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TESL Reporter

A Forum for and by Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages

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Using Small Group Work in the English Language Classroom*

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Small group work, which we take to include pair work, is often a misunderstood, misused, and mismanaged form of interaction in the language classroom. Though many language teachers may have tried using this technique, many of them may have also given it up altogether due to practical problems. Or, perhaps, because the small group work activities they tried before never really took off. On the other hand, there are some teachers who do use small group work without really knowing why, except that it makes them appear up-to-date with "new" trends in English language teaching. Who would want to be called "out-of-date"?

The Voices of Experience

What story does your experience of small group work tell you? See if your experience is similar to any of those expressed in the statements listed below (adapted from Buckley, 1982).

1. I have to teach my students the language, i.e. grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation. They can't learn that in groups!
2. I found pair work and group work too complicated to use with large classes (e.g., 50 or more students).
3. Small group work is too time-consuming.
4. I need to be able to correct my students. I won't be able to do that if the students are in groups!
5. When I tried out group work, the students made so much noise the teacher next door complained.
6. The students couldn't understand what they were supposed to do.
7. The students just didn't want to work with each other.

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8. The students simply spent time talking just about anything other than working on the group task.
9. The group activity went on too long and the students dried up.
10. The students kept on talking in the vernacular while doing group work in their English class.

If you resonate with many of the statements above, welcome to the club! But this is no reason to despair! The good news is, although there are many practical problems in the use of small group work, most of these problems can be overcome. In addition, the advantages of small group work in the language classroom far outweigh the practical difficulties it presents.

Our Bias

This paper will argue for the use of small group work as a means of maximising learning in the English language classroom. It can be used with the majority of areas and skills involved in English teaching. More importantly, small group work is an ideal way of providing the freedom students need in learning and of helping students help themselves to learn.

To be able to maximize the use of small group work, it is important to understand the "why" of small group work. Why do we use small group work in particular activities in our class? What principles will help us decide when to use pair or small group work and not whole class activity? Is there a framework which can guide teachers in choosing a particular form of classroom interaction? If the "why" is clear to us, the practical problems become easier to solve. In this paper we will also look at the "how" of small group work. How do we overcome the logistical difficulties in using small group work? How do we manage pair work or small group work?

The "Why" of Small Group Work

When we advocate the use of small group work, we do not mean that we are asking for anyone to do away with whole class work. It would be asking for the impossible! But to help us understand the "why" of small group work, it would be good to recognize the advantages and disadvantages of whole class work. Let us look at a list of uses and limitations of whole class interaction drawn up by a group of teachers in one of our seminars:

Advantages

Time saving

Achieves immediate results

Disadvantages

Less student participation

A few students dominate discussion

Easier to manage class	“Slow” students are neglected
Students receive uniform instruction	Teacher dominates
Less effort in preparation	The set-up is less personal
Classroom logistics is easier to handle	Difficult to differentiate students’ abilities
Expected by students	Less affective
Preparatory step before group work	Mistake correction becomes a teacher’s ordeal
	Reduced quantity and quality of learning
	Less freedom for learning

As we can see from the list, there are many benefits in using whole class work. In **such** type of interaction, the teacher can make sure that everybody in class gets the same **information** he or she wants to get across. Hence, learning is more controlled. There **are** certain activities in which whole class work is indispensable (e.g., giving **instructions** before group work). In other situations, a teacher often resorts to whole class work **when** things have to be finished within a limited amount of time.

While control is the main strength of this mode of classroom interaction, it is also **its** main limitation. It limits students’ freedom and creativity. If whole class work is **used** always in the classroom, or if it is the only mode of interaction used, it will **seriously** stunt the language learning of students. At the early stages of the lesson, control **is** important (e.g., to make sure students are getting uniform instruction), but the teacher **should** learn to slowly relinquish the responsibilities of learning to whom they really **belong; the learners**.

Making the Right Choice

What we need, therefore, is a judicious choice of form of classroom set-up or organization. When do we use whole class interaction or small group work? What principle can **guide** us in deciding on the appropriate class interaction for specific activities in our lesson?

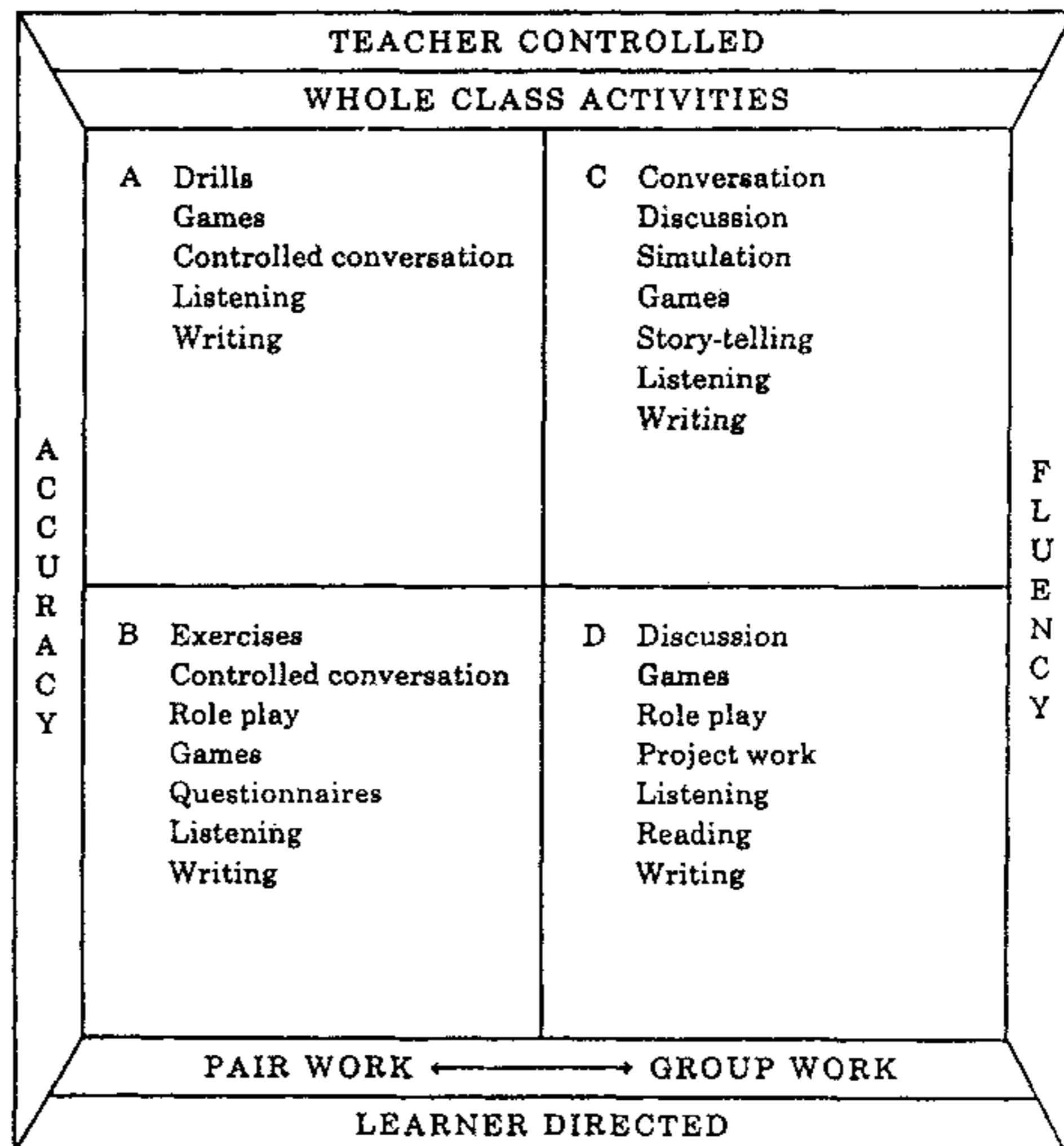
Byrne (1995) offers a framework which can help us, teachers, in deciding on the **appropriate** kind of classroom interaction (whole class or pair and group work) or on the **appropriate** combination of these kinds of interaction, depending on our main activity **objective**. The key here is *the main objective of the phase of the language lesson*. What **is** our goal? Accuracy or fluency?

Accuracy activities are meant to make sure that students get enough practice in a particular grammar point or vocabulary or pronunciation. The objective is to get students to practice a certain language point accurately. This comprises the “practice” stage of a lesson. Fluency activities, on the other hand, are meant to give students opportunity to *use* the language points they have learned. The objective of these activities is for students to use the language freely, even if they make mistakes. These activities comprise what we call the “production” part of the lesson.

In actual teaching situations, we will need to provide opportunities for both accuracy and fluency work. It is our responsibility as language teachers to determine the appropriate class organization (whole class, pair work, and group work) to be able to achieve the goal of the lesson phase (accuracy or fluency) in such a way that students will be cognitively challenged and affectively involved. Let us look at Byrne’s (1995) framework (see Fig. 1).

Figure 1

Byrne’s Framework (Summary of Activities)



There are four areas of interaction in this model:

A. *Accuracy activities* - controlled by the teacher and done with the whole class. Drills and most traditional language games are examples of activities of this kind. They are easy to do with the whole class (perhaps divided into teams, though) and they are usually intended to practice specific bits of language other activities can take the form of controlled conversation, listening, and writing.

B. *Accuracy activities* - directed by the learners and done in pairs (or occasionally in groups). Mini-dialogue practice is one form of this activity. The students work in pairs, using a model provided by the teacher. The dialogue is intended to provide practice in grammar and vocabulary. The students can vary the dialogue or even go on to change it altogether. Other activities in this form of interaction are: role play, games, questionnaires, listening, writing.

C. *Fluency activities* - controlled by the teacher and done with the whole class. One form of this is a class discussion where the teacher does only *some* of the talking and students do most of it, expressing their own ideas, interacting with one another. If this student participation doesn't take place, it would be better for the teacher to allow the students to do this activity in groups. Other activities of this type can take the form of story-telling, simulation, games, listening, writing.

D. *Fluency activities* - directed by the learners and done in groups (or occasionally in pairs). These are activities which encourage students to use the target language freely (e.g., discussion, games, role-play, project work, listening, reading and writing).

