008. The next prize went to five members who each won US$50 credit toward TESOL publications. TESOL sent Certificates of Appreciation to the TRC contributors.

Nearly 200 resources have been submitted to the TRC since its launch in February 2007, and a number of members have volunteered to review resources. TESOL encourages all members to continue their involvement in the TRC by submitting or reviewing resources.

The TRC will announce the Mile-High City contest for the 2009 convention by the end of December. For more information about the contest and the TRC in general, please visit http://www.tesol.org/resourcecenter or e-mail resourcecenter@tesol.org.

Publishers from China visit TESOL and meet with Central Office staff
CALL Environments: Research, Practice, and Critical Issues—Second edition
(Joy Egbert and Elizabeth Hanson-Smith, eds.)

When TESOL published the first edition of CALL Environments in 1999, it filled a distinct need for a computer-assisted language learning (CALL) text focused specifically on second language acquisition (SLA). Much has happened in the world of technology since then, but the need to maintain this connection between research on both CALL and SLA still exists. This second edition continues to meet that need by highlighting new tools, discussing new research, and proposing new practical applications. And many of the chapters, which discuss topics such as visual literacy, critical thinking, and creativity, address content from the revised National Education Technology Standards for Students. As Egbert and Hanson-Smith point out, although technology presents a whole new language, the language of technology is not the most crucial information that educators need in order to use computers and the Internet effectively in their language classrooms. More important is an understanding of good pedagogy and the relationships among teaching, learning, and technological environments.

Revitalizing an Established Program for Adult Learners (Alison Rice, ed.)

Deliberately introducing change into an established English language program, in which faculty, students, and administrators are comfortable with courses and procedures, is unsettling and often costly. Why, then, would overworked program directors, coordinators, and faculty decide to overhaul their curricula, testing procedures, and academic schedules? This volume showcases ten programs that have struggled to find innovative solutions for such issues as increased competition for declining numbers of students, changing student populations and demands, and institutional requirements to prepare future undergraduate or graduate students. The introductory chapter reviews the literature of change management in English language teaching and discusses a framework for successful educational innovation. The following chapters detail challenges faced by programs in Australia, Canada, Korea, Turkey, and the United States. The contributors provide valuable and frank insights into what happens when theory hits reality. They make clear that their final products are works in progress that will continue to develop as faculty and students come to own them. All contributors provide thoughtful models educators can turn to in revitalizing their own programs.

To order, see the Book Catalog at http://www.tesol.org.

Open Access

Open access, the free access for all members to as many IS and caucus e-lists and e-newsletters as they wish, has been successfully embraced by members. No longer are fees associated with subscribing to additional ISs and caucuses.

In order to maintain a core membership for each IS and each caucus, members who have selected a primary interest section and/or primary caucus will vote in that primary IS and/or caucus but no others.

If you haven’t visited the special Web page set up for members to manage their communities, log in to the TESOL Web site at http://www.tesol.org and click on My Communities in the Member Toolbox area. You may choose whichever primary IS and caucus you want, as well as add, change, or delete as many other ISs or caucuses as you would like. You will also be able to easily turn mail on and off while on vacation, determine how you’d like to receive your e-lists (digested or not), and so on. You may also provide an alternative e-mail address at which to receive e-mails or e-news.

You may also manage any other free e-mail services, such as deciding to receive TESOL Connections, joining a student e-list, getting the electronic placement bulletin, receiving book updates, getting education program information, and so on.
Board Approves Position Statements

At its meeting in October, the TESOL Board of Directors approved new position statements on the issue of terminal degrees and the role of teacher associations in education policy. In addition, the TESOL Board approved a position statement supporting the use of weighted measures for accountability under No Child Left Behind. The full position statements are available for download from the TESOL Web site.

2008 Call for Member Resolutions

Resolutions and/or reaffirmations may be submitted to the Rules and Resolutions Committee from the following sources: the Board of Directors (representing the general TESOL membership), an affiliate, an interest section, any standing committee, or a group of at least ten (10) members in good standing.

