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Cultural Encounters of a Virtual Kind

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What would happen if you had students from a Japanese university and students from a Venezuelan university, writing about themselves and certain social-cultural issues of their respective countries in English, via email? When we asked ourselves this question, several answers immediately came to mind. First of all, we assumed that it would provide an excellent opportunity for the students to practice writing in English. We also thought that the email messages would constitute an interesting point of departure for discussions, thus stimulating oral participation in class. Furthermore, we believed that it would be a motivating activity since it would personalize communication between students and allow them to express their opinions and ideas authentically and spontaneously. And, of course, we hoped that in addition to promoting increased foreign language (EFL/ESP) proficiency that it would generate greater cross-cultural understanding. We assumed such understanding would be useful to many of our students upon embarking on travel and careers after graduation.

Certainly a number of authors supported our assumptions. For example, in relation to over-all foreign language learning, Redmond (1994) emphasized the importance of immersing the student in language-rich experiences, and affirmed that teaching language skills in isolation is far less effective than providing the student with real language situations. This idea was amplified by Willis and Willis (1996) who felt that "Students need to practice in the classroom the things they will need to do with the language outside the classroom" (p. 67). They suggested that the best way to improve language skills is to be in continuous contact with the target language through what they termed" task-based framework" in which the communication task is central to learning and involves student production of language. This often means that the student must draw upon personal experiences and general knowledge.

Wright (1987) has also referred to the advantages of a task-based approach and sees it as a way for students to develop their second/foreign language skills and as a method for improving competence in social communication skills. Moreover, since within this framework, students are encouraged to express personal opinions and feelings, they also learn to think critically about their environment, their culture, and the culture of others.

The underlying conviction of the task-based orientation is that when people are actively involved in their language learning process they will learn more efficiently. Furthermore, active participation in the learning process also implies that the student pursues opportunities for language use outside the classroom.

Personal experiences and aspects of culture as sources of information for writing tasks are also mentioned by Leki and Carson (1997) in their comparison of the writing experiences of EAP (English for Academic Purposes) and ESL (English as a Second Language) university students. They analyzed student responses with regard to three types of information sources, "writing without a text source," "writing from a source text without responsibility for content" and, "text response writing" (pp. 44–52). They concluded that students must be encouraged to "experience a deeper interaction between language, personal interests, needs, and backgrounds; and a wider social world in the form of some kind of extended (in the broad sense) reality that they are accountable for" (pp. 64–65).

Numerous writers such as Gardner and Lambert (1972), Gardner (1985), Gardner and Clement (1990), Dornyei (1990), Clement and Dornyei (1994), and Belmerchri and Hummel (1998), to name but a few, have written extensively on the importance of motivation in second or foreign language learning. Most have agreed that providing relevant, interesting tasks for the learner, involving students actively in the learning process, encouraging self-evaluation, and promoting a positive attitude towards the target language and its speakers are fundamental in motivating the language learner. The relationship between motivation and task-based learning is explained by Willis and Willis (1996), who feel that students are more highly motivated because they usually want to achieve the goals of the task, causing them to use the language in order to complete the task successfully.

The issue of cultural knowledge and foreign language learning has been dealt with by various experts, including Crawford-Lange and Lange (1984), Kramsch (1993), Robinson-Stuart and Nocon (1996) and Flowerdew (1998). For these, and other writers, cultural knowledge is essential to the development of communicative competence. According to Robinson-Stuart and Nocon (1996; p. 435) "The productive synthesis of cross-cultural perceptions of similarities and differences is useful for extending the concept of culture as a process in which one enhances the other." Furthermore, we felt that the necessity of "making sense" in a foreign language (English) in the case of both groups of students served to underscore the importance of not only understanding a language but also the culture of its speakers (or users).

The Activity

Taking into consideration these theoretical issues, we decided to design an activity that would follow a procedure similar to that process by Crawford-Lange and Lange

(1984). This involved the classroom discussion of the in-coming messages, the personalization of the discussion on the basis of the students' home culture, and the students' emotions and opinions with regard to the information received.

Furthermore, we also had to design an activity that would also conform to different academic calendars and the students' access to computers, as well as different course levels and course objectives. Because our trimesters did coincide for a ten week period between September and December 1998, we decided on 6 weekly email messages that covered approximately eight weeks (this took into consideration the 13 hour time difference between Japan and Venezuela and any technical problems in sending and receiving email).

All students in both groups had access to computers; however, we did encounter a vast difference in class size, 35 Japanese students vs. 18 Venezuelan students. We overcame this problem by having all students of both groups write, and hand in the message for the week. Then each teacher randomly selected two email messages and sent them. Photocopies of these two messages were then handed out to the receiving group for classroom discussion. It is important to mention that we made virtually no corrections of the original messages since we felt that authenticity was more important than grammatical correctness or spelling.

With regard to course levels and objectives, the course given in Japan was a required, first year English language course taught predominantly in English, whereas, the one given in Venezuela was an elective American culture course given in English. Most of the Venezuelan students were slightly older than the Japanese students, were very fluent in English, and were primarily interested in practicing their language skills, while the majority of the Japanese students were at the upper beginning or intermediate level and were less fluent. These differences did not present overwhelming difficulties however since both groups were able to understand each other's messages. The Japanese students were motivated to put forth more effort into the preparation of their messages knowing that the Venezuelan students were more advanced. The Venezuelan students were required to hand in a final written comparison of Japanese, Venezuelan, and American cultures based on the analysis of the emails received course reading assignments, and discussions in order to compensate for their distinct advantage in English.

Topics

Taking into account that Crawford-Lange and Lange (1984) recommend that students be involved in the selection of the topics for oral and written activities, we consulted with our students about topics that would be of interest to them. After a brief mail

consultation between teachers, the following topics were proposed for each of the weekly email messages which were to be between 150–200 words in length.

Week 1: Introduce yourself. This should include information about your major, your hobbies, where you live and your family.

Week 2: Describe the educational system in your country. Discuss the structure of the system (levels and years), private vs. public education, and college programs and university entrance requirements.

Week 3: Discuss attitudes toward working women and childcare in your country.

Week 4: Discuss attitudes towards minority groups. These may be ethnic, racial, or religious. You may also discuss attitudes towards homosexuals, interracial marriages, the homeless or the unemployed in your country.

Week 5: Select a social problem in your country that you feel is extremely important; describe it and propose a solution.

Week 6: Write a thank you message to the other group.

Results

Practicing Writing Skills

First of all, we can say that most of the students in each group participated willingly in the activity and were quite enthusiastic about it, thus indicating a high level of motivation. In fact, many of the messages exceeded the 200 word suggested limit. Naturally, this meant that the students were getting ample opportunities for practicing their writing skills in English, thus confirming our first supposition.

Cultural Differences and Similarities

Introducing oneself. The first learning experience for both groups of students was a cultural one, and was related to the preparation of the first email message. It was necessary to explain to the Venezuelan students that the Japanese do not normally like to talk about their families and therefore not to expect too much detailed information about parents and siblings. The Japanese students had to be told to expect a good deal of information about the Venezuelan students' families since it constitutes one of the main topics of conversation in Venezuelan society. This was probably an important issue because in future professional situations they will know what to expect from Venezuelan or Japanese colleagues and neither will be offended by too little or too much personal information.

The educational system. The Venezuelan students were surprised to find out that for most of the Japanese students high school and preparing for university entrance

exams were far more difficult (and stressful) than successfully completing a college course and graduating. For Venezuelan students the academic demands at the university level are far greater than those of high school. Japanese students were surprised at the effort expended by Venezuelan college students, as for some Japanese, college is a four year "break" before entering the job market. While private education, particularly at the elementary and intermediate levels, is preferable to public in Venezuela, in Japan, public schools (with some exceptions) are usually superior. Talking about one's educational background in Japan can be a "touchy" topic as the name of the school attended is believed to reveal one's level of academic ability—schools are ranked hierarchically, and the reputation of the school can chiefly determine the quality of the company willing to hire the graduate. Japanese students were interested in such differences in the educational system in Venezuela.

Working women and childcare. With regard to the issue of working women and childcare, the Japanese students were surprised to learn about the high percentage of Venezuelan single mothers who are responsible for raising and supporting several children. This was of special interest since divorce and illegitimacy are still fairly rare in Japan. Both groups did concur on the importance of the mother's role in taking care of children and the difficulties encountered by professional women.

Attitudes towards minority groups. Perhaps the topic which produced the greatest number of surprises for both groups was the one related to attitudes towards minority groups. For the Japanese students it was very interesting to learn about the high degree of racial, religious and ethnic tolerance that permeates all levels of Venezuelan society, particularly related to foreign residents and cross-cultural marriages and racial mixtures. The Japanese students felt that although discrimination against non-Japanese residents and certain religious groups does exist, these attitudes are not so prevalent in the younger generation. Cross-cultural marriages in Japan are sometimes considered "stylish" by young Japanese, though perhaps even impossibly difficult, due to differences in cultural background. Japanese students tend to have, if not an accepting attitude, at least more consciousness of prejudice against mixed race children or foreign workers than their parents.

With reference to homosexuals, both groups did agree that this particular group of people is discriminated against, although many students of both groups felt that this situation would improve and that homosexuals would be treated more justly in the future.

Attitudes toward homeless people by Japanese students are also becoming milder, with fewer automatic assumptions that the homeless person deserves his or her fate or enjoys his or her lifestyle. Many Japanese participants were very interested in the attitudes of Venezuelans toward these same groups, and especially toward the economically

disadvantaged. The gap between rich and poor is perceived as relatively narrow in Japan.

Social problems and solutions. With regard to social problems, the Japanese students expressed their preoccupation with the increase in juvenile delinquency, specifically bullying and aggressive behavior among adolescents. They seemed to feel that more attention should be paid, by both family and society, to the needs of adolescents. They also emphasized the importance of the role that a stable family situation plays in bringing up well-adjusted children. The Venezuelan students for the most part felt that the most serious social problem faced by the country is related to a deficient educational system, particularly the deficit of schools and institutions of higher learning as well as the lack of well-trained teachers and professors. They felt more economic resources should be invested in building schools and in teacher-training programs.

The final email, which was a thank-you letter, lent a personal touch to the activity and gave proof that both groups had enjoyed being able to communicate with peers from a vastly different culture.

The Survey

In order to determine what our students felt about the activity, and to find out whether or not they thought that it had been a positive learning experience, we polled them at the end of the course. Each of us prepared a questionnaire that included the nine items listed below, as well as questions that were relevant for our own particular courses.