The overall point, thus, is that the classroom format should be varied to suit the stage in the learning process which is at hand. Sometimes whole class work will be the most appropriate form, but there will also be numerous other occasions when students will need the greater freedom and responsibility that can only be achieved through pair or small group work.

Sampling the Choices

To understand more concretely what we have discussed so far, let us take a look at a segment of a lesson on the topic of "leadership." The main objective of this phase of the lesson is *fluency*, production using the language points taught in the lesson: asking WH-questions and responding to such questions.

In Stage 1 of the lesson, the teacher is preparing the class for the small group work that will follow by reviewing both the information and the language structures the students will need in their production. In the second half of Stage 1, there is a bit of lan-

guage practice. (This type of activity belongs to Byrne's Quadrant A: accuracy activities controlled by the teacher and done with the whole class). This whole class activity is also for the purpose of giving the students uniform instructions for their group work

Stage 1 Whole Class Work

Remember yesterday's lesson on leadership:

- *what kind of seminars have you attended?*
- *what happens during a seminar?*
- *look at Activity 10. Read through the schedule*

Activity 10

Here is a schedule of the first day of the leadership seminar.

Friday, September 19

<i>8:00-9:00a.m.</i>	<i>Registration of Delegates</i>
<i>9:00-10:00</i>	<i>Opening Session</i>
<i>1. Welcome</i>	<i>Dr. Maximiano Pulan</i> <i>Mayor of Tagaytay City</i>
<i>2. Objectives & Procedures:</i>	<i>Dr. Jossie Lacson</i> <i>Seminar Director</i>
<i>10:00-10:30</i>	<i>Break</i>
<i>10:30-12:00</i>	<i>Lecture: "What is a Good Teacher"</i> <i>Dr. Vicky Calderon</i> <i>Open Forum</i>
<i>12:00-1:00p.m.</i>	<i>Lunch</i>
<i>1:00-2:30pm</i>	<i>Lecture: "The Need for Good Leaders"</i> <i>Dr. Tess Catamora</i> <i>Open Forum</i>
<i>2:30-3:00</i>	<i>Break</i>
<i>3:00-5:00</i>	<i>Workshop</i>

Teacher: Last week, we studied WH-Questions and short responses.

- *Ask a WH-Q. to get info. Look at examples on p. 91: When did the seminar start? What time did you register?*
- *Other questions (and answers) e.g. Who will give opening remarks? etc. → answer*
- *Anything in the schedule you don't understand → e.g. "workshop"?*
- *Anything else → "where? → Tagaytay (have clue)*

The use of small group work in Stage 2 allows room for students' creativity. Designing their own seminars can be fun—cognitively and affectively involving—for the students. The use of pair work in Stage 3 further devolves "ownership" of the learning activity to the learner. Each student has the responsibility to gather information from, as well as disseminate information to, his/her partner. These types of activities belong to quadrant D (fluency activities directed by the learners and done in groups [or occasionally in pairs]) in Byrne's model of classroom interaction.

Stage 2 Small Group Work (groups of 5 or 6)

What does a seminar schedule contain?

- *times*
- *activity/topics*
- *dates/day*
- *speakers/persons*
- *place*

Each group will make their own schedule for a one (or half) day seminar → 10 minutes to make own schedule. Write names and schedule on sheet of note-paper. Teacher asks students to make the topic something their classmates are likely to be interested in. Each member of the group is instructed to make a copy of the group's schedule.

Stage 3 Pair Work

Work in pairs with members of another group to exchange information about each others' schedules. But do not show your partner yours. He/she should find it out, by asking Qs. Decide which member of the pair will ask first. Write down the partner's schedule. Have 2-3 mins. each way → swap over.

Then form into your groups again and re-construct the other group's schedule together.

Stage 4 of the lesson ends with whole class discussion to synthesize the learning from the “free communication activity.” Here the teacher directs the discussion to encourage the students to freely express their opinion on and evaluation of the seminars designed by the different groups (Quadrant C).

Stage 4 Small Group Work → Whole Class Work

- *Write other group's schedule on manila paper and own schedule on piece of paper*
- *Post the other group's schedule and put your group's piece of paper with your own schedule on beside the copy of it done by the other group.*
- *Mill around to view the posters etc.*

Which groups got it right? → analysis/diagnosis. etc.

Which seminar would you attend and why?

In summary, we can see that the teacher in this phase of the lesson on leadership chose to use mainly small group work because it would allow the students the freedom and sense of responsibility for their own learning. The main objective of this part of the lesson is production; the “ownership” by the students of the information and language processed in the lesson.

The “How” of Small Group Work

After choosing small group work as an appropriate form of interaction for a certain activity, the next big question that the teacher faces is: How do I deal with the logistics of setting it up?

The following guidelines might be helpful in considering answers to this question (cf. Nolasco and Arthur, 1995):

Stage instructions for the learners

We know from our own experience that vaguely worded or unfocused instructions are a major source of chaos in the classroom. This problem is more palpably felt in large classes, which is more the rule than the exception in the secondary and tertiary level institutions around the world. Appropriate instructions play a vital role in setting up the learners to accomplish the given task. Staging instructions has to do with giving them

piecemeal, or in stages, as it were, so that the learners are not confused about what they need to carry out.

Demonstrate the task when necessary

Learners sometimes do not fully grasp all instructions, especially if their minds are racing ahead wondering how to accomplish what for them may be a potentially complex task. The teacher can then demonstrate part of the instructions (e.g. doing the first few tasks either with the learners or for the learners), to offset their anxiety.

Speak Clearly

It's a rule of thumb in theater to project oneself to the farthest person in the hall. The same holds true in the classroom. Our audience are our students, so we must ensure that our voice and pronunciation are clear. (As a guiding principle, we can project our voice by pushing in our diaphragm; this requires muscle work). The secret here is not volume of the voice but intensity.

Put instructions in a logical order

From a cognitive standpoint, a teacher can stage the instructions for the learners so that they progress from simple to complex. In other words, the level of difficulty progresses with the instructions and activities.

Use simple, direct statements

We want our students to go from point A to B in the simplest way. We surely hope we would not want to sound like this: "Consider the ramifications of the nuclear issue and congregate in groups to ruminate on this matter - you have 15 minutes to do this!" If we do, we will be answerable to the confusion that is bound to follow. Compare it with the following, however. "First, form into groups of five. Second, share your opinions on the advantages and disadvantages of nuclear energy. Third, make a graphic presentation on a poster paper of what your group has finally concluded to be the number one advantage and the number one disadvantage of nuclear energy. Fourth, be ready to report about your work in class."

Write legibly on the board

In order to help our students remember our instructions, it is not enough for us to give them orally. Writing them legibly on the board will also help them visualize the process better. While they are doing their tasks in the small groups, they can always check against the written instructions to see if they are following the recommended steps in the process.

Use language suited to the level of knowledge of the learners

Each discipline has its own jargon. The jargon that we learn in graduate school will definitely not be understood by our high school students. Our challenge is to explain the same idea using a language that is suited to the level of knowledge of the learners.

In managing group work itself, there is also a need to train students to get used to:

- *starting at the teacher's signal*

In the same way that motorists are alert to the changing signals of a traffic light, so our students should also be alert to our signals (e.g., raising our hands to indicate that a task is about to begin, or saying "begin!").

- *stopping when told to stop*

Many teachers tend to be "hyper" in class, employing much body language and theatrical poses. We need not lose our voices trying to shout over the din; we can exude a firmness that will be unconsciously picked up by the students. There's no need to holler, "Stop! Attention! Attention!" Without losing our composure and temper, we can say in a normal tone of voice, "Let's go back to our seats now."

- *working with each other with the noise level down*

Before the start of an activity, we can tell the learners to speak in a normal, conversational tone, or one that does not exceed the sound level of the person next to them. The teacher can demonstrate the ideal and appropriate volume level to be used in the group discussions. Or the teacher can write a sound gauge on the board and direct the students to look at the board once in a while to check if they are still within the acceptable decibel level for that activity.

- *listening carefully to instructions*

Here is where teacher support comes in. As we give them the instructions, we can have the students echo the instructions back to us to check for understanding of the tasks.

- *moving into and out of groups quickly*

Again, this requires much time to develop. But if we are consistent throughout the year in reminding the students to be snappy and alert in the classroom, by year's end, we will see a very efficient set of students moving quickly and quietly around the room! These practical tips, we hope, are helpful reminders to us teachers to minimize our anxiety about making sure that our small group activities work to the great advantage of our learners and ourselves.

Conclusion

There are two important points that we need to stress from the preceding discussion. First, that using small group work is more than just a matter of dividing the class into groups of either two, three, or five, as the case may be. Secondly, that although small group work is desirable, it can be a deterrent to learning if not used appropriately. Is it whole class activity or small group work? The choice lies in our hands but the evaluation of that choice will rest on how well we have empowered our students to own their learning.

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Teaching Citation Methods to Degree Seeking ESL Students

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Several concepts and techniques in the field of second language acquisition command the attention of researchers and classroom teachers, yet one of the most frequently discussed topics in both university English language institutes and community college ESL departments is plagiarism of source material. Unfortunately, most teachers misinterpret this form of student copying as a discipline problem. Actually, the problem of undocumented copying of published texts in an ESL classroom should be treated as an acculturation problem rather than one of cheating. Cheating is, after all, a cultural concept, subject to societal interpretation; and since many students in English language institutes intend to pursue academic degrees in western colleges or universities, they need to understand the western or English language interpretation of plagiarism. Viewed from a perspective of culture, therefore, the solution to student plagiarism becomes one of an acculturation process rather than a more stringent application of rules.

The First Projects

The problem has been addressed in a rudimentary way in the native-speaking, mainstream classroom through a practicum project done by Ann W. Hall (1986). Her project emphasized critical thinking skills as one potential solution in an eighth grade class. Through an integrated approach for developing note-taking, writing, paraphrasing, and summary skills, Hall managed, in the ten week unit, to significantly reduce instances of plagiarism of published texts. Classes of different age groups, as well as students in TESOL classes, would require some adjustments to Hall's approach, however, since strategies similarly applied have met with only minimal success in those teaching environments.