1. Inform yourself about the background of the issue, and find out what TESOL may have already done about it. See TESOL’s Web site for information on standards, initiatives, and policy statements and resolutions passed by the Board of Directors.

2. Make sure that the resolution is germane to TESOL’s mission statement:
   TESOL’s mission is to ensure excellence in English language teaching to speakers of other languages. TESOL values
   • professionalism in language education
   • individual language rights
   • accessible, high-quality education
   • collaboration in a global community

3. Consider whether a resolution is the most appropriate response.

4. Focus the resolution. Do not try to accomplish too many ends in a single resolution. Taking into account the global membership of TESOL, avoid proposing an action that would be improper or impossible in some nations where TESOL has affiliates.

5. Write the resolution in standard resolution format, as recommended in Robert’s Rules of Order, Newly Revised.

6. As soon as you decide to write a resolution, please contact Susanne McLaughlin (smclaugh@roosevelt.edu) so that you can be assigned a mentor with expertise in writing resolutions to support your efforts to draft your resolution before the submission deadline.

A proposed resolution bearing the signatures of at least ten (10) TESOL members in good standing must be received (not postmarked) by the chair of the Rules and Resolutions Committee by February 22, 2008.

Resolutions to be considered by the general membership at the Annual Business Meeting in New York should be sent to

Susanne McLaughlin
555 Hinman Ave., Apt. A3
Evanston, IL 60202-3088
Fax: 312-341-2156    smclaugh@roosevelt.edu

Board Approves Position Statements

TESOL Payment Options

TESOL offers the following payment options (all payments are accepted in U.S. dollars drawn on U.S. banks). For those countries where credit cards are not an option, please note that TESOL offers wire transfers and payments through Western Union.

METHODS OF PAYMENT

**Online**: For fastest processing, join online at http://www.tesol.org/join.

**By Phone**: Apply by calling +1 240-243-2243 (888-547-3369 toll-free in the United States and Canada).

**Mail**: Send your completed form with credit card information or check to TESOL, P.O. Box 79283, Baltimore, Maryland, USA 21279-0283.

**Fax**: Fax your completed form with credit card information to +1 703-836-6447 or +1 703-836-7864.

**Western Union® Quick Pay**: Visit http://www.tesol.org/join and select Payment Options for details on submitting Western Union® Quick Pay.

**Purchase Orders**: Purchase orders are not accepted.

**Forms of Payment**

**Checks**: TESOL accepts personal or corporate checks or money orders drawn in U.S. funds on U.S. banks.

**Credit Cards**: TESOL accepts Visa, MasterCard (including check cards), and American Express.

**Wire Transfers**: Visit http://www.tesol.org/join and select Payment Options for details on submitting wire transfers.
The TESOL Symposium on English Language Assessment

On October 26, 2007, 199 participants gathered at Kyiv National Taras Shevchenko University, in Kyiv, Ukraine, for the TESOL Symposium on English Language Assessment. The featured speakers were Jeffrey T. Connor-Linton, Georgetown University, Washington, DC, United States; Constant Leung, King’s College London, London, United Kingdom; and Jo Lewkowicz, University of Warsaw, Warsaw, Poland. Olga Bessonova, Donetsk National University, Donetsk, Ukraine, led the closing session.
TESOL Recognizes World Teacher Day Honorees

The overarching theme of World Teachers’ Day, celebrated on October 5, 2007, was “Quality Teachers for Quality Education.” The subtheme was “Better Working Conditions for Teachers Mean Better Learning Conditions for Learners.” A notice was posted in TESOL Connections inviting all members to identify honorees who exemplify the 2007 theme.

The 2007 honorees are

Dr. Ryan Monroe, identified by TESOL member Robert Meszaros, for his mentoring skills and effective SIOP training program

Adela Muñoz Prado, identified by TESOL member Karen Taylor, for her interpersonal skills and ability to create full-time positions with benefits for newly hired teachers in a university-wide EFL program in Yucatan, Mexico

Karen Taylor, identified by TESOL member Brock Brady, for her passion and commitment to her students and for developing effective methods of teaching

Louise Vogel, identified by TESOL member Ann Kennedy, for using her extensive second language knowledge to challenge her ESL adolescents to achieve academically at an accelerated pace

TESOL congratulates the honorees for their commitment to providing quality education. To find out more about World Teachers’ Day, go to http://www.tesol.org/career/awardsandgrants/WorldTeachersDay.