1. In general, I felt that this was an interesting activity.
2. Preparing my email to send to (Japan, Venezuela) allowed me to reflect on my own culture.
3. The emails received from (Japan-Venezuela) gave me a better idea about certain aspects of (Japanese-Venezuelan) culture.
4. Receiving email correspondence from (Japanese-Venezuelan) students was a more personalized way of getting information.
5. In comparing my own email with the ones we received, I gained a better understanding for differences in cultural values in general.
6. This activity also helped me practice my writing skills in English.
7. By comparing my emails with the responses received, I could discover similarities and differences in cultural attitudes towards certain social issues.
8. I would have liked more direct contact with individual students and more questions and answers.

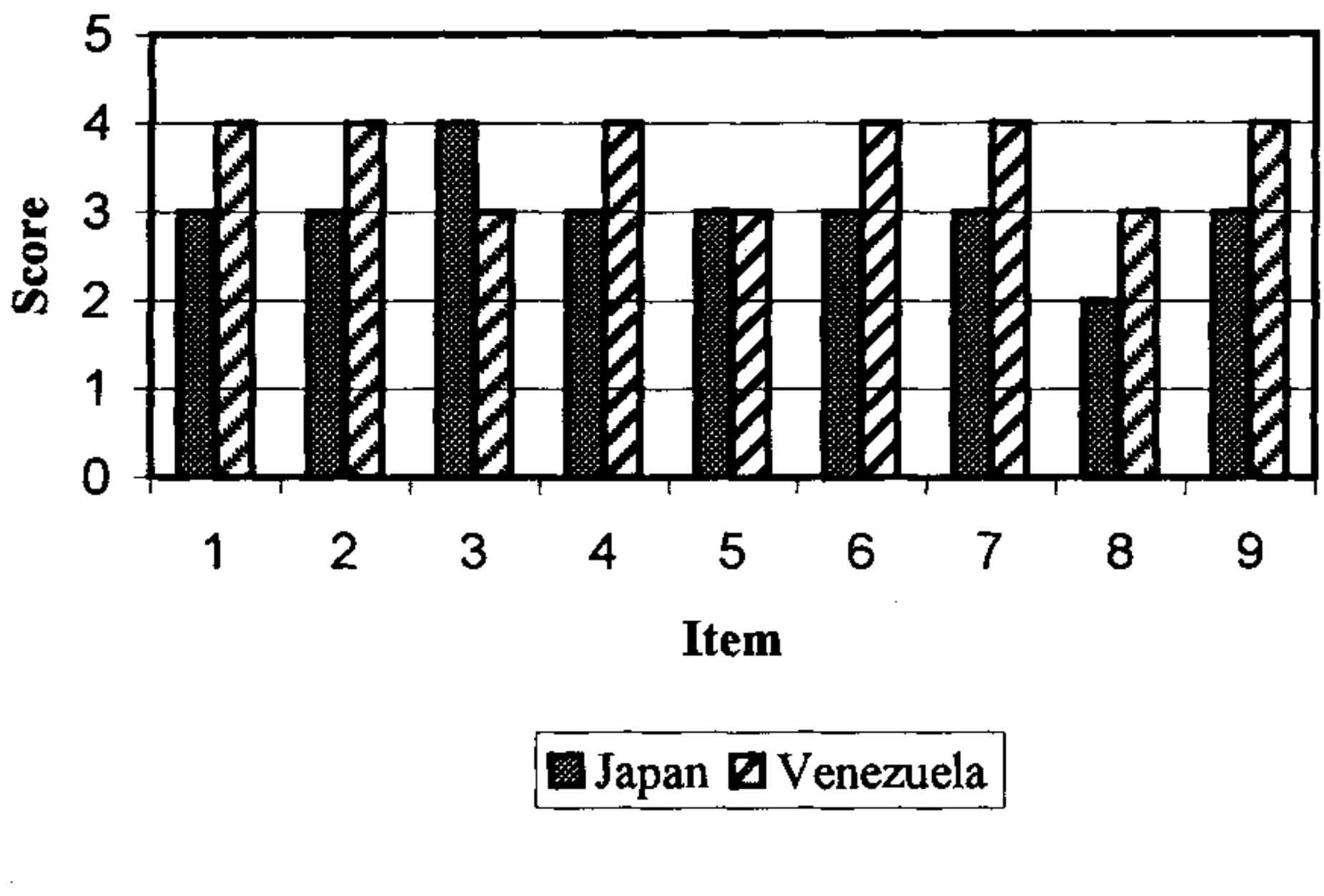
9. I would definitely include this activity in this and similar courses.

A four point, Likert-type, bi-polar scale (total disagreement-total agreement), located directly beneath each statement was used for recording the students' responses to each of the items. Students were instructed to circle the number on the scale which best reflected their opinion. This scale was used since it is commonly used to measure opinions and attitudes.

The responses of all students of each group were then tabulated on a double entrance matrix and the mean for every item was calculated. This data corresponds to the answers of 16 out of 17 Venezuelan students and 34 out of 35 Japanese students who were present on the day the questionnaire was administered. This information is synthesized in Figure 1.

Figure 1

Mean scores per item for both groups



In comparing the means, we find that the Japanese students were slightly less enthu siastic about most aspects of the activity and were more uniform in their opinions thai the Venezuelan students. This may also reflect specific cultural characters; the Japanes tend to be less effusive than Venezuelans. More importantly however, with a singl exception in the Venezuelan group, all of the students from both groups had a very pos itive attitude toward the activity. The frequency of the responses per item for each grou is presented in Tables 1 and 2.

Table 1

Frequency of responses per item of Japanese students

	Frequency	Ss.	%	Ss.	%	Ss.	%	Ss.	%
	Score	4		3		2		1	
Item								1	
1		8	24	18	53	7	20	2	3
2		22	64	10	29	2	5	1	2
3		25	74	7	21	2	5		
4		6	18	19	56	9	26		
5		14	41	16	47	4	12		
6		10	29	15	44	9	26		
7		15	44	15	44	4	12		
8		5	15	7	21	16	47	6	17
9		7	21	18	53	6	17	2	9

Data corresponds to 34 out of 35 students.
4 indicates total agreement while 1 indicates total disagreement with statement.

As can be seen from the data on Table 1, the responses of the Japanese students to eight out of the nine questions was very positive. The only statement that received a predominantly negative opinion was related to having more personal contact with the Venezuelan students and asking and answering more specific questions. The overwhelming majority felt that the activity caused them to reflect on Japanese culture as well as giving them greater insight into Venezuelan culture. Another large number of Japanese students believed they had gained a better knowledge of cultural values in general and learned something of the similarities and differences between Japanese and Venezuelan attitudes towards certain social issues.

Table 2

Frequency of responses per item of Venezuelan students

Frequency	Ss.	%	Ss.	%	Ss.	%	Ss.	%
Score	4		3		2		1	
Item								
1	12	75	3	19			1	6
2	11	69	4	25	1	6		
3	6	38	8	50	2	12		
4	11	69	3	19	2	12		
5	8	50	5	32	2	12	1	6
6	14	87	2	13				
7	13	82	2	12	1	6		
8	2	12	10	63	3	19	1	6
9	12	75	4	25				

Data corresponds to 16 out 17 students.
4 indicates total agreement while 1 indicates total disagreement.

The Venezuelan students also evaluated the activity very positively. However, their opinions differed from those of the Japanese students in relation to the aspects they considered to be most valuable. Although the Venezuelan group shared the opinion of the Japanese group with regard to statement two, they were less enthusiastic about items three and five. In contrast to the Japanese students, the Venezuelans were extremely positive about statements six, seven and nine. While 73% of the Japanese students believed that the activity helped them to practice their writing skills in English, 90% of the Venezuelans felt they had gained significant practice. Ninety-four percent of the Venezuelans thought that the activity was a good way to discover cultural differences and similarities as compared to 88% of the Japanese. Finally, the largest difference encountered in the opinions of the two groups was related to the final question. One hundred percent of the Venezuelan students would definitely include the activity in the same course or a similar one while 74% of the Japanese students expressed this opinion.

Discussion

Taking into consideration these results and our initial assumptions we can say that the activity did provide an excellent opportunity for the students to practice their writing skills in English. In terms of language, both groups were able to practice using various language functions such as describing, comparing and contrasting, explaining, and expressing opinions and feelings.

We can also conclude that this type of task-based activity is motivating for the student since it does indeed involve him/her actively in the learning process by encouraging him/her to express personal opinions and feelings. In many instances students began to spontaneously ask and answer questions which we interpreted as an indication of the progressive development of social communication skills.

With regard to stimulating classroom discussion, the email messages received by each group definitely promoted participation. This was due primarily to the fact that both groups of students were receiving "first hand" information from members of a peer group as opposed to textbook data and academic explanations. This also concurs with the findings of Chavez (1998) who found that the quantity of authenticity factors was of great importance to the students that participated in her study.

Although the exchange of electronic messages is no substitute for actual personal interaction, the element of authenticity and personalization of student messages produced a greater awareness of cultural differences and similarities and most definitely produced greater cross-cultural understanding. Furthermore, the necessity of achieving communication between members of two very different cultures reflects a reality in which our students will likely find themselves in today's world of advanced telecommunications, tourism, and multinational corporations.

Language teaching organizations throughout the world have taken notice of the need to teach language as well as culture to both foreign language and second language students. Organizations such as TESOL, IATEFL and JALT, for example, have special interest groups devoted to intercultural communication and global education in ESOL, and publish an ever-increasing number of articles relative to the topics of cross-cultural understanding and even environmental and peace studies. ESL teachers frequently aid immigrant students not only in acquiring linguistic, but also cultural competence to help them acclimatize to their new life situations. EFL teachers, on the other hand, may be preparing students for work or study overseas. Also, EFL teachers of students in required language courses who seemingly possess no real need for using English or another foreign language may use multicultural and world issues primarily as a way to "enliven" their language courses or offer stimulating content. However, the current wisdom is that a great many, if not all individuals, could benefit from increased cultural sensitivity, if not concrete understanding, of a specific culture that they may likely find themselves in contact with, in an increasingly interdependent world.

In some FL situations, such as in Japan, generally, students are required to study a foreign language but have little if any direct contact with non-Japanese. Using an email cross cultural exchange was one way to give the Japanese students a genuine opportunity to communicate with others in a foreign language, versus the artificial situation of students who can more easily speak Japanese with each other and who "practice" speaking English to each other in class. However, for those students planning to go into fields such as tourism, being able to use English and deal skillfully with foreigners will be a tremendous asset. But even for students whose future professional goals do not require English, the cross-cultural exchange, creates, if not a more useful course, at least a more exciting one, and a legitimate need (if only temporarily) for English, while providing an authentic situation for students to use the language. This type of activity also broadens the worlds of the Japanese students, the majority of whom have had very little direct contact with non-Japanese and whose images tend to be restricted to common stereotypes.