Current strategies for dealing with the problem in the ESL or EFL classroom frequently prove inadequate because of cultural differences. These cultural differences seem to be responsible for both problem areas of plagiarism and, as such, cannot be controlled through mainstream critical thinking instruction or simple authoritarian methods. Unlike United States college students (or grade school students) raised with a Western concept of cheating, non-native speakers of English cannot simply be told to avoid

copying because of many of their cultures do not relate to the term in the same way that we do. For them, a published text is part of the public domain.

Also, in most cases, students' initial experience with the concept of plagiarism of published texts comes in intermediate or advanced classes when they are first asked to produce relatively long compositions. By contrast, native speakers have dealt with the issue for most of their academic lives. Pennycook (1996) discusses the concept of ownership of texts as a Western notion, and Brownlee (1987), suggests the necessity of using specific techniques to help students avoid Western concepts of plagiarism. Neither of their strategies goes far enough, however; the best they do is teach students to paraphrase. That just circumvents the issue and does a disservice to students planning an upper level education in the United States.

It seems more reasonable to combine Pennycook and Hall's research with theories of composition, schema, intercultural communication, and literature to present strategies for teaching the Western cultural significance of authorship and textual ownership to ESL and EFL students. Such a strategy would have the additional benefit of teaching proper citation methods at an early stage, an important consideration for language institute students looking forward to pursuing a college degree in an English speaking country.

The Cultural Assimilation Strategy

The strategy would be designed to teach the concept of textual ownership as well as the difference between (and proper use of) sentences of original thought and those of support paraphrased or quoted from published sources. Over the course of a semester, students learn the Western cultural concept of copyright sanctity not only through the mechanical techniques of citation, but also through the study of authorial background and intertextual contrast.

My experience in applying the strategy proved quite enlightening with a diverse English Language Institute literature class of low-intermediate students from Colombia, France, Japan, Korea, Kuwait, Mexico, and Saudi Arabia. Most of the students fell into the traditional college age range, and most intended to pursue a United States university degree after attaining English language proficiency.

Direction of the Lesson Plans

During the course of a semester, the low-intermediate students learned to use basic literary terms; and they analyzed eight short stories in a format similar to a mainstream literature class. After initial vocabulary work, students discussed various aspects of the stories in small groups first, and later as a class, with constant reinforcement of literary

terms. Early quizzes were closed-book and multiple choice, standard fare, except that a frequent question dealt with the name of the author. There were no writing assignments during the first third of the semester, and the word "plagiarism" was never mentioned.

First, I always scheduled the stories grouped by author, pointedly circumventing the textbook sequence, and began the first lesson of each new author with some biographical information in the form of an essay or audiotape. This had an added benefit of humanizing the stories and increasing student interest, especially among the Middle-Eastern and Latino students. Second, I devoted one lesson to the difference between an idea or opinion and factual or textual support, taking most examples from the stories. Thereafter, during every lesson, I reinforced the author's name, and during every discussion, I asked the students to find and read their textual support for their opinions of the stories. Quite on their own, students began to back up their claims by saying, "Here on page ten, O. Henry says . . ." or "The protagonist in O. Henry's story says. . ." In this way, the students began to acquire our cultural concept of crediting an author and supporting their ideas without having rules imposed upon them. Interestingly, their analytical skills also improved as their varied responses showed their differing cultural perspectives, and students began to debate the relative applicability of textual passages chosen for support by their classmates. Essentially, the level II ESL group began to behave like a college level literature class. The next step was to transfer what they learned from class discussions to their writing.

At the low-intermediate level, student writing was limited to short, simple paragraphs. As the semester progressed and students became comfortable with using literary terms to discuss the stories; backing up their opinions with textual support; and comparing different stories by the same author, I gradually, with a lesson of preparation, began to supplement their objective quizzes with open-book, open-ended questions that were similar in format to the class discussions. The first lesson in writing with source material included a handout which walked students through the citation process step by step (see Appendix A).

Teachers should, of course, adjust the handout to suit the direction of the class, their own purposes, and the texts they are using. Teachers may also mention that exact citation styles differ from one field of study to the next, (although ESL students need not worry about such specifics until much later in their academic careers). In addition, teachers may want to begin with a relevant vocabulary, although in a literature class, students will already have a working knowledge of most of the words. The handout works as both class exercise and model for future writing assignments. After reinforcing the cultural aspects of literary citation and working through a couple of examples, students worked in groups and then alone, first with the handout in front of them for reference,

and later on their own. By the time of the first open-book quiz with an essay question that requested quoted sources, the students knew they would be evaluated in three areas: the quality of their response, the relevancy of their support, and the accuracy of their punctuation in citing their support from the text.

They were already comfortable with the first two points. I presented the third, Modern Language Association citation methods, as a grammar lesson along with the citation handout. As in each lesson thus far, I gave them citation methods in small, easily digested doses. Since there was no research paper—nor would they see one in the near future—I did not teach the “Work Cited” page. I also did not teach off-setting paragraphs or any other complicated details. I merely told them that they would learn more about crediting authors at higher levels of study. All they were required to learn was a basic, parenthetical citation with quote marks, the author’s name, and the page number of the citation.

The reason for the basic approach relates to the original goal: to show them a cultural perspective in a way that they can relate to, understand, and use effectively as they are learning to use the target language.

Conclusion

By the end of the semester, the entire class had a better grasp of paragraph construction and textual support; and they had an intuitive understanding of the need to consistently and correctly cite anything they borrowed from a printed text. Best of all, the students actually enjoyed learning this new way of writing.

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Appendix A

Reference text: *Surprises*. Ed. Burton Goodman. Chicago: Jamestown Publishers 1990.

Acknowledging Sources

When you support your topic sentence with evidence from the text, you should give credit to the author. To give credit to the original author means to acknowledge your source. The evidence that you quote is called a citation. To credit the citation to the author, you need to use quote marks around the citation followed by the author's last name and the page number in parentheses. Then put your period at the end. The following is an example from "A Secret for Two," by Quentin Reynolds.

Text: Relevant Textual Passages

Page 10 *At the stable, Pierre would boast of Joseph's skill. "I never touch the reins," said Pierre. "Joseph knows just where to stop. Why, a blind man could handle my route with Joseph pulling the wagon." It went on this way for years—always the same.*

Page 11 *Pierre had a remarkable memory. When he returned to the stable he'd always remember to tell Jacques, "The Paquins took an extra quart of milk this morning. The Lemoines bought a pint of cream."*

Page 12 *"But of course," the president laughed. "I know his record. He has been on this route for thirty years. Never has there been even one complaint. Tell him it is time he rested. His salary will go on just the same."*

Test Question: How would you characterize Pierre in "A Secret for Two?"

Answer: Pierre is very smart and reliable, and he is proud of Joseph. The story shows the Pierre is smart when the narrator says, "Pierre had a remarkable memory" (Reynolds 11). The story shows that Pierre is reliable when the president says, "He has been on this route for thirty years. Never has there been even one complaint" (Reynolds 12). Pierre shows his pride in Joseph when "Pierre would boast of Joseph's skill" (Reynolds 10). The story shows that Pierre has always been a good worker who is loyal to his friend.

The answer has a topic sentence, four sentences for support, and a conclusion. Notice that you need one extra quote mark, called an apostrophe, when you quote dialogue. Also, try other ways of constructing the sentences. You can use your own style. The main thing to remember is to credit your source; that is an important part of the culture of United States and British colleges and universities.

About the Author

William Rand currently teaches ESL grammar, reading, and conversation at Hillsborough Community College in Tampa, Florida. Previously, William taught literature to EFL students at the English Language Institute at the University of South Florida and EFL grammar and conversation at the Foundation of the Technological Institute at Cartago, Costa Rica. William has also taught mainstream grammar, composition, literature, and creative writing at Cosumnes River College in Sacramento, California.

Conference Announcements

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International Language in Education Conference (ILEC '99). December 17–19, 1999. Annual conference, “Language, Curriculum, and Assessment: Research, Practice and Management,” Shatin, Hong Kong. Contact The Secretariat, ILEC99 c/o the Hong Kong Institute of Educational Research, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, Shatin, NT. Tel. (English) +852-2609-6928, (Chinese) +852-2609-6962. Fax +852-2603-6850. E-mail: pchan@cuhk.edu.hk. [Http://www.fed.cuhk.edu.hk/~hkier/seminar/s991216/index.htm](http://www.fed.cuhk.edu.hk/~hkier/seminar/s991216/index.htm).

Modern Language Association of America (MLA). December 27–30, 1999. Annual Conference, Chicago, Illinois. Contact MLA, 10 Astor Place, New York, New York 10003-6981. Fax 212-477-9863. E-mail: convention@mla.org.

Thailand TESOL (ThaiTESOL). January 20–22, 2000. “Reflections on the Past-projections for the Future,” Khonkaen, Thailand. Contact Naraporn Chan-Ocha or Suchada Nimmannit, Thailand TESOL, c/o Chulalongkorn University, Language Institute, Phayathai Rad., Bangkok, Thailand. Tel. +66-2-2186100. Fax +66-2-218-6027. E-mail: naraporn.c@chula.ac.th or nsuchada@chula.ac.th.

TESOL Ukraine. January 25–26, 2000. 5th Annual Conference, Lviv, Ukraine. Contact Paraskeviya Yerchenko, 41 Dorshenko St., 290000 Lviv, Ukraine. Tel. +380-322-340-829. E-mail: pyerch@ext.franko.lviv.ua.

Bilkent University School of English Language. February 3–5, 2000. Conference, “Excellence in Teaching: Promoting, Implementing, and Sustaining Effective Practice,” Ankara, Turkey. Proposal deadline October 31, 1999. Contact Conference secretary. Tel. +90-312-2665169. Fax +90-312-2664320. E-mail: curronf@bilkent.edu.tr.