Student Membership

Do you have students who would benefit from TESOL membership? This year TESOL will begin an incentive program in which one free convention registration will be shared by the five student TESOL members who are recruited by Friday, March 7, 2008. TESOL is committed to making membership affordable to students, so urge your students to join now at the student rate using the materials TESOL recently sent to participating teacher education programs in the United States and Canada. If your school is not participating and would like to become a part of this program, please contact Joe Howard at jhoward@tesol.org and ask to have materials shipped to you.

With TESOL’s upcoming annual convention in April, now is a good time to remind your students to join TESOL. Please ensure that your students have their full-time student verification information with them, especially if they plan to join or renew at the convention; students must bring their credentials with them to the TESOL convention if they plan to join or renew on site. For more information on student verification, please go to http://www.tesol.org, and click on Membership : Student Membership:

Conduct TESOL Business Online

You can join or renew your membership, subscribe to TESOL serial publications, and purchase TESOL publications online. TESOL members get an average discount of 25% on publications.

Main.................................................info@tesol.org
Advocacy........................................advocacy@tesol.org
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Member Services..........................members@tesol.org
Affiliates........................................affiliates@tesol.org
Awards.............................................awards@tesol.org
Career Services...............................careers@tesol.org
Caucuses........................................caucuses@tesol.org
Interest Sections............................interestsections@tesol.org
President (Board of Directors)........president@tesol.org
Publications.................................publications@tesol.org
Advertising.................................advertise@tesol.org
Ordering...........................................tesolpubs@tasco1.com
Essential Teacher............................et@tesol.org
TESOL Quarterly.........................tq@tesol.org

Using the Forgot Password? Function

If you forget your password or member ID to log in to TESOL’s Web site, use the Forgot Password? option under the log-in area on the left side of the home page. If you have any questions or problems, e-mail info@tesol.org.
The 2008 Board of Directors and Nominating Committee slate shown below has been posted. Visit http://www.tesol.org/. Voting began in October 2007 and will end in early January 2008.

President-elect, 2008–2009 (to become President, 2009–2010)
Mark S. Algren
The University of Kansas
Lawrence, Kansas, USA

Mary Ann Boyd
ESL Consultant
Towanda, Illinois, USA

Nominating Committee (2008–2009) Representing Eight Major Groups

Adult Education Programs:
Bruce Rogers
Front Range Community College
Westminster, Colorado, USA

Paula Schlusberg
Consultant
Tucson, Arizona, USA

Affiliates:
Ulrich Bliesener
University of Hildesheim
Hanover, Germany

Diane Booth
Boise State University
Boise, Idaho, USA

Caucuses:
Kyung-Hee Bae
University of Houston
Writing Center
Houston, Texas, USA

Leslie Barratt
Indiana State University
Terre Haute, Indiana, USA

Elementary and Secondary Education Programs:
Betty Ansin Smallwood
Center for Applied Linguistics
Washington, District of Columbia, USA

Glynis Terrell
Georgia Department of Technical and Adult Education
Atlanta, Georgia, USA

Higher Education Programs:
Lawrence Berlin
Northeastern Illinois University
Chicago, Illinois, USA

Yvonne Freeman
The University of Texas at Brownsville
Brownsville, Texas, USA

Intensive English Programs (IEPs) and Bicultural Centers:
Joe McVeigh
Independent Teacher Trainer, Consultant, Materials Developer
Middlebury, Vermont, USA

George Scholz
U.S. Department of State/Public Affairs Cairo
Cairo, Egypt

Interest Sections:
Nevine Abdelkhalek
Egypt Education Reform Program – USAID
Cairo, Egypt

Dorothy Zemach
Freelance Editor, Author, Writer
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Researchers:
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Colorado State University
Fort Collins, Colorado, USA

Sherry Taylor
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