Although many of the Venezuelan students have traveled abroad (mainly to the U.S. and Europe), their contact with Japanese people and culture has been very limited and their images were also somewhat stereotyped. Therefore, this activity helped to dissipate many of their preconceived notions and, in several cases, motivated them to enroll in the Japanese language and culture courses offered by the language department of the university. Even though one of our primary objectives was to provide an opportunity to increase cross-cultural understanding, we discovered that the activity also increased the students' understanding of their own cultures. In describing and discussing various social issues in their own countries, they were obliged to analyze, compare, and question many customs and situations. In this sense, we can say that the activity contributed

towards making them into what Saltzman (1986) has referred to as "150% persons" (p. 251), able to find value in both their own culture and that of others.

In spite of the fact that this is a time consuming activity that demands a significant amount of organization and coordination on the part of the teacher, it is also a very rewarding one. Given the high percentage of students of both groups that felt that the activity had caused them to reflect on their own culture as well as gaining a better understanding and awareness of another culture, we can only conclude that it is an exceedingly valuable tool in the EFL/ESL context.

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Conference Announcements

Georgetown University Round Table on Language and Linguistics (GURT). May 4–6, 2000. Conference, "Linguistics, Language, and the Professions: Education, Journalism, Law, Medicine, and Technology," Washington, DC. Contact Ai-hui Tan. Tel. 202-687-5659. E-mail:tana@gusun.georgetown.edu.

IATEFL Chile. May 12–13, 2000. 6th International Conference, "The Way Forward for English Language Teaching," Santiago, Chile. Contact Maria Isabel Bizama, Conference Programme Coordinator, Crescente Errizuriz 1741, Santiago, Chile. Fax 56-2-239-3189. E-mail:misabel@ctcreuna.cl.

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The Communicative Approach: The Reality

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Introduction

The communicative approach has been a popular method in language teaching. The shift in emphasis from developing linguistic competence to communicative competence has brought about sophisticated changes in syllabus design. There have also been drastic changes in teaching methods, with the monotonous drilling exercises being replaced by a wide variety of stimulating and innovative course materials. Pair work, jigsaw puzzles, information gap, simulation, group work and the like have become the catchword of the modern language teacher. However, many language teachers still view the approach with skepticism and apprehension. Learner-centredness and grammar teaching, for example, are the two areas that many language teachers find difficult to deal with in the implementation of the approach.

Learner-centredness

One of the major attractions of the communicative approach is its emphasis on learner-centredness (Murray, 1983). Learners within the communicative paradigm of language learning "are seen not so much as full-time linguistic objects at whom language teaching is aimed, but rather as human individuals whose personal dignity and integrity, and the complexity of whose ideas, thoughts, needs, and sentiments, should be respected" (Medgyes, 1986, p. 109). Clarke (1991) points out that the learner's affective, cognitive and linguistic needs should be considered when drawing up the content of a syllabus. His proposal of the Negotiated Syllabus is based on the principle that the learner should be allowed to take part fully in the selection of content materials, assessment procedures, styles, as well as method of learning and so on. Although the strong version of such a model may not seem viable, Clarke (1991) suggests that it is possible to introduce a negotiated element within the framework of an externally imposed syllabus, particularly in a communicative classroom in which there is much room for variation of activities to suit learners' needs.

Learners should be assigned an active and contributory role within the communicative framework of learning. Breen and Candlin (1980, p. 110) describe the learner as a negotiator whose learning is mediated "by the self, the learning process, and the

object of learning." In order to make teaching more relevant for learners, needs analyses should be conducted as a basis for syllabus design (Munby, 1978). Learners' schemata are also a valuable resource that can be capitalized on to enrich classroom experience (Clarke, 1991). The communicative approach requires learners to take greater initiative in their learning, becoming active agents in the process.

The Teaching of Grammar

There is always the tendency for language teachers to discard the teaching of grammar. However, it is not a necessity to totally omit grammar-oriented instruction. There are attempts to conduct the teaching of form through meaning-oriented activities. Dickens and Woods (1988) present tasks which contain grammatical problems to learners who are required to solve them cooperatively with their peers. Fotos and Ellis (1991) develop a task-based approach to facilitate communication about grammar in order to develop explicit knowledge of L2 grammar and provide opportunities for information-focused interaction. One of the advantages of this approach is that grammar tasks can be used in both a teacher-fronted lesson and small group activities which provide opportunities for interaction.

Thompson (1996) favours a more self-initiated approach on learning grammar through communicative activities. Instead of teachers going through grammar, students are encouraged to discover grammar by themselves. Thompson (1996) suggests a retrospective approach in which teachers first introduce the new language in a meaningful context to students who are then helped to understand the usage and meaning before their attention is drawn to analyzing the grammatical structures used to bring out the message, through discussing and working out rules under the guidance of the teacher.

Apart from conducting communicative activities, there are times when language input will need to be provided for students. Harmer (1983) distinguished two types of input: roughly-tuned input, referring to language at a level which is a little higher than that of the learner, and fine-tuned input, including language items specifically chosen for conscious learning. A language lesson may consist of three components: input (both fine-tuned and roughly-tuned), practice output, and communication output. Provision of input might involve formal instruction of pre-selected grammatical items. It might be less communicative in nature because a certain language has to be practised. Situating at the other end of the communicative continuum, the communication output consists of activities that focus on using language as a means of communication. Students are encouraged to use whatever language is available to express themselves in the process of developing communicative competence.

Littlewood (1981) deals with grammar in the communicative approach using pre-communicative activities in which teachers provide opportunities for students to prac-

tise the new grammatical structure taught. The purpose of such activities is to equip students with the knowledge of the form without the pressure of applying it for communicative purposes. It is only when students have mastered the specific elements of grammar that communicative activities will be introduced to them. The focus is on integrating the precommunicative knowledge with existing language skills to bring about communication. This is similar to Hubbard, Jones, Thornton, and Wheeler's (1983) controlled and free practice: the former concentrating on giving intensive practice on the new structure, with the production of the language being heavily controlled by the teacher to minimize errors, and the latter emphasising the free production of the language quite independent of the teacher.

Case Studies

From interactions with the student teachers of English in the B. A. TESL programme in the authors' institution, the authors observed that the student teachers were not confident in conducting lessons based on the communicative approach. One of their major problems was that they felt that they were not learner-centred enough in their teaching because they had to conform to guidelines set for them by the school during their practicum and there was little room for variation both in teaching methods and materials. Another worry was that they thought that their teaching was not communicative because they had to do a great deal of teaching rather than carrying out activities and games when presenting grammatical structures.

The following case studies are taken from journal entries written by teachers-in-training during their practicum in the B. A. TESL programme. The extracts are quite representative of their mentality towards implementing the communicative approach. They generally had reservations on how teaching can be learner-centred when there were restrictions from schools, and how the teaching of grammar can be incorporated into the approach. The case studies are outlined below and analyses presented to clarify the misconceptions which are rather prevalent among newer practitioners of the communicative approach.

Case Analysis 1: Teacher-Dominated Lessons

The following journal entry was made by a teacher-in-training who taught a Form Two class (of 36 students) in an English-medium secondary school.

> Before the lesson, I was prepared to "accept" the fact that the students' standard was rather poor. However, I did not realise that the situation could be that bad. I tried to give instructions in English but the students complained that I spoke too fast and used too many difficult words. I reflected on myself, moderated the speech rate, and tried to use more simple English. However, I noticed that some of the

students were just too talkative. They did not pay attention at all and chatted with their neighbors. I felt so annoyed.

Originally, I did not intend to conduct a teacher-dominated lesson as a traditional teacher would do. I planned to elicit answers from the students. I also expected that they would read the text by themselves and do the exercise in the coursework. However, when I gave them time to read the text, many of them just kept on talking with one another. Their voices were even louder than mine! Some students slept throughout the lesson; I had to wake them up by knocking on their desks. I was totally upset and did not know what to do. I tried to encourage the students to guess the meaning of the difficult vocabulary items. But most of them did not respond to me. Even the smarter students did not answer my questions.

I was too nervous and frightened. As a result, I had to change my lesson into a teacher-dominated one. I gave the students less time to do the silent reading. I also told them to write answers to the comprehension questions. The students seemed to be able to follow my instructions at last. Most of them wrote correct answers on their books. However, the teacher-student interaction was very limited. I did most of the talking and I explained everything. It was not a communicative lesson.

Analysis

The above case highlights a typical phenomenon of a conventional language classroom: non-participation. This may be due to the students' generally low proficiency in English, their naughtiness, or both. Obviously, the teacher-in-training was very frustrated during and after the lesson. He was upset because the lesson was teacher-dominated. He did most of the talking and provided full explanations. The teacher-student interaction was limited.

The reaction of the teacher-in-training reveals some misconceptions about the communicative approach. He might believe that a communicative lesson is one in which students do everything fairly independent of the teacher and talk a lot in order to interact with others. In fact, a teacher-fronted lesson is acceptable when the class does not cooperate. If students are incapable of working independently, the teacher needs to provide more guidance and talk more before giving them a free hand. Where interaction is concerned, the students in this case were able to complete the comprehension exercise, indicating understanding and thus successful interaction between the students and the writer of the text.

The teacher-in-training might believe that a lesson is made communicative only if students have a larger share than the teacher in classroom interaction and that the role of the teacher is solely to facilitate students' free performance. Students indeed should participate in order to learn. Nevertheless, the teacher needs to adapt himself flexibly to the classroom situation by playing different roles: instructor, facilitator, advisor, consultant, and the like. He should first ensure that students understand and know how to work out the task before retreating to the role of a facilitator. In this case, teacher input is indispensable. In other words, the communicative nature of a lesson should not be strictly judged by the ratio of teacher talk and student talk in the lesson. Rather, it depends on the objective of the lesson and the real needs of the classroom. In the present case, despite the apparently teacher-dominated scenario, the lesson is learner-oriented in the sense that the teacher slowed down and used simple English in response to students' complaints. Such an act was clearly made to meet the learners' needs. Additionally, the lesson was effective in view of students' comprehension of instruction and completion of task toward the latter part of the session.

Case Analysis 2: Presenting a Grammar Structure

The following two journal entries were made by two different teachers-in-training who taught at Form Two level. One of them (Teacher-in-training A) taught in an English-medium school, while the other (Teacher-in-Training B) taught in a Chinese-medium one. They described how they taught the use of gerunds after prepositions to a class of forty.