American Association of Applied Linguistics (AAAL). March 11–14, 2000. AAAL 2000 Annual Convention, “Crossing Boundaries,” Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. Contact AAAL, PO Box 21686, Eagan, Minnesota 55121-0686. Tel. 612-953-0805. Fax 612-431-8404. E-mail: aaaloffice@aaal.org. [Http://www.aaal.org](http://www.aaal.org).

Mining Message Menus for Meaningful Activities

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Communication experts suggest that talking on the telephone can be a very challenging task which often produces anxiety (Hopper, Doany, Johnson, & Drummond, 1991). Initiating and maintaining telephone conversations is particularly difficult when the task must be accomplished in a language other than the native tongue. Not only do telephone behaviors differ from country to country but so many of the non-verbal signals normally relied on for negotiating meaning are missing in telephonic communication (Harmantz-Levin, 1986; Hopper, 1989; Reitzel, 1986; Schegloff, 1979; Sifianou, 1989). Thus, it is no wonder that language learners often express great fears about using the telephone to communicate in their non-native language. One student from our ESL program wrote about such fears in a recent entry in her journal. Her comments exemplify the sentiments often expressed by our language learners:

I lost my checkbook today. I was so surprised and upset. I called a bank and stopped my checks. But at that time, I realized that it's so hard to talk in English on the phone. Especially, if that person is who I don't know. Sometimes they understand that I can't speak English well and talk very slow, but sometimes they don't care . . . I feel different if I talk in English on the phone. I always feel pressure that I really need to improve my English.

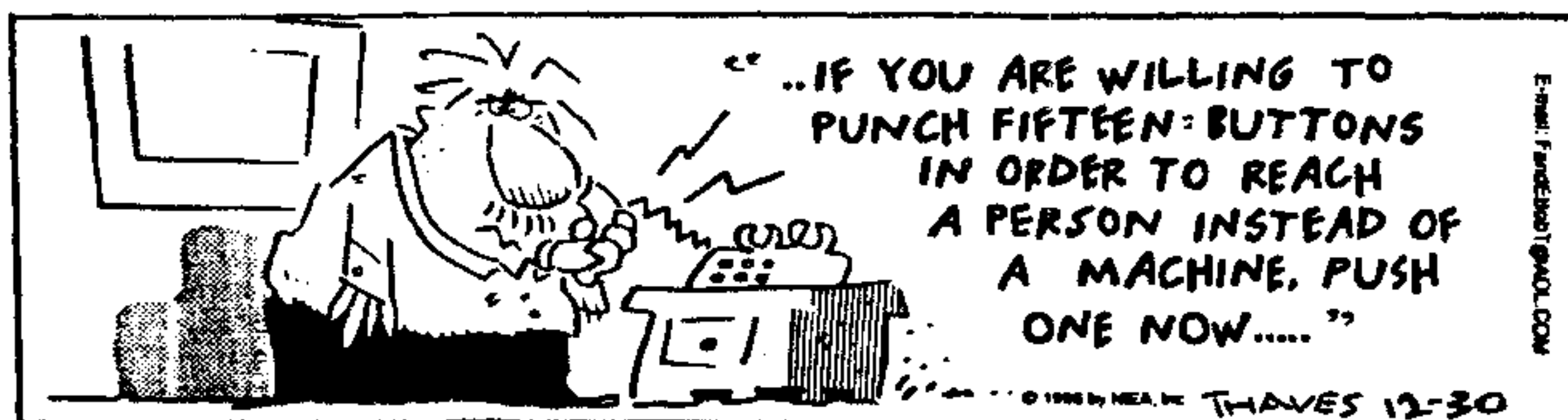
ESL and EFL materials writers are well aware of learners' fears of using the telephone in a second or foreign language and many have included telephone speaking and listening activities in their textbooks (See Tanka & Baker, 1996, for example). Generally, these exercises involve role play or actual use of the telephone to get information or leave a message. Such activities allow students to develop and practice verbal strategies for accomplishing tasks on the telephone. While many of these activities provide good preparation for the activity we describe here, they don't take into account the increasing use, even the prevalence, of message menus in telephonic communication. Government agencies, airlines, public utilities, and private businesses, for example, have all begun to employ voice menu systems as part of their routine telephone communications.

A cartoon by thaves (1996) published in our local newspaper highlighted the frustration felt by many telephone users when they encounter the "ubiquitous" voice menu systems.

Figure 1

Frank and Ernest message menu cartoon

FRANK AND ERNEST



When we showed this cartoon to our students, the giggles and nods of recognition suggested that voice menu systems would be good fodder for the classroom. Using only a tape recorder, a copy of our area yellow pages, and voice menus from local businesses, we developed a voice menu unit which has proven to be very helpful to our ESL learners. The process is extraordinarily simple and can be easily duplicated with only a tape recorder, a little time, and a bit of patience.

Designing a Voice Menu Unit

The voice menu unit is a multi-step process which begins with defining voice menus for students. The best way we have found to help students understand exactly what a voice menu entails is to record and play one for them in class. We chose our university's telephonic registration system called "TOUCH" because it is one that they will use regularly when they complete their ESL studies. After listening to the recording made with the use of a speaker phone, we transcribed the contents of the voice menu. This listening activity was very useful because it allowed the students to see on paper the logic used in constructing voice menus. After spending some time analyzing the TOUCH message menu, students were sent off on their own to conduct mock registra-

tions using TOUCH. In the next class, they shared their experiences and frustrations. We learned that students found the system to be "too fast," and that it had "so many instructions, I can't remember them all." Many students reported having to call back and start over a number of times, writing down instructions on paper as they listened. One student suggested that a "pause" function would be helpful in negotiating TOUCH!

The second activity in the unit built on skills developed in the first activity but provided a more challenging listening and critical thinking task. Recordings of message menus from the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) and the Citizens' Area Transit (CAT) were played in the classroom. We chose these agencies because of the complexity of their voice menus and because of their usefulness to our learners. While listening to the message menus, students completed exercises we had made up ahead of time. These exercises involved open-ended questions, cloze exercises, and other sorts of listening and comprehension checks. Figure 2 illustrates the sorts of questions which provided students the opportunity to "gear-up" their listening for message menus.

Figure 2

CAT Bus Message Menu

DIRECTIONS: Listen carefully to the message menu. Follow the directions for each section.

1. What agency's recording are you listening to? _____

2. Listen to the options of the main voice menu and fill in the missing information.
 For regular bus transportation on Citizen's Area Transit, press _____.
 For CAT Paratransit Services, press _____.
 If you _____, please _____.

3. You are now in *option one* of the menu choices listed above. Listen and answer the following question:
 There is a "two for one" special fare available right now. What is it?

4. The sub-menu in option one of the main menu lists four options. Write in the options by the menu numbers below.

	1
	2
	3
	4

5. You are now in *option one of the sub-menu* above. Fill in the missing information from the recorded messages found in this option.
 The CAT full-fare, one-way price for adults, 18 years and older, is _____ on residential routes.
 The CAT full-fare, one-way price for adults, 18 years and older, is _____ on the Las Vegas Strip.
 The route numbers of the \$1.50 fare are _____ and _____. The reduced fare for children and youth, 5 to 17 years old, senior citizens, _____, and riders with _____ is _____ on _____ routes _____.

Although the questions appear to be rather simple, students had to listen repeatedly to complete the exercises. But having done so, they were armed with an intuitive understanding of the logic and construction of voice mail systems.

Now students were ready to write their own voice menus, the final step in the unit. To prepare for this culminating assignment, students browsed through yellow pages in the local telephone directory looking for an agency or business that drew their attention. After selecting a business based on an advertisement, students then called that business and asked various questions, the answers to which were to be incorporated in their voice message designs. Students then set about writing up their voice message menu scripts. Some students worked in pairs while others chose to work alone. Even for those working alone, the process was highly collaborative because students tested each instruction in their menus on the teacher and on other students in the class. Instructions that were not clear were rewritten with the help of peers and the teacher.

Students were given complete freedom to use their imaginations, humor, and good sense in developing their scripts. Basing his voice menu on an advertisement for a divorce attorney, Arturo, an advanced ESL learner from Mexico, wrote a particularly clever script:

Arturo's Voice Menu

- Thank you for calling the divorce clinic where everyone gets divorced. If you speak English, press 1. If you speak Spanish, press 2. If you speak French, press 3. Any other languages, please hang up and call your mother for advice. (Beep)
- You have selected the English menu. For office hours and location, press number 1. For counseling, press 2. For legal fees and concerns, press 3. If you are thinking about reconciliation, please remain on the line and our next available agent priest will be right with you shortly. (Beep)
- Counseling. If you are divorcing your spouse, press 1. If you are divorcing your children, press 2. If you are divorcing your mother-in-law, good luck, and press 3. (Beep)
- Spouse. If this is your first divorce, press one now. If this is your second divorce, press 2. If you want to divorce more than 3, take our special, divorce 3 and just pay 2. (Beep)
- You selected first divorce. For scheduling prices of divorce, press 1. For drive-thru divorce, press 2. To divorce by phone, press 3. (Beep)
- You selected divorce by phone. Please, all of the agents are busy at this moment. Please, leave your name and number, message, and we'll give you a call as soon as we can. Thank you and thanks for being divorced.

Although Arturo's script uses humor and irony not typically found in voice menus, it displays the logic and all of the necessary elements of a typical voice menu system. His script demonstrates that he understood the purpose of menus and how they are constructed. This understanding was gleaned from the multiple, ladderred exercises included in our voice menu unit.

Once the scripts were completed and tested for logic, students recorded them using their own voices or the voices of peers and/or family members. The final presentations of the recordings were given in groups of four to five students who participated in peer critiquing. Some criteria for the peer evaluation included: Is the name of the agency clearly identified? Is the language of the script clear and easy to understand? Are the steps in selecting specific options easy to follow? This final peer evaluation process capped off the unit, allowing students to compare their scripts and learn from each others' creations.

Implications for Teaching

Our experience with the voice menu unit was very positive. Our students were focused and absorbed during the project and openly enthusiastic about the scripts they produced. They also reported being able to understand and use voice menus more confidently after completing the voice menu activities in our unit.

Although designed for use in an advanced speaking and listening class, the unit required students to use all of their linguistic skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. What is more, the tasks involved in completing their message menus called on students to engage their critical thinking skills and involved them in a purposeful, "real-world" activity. As Dale (1969) suggested, direct, purposeful experiences are the most powerful learning experiences because they require learners to engage with material not only at a cognitive but also an affective level. For our program, the voice menu unit, although somewhat time consuming, was just such an activity.

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The Internet and the EFL Classroom: An Integrative Approach for Teachers With Limited Resources

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Introduction

Bill Gates claimed that 1997 would be the year when the Internet would be recognized as an integral part of world culture. For 1998 he predicted that in ten years the Internet would be as important to our way of life as the car. For the year 1999 he remains optimistic that one day everyone on the planet will need the Internet to the point of not being able to live without it. Obviously, if that claim is to be taken seriously, we EFL teachers should be anxious to include activities involving the Internet as a part of our programs, curricula, and lesson-planning.

However, the rate at which the Internet is spreading outside of the United States, where most EFL teaching takes place, has not risen significantly enough to make that need pressing. Although statistics on the Internet itself vary significantly even for the United States, it is estimated that in the U.S. about 30% of the population is connected to the Internet. Although there are isolated countries that surpass this rate, such as Finland with 35% and Iceland with 45%, most countries have a much lower rate. There are places where the connectivity is rather uniform, such as Western Europe (Germany, 8.7%; France, 6%; Spain, 6.6%), areas where the rate is rather sporadic geographically, such as Asia (Japan, 11.1%; Taiwan 14.3%; China, 0.1%), and immense areas of sparse connectivity, such as South America and Africa, where the rate is truly negligible in most countries.* Institutional response to the Internet demand also mirrors the statistics

*All of these statistics can be found on the NUA Internet Surveys, <<http://www.nua.ie>>, which in turn are compiled from various other sources on the Internet. See: <http://www.nua.ie/surveys/how_many_online/n_america.html>, <http://www.nua.ie/surveys/how_many_online/europe.html>, <http://www.nua.ie/surveys/how_many_online/asia.html>, <http://www.nua.ie/surveys/how_many_online/s_america.html> <http://www.nua.ie/surveys/how_many_online/africa.html>.

provided above. While many educational institutions in the U.S. are able to provide on-line computer facilities for their students, this is less true than other countries.

The Internet for Information

The Internet holds three main promises for English language teaching (ELT) professionals. It provides the medium for resources for EFL teachers, which otherwise would be difficult to locate. It provides users with the possibility of communication with other users, who would not otherwise come into contact. It also provides a wealth of information, which otherwise would be more difficult and time-consuming to find. However, ELT publications have concentrated mostly on the Internet as an ELT resource and the Internet as a communication device, while they have devoted little space to the use of Internet as an information-gathering tool. Also, most published didactic material involving the Internet in the EFL classroom, whether published on the Internet itself or paper-published, assumes an ideal teaching situation.

The *English Teaching Forum* and *TESOL Matters* now have columns in their publications dedicated to Internet resources for the ELT profession, called “online resources” and “Wandering the Web” respectively. There are now ELT publications available exclusively on the Internet such as the *Internet TESL Journal* <<http://www.aitech.ac.jp/~iteslj/>>, or the *ELT Spectrum* <<http://www.oup.co.uk/elt>>. Recent articles in *The Language Teacher* and the *TESL Reporter* have also dealt with teachers’ resources on line (see Kluge 1996; 1997; McGuire, 1997; Newfields, 1996; Newfields and McGuire, 1997; Templin, 1998; Warschauer and Whittaker, 1997).*

However, few ELT publications deal with using the Internet for information collecting. I feel that this is the greatest possibility for EFL classroom applications of the Internet, because, as the term “information superhighway” unequivocally indicates, the Internet is a source of information. Information collected on the Web is more current, more visually stimulating, and available in greater amounts than information collected from traditional sources of information, such as encyclopedias, almanacs, dictionaries, and so on. Information-intensive curricula, programming, or lesson planning, such as content-based, task-based, or project-based teaching, are very promising areas for using the Internet as an information-gathering tool in the EFL classroom.

All didactic material that I have seen in recent publications assumes the ideal teaching situation in which all computers in a computer laboratory are connected to the Internet and students work either individually or in groups (see Hardisty and Windeatt, 1989).

*All except one of *The Language Teacher* articles are available on the Internet at *The Language Teacher Online* at: <<http://langue.hyper.chubu.ac.jp/jalt/pub/tlt>>

Although the availability of computer labs and the rate of Internet connection that they enjoy for many countries is less than ideal, EFL teachers are, nonetheless, anxious to accommodate current technological developments into their classrooms. They must have some means of responding to this new technology, while not excluding traditional sources of information from their programs and lessons.

The Internet as a Teaching Tool

There are five main ways to use the Internet for information-collection in the EFL classroom. First, the EFL teacher takes the entire class to the computer laboratory where there are a certain number of computer terminals for a certain number of students. This is the ideal situation that most ELT publications take for granted, but is actually more than an elusive dream for most EFL professionals. In this situation, students work individually, in pairs, or in groups on their terminals, which are connected to the Internet, which may be either controlled by the teacher, so that all students are using the same Web page and doing the same task with it, or, it could be uncontrolled, so that teachers give students a task and allow them to get the information they need with supervision (unless it is requested). This lesson or unit of work could also be semi-controlled, so that there would be either a balance between teacher-directed exercises and autonomous student work throughout the lesson, or so that part of the lesson would be controlled by the teacher and the other part of it uncontrolled.

The second method is by necessity a teacher-controlled exercise, but it could also be adapted to be semi-controlled. Since many computer labs in real teaching institutions can have no more than one telephone line connected to the Internet at one time, the Internet connection is limited to one computer. With a multimedia monitor projector the teacher operates the computer connected to the Internet while the students do the tasks using the information they see on the monitor, which is projected on the screen at the front of the computer lab. The teacher could allow the students to direct the Internet search in order to relinquish some of the control to the students, thereby making this a semi-controlled exercise. Without a monitor projector, the students would be forced to gather around the one computer that is connected, which would make the exercise more uncomfortable, but still useful.

The third way of using the Internet would be to have one computer connected to the Internet available in the classroom, just as most classrooms have a VCR and monitor, cassette player, or an OHP. That way, students could access the Internet by turns whenever the task they are doing requires information collection for which the Internet is ideally suited. This way of using the Internet is by nature uncontrolled.

The fourth method would be to have students do tasks or assignments for homework by using the Internet to collect their information. The teacher would ask them to collect information exclusively from the Internet rather than from traditional sources of information, such as encyclopedias, dictionaries, almanacs, and so on. They would be asked to use the information for input into their task or assignment and hand in the work as they would for any other homework assignment.

Integrating the Internet in the EFL Classroom

All four of the above methods, while being solid pedagogically are often unrealistic logistically, especially in countries outside of the U.S., where the majority of EFL teaching takes place. In these places, therefore, a realistic method of integrating the Internet into the EFL classroom must be found. The following five points outline a fifth method for teachers to include the technological advances of the Internet as an information-gathering tool in the absence of Internet provision by the institution they serve. The following guidelines explain how to make use of those students who have Internet at home. These five points could be put into practice with any type of content-based, task-based, or project-based lesson or unit of work for which information collection is a basic ingredient.

a). Organize groups around those students in the course who have access to the Internet. How to find out who does and who does not may be established through questionnaires which seek to gather general information about the students. It is a good idea to always have your students fill out such a questionnaire no matter what type of course they are in. That way you can find out who plays musical instruments, who can speak other foreign languages, who comes from interesting places, and as an additional point, who has access to the Internet.

b). Make the Internet information-gathering compatible with traditional information-gathering. The information-gathering tasks in each group will be delegated according to the sources each student has available, whether they be dictionaries, encyclopedias, specialized books, CD ROM's, or Internet access. Outside the classroom, those who have access will search the Internet for information, while those who do not will gather their information traditionally. There will be a group opportunity during classtime to select which information, whether from the Internet or traditional sources, will provide the best basis for the final project.

c). Teach and practice Internet vocabulary. The students who have Internet will probably know a lot of vocabulary which is useful when doing a search, because most of the search engines and web pages are in English. Vocabulary practice exercises which use these students as a resource will allow all of the students to learn the items

and hopefully spark their interest in the Internet in general. The following ten key vocabulary items could be dealt with in gap-fill, multiple choice, or matching exercises:

- address (url, e-mail)
- click
- cursor (arrow, bar, hand)
- hypertext
- links
- print
- search
- scroll (up, down)
- web site/web pages
- world wide web (www)

A comparison of these words to the students' L1 is often in order to ensure comprehension. A simple check of which words they actually came across during their search would suffice as a follow-up exercise to consolidate the vocabulary.

d). Give them some url addresses to start with. For example, I usually give my students some addresses of search engines like Yahoo! <<http://www.yahoo.com>> or Altavista at <<http://www.altavista.com>>, and then some of the sites they might want to visit. For example, for a unit about movies, The Academy Awards is on line at <<http://www.oscar.com>> or <<http://www.oscars.org>>, or Twentieth Century Fox is at <<http://www.fox.com>>. Then the students can go directly from sites to links more easily. For uninitiated web users, a search often yields strange things that take some time to view and then turnout to be something totally unrelated to what they actually wanted to get. By clicking on links instead, the search could be made without using search engines except as a last resort. Of course, the material they come across should be printed, in order to share it with the other group members.

e). Allow the students plenty of time to compare the Internet printouts and photocopies from the traditional sources during class time. During the actual writing phase of the final project, students will select the material they want to incorporate into it and discard that which they do not. The Internet material is printed on paper just like the traditional material. This selection process will give those students who do not have access to the Internet a chance to see what is available on it and give the students who have access to the Internet a chance to see if they know how to efficiently get information of a quality similar to traditional encyclopedias, dictionaries, and the like.

Things to Keep in Mind

This series of guidelines assumes a minimum of knowledge on the part of the teacher as far as conducting information searches on the Internet is concerned. If you do not have much experience with search engines and websites, perhaps it is time you tried to do something about it. About 10 hours at the computer with a little help from someone more knowledgeable than yourself will suffice to acquire the know-how needed to apply these guidelines.