> **By Teacher-in-training A:** The students got bored by my teacher-centred presentation of the use of prepositions. Unfortunately, I was not able to think of any new and interesting ideas or any games and activities to motivate them. If lecturing is not the best and most appropriate way, then in what other ways should we present a grammar structure to such a big class? Notice that some of the grammar forms such as "interested in" or "good at" should be memorized. If students hear these expressions a few more times as pointed out by the I believe they will remember them better. However, students may not be aware of these expressions if the teacher does not highlight them.
>
> **By Teacher-in-training B**: Today, I had two single lessons. I planned to have a presentation on the use of gerund after preposition in the first period and practice and consolidation in the second period. When I entered the classroom, the students were all very tired. Perhaps they were bored by the previous lesson. But I was confident of waking them up because I had brought photos of some famous people including Roberto Baggio

(a famous soccer player), Michael Chang (a famous tennis player), Aaron Kwok (a famous singer) and Jackie Chan (a famous film star).

Obviously, when I showed them the photos, they were all awakened and eager to have a close look at them. Actually, I showed them the photos because I wanted to motivate them and, what's more, to elicit sentences like "Roberto Baggio is good at playing football," "Aaron Kowk is good at singing and dancing," "Michael Chang succeeded in winning the last tennis tournament" and "Jacky Chan succeeded in getting an award for his film."

I drew some simple pictures to give more examples. The students seemed to enjoy my ugly drawings because they laughed a lot. But I did not mind so long as I achieved my purpose—drawing their attention. I tried to explain the structure a few more times but, as predicted, quite a number of students could not catch up. So I used Cantonese to make a summary of the target structure. But I still insist on using English to teach English, unless it is really necessary to use the mother tongue. I was happy that the students could finally identify the "verb," "adjective," "preposition," and "verb-ing" in the various examples. Most of them could give me suitable verbs and adjectives to describe each picture and construct sentences with the target structure.

As there were a few minutes left after my presentation, I started chatting with the students. In the previous lessons, I did not have the chance to talk with them. Thus, this was the first time we chatted. They were all very interested in my height and brothers' and sisters' height. So funny!

Analysis

The above case started with the worries of Teacher-in-training A when he had to present grammar structures. He was bothered by the idea of "lecturing," giving a great deal of teacher-talk input in the presentation. Yet he could not think of a better and more communicative way of presenting these grammar structures. The reaction of this teacher-in-training unveils a dual myth about the communicative approach: Teacher talk is inherently boring and only student-oriented activities or games promote communication.

In fact, teacher input is essential in the presentation stage of a lesson. Providing a great deal of teacher input does not necessarily mean being boring or teacher-centred, and consequently making the lesson not communicative. In fact, both Teacher-in-training A and Teacher-in-training B were in charge of the class as they gave "lengthy" teacher talk. Yet Teacher B's presentation was more effective than Teacher A's in that

Teacher B brought to the classroom pictures of people his students knew, thus sustaining their interest. He made sentences which involved these famous names and the target construction. His attempts at using realia (i.e. pictures) and appealing to students' personal knowledge (i.e., that of some public figures) enlivened the presentation. It created an interesting, meaningful, and relevant context for the introduction of the target structure. The students responded enthusiastically to the teacher's questions. This is evidence of the interactive nature of the presentation.

While Teacher-in-training B presented and explained the target structures to the students, the students were at the same time expected to remember these structures well. Teacher B's explanation was contextualized, making it easier to process and retain the information about the target structure.

Towards the end of the lesson, Teacher-in-training B had a chat with the class. Although the few minutes' talk was not directly related to the focus of the lesson, it was an opportunity to interact with students, build up a close relationship, and practically fill up the remaining time gap of the session. Most important of all, such a conversation was essentially a language practice. Like the earlier interactive presentation, this can be taken as an evidence of effective communication.

It should be clear in these remarks that the communicative approach does not require lots of student talk and games, which, though, are some of the major activities in a communicative classroom. The goals of a communicative classroom can, and sometimes have to, be achieved by engaging in lots of teacher talk, particularly in the initial (presentation) stages of a lesson. If interesting materials are used in the teacher talk, comprehension and teacher-student interaction may result.

Conclusions

It is true that at the macro-level of teaching, there are always broad guidelines that need to be conformed to within a particular educational context. However, at the micro-level of teaching in the classroom, there are plenty of opportunities for learner-centredness because the types of activities that can be used in the communicative approach are numerous. Adopting a learner-centred approach does not merely mean to allow students to choose randomly whatever they want to learn in class.

Within each lesson, it is possible to sustain students' interest by using stimulating teaching methods such as singing songs and playing games to facilitate learning. Teacher-in-training B in Case Analysis 2 made use of 'ugly' drawings to make students laugh in order to arouse their motivation. Using students' background knowledge on famous singers and football players to attract their attention was also a powerful technique to enhance learning. The use of realia such as photographs about these famous

people who were familiar to students to introduce a particular sentence structure was an attempt to achieve learner-centredness in his teaching.

Knowing that students had difficulty in understanding English, the Teacher-in-training in Case Analysis 1 adjusted the speed of the conversation to allow students to follow the instructions better. Teacher-in-training B in Case Analysis 2 even switched briefly to Cantonese, which was the students' mother tongue, to explain the target structure to ensure maximum understanding of what was taught.

It may be seen that the teachers-in-training were constantly making changes in their teaching methods and coming up with appropriate strategies to help students learn more effectively. These attempts were evidence of the teachers-in-training being learner-centred in their teaching. Hence, learner-centredness encompasses a broader concept to refer to all efforts made in the adjustments and modifications in teaching to meet the needs of the students rather than merely to allow students to select whatever they wish to learn.

With respect to the teaching of grammar, the teachers-in-training generally thought that it had to be done with plenty of games and pair work activities in order to be communicative. As a matter of fact, grammar can be taught quite effectively through formal instruction. Littlewood's (1981) pre-communicative activities and Hubbard *et al.'s* (1983) controlled practice are examples of this. Since it is sometimes necessary to formally provide students with language input, especially in the provision of fine-tuned input, it is inevitable that a significant amount of teacher talk will result. There is no reason why "lecturing" cannot be part of a communicative lesson.

Furthermore, the teaching of grammar can have a great deal of variations in teaching methods. The task-based approach (Fotos & Ellis, 1991) to integrate grammar-focused and meaning-oriented activities can be conducted both in teacher-fronted and small-group settings. Thompson's (1996) retrospective approach in teaching grammar is also appealing. Hence, "lecturing" is not the only way to present grammar, as understood by Teacher-in-training A in Case Analysis 2, although it is one of the most popular ways to do it. In a communicative lesson, it is still possible to incorporate traditional stages of presentation, practice and production.

Many student teachers complain that learner-centredness can only be achieved in conditions where the teacher-student ratio is low and where there is no effort to include the formal teaching of grammar in the syllabus. This is true if learner-centredness has the narrow definition of allowing students to choose what they wish to learn and teaching solely through activities. With the arguments raised in the preceding discussion, it is seen that learner-centredness in large classes and the formal teaching of grammar in a communicative lesson might still be possible but, to do it effectively, teachers must be

flexible in their teaching and sensitive to the needs of students. In dealing with grammar, they need to learn new skills to integrate the teaching of form and meaning in order to make learning more interesting. At the same time, traditional teacher explanation can also be exploited quite effectively in the teaching of grammar.

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Teaching Reading Comprehension in English Through Vocabulary: A Demonstration of Some Strategies

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Introduction

The effective teaching of reading comprehension to children requires the development of certain skills (viz., perceptive, cognitive and linguistic skills). These skills can be focused on severally during teaching or, otherwise, they can be integrated. Current thinking in teaching reading comprehension, however, would seem to favour the latter, in view of the maximum input benefit which pupils can derive from it.

The symbiotic relationship between reading comprehension and vocabulary development has been long recognized (Personke, 1982; Dudley, 1986; Abe, 1987). While words are regarded as tools for comprehending texts, it is equally clear that reading (with comprehension) also assists in developing one's vocabulary (Day & Bamford, 1998; Huckin, Haynes & Coady, 1993). Krashen (1989) says:

> Although we suspect that there is still a valuable role for some explicit vocabulary-building activities, we believe it is reasonable to assume that a great deal of vocabulary, like syntax and morphology, can be acquired through 'comprehensible input,' especially when the oral input is augmented by reading (p. 28).

In this paper we shall discuss some methods of teaching reading comprehension to Senior Secondary School pupils through the process of learning and mastering of English words. The demonstration is expected to:

i. make classroom teachers aware of some effective methods of teaching reading comprehension.

ii. suggest to teachers some effective methods of helping pupils develop their vocabulary through reading.

Although the above objectives form the focus, the discussion of them takes place within the wider framework of "integrated language teaching" (Howe & Tomori, 1980).

Developing Pupils' Reading Comprehension Skills in English

Two major concepts are central to our discussion in this study. First is that of integrated language teaching or whole language approach. This approach (Goodman & Goodman, 1981; Onukogu & Arua, 1997) emphasizes two major procedures which apply to this study. First is the integration of skills procedure which decries the atomistic presentation of language skills in the classroom. In presenting reading comprehension in this paper, relevant aspects of the four basic skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing are stimulated towards a whole learning process.

The second concept is that of the interactive processing model (Carrell, Devine, & Eskey, 1988; Paran, 1997) applies to this study in three respects. First, it ensures that the learner interacts with a text not only by recognizing words and decoding its content but also by constructing the meaning, (i.e., predicting, confirming, evaluating and creating messages out of the text content). By doing this, both the "top-down" and "bottom-up" procedures are utilized to integrate the higher and lower levels of processing comprehension. Second, it ensures learner, teacher and learner-learner interaction in the classroom, in preference to the teacher-centered or learner-centered presentation. It is especially very important that learners interact in pairs and in groups when lessons take place in large classes (Coleman, 1987). Lastly the interactive processing model ensures that pupils are encouraged to relate the interpretation of text to the culture and environment in which reading takes place.

Undoubtedly, the teacher provides an anchor for the comprehension lesson, but the learners should be constantly busy as the teacher sets various tasks for them with little intervention from him/her.

Some Methods of Teaching Reading Comprehension Through Vocabulary

Several methods have been utilized over the years for teaching and testing reading comprehension in the classroom. These include the traditional intensive reading-question-answer methods and gap-filling methods such as the cloze test and c-test. In more recent times, several other methods deriving from insights into language studies have been introduced for teaching effectiveness. Such include, especially, the prediction, spider-graph, story-telling and retelling, and creative activity methods which we have found useful in the classroom. Our presentation later in this study is a demonstration of how these methods might be utilized in the classroom.

To put it briefly, the prediction method enhances the teaching of reading comprehension by ensuring that learners process texts through interactive guessing and making

of hypotheses. Research in schema theory says efficient reading is an interactive process involving the activation of prior knowledge both before and during decoding.

The spider-graph method is a test of word association in vocabulary development (Meara, 1983; Nation, 1991). Rather than test individual words, the method connects words together into an association network based on semantic relationships (synonyms, antonyms, collocations, etc.) among them. In teaching reading comprehension, an establishment of relationship among key words in a text is one way by which learners can interact meaningfully with the text.

The method of retelling stories has been known to help in comprehension. Glazer (1993) opines that as learners retell the story they have read or listened to, the teacher can determine how well they understand texts. In retelling stories, pupils have the opportunity to share their experiences with others while they strive to remember what they have read or heard. Jegede (1997), in her discussion of text comprehension, presents different guidelines and procedures for encouraging pupils to retell stories.

Lastly, various forms of creative activities can take place during or after reading comprehension. Pictures can be drawn to represent events or characters in a text. A short piece of drama can be composed from a story and this can be acted out in class or during a period for social or literacy activities. In addition, the key words of a text may provide the topic for new stories to be told or written. The integration of creative activities into the reading comprehension lesson seems to provide the greatest avenue for demonstration of integrative teaching.

The Reading Material and Classroom Setting

The material for the comprehension lessons presented in this study consists of four short stories, A, B, C and D (See Appendix) provided by Price (1997, p. 38). The four passages located here are found appropriate for two one-hour lessons of reading comprehension for forty senior Secondary School 1 pupils in Nigeria.

The pupils generally have had six years of primary education and are in their fourth year in the secondary school. Although the pupils have been exposed to English lessons right from their first day in primary school and also learnt other subjects through the medium of English from the upper primary class, their level of mastery of the language cannot be judged higher than that of lower primary school native-English children. Nonetheless, the learners have had enough exposure in the language to enable them to participate in a reading lesson, if well-motivated.

The teacher (this writer) is a participant in an extramural evening coaching class organized by some university teachers for their children (the learners) to augment the normal school lessons of the children. When it became clear at one point that the

schools were not doing enough to educate children and that the standards of education were falling, parents resorted to sending their children to organized evening coaching classes, while some who could afford it, employed teachers to specially coach their children at home.

The classroom is spacious enough to accommodate forty or more pupils. Even though the seats and tables are fixed, there is enough space to allow improvisations of seating arrangements for group work. However, the greatest challenge before the teacher is the need to constantly search for materials and also improvise them. As it were, apart from the recommended class text, pupils have no other text that is common. When pupils find reading materials in the class text boring, varied materials from other sources stimulate them and thus make the lessons more exciting.

Presentation of Reading Comprehension Lessons

Lesson 1 (60 mins.)

Prediction (10 mins.)

The teacher greets the class and introduces the topic of the lesson. The classroom interaction continues thus:

Teacher: Pupils, I read a number of related stories from a book yesterday. The title of the book is "Street Wise". (Teacher writes title on the board). I want you all to guess what the content of the stories could be. What words of objects and activities can you likely connect with "street"?

Pupils: (Following bids and nominations with some occasional prompting): Houses, road, people, animals, traffic, vehicles, bicycle, shops trees, driving, walking, riding, noise .....

Teacher: What about "wise"?

Pupils: Careful, careless, sensible, warning, rules, following regulations, etc.

Teacher: How can we be wise in the street?

Pupils: Avoid accident, beware of thieves, be cautious of strangers, make new friends, be businesslike, observe traffic regulations, avoid sluggishness, walk/drive carefully, don't be drunk....

Teacher: Now, let us read some of the stories in the book on "Street Wise" to find out.

Story-reading: Sharing and Retelling (50 mins.)

The forty pupils are divided into eight groups of five pupils each. The stories A, B, C and D are shared among the groups, so that two different groups have a similar story

to look at in their respective discussions. A story is read and discussed in each group following two instructions:

1. Each group should point out the mistakes that the tourists made in each situation.
2. The group should give advice to the tourists to avoid the mistakes above.

The whole class now comes together as a representative of each group retells her group story to the class. Four groups retell their stories; the other group representatives only supply missing links to the stories they share with the previous groups. The groups come up the the following "edited" responses to the instructions given to them.

Text A:

> The girlfriend did not take good care of her bag. She should have held the bag more tightly in her arms. She should beware of thieves in the street. She should report the incident to the police.

Text B:

> The tourist unwittingly showed the location of her wallet to the thief. She was credulous. The tourist should keep her wallet securely next time. She should be more critical of other people's comments.

Text C:

> The tourist was gullible to have totally trusted a stranger. The tourist was sedated through the coffee he/she drank. She/he should not have taken a drink from a stranger. She/he should report the stranger and describe him to the police.

Text D:

> The tourists were taken in by the good dressing of the locals. They were also not cautious enough in the information they gave to strangers. Tourists should not judge people's behaviour by their dressing. They must also watch their speech.

After the classroom discussion, pupils go back to their groups where they exchange stories with other groups. At the end of the lesson each group is expected to have read three or four of the stories.

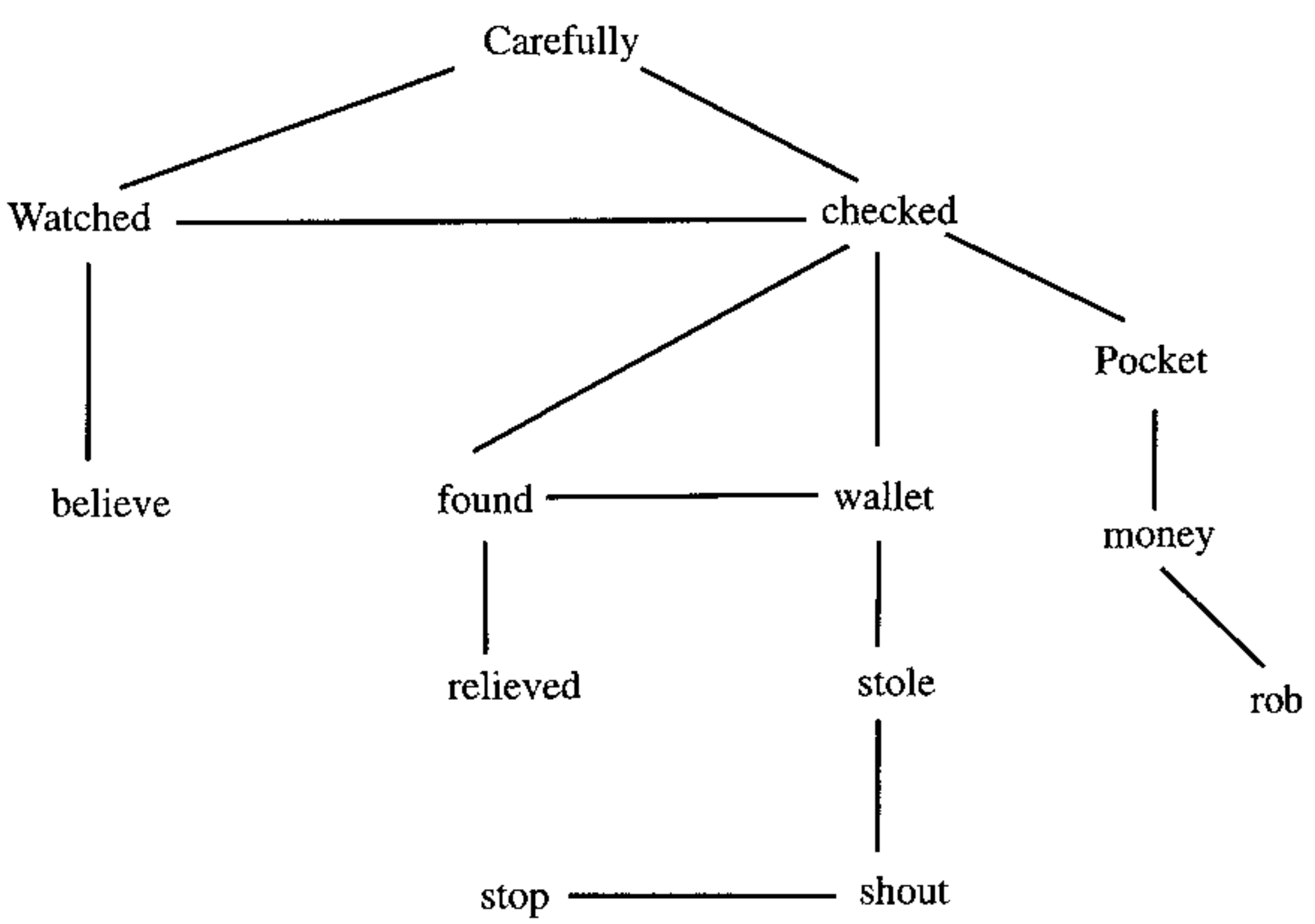
Lesson 2 (60 mins.)

Spider-graph (15 mins.)

The pupils are told that a text is made up of words which are connected in a related field for meaning. A knowledge of the relationship between words in a text enhances

coherence and makes the text more understandable to the reader. Pupils are asked to pick one of the stories. Then working in pairs, they should try to relate as many key words in the text together.

The following graph prepared by a pair of pupils on messages has the greatest density of words.



Creative Activity (45 mins.)

Following the teacher's instruction, the pupils voluntarily divided into three interest groups to engage themselves in different creative activities. Each group was told to pick some (four or five) key words from any of the texts being studied and create a story, drama sketch, or draw a picture.

The picture group presented, in five minutes, a drawing which contained a motor cycle, the rider, a female passenger sitting on the ground holding a damaged shoe in her hand, and two other people standing by her. The presenter claimed in his explanation of the scene that the heel of the passengers shoe had mistakenly slipped into the spoke of the motorcycle and the spoke had twisted the shoe out of her leg. The passenger's shout had caused the rider to stop and drawn the attention of some passers-by. The shoe had been badly damaged, while the passenger, luckily, had a minor sprain of her ankle. The presenter explained that objects in the picture were drawn separately by different members of the group and later pasted to create a scene earlier agreed upon by members.