Much of the information on the world wide web is very commercial and each individual Internet user must determine what is valuable and what is not. That is often a skill which requires time in excess of what information tasks propose. If you suspect that your students are going to use the Internet information search to the detriment of other activities, try to make them aware that they should focus only on the work at hand. No apparatus will save time for anyone if it takes away time from other pleasures.

Teachers in countries where access is very low may need to make use of private Internet providers, which will mean that either students will have to pay the bill or that the program organizer will be willing to pay. The convincing is not always easy to do.

The Value of Internet Information-collection as a Learning Tool

The guidelines above make the Internet valuable as a learning tool, because it becomes an information-collecting tool for the EFL classroom, while not excluding traditional information from the classroom. The websites that the students will encounter on the Internet will most likely be in English and therefore constitute authentic reading material. In project-based, task-based, or content-based work, this authentic material will constitute the input on which the output exercise will be based. Comprehensible input is the basis on which language production competence rests (Krashen, 1983).

The method encourages skills transfer, both from productive to receptive skills, and from receptive to productive skills. The guidelines and nature of the classroom activity also encourage students to compare information from various sources and filter through it by selecting the best information for the students' present purposes, which translates into critical thinking skills. The incorporation of the Internet as an information-collecting tool to be assigned for use outside of the classroom triggers positive attitudinal response, because it offers an opportunity for individual expansion on classroom material. Also, the incorporation of Internet sources of information into the classroom offers teachers a chance to show that they too are in touch with modern technological developments. As developments such as these are especially present in the lives of young students, this may boost their confidence in their EFL teachers.

Conclusion

EFL teachers want a chance to react to new technological developments and show that they are in touch with them. Since many public and private institutions which provide EFL classes respond slowly to these new developments, EFL teachers must look for ways to integrate them into their lessons somehow if they want to prepare for the future.

The Internet holds three main promises for the ELT professional. It provides resources for the EFL teacher, which otherwise would be difficult to locate. It provides the chance to communicate with other users, who otherwise would not find each other. Its also provides a wealth of information, which otherwise would be more difficult and time-consuming to find.

The guidelines proposed above take advantage of the information that the Internet provides, enabling EFL teachers who work under less than ideal conditions to incorporate the Internet into their classrooms. The guidelines outline a method for integrating traditional information with information from the Internet by taking advantage of students who have access at home. They may be applied to content-based, task-based, or project-based lessons and units of work that require information-collecting. This set of guidelines enables all EFL professionals to incorporate the Internet into their lesson-planning immediately.

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Conference Announcements

Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, Inc. (TESOL). March 14–18, 2000. Annual conference (including pre- and postconvention institutes, and publisher and software exhibition), “Navigating the New Millennium,” Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. Contact TESOL, 700 South Washington Street, Suite 200, Alexandria, Virginia 22314. Tel. 703-836-0744. Fax 703-836-7864. E-mail: conv@tesol.edu. [Http://www.tesol.edu/](http://www.tesol.edu/).

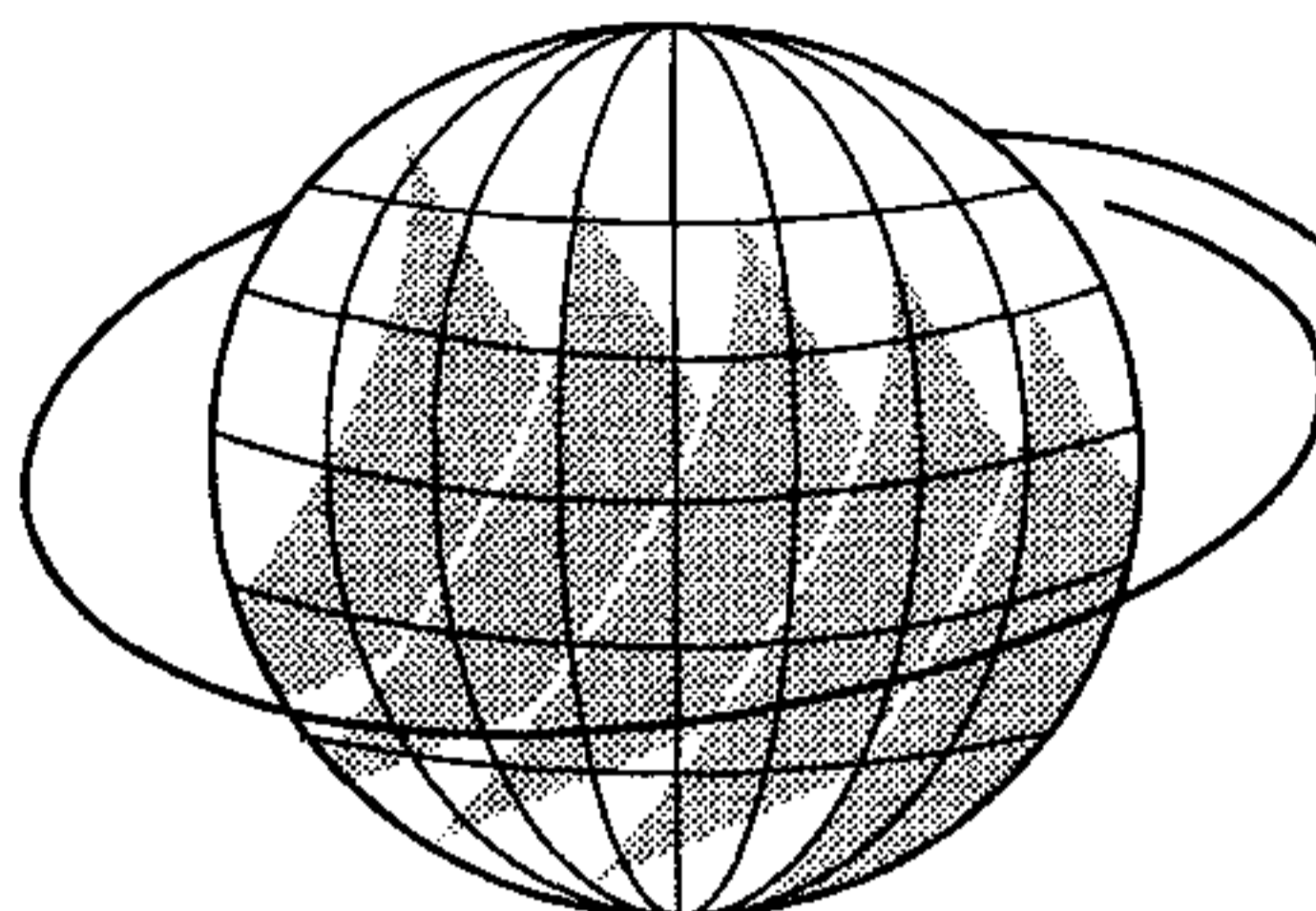
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TESOL. April 8–9, 2000. Conference, “The Changing Face of English Language Teaching,” Athens, Greece. Proposal Deadline January 14, 2000. Contact Eleni Giannopoulou, 40–42 Mikras Assias str., 115 27 Athens, Greece. Tel. +01-7488-459. Fax +01-7488-411.

TESOL Arabia. April 12–14, 2000. Conference, “Bridging the Gap between Teacher and Learner,” Al Ain, United Arab Emirates. Contact Les Kirkham, HCT, Al Ain Women’s College, PO Box 17258, Al Ain, United Arab Emirates. Fax +971-3-622920. E-mail: leslie.kirkham@hct.ac.ae. [Http://tesolarabia.uaeu.ac.ae/tesol/mission.html](http://tesolarabia.uaeu.ac.ae/tesol/mission.html).

Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization Regional Language Centre (SEAMEO). April 17–19, 2000. 35th RELC International Seminar, “Language Curriculum & Instruction in Multicultural Societies,” Singapore. Proposal Deadline November 13, 1999. Contact Seminar Secretariat, SEAMEO Regional Language Centre, 30 Orange Grove Road, Singapore 258352. REPUBLIC OF SINGAPORE. Tel. +65-737-9044. Fax +65-734-2753. E-mail: admn@relc.org.sg. [Http://www.relc.org.sg](http://www.relc.org.sg).

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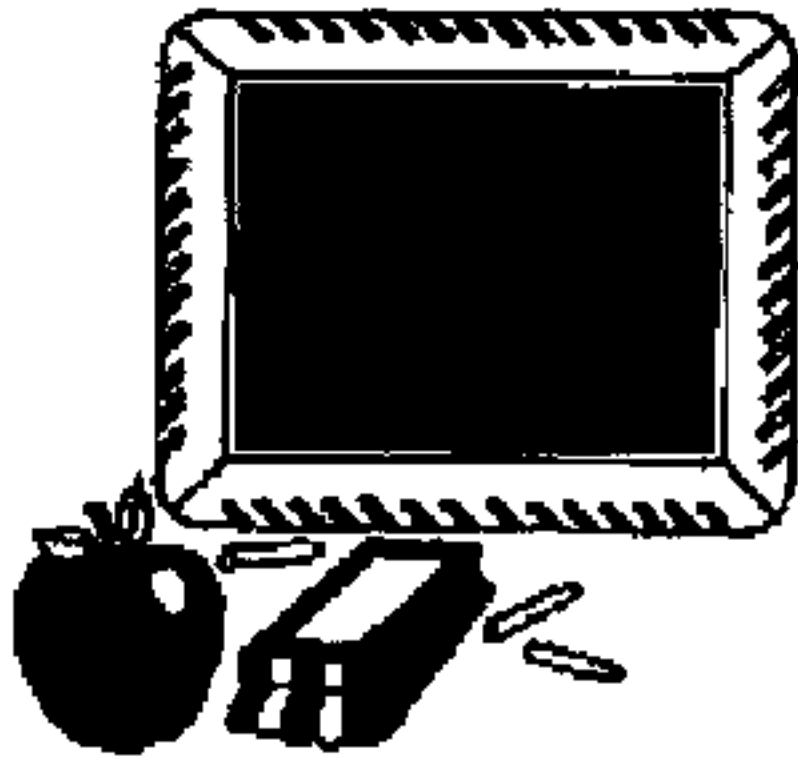
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Tips for Teachers

Music Culture Assimilators

Stella and Tatsuroh Yamazaki, Hosei University, Tokyo

Year after year our Japanese university conversation students ask for two things: popular music and culture (which often means, “What’s happening in America today?”). The problems of working these things into prepared lessons and deriving something educational from them can deter many teachers from responding to such requests. However, by adapting an established technique referred to as “culture assimilators” we have come up with an activity which satisfies our desire to teach substance as well as our students’ desire to learn about music and culture.

In the traditional culture assimilator, a cross-cultural interaction (for example, between an American and a representative of the target culture) is described in which the American is puzzled or upset. Students read and then select one of four plausible explanations for the target culture behavior. After selecting an option, students turn to a page explaining why one choice is clearly a better explanation than the others. Students enjoy testing their understanding of the foreign culture, and their interest is piqued through the quiz.

In our adaptation, *music* culture assimilators, we begin by presenting a contemporary popular song. We briefly introduce the song on the board, mentioning title, recording artist, and topic or inherent message of the song. An example follows:

“Everybody Hurts”

R. E. M. won a 1994 Grammy Award for this song.

They say that all of us have problems and that

we should feel sorry for others in trouble.

Students are provided with a copy of the song lyrics and the Japanese translation to save the need for lengthy explanations. In Japan we have collected many lyrics plus translations from issues of the *Japan Student Times* and *Asahi Weekly*. Western CD’s sold in Japan also include lyrics and translations.

We next play the song, usually on video. This allows students to observe the singer's face and body language and for students less interested in language or a particular song to receive information through the visual presentation.

After viewing the video, students are asked to answer a question related to the topic or theme of the song. An example follows for "Everybody Hurts."

When a Westerner tells you his bad news ("My mother died." "My child is sick." "I lost my job," etc.), you should: (Circle the best answer.)

- a. laugh loudly.*
- b. say nothing*
- c. say you are sorry if you feel truly sorry for him.*
- d. always say you are sorry even if you don't feel sorry.*

The best choice and an explanation follow on the lower half of the paper which has been folded up and taped or stapled shut. Once the majority of students have responded to the question, we call on a student for the answer. From experience, we've found it best to call on a student with the correct answer. If no one in class has the correct answer, we simply move to the next step, which is to open the bottom half of the paper and discover the correct answer. We read the explanation as students follow along. A sample for "Everybody Hurts" is given below.

The best answer is d) always say you are sorry.

When Westerners tell you their sad news, they expect you to say, "I'm sorry," or "I'm sorry to hear that." This is the way other Westerners always answer. Westerners believe that trouble happens to everyone and that it is usually not our fault. We should feel sorry for other people because we all have the same problems. Also, most Westerners come from Christian families. Christians believe that people are all brothers before God and should all care about each other. Thus, it has become a fixed custom to say you are sorry even if you don't particularly like the other person or are not truly sorry.

If you hear another person's bad news and say nothing, you are quite impolite. Westerners think you only care about yourself. If you laugh when someone tells you bad news, you are a very rude person. It looks like you are enjoying the pain or sadness of another person. Many Easterners will get angry if you laugh in this situation. When speaking with Westerners, the Japanese would do well to show sincere sympathy

when confronted with a sad or troubling story. Americans will, consciously or unconsciously, expect that sort of reaction. Smiling or laughing will only add to their distress. (Rozman & Kato, 1998).

We have found it helpful to include documentation, particularly for statistics or conclusions that students may challenge. Such documentation gives me the opportunity to mention the titles of good textbooks on culture. We have also from time to time used such music culture assimilators as attention-getters in otherwise dry writing classes on documentation. When we find relevant news articles on our topics, we include copies at the ends of the assimilators for students' further reading outside of class.

We usually present these assimilators at the beginning of class. This rewards punctual students and provides enough time for tardy students to arrive before we begin the body of the lesson. Whenever possible, we choose a song reflecting the theme of the day's lesson. We used "Everybody Hurts" in a class on expressing sympathy in conversations.

Some teachers may contend that most popular music is transitory and lacks substance, but music is an expression of the deepest values of a culture. Good songs expressing substantive values endure, and in any given year, a number of these songs are produced. While we do not follow popular music as avidly as we did in our teens, we are able to collect good songs, which usually appear in the top ten, by taping the music specials of popular singers and the Grammy and Academy Award ceremonies, which highlight the best of popular music for the year. MTV's top twenty programs are also a good source.

Other songs which we have found productive for introducing western culture and American social trends are listed in the Appendix along with their class themes and quiz and questions. We are always on the lookout for new songs.

Statistical data in these assimilators must be updated periodically. Other, than that, once we have put together such an activity, we are able to use it for years with minimal preparation but very gratifying results. Music soothes the savage beast. There is something calming about starting a class with music and with an activity that students have specifically requested. On their midterm and end-of-term evaluations, students say these music segments were their favorite part of class, and they suggest that we use more of them. Even weakly motivated students have confessed to becoming somewhat interested in English through the music. Overall, we have found music culture assimilators to be an informative and consistently well-received class activity.

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- Seelye, H. N. (1974). *Teaching Culture: Strategies for Foreign Language Educators*. Skokie, IL.: National Textbook Company.

About the Authors

Stella Yamazaki has taught English as a foreign language in Japan for the past ten years and is now a lecturer at Hosei University in Tokyo. Prior to that she taught ESL for 12 years in America. Her Research interests include teaching culture and using affect in the English classroom.

Tatsuroh Yamazaki has taught English in Japan for the past 11 years and is now a professor of the Faculty of Economics at Hosei University. His research interests include sociolinguistic analysis of loan words and Japanese English.

Appendix A

Song	Artist	Theme	Quiz Question
1. "I believe I Can Fly"	R. Kelly	Confidence building (first class)	In the late 1990's the U.S. government is trying a new way to help blacks and minorities: It is helping them by giving them more: (Circle the best answer). a) jobs b) education c) self-confidence d) money
2. "Anytime You Need a Friend"	Mariah Carey	Friendship	During their lifetime Americans will keep: a) small group of friends and those friends won't change. b) small groups of friends from elementary school, secondary school, university and their company. c) very few, long friendships but many short ones of one or two years.

Appendix A continued

Song	Artist	Theme	Quiz Question
3. "He Thinks He'll Keep Her"	Mary Chapin Carpenter	Family	Today Americans have a) the highest divorce rate in the world. b) the highest divorce rate in US history. c) about 4.3 divorces for every 1,000 people.
4. "Luka"	Suzanne Vega	The body	In America there are many children like Luka. They are badly abused and often even killed. Who abuses these children most often? a) their real mother or father. b) a foster parent or boyfriend of their mother. c) a total stranger.
5. "Drive My Car" (The video promotes use of a designated driver)	Beatles/ Recording Artists Against Drunk Drivers	Driving	Different states in America have different laws about driving, but what is the youngest age that a person can legally drive in America a) 12 b) 14 c) 16 d) 18
6. "I swear"	George Michael Montgomery	(Function) making promises	The number of unmarried teenage mothers is very high in America. Which statement is true today? a) More teenage girls get pregnant in America today than ever before. b) America, Canada and Australia have about the same percent of teenage mothers. c) In America over 2/3 of new teenage-mothers are not married.

Appendix A continued

Song	Artist	Theme	Quiz Question
7. "Sealed with a Kiss"	Jason Donovan	Summer vacation plans	<p>Why are summer vacations from school an especially sad time for sweethearts in America?</p> <p>a) American summer vacations from school are long.</p> <p>b) American summer vacations are a time when most students travel for pleasure to far-off places.</p>
8. "Champagne Super Nova"	Oasis	Drugs and teen problems	<p>American newspapers reported that from 1998 to 1999 teenagers used ____ marijuana as compared with 1977.</p> <p>a) much more b) much less</p> <p>c) about the same amount of</p>
9. "Star Spangled Banner" (The video was filmed at the Super Bowl during the Gulf War.)	Whitney Houston	Sports	<p>In the videotape you see the crowd cheering and shouting with excitement. Why do you think they are doing this?</p> <p>a) Americans always act this way. They are very patriotic.</p> <p>b) Americans don't usually act this way, but they often do during time of war.</p> <p>c) Americans love the singer Whitney Houston. That is the only reason they are cheering.</p>
10. "Runaway Train" (The video promotes awareness	Soul Asylum	Crime	<p>This video estimates that 1 million children have gone missing in America. What is the biggest reason for this?</p> <p>a) They are stolen by one of their divorced parents.</p>

Appendix A continued

Song	Artist	Theme	Quiz Question
			<p>b) They run away to escape abuse.</p> <p>c) They are stolen and often killed by strangers.</p>
11. "Another Day in Paradise" (The video promotes awareness of the problem of homelessness.)	Phil Collins	Your home or apartment	<p>In the song a man meets a homeless woman but won't help her. In fact, he pretends that he doesn't see her. Why do you think he acts this way?</p> <p>a) Americans feel no need to help strangers.</p> <p>b) Americans feel they should help the homeless, but there are too many poor people to help, so all they can do is ignore them.</p> <p>c) In America it is shameful to help poor and homeless people because they are dirty and lazy.</p>
12. "Streets of Philadelphia"	Bruce Springsteen	Health	<p>In America AIDS has increased greatly in the last ten years among:</p> <p>a) ordinary men and women.</p> <p>b) homosexuals</p> <p>c) drug users</p> <p>d) all groups</p>
13. "The War Song" (the video emphasizes the vulnerability of children during war.)	Boy George	War	<p>Who is hurt most by war?</p> <p>a) soldiers</p> <p>b) average men and woman</p> <p>c) children</p>

Appendix A continued

Song	Artist	Theme	Quiz Question
14. "Papa Don't Preach"	Madonna	(Function) giving advice	The number of teenage pregnancies in America _____ from 1991 to 1997. a) went up a little b) went down a lot c) remained the same
15. "Will You Marry me"	Paula Abdul	Dating or marriage	In America when a man and woman are ready for marriage: a) the man usually asks the woman to marry him. b) the woman usually asks the man to marry her. c) about half the time the man asks and half the time the woman asks. (A surprising number of students chose the wrong answer).