The drama group, in ten minutes, presented a play in which a sensuous man was robbed by a lady. The man had met the beautiful lady at a restaurant where he had stopped over for relaxation after work. After a friendly exchange, the lady agreed to follow him home; she offered to prepare a meal which he joyfully ate. After a seemingly exciting meal, he fell asleep. Six hours later, he woke up and found that his purse and wrist watch were missing.

Homework

After the presentations, the teacher gave the pupils an essay assignment to write from home—the topic was: "The Day I Lost My Pocket Money to Thieves On My Way to School."

Conclusion

This paper has presented some strategies whereby the vocabulary is used as a resource for reading comprehension in English. Utilizing the principles of integrative language teaching and interactive processing, the study demonstrates the teaching of reading comprehension through the methods of predicting, spider graph, story-retelling and creative activity. In particular, the study has been stimulated by the location and use of short, interesting, and sensible texts collected from a journal.

The active participation of pupils and their creative output during the lesson encourage the teacher and testify that effective teaching has taken place. The recipe has, of course, been (i) suitable reading materials, (ii) an experienced teacher, and (iii) appropriate teaching methods.

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Appendix

A The ocean looked fantastic and the locals and tourists were enjoying themselves, walking up and down the road next to the beach. People were cycling or riding small motorcycles along the beach road. My girlfriend was carrying her bag over her shoulder. I heard the noise of a motorcycle engine close behind us. Suddenly, my girlfriend started shouting and I saw the motorcycle speeding off up the street. A passenger on the bike was holding a knife, and my girlfriend's bag.

B We were walking along in the city centre enjoying the sights. I kept my wallet in my inside jacket pocket. Suddenly a man ran up to us. He was shouting, "Sir, Madam ... stop! You've been robbed!" Of course, I immediately put my hand inside my jacket to check my wallet. I was relieved to find that it was still there and so was my money. Back at the hotel, I couldn't believe it when I found that my wallet was gone! The helpful man had watched me very carefully. He saw exactly where I kept my wallet when I checked my jacket pocket. Later he stole my money.

C I was walking down to the beach when a stranger came up to me and tried to shake my hand. "Don't you remember me, my friend?" he said. I didn't recognise his face at all. "I saw you at the airport the other day. I work there at passport control. How are you enjoying our beautiful country?" I couldn't remember him but I was too embarrassed to tell him. He was so friendly. He even offered to take me to his uncle's seafood restaurant. We went there for dinner. The seafood was great but the coffee did taste a little strange! Six hours later, I woke up. My money was gone and I didn't know where I was. My friend had even taken my watch and shoes!

D We were in a bar when two well-dressed locals introduced themselves. When I told them that I was from London they were really excited. "You are from London? What a coincidence! My sister is going to London next week, to be a nurse in a big hospital. But she is worried about travelling to a strange country. Could you come back to my house and talk to her? She would be so grateful and my house is close to here!" They were so polite that it seemed rude for us to refuse. We left the bar and started walking to the house. Ten minutes later one of our new 'friends' pulled a knife out of his pocket. "Give us all your money!" he said. We never met his sister.

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Envisioning a Democratic Linguistic Order

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Introduction

Sociolinguist' Joshua A. Fishman, has recently argued that there has been a growing resurgence of regional and local languages around the world against the global spread of English and gives an optimistic view that the dominance of English is not going to be a big problem as there will be a balance of power between English and other languages, forming a "new linguistic order" (Fishman, 1998).

However, I feel that there should be more discussion about the global spread of English and its influence upon culture and communication in the world today, especially from non-Western, non-English-speaking perspectives.

English is no doubt a lingua franca, a global language of today, but the hegemony of English is also very threatening to those who are not speakers of English. While it may be convenient to have a common international language, we have to ask ourselves whether it will really contribute to a democratic global communication to use a language which is historically and culturally connected with particular nations, namely the English-speaking nations. We have to realize that the superimposition of English is ironically creating an "anti-democratic linguistic order" in which English maintains a prestigious status while dominating other languages. We need to envision a "democratic linguistic order" which ensures equality among languages and democracy in international communication. To do this, exploring the problems caused by the hegemony of English is due.

The Structure of the Hegemony of English

The existing hegemony of English is first of all anti-democratic because it is creating a structure of linguistic hierarchy as well as social inequality and discrimination, while reinforcing the existing unequal power structures of international relations (Tsuda, 1986, 1990, & 1994; Phillipson, 1992).

The global use of English no doubt benefits the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, and other English-speaking countries, and allows them to strengthen their political and economic powers. Politically speaking, English-speaking countries have a better chance to express their ideas in international politics and conferences. The United Nations, for example, allows for the use of only six major languages in its conferences

and only English and French for documentation. Thus, the linguistic environment of the United Nations is designed so that only the representatives of a few major languages can enjoy a comfortable communicative environment, and in that environment the representatives of the English-speaking countries seem to enjoy the greatest freedom as the use of English increases in global communication.

The hegemony of English creates an anti-democratic linguistic order and gives the English-speaking countries a greater political power than they actually deserve as more and more international conferences use English and appoint native speakers of English as the officials of conferences, Thus, they tend to have power to control the proceedings, possibly the results of the conferences, and the reporting of the results in the media. In international political conferences where the interests of each nation come into conflict, it is possible for English-speaking officials and delegates to take advantage of their linguistic advantage to dominate the non English-speaking delegates. Japanese cultural anthropologist, Junichi Takahashi, observed an international conference in which English was the only official language and concluded that some native speakers of English "intentionally try to push non-native speakers out of discussions by making full use of tactics that stem from phonetic, idiomatic, syntactic, and pragmatic characteristics unique only in English" (Takahashi, 1991, pp. 188–189). The exclusive use of English thus creates a structure of inequality in communication in which the non-English-speaking people or non-native speakers of English are often excluded from the center of communication and thus marginalized.

The hegemony of English also gives the English-speaking countries enormous economic power. Because English sells well, English is now one of the most important products of the English-speaking countries. So, English is not merely a medium, but a proprietary commodity to be marketed across the world.

A recent study on the global spread of English published by the British Council, a public relations agency for the United Kingdom, underscores this point and proposes for the global marketing of the "British English brand." In answering the questions: "Will the British 'brand' of English play an important role in the world in the 21st century?" the study concludes by saying:

> The future of British English in the world will depend in part on continued, careful management of its 'brand image'. . . . The support of 'British Studies' courses in overseas universities, for example, has helped shift the focus from cultural heritage to a more balanced understanding of Britain's place in the modern world. There is also a growing appreciation of the importance of British audio-visual products in projecting an image of Britain as a leader of style and popular culture (Graddol, 1995).

Both in the question and the conclusion, the report assumes Britain is the supplier of a 'brand' product called 'British English' and its culture, and by assuming so, it justifies the commoditization of English and the British governmental intention to market it globally as a 'brand' product.

The commoditization of English by the British government (and by other governments to a lesser degree) incurs at least two concerns.

First, their perception of their own English as a "brand" product shows their sense of superiority over other varieties of English and other languages. This is nothing but 'ethnocentrism', to say the least, and potentially implies a racist perception which justifies their discriminatory attitudes and behaviors toward speakers of other languages and other varieties of English. It is justifiable for the British to say that their English is a 'brand', and then legitimate their feelings of ethnocentrism and discrimination? By communicating these feelings, are they justified in reproducing and reinforcing the perceptions of inequality between them and others?

Second, in their concept of the commoditization of English, the British government wants to claim English as if it were their own personal property even though it is already a global "common good" that belongs to everyone. They may argue that they claim ownership of "British English" alone and that they are thus free to sell it, much like other commodities such as British automobiles and TVs, but this is debatable.

Language as Environment, not Commodity

The British intention to promote "British English" will only exacerbate the existing unequal linguistic order of today, allowing English to dominate other languages and reinforcing the inequality of international communication. To tackle the hegemony of English and the resultant "Anti-democratic Linguistic Order", we need to abandon our definitions of language as a mere tool of communication or a product to be marketed. Instead, we need to regard language as an essential component of our informational environment in which we live. In this view, language does not exist outside of us as an objective entity. But it exists as the essential informational component which interacts with us and affects and molds us in the process of interaction. Thus, language directly relates to our ontological states and constitutes the essential environment for a person to develop an identity. So learning and using a foreign language and living in a foreign society are not the mere change of symbolic systems, but radical changes in the informational environments as well as in ontological conditions.

In addition, the use of English as a global language generates a number of more serious difficulties, especially to the speakers of languages other than English. I shall discuss only three of them here.

When people are deprived of their native language to speak in and listen to, a part of their human dignity is at risk. They become, in a sense, mute, deaf, and blind. They may be there physically, but are treated as invisible, and are easily ignored.

Having to use English can result in a kind of existential crisis as well as a loss of human dignity. I, for one, as a non-English speaking person, have experienced these crises in English-speaking environments. It is far more than just a matter of inconvenience, but a serious problem directly concerned with human dignity, because being deprived of language means the deprivation of informational environment, an essential source of our existence. The replacement of a weaker language by a stronger language such as English is equal to the replacement of one environment essential to human existence by another which is alien and possibly threatening. The new and foreign informational environment can be very threatening to human existence as it creates the loss of voice, the loss of hearing, and the loss of sight on the part of speakers of a weaker language.

Thus, the issue of a global language should not be considered only from a functional and pragmatic perspective which sees language as a mere tool of communication. Language problems should be dealt with from a broader ontological perspective that can look at language as essential to human dignity, identity, and existence.

Secondly, there is a more practical problem in the English-dominated communication. The adoption of English as a global language obliges the non-English-speaking population of the world to learn and use it. This is an enormous burden, economically and psychologically, and there is no guarantee that one will be successful.

If learning English urges you to make sacrifices, using it can cause you pain and pity! Unless you are near-native-like in English, you will continue to suffer fear and anxiety over possible mistakes in language use, and mistakes can have great consequences in an increasingly global, competitive, and English-dominated marketplace. Thus, it can be very difficult for the non-English-speaking people to develop confidence, or psychological certainty and stability as they are entirely dependent in terms of proper language behavior and thus susceptible to possible insults and punishments.

In sum, learning and using English is not merely a matter of education, but it serves in function as a way of producing and reinforcing unequal power relationships between English-speaking peoples and non-English speaking peoples by instilling anxiety, fear, shame, or insecurity in the minds of non-English-speaking people. In other words, the imperative to learn and use English operates as a form of social-psychological control or mental colonization of the non-English-speaking world.

Another problem resulting from the hegemony of English is the Englishization of other languages. Quite a few languages of the world have been influenced and trans-

formed by English to the extent that even portions of their phonetic and semantic order are disrupted.

Some may argue that the Englishization of languages is inevitable, and that criticizing it represents the position of linguistic purism, a form of ethno-nationalism which excludes any foreign influences. It is argued that language evolves through incessant contact with other languages and that having foreign influence is just a matter of natural evolution. This is true, but never has such an influence been so dominating in so many areas worldwide, so quickly. My point, simply, is that we must not do so without careful consideration.

Democracy Among All Languages

But what about the growing "New Linguistic Order"? There is indeed a resurgence of regional and local languages, as if to counter-balance the force of English, as Fishman (1998) rightly discussed. This indicates that there is a concern about the colonial languages, particularly English, being so strong and influential that they are posing a threat to most weaker languages, and therefore a great need is felt to develop a balance of linguistic power. And this perception should not be ignored but recognized from an ecological perspective which treats language as the essential informational environment for human existence. We cannot afford to let nature take its course with regard to language, but should take some intelligent action to prevent it from being transformed into something we are not sure we want.

Can we do anything about the growing hegemony of English?

The rise of regional and local languages as described by Fishman may exercise some power to check the force of English, but it may turn out to be only legitimating the dominance of English, as it serves to create global bilingualism, in which English is used together with a local (or regional) language. The power of English is sustained and even reinforced in global bilingualism.

In order to establish a more democratic order of language, we need to have a vision. A vision to realize a higher goal. A democratic linguistic order is a vision which aims for democracy among all languages, rather than democracy plus English. While democracy among all languages is an attempt to realize and respect equal opportunity for all languages to be used and learned, democracy plus English presupposes the use and learning of English, a great handicap for non-English-speaking people and a grave challenge to a democratic linguistic order.

We have quite a good theoretical foundation for developing a democratic linguistic order. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights can serve as the theoretical ground for elaborating on the idea of democracy for all languages. Article 2 asserts, "Everyone

is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth, or other status." Also, the International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights and several other international agreements oppose discrimination on the basis of language. These declarations can be used as the theoretical base on which linguistic democracy can be elaborated.

In 1996, the draft of Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights was adopted in a UNESCO meeting held in Barcelona, Spain. Article 7, prescribes that "All languages are the expression of a collective identity and of a distinct way of perceiving and describing reality and must therefore be able to enjoy the conditions required for their development in all functions." The Declaration is an attempt to preserve the rights of linguistic minorities based on the agreements reached in the other international declarations discussed above. This is a great step forward toward a democratic linguistic order and equality among all languages.

Conclusion

For a democratic linguistic order to be further developed, consciousness raising is necessary both among the speakers of English and among the speakers of other languages. The majority of the speakers of English are unaware of the problems caused by the hegemony of English; and even educated people take the use of English for granted and naively expect everyone in the world to speak English. Some attempts should be made in education and in the media to sensitize people about the hegemony of English and make them critically aware of the taken-for-granted knowledge about the global use of English. It might be difficult to be self-critical, but as the old saying goes, "Nobless, Oblige."

And finally, efforts should be made on the part of non-English-speaking peoples as well. They are even more uncritical of the hegemony of English. Rather, they are becoming the major supporters of it by enthusiastically learning English and hoping to reap the profits out of it. In being content with individual success by learning English and not being concerned about the problems caused by the hegemony of English, they become accomplices to the hegemony. And, unfortunately, there is a great number of "English language elites" in the world whose status and power are dependent on a linguistic aristocracy. As we can see, there is much work to be done.

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About the Author

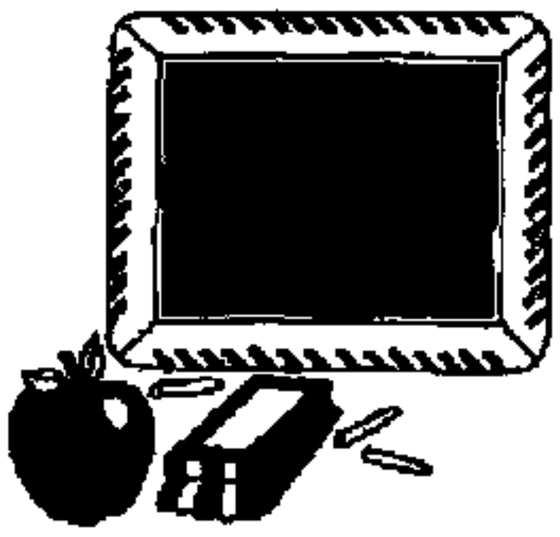
Yukio Tsuda is Professor of International Communication at the Graduate School of International Development, Nagoya University, Nagoya, Japan. He was recently a Fulbright Scholar and Visiting Fellow at the East-West Center in Honolulu, Hawaii. He has been writing about the hegemony of English since the mid 80's. His publications include Language Inequality and Distortion *(1986, The Netherlands: John Benjamins),* Eigo Shihai-no Kouzou *(The Structure of the Dominance of English, 1990, Tokyo: Daisan Shokan),* Eigo Shihai-eno Iron *(The Objections to the Dominance of English 1993, Tokyo: Daisan Shokan)* Shinryakusuru Eigo, Hangekisuru Nihongo *(The Invading English, the Counterattacking Japanese, 1996, Tokyo: PHP).*

Conference Announcements

Venezuela TESOL (VENTESOL). May 19–21, 2000. Conference, Caracas, Venezuela. Proposal deadline January 15, 2000. Contact Lucius Daniel, Conference Chair, Interidiomas, Av. Rmulo Gallegos, Torre Capital, PB-Local 3, Los Dos Caminos, Caracas, Venezuela. Tel. 582-232-5969. Fax 582-232-2812. Proposal contact, Mary Chapparo, Av. Ppal. Las Mercedes, Edif. CVA, Caracas, Venezuela. E-mail:marychap@ven.net. E-mail:iidiomas@internet.ve.

NAFSA: Association of International Educators. May 28–June 2, 2000. Annual Conference, "Developing a Creative Climate for international Education," San Diego, California. Contact NAFSA. Tel. 202-737-3699. E-mail:inbox@nafsa.org. Http://www.nafsa.org.

Japan Association for Language Teaching Computer-Assisted Language Learning Special Interest Group (CALL SIG). June 9–11, 2000. Annual Conference, "JALTCALL 2000: Directions and Debates at the New Millennium," Tokyo, Japan. Contact Ali Campbell, Conference Chair. E-Mail:campbell@media.teu.ac.jp. Http://jaltcall.org/conferences/call2000/.



Tips for Teachers

Semantic Mapping as Scaffolding for Building an Essay

Azzeddine Bencherab, Algeria

As communicative language teachers, we are constantly reminded that there is a continuum of tasks, from manipulative and structured, to communicative and free, along which we are to lead our students. As we all know, teachers often spend too much time either on the structured end of the continuum (drills, rules, etc.) or too much time on the opposite end (unstructured tasks, group work, freewriting, etc.) The key, it seems, to any successful language class, particularly at the beginning and intermediate stages, is the effective development of task types or activities that lead students progressively and confidently along the continuum. This requires the development of a vast repertoire of activities that bridge the middle ground effectively.

One such activity is semantic mapping. This activity has proven to be an efficient tool to develop reading strategies and promote written expression. In this paper, I will attempt to describe how I used a semantic mapping in developing a structured writing activity for small groups.

When I tried it, for the first time, in March 1999 with my 3rd year learners, I was delighted to realize the implementation of such a tool could result in heightening learners' motivation in writing and rid them of their writing phobia. Before embarking on explaining how I proceeded, I would like to caution my colleagues that this technique cannot work out well if learners are not familiar with the mapping/brainstorming process.

Writing assignment:

What is air pollution caused by? What are its effects? What solutions do you suggest?

Procedure:

The teacher draws a circle and writes the topic inside the circle.

The teacher, then asks questions about the topic. The benefit of this brainstorming is to make learners process their existing knowledge, provoking in this way a chain reaction, since one learner's idea will enable other learners to recall the information, record it, correct it if wrong, and improve it if incomplete.

Learners' answers are written on corresponding nodes. Each principal node is linked to secondary nodes by a straight line.

- What is air pollution?
- What is it caused by?
- What makes factories dangerous?
- What will happen when we breathe polluted air?
- What will bronchitis result in?. . . .

Once learners have finished generating ideas, they decide in groups on the organization of their essay. The map will help them in its organization. (See Appendix for example).

A very important point here is that learners should feel free to take, add, or eliminate what is suitable to them. In other words, they should not be forced to use all the information radiating into the nodes.

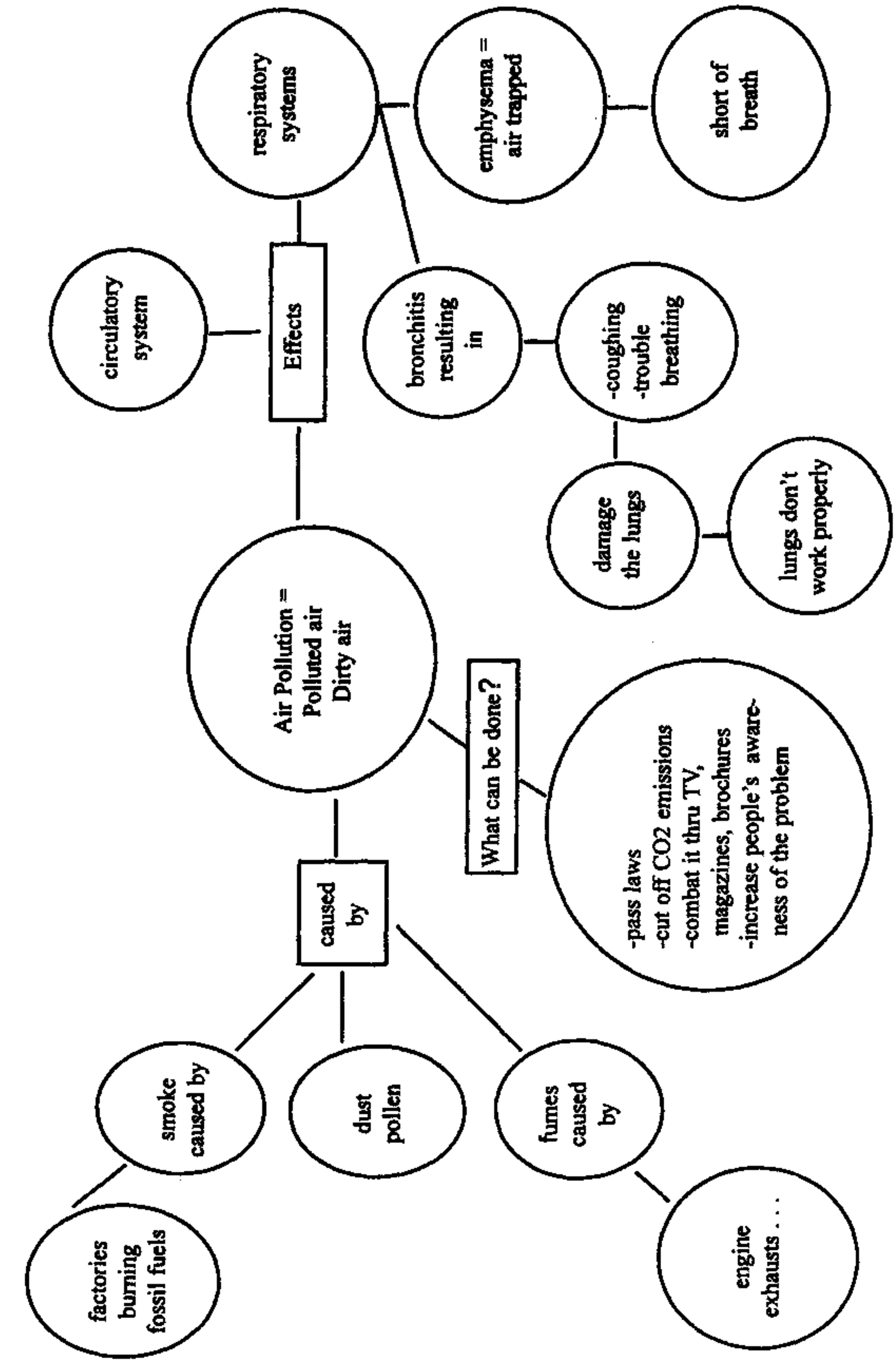
A Sample (revised and corrected):