Non-Native Educators in English Language Teaching

Review by Beniko Mason

International Buddhist University, Habikino-shi, Japan

NON-NATIVE EDUCATORS IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING. George Braine (Editor). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 1999. pp. 208. \$24.50.

Generally speaking, native speaker (NS) teachers are thought to be better qualified and more effective for language teaching than non-native speaker (NNS) teachers. Because of this myth, NNS professionals experience unjust treatment. This condition must be recognized and corrected not only for better working conditions for NNS teachers, but also for better education for learners.

This book reminds us that NNS professionals are not equally welcomed in classrooms by students, at work by colleagues, in professional organizations by NS colleagues, and in the job market by employers, due to their language deficiencies, the color of their skin, and/or their accent, even though some are even from countries where English is commonly spoken in the community and schools.

The book contains thirteen articles by authors from various countries, and is divided into three parts. In Part One, authors describe their ideas about NS-NNS dichotomy. One author challenges the idea that there is only one right English spoken by special people (p. 7). In Part Two, authors discuss how NNS professionals are excluded in the profession. NNS students with a graduate degree have little chance of obtaining a position. NS teachers have less respect for NNS teachers; therefore, students in the classroom follow the examples that NS teachers show. Students regard NNS teachers less qualified (p. 102). The Japan Association of Language Teaching (JALT) still uses English as the working language in a large part of JALT activities (p. 107), and excludes the Japanese members (45% of the total membership) from the decision-making procedures by using Robert's Rules of Order as the standard parliamentary procedure of the organization (p. 110).

The authors believe that a solution is to educate the graduate students. In Part Three, they stress the importance of incorporating curricula related to non-native professionals in the TESOL field (p. 146). Research findings show that NNS graduate students believe that educating and training highly competent non-native speaker teachers

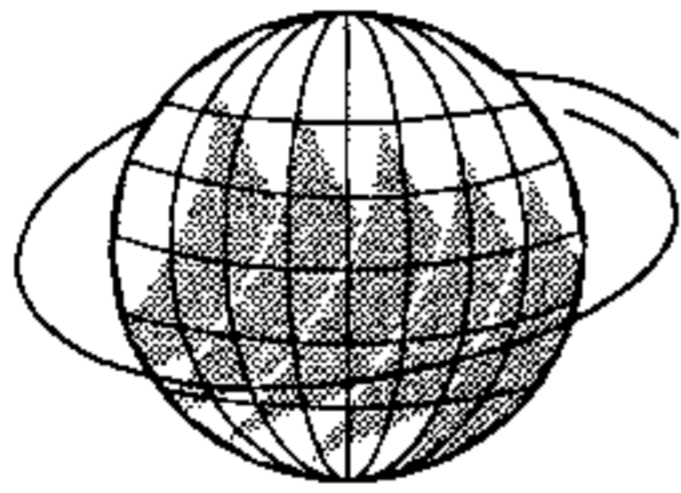
in the following areas are necessary: language proficiency, classroom language resources, and cultural understanding.

I value the opinions and feelings of these authors. It is an achievement that the editor took the leadership to organize a TESOL caucus for non-native educators and put this book together. *Non-Native Educators in English Language Teaching* should be read by everyone in the TESOL profession for further productive discussions and movement in improving the TESOL teaching and learning environment.

About the Reviewer

Beniko Mason (International Buddhist University in Habikino-shi, Japan), is interested in the development and evaluation of efficient and effective language curricula.

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The ESL Classroom: Teaching, Critical Practice, and Community Development

Review by Stephanie Vandrick

University of San Francisco

THE ESL CLASSROOM: TEACHING, CRITICAL PRACTICE, AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT. Morgan, Brian D. Toronto and Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1998. 167 pages. Cloth (ISBN 0-8020-4334-8) \$40; Paper (ISBN 0-8020-8254-1) \$14.95.

Many ESL teachers have expressed interest in learning more about critical pedagogy and how it might apply to the ESL classroom. However, they sometimes complain that most books and articles about critical pedagogy are very theoretical, often full of jargon, and rarely speak in concrete terms of what critical pedagogy might look like in a real classroom. Morgan's new book, *The ESL Classroom*, addresses these concerns in a thoughtful, useful way, addressing theory but mainly focusing on practice. Thus this book makes an ideal introduction to critical pedagogy (or, as Morgan terms it, "critical practice") for the classroom teacher.

The first chapter provides a succinct, useful introduction to "critical practice." Some of the principles the author discusses are the importance of critical thinking, the idea that language is not ideologically neutral, the fact that students' language needs are interdependent with their social needs, the important role of students' experiences and expectations in developing the syllabus, the dialogic nature of teaching, and the importance of the idea of "community" in critical language learning.

In the following five chapters, which form the bulk of the book, Morgan describes in very concrete terms, what happens in his own classrooms in a community centre in Canada, where he teaches adult immigrants. Each chapter begins with a few paragraphs of discussion of relevant principles, then quickly turns to actual, detailed lesson plans, annotated with Morgan's explanations of why he chose each activity or element of the lesson, and how the lesson was received by the students. One chapter, for example, discusses reasons for teaching political issues in the classroom, and describes a unit the author taught on the Gulf War.

The seventh and final chapter addresses teachers directly, asking them to become aware of the political and social forces which affect their students' lives. The author also asks teachers to consider critically their own professional situations, including forces

which privilege theorists and scholars and marginalize classroom practitioners within the profession. Morgan feels strongly that classroom practitioners should learn about current theories, yet must question and test those theories, choose which aspects are useful and beneficial, and trust their own knowledge of their students and their needs.

The ESL Classroom would be an excellent supplementary text in a TESL methodology class. It is equally of interest to ESL practitioners who are willing to question their own teaching practices. This is a professional book of real weight and merit which is also accessible, thought-provoking, and compelling.

About the Reviewer

Stephanie Vandrick is Associate Professor in the ESL Department at the University of San Francisco. Her research interests focus on critical and feminist pedagogies.

Notes to Contributors

The *TESL Reporter* is a semiannual publication of the Language, Literature, and Communications Division of Brigham Young University–Hawaii, and is dedicated to the dissemination of ideas and issues of interest to teachers of English to speakers of other languages worldwide.

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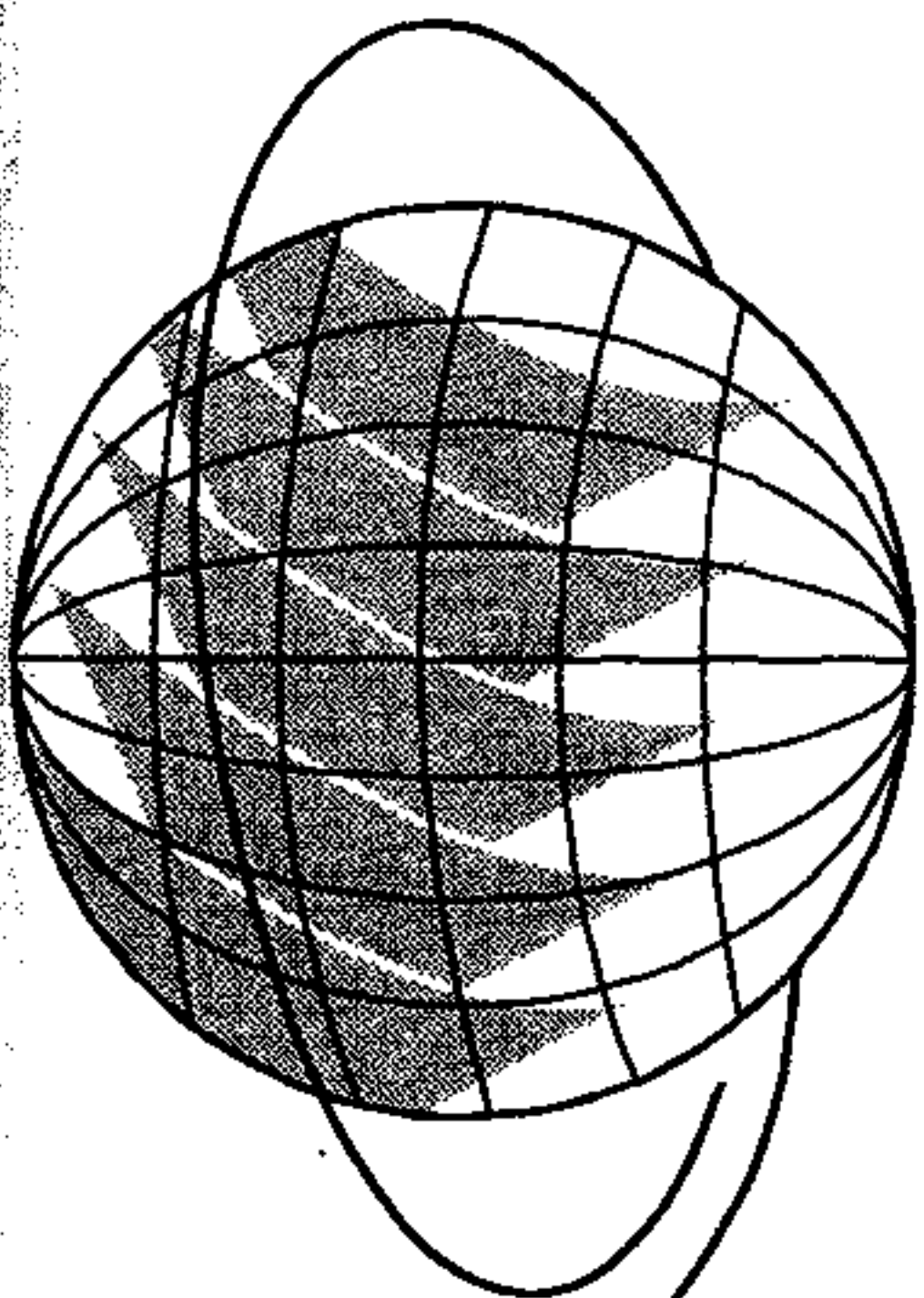
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