> Air pollution means polluted air or dirty air. It is a serious problem. It is caused by dust or pollen. These are natural causes. There are other causes. These are man-made. Factories that pour smoke into the air or burn fossil fuels are the main cause of air pollution.
>
> Air pollution can have serious consequences on people's health. It can damage the respiratory system causing bronchitis and trouble in breathing.
>
> Local authorities should do something to solve this problem. They can pass laws to reduce or cut off CO_2 emissions. Mass media can be used to raise people's awareness on the problem.

About the Author

Mr. Azzeddine Bencherab is coordinator teacher of English in a Senior school in Algeria. He has been teaching English for more than 13 years. His field of interest is developing reading, writing, and syllabus design in mixed abilities classes.

Appendix


respiratory systems
emphysema = air trapped
short of breath
circulatory system
Effects
bronchitis resulting in
-coughing
-trouble breathing
damage the lungs
lungs don't work properly
Air Pollution
Polluted air
Dirty air
What can be done?
-pass laws
-cut off CO2 emissions
-combat it thru TV, magazines, brochures
-increase people's awareness of the problem
caused by
smoke caused by
factories burning fossil fuels
dust pollen
fumes caused by
engine exhausts . . .

42 TESL Reporter 33,1 (2000), pp. 42–43

Virtual Language Learning: Finding the Gems Amongst the Pebbles

Review by Jana Harper Makaafi
Brigham Young University–Hawaii

VIRTUAL LANGUAGE LEARNING: FINDING THE GEMS AMONGST THE PEBBLES. Uschi Felix. Language Australia. $35.00

Virtual Language Learning: Finding the Gems Amongst the Pebbles by Uschi Felix of Monash University, Australia, is a 182-page guide to using the internet in language teaching and learning. The book comes with an accompanying CD-Rom that enables readers to access the sites described in the text. It calls itself "an essential guide" for language teachers looking for useful internet resources, language learners who want to improve their skills or learn about a new language, teachers who are interested in creating their own internet courses or materials, and others who want to learn about Web-based language instruction.

The book is divided into four parts. The first part is an introduction to and rationale for using the internet for language learning and teaching. It includes a brief discussion of the major advantages and disadvantages of using the web; specifically addressing language teachers, students, and materials or course developers.

This together with a description of different activities and levels of interaction available on the web, convey some compelling reasons to incorporate web-based activities into language learning environments.

The most valuable part of this book may be the second part, which is a nearly 70-page annotated list of example websites. The list is nicely subdivided into 12 smaller lists, depending on the type of materials found on the site such as materials based on textbooks or magazines, whole courses, interactive grammar exercises, and more. Each smaller list is further divided by language. For example, all the German websites are listed together, then all the French sites, and so on. For those looking for language-specific material, this subdivision helps locate relevant sites more quickly. For those interested in creating their own materials, looking at all the descriptions regardless of the language will prove rewarding. Some of the annotations are quite thorough, whereas others are just a sentence or two. Either way, one can always go to the sites for more information.

The third part of this book is called "Making Sense of the Technology" and is ıtremely helpful for those who need a review of or introduction to things such as band-ıidth, FTPs, Hypertext, Java, the difference between a MUD, a MOO, and a MUSH, and ıore. Most of the explanations are surprisingly easy to understand, although they assume ɔme computer and/or internet experience and are probably not for a complete novice.

The last part of the book is an interesting and useful discussion of reading and writ-ıg on the Web in languages other than English, including many European and Asian ınguages. This section is the most technical of the book.

In addition, there are four appendices which list even more useful sites. One otable feature of this book is that ESL sites are not the main focus. Most of the sites escribed are for European languages, and the ESL/EFL sites are compiled in an appen-lix. The rationale for this decision is never explicit, but nevertheless, a fairly good list ıf the top sites (with very brief annotations) is included in the appendix.

Overall, this is a practical, useful book, especially for the annotations of the many lifferent websites and the lack of computer jargon in the explanations. While there is ıothing on the list that a dedicated surfer would not be able to find for himself, having ın annotated list like this one can certainly save countless hours of wandering the web.

About the Reviewer

Jana Harper Makaafi has been working for BYU-Hawaii since 1992, including one year as the in-country ELI Coordinator in Tonga. She is currently the project leader of ɪ team working to develop an advanced ESL course for the Web. She earned a B.A. in Linguistics at Brigham Young University (1990), and an M.A. in Linguistics at California State University, Long Beach (1992). Her professional interests include bilingualism and language acquisition.

Conference Announcements

Far Eastern English Language Teachers Association (FEELTA) and Far Eastern State University (FSU). June 15–18, 2000. Conference, "People, Languages and Cultures in the Third Millennium," Vladivostok, Russia. Contact Larissa Krainik, Conference Coordinator, Far Eastern State University, Aleutskaya St., 56, Room 325, 414, Vladivostok, 690600, Russia. Tel. 7-4232-25-93-92. Fax 7-4232-25-72-00. E-mail:feeltacon@dvgu.ru

7th International Conference on World Englishes. December 14–16, 2000. Portland, Oregon. This year's theme is World Englishes and Globalization: Facing Challenges and Maximizing Opportunities. Contact Kimberley Brown, Secretary IAWE, International Affairs, Portland State University, PO Box 751, Portland, OR USA 97207-0751.

Sociocultural Contexts of Language and Literacy

Review by N. McBeath
Royal Air Force of Oman

SOCIOCULTURAL CONTEXTS OF LANGUAGE AND LITERACY. Bertha Perez (Ed.) with Teresa L. McCarty; Lucille J. Watahomigie; Maria E. Torres-Guzman; To thi Diem; Ji-Mei Chang; Howard L. Smith; Aurelia Davila de Silva Mahweh. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates 1998.

This is a solid contribution to the literature on language and literacy, which fuses theory and practice, but only in the context of the continental United States. With that limitation, it is a model of its kind, a book which has a great deal to offer and which works at several levels. It is highly recommended for teachers working on TESOL programs and for applied linguistics with an interest in multicultural education.

The editor is responsible for six of the twelve chapters, and two of the three sections. She begins with "Theoretical Perspectives on Language and Literacy," examining culture and linguistic diversity in the United States; existing programs for linguistically diverse students; research on literacy and biliteracy; writing systems; language discourse differences and the implications that all these factors have for the classroom.

In the second section, "Language and Literacy Acquisition in Diverse Communities," her associates speak for themselves. The reader is introduced to the problems facing Native American, Native Alaskan, Puerto Rican, Vietnamese-American, Chinese-American, and African-American community children, and is provided with a study of the development of the Spanish writing skills of a second grade student from the Mexican-American community. Hawaii, unfortunately, receives no attention, but a close reading of Section Two reveals that many communities have difficulties in common.

This point is emphasised in "Literacy Development in Multilingual, Multicultural Classrooms," where the editor moves from theory and first-hand evidence into practice. She explores instructional approaches, the teacher's role in biliteracy, capitalising on students' languages, developing a literacy curriculum, assessment, and the use of student portfolios. Her advice is eminently sensible, the use of theme-based instruction is thoroughly explored, and she includes a list of multicultural readers which could have applications beyond TESOL programs.

Notes to Contributors

he *TESL Reporter* is a semiannual publication of the Languages and Linguistics ivision of Brigham Young University–Hawaii, and is dedicated to the dissemination of eas and issues of interest to teachers of English to speakers of other languages world-ide.

lanuscripts relevant to teaching English as a second/foreign language, bilingual educa-on, intercultural education and communication, and teacher preparation in these areas re welcomed and should be submitted (in duplicate) to the editor. Manuscripts dealing ith classroom implications of the above are especially encouraged.

lanuscripts should be typed and double spaced throughout, generally not exceeding fif-een pages. Each manuscript should be accompanied by a cover sheet with the title; uthor's name, position, and address; and a short (less than 50 words) biodata statement. dentifying information should not appear elsewhere in the manuscript in order to insure n impartial review. Authors are encouraged to follow APA style and review past issues f the *TESL Reporter* for matters of style. Any tables, graphs, or illustrations should be ent in camera-ready form whenever possible.

t is expected that manuscripts submitted to the *TESL Reporter* are neither previously pub-ished nor being considered for publication elsewhere. Upon publication, authors will eceive six complimentary copies of the issue in which their article is published. Manuscripts are generally not returned to authors. Authors should retain a personal copy.

Reviews of recent textbooks, resource materials, tests, and non-print materials (films, apes, or computer software) are also invited. Potential reviewers who indicate a particu-lar area of interest to the review editor will be contacted concerning recent titles in that area. Requests for review guidelines should be addressed to the review editor. Authors of published reviews will receive two complimentary copies of the issue in which the review is published.

Advertising information is available upon request from the editor.

Abstracts of articles published in the *TESL Reporter* appear in *Linguistics and Language Behavior Abstracts.*

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