TESL REPORTER

Vol. 29(1) April 1996

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ISSN 0886-0661

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Believing in One's Approach to Teaching Writing

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An Invitation to Believe

This paper is written for other S/FL writing teachers who, like myself, want to read about more than a newer, more effective pedagogy at a time when the "battle lines" have been clearly drawn. It concerns belief and the need for each of us to enter into a personally fulfilling discourse of thinking that not only engages writing students in life-enhancing and writing-enriching activities, but which also invites us to reflect continually upon what it is we do and why we do it. In so many ways, it is faith in ourselves that I write about. What I'm attempting to address here is the need to develop the same self-esteem in ourselves that the literature invites us to develop in students. In this respect, I write this paper for all writing teachers, regardless of the pedagogical approach you will return to tomorrow.

I begin with Lucy M. Calkins (1994). She makes a profoundly instructive statement at the end of her teacher education text *The Art of Teaching Writing*. What she says is both innocent and controversial at the same time: "We need to be able to teach according to our beliefs," she urges. Calkins in an L1 writing educator whose words have tremendous value and meaning for those of us involved in the teaching of S/FL writing. After all, each of us brings to our work a multiplicity of ideas, values, and perception that shape our involvement with learners. It is our beliefs about such matters that lead us to engage learners in any number of activities, e.g., process writing, and which ultimately emerge in our responding behaviors. What we fundamentally believe about the teaching of S/FL writing is of vital interest to all of us.

The problem is: We don't all necessarily believe the same ideas about writing pedagogy and learning. Moreover, it can frequently be the case that we are expected to teach with someone else's curriculum or course outline, or to adhere to someone else's teaching philosophy, and we find ourselves holding back our beliefs in order to simply obtain and keep a teaching position. From the point of view of learners who generally have to adjust every time they find themselves with a new teacher (not inherently a bad or problematic reality), these may be issues worth addressing in a public format. What *do* S/FL writing teachers believe about pedagogy and learning? Germane to this paper, how

do S/FL writing teachers come to hold the beliefs they have? What do I believe and how did I come to believe it?

While I do not propose that some universally acceptable idea of how to teach S/FL writing suddenly be prescribed for all of us (mostly because I don't think that is possible), I do think it *is* valuable to consider what we believe about our work and, significantly, how we come to whatever beliefs we have. Since our beliefs are influenced by the discourse of others, perhaps by considering what others believe—and how they got there—we may look again at our own ideas and see how they might be informed by the various processes others engage in their thinking and, ultimately, in their writing pedagogies.

Some might say, "Of course, whenever I can, I teach according to my beliefs. That's precisely why I do what I do every day. Thank you very much". Why write about such a seemingly ambiguous and often idiosyncratic issue, then? First of all, simply to believe something and to act upon that belief could result in a writing pedagogy that "sounds right" to a particular teacher, but which could narrowly exclude consideration of what other classroom teachers think or what researchers have found. As someone involved with the teacher education of undergraduate students preparing to S/FL teachers, I often find in introductory level classes that a significant number of these students begin such studies with preconceived ideas about how to proceed pedagogically, largely based upon their own language (and other) learning experiences. It sounds logical, without doubt: I do what/as I've been taught to do.

What I'd like to address in this paper is direct: what I believe about pedagogy in general (which influences the way I teach writing). I'd also like to point out how and where my beliefs have been shaped: from previous teachers, by researchers, through dialogues with colleagues, and by listening to students. One interesting factor in all of this is that these four primary sources are often in conflict with one another, and I am left standing with the need to decide, to choose, to believe something or another that makes a worthwhile difference in my work. Like the students I teach, I must take risks and determine what I actually believe about everything I hear. What do I do when I hear conflicting ideas? Some teachers may prefer to avoid the discomfort of making choices that alienate others and simply do "what's expected". For me, that has never been sufficient. I believe it has been critical for me to think about the pedagogy/learning talk of others, to sort out the input, to reflect on what I am thinking, and to know what I believe. I think this is equally important for others S/FL teachers. All of us can be informed by, first of all, thinking about our believes and, then, by conversing with our colleagues about these issues. The four groups of people who have mostly influenced what I believe are described in each of the next sections.

Listening to "Gurus"

Mark Clarke (1984) has written informatively on the topic of "teaching as I've been taught". In fact, he has made exactly that point, we need to teach as our "gurus" taught us. For him our gurus are those teachers we have personally emulated over time and from whom we think we learned not only content, but pedagogy. For me, that list includes a high school French teacher and a graduate professor of TESL. While many S/FL writing teachers know the public work of the latter person, few, if any, are familiar with the first teacher. Both, in quite different ways, are among those I think of as my teaching gurus. What they taught me about teaching came directly through their own pedagogies.

I often wonder how Phil McGoohan, a religious brother teaching in a Catholic high school in Boston in the late 1960's, could have had such an impact on my professional work today. Much unlike me, he was a strict classroom language teacher (pretty common in a Catholic high school at that time) who arranged 24 students in 5 rows, calling on each of us at random for verbal responses, and assigning an unending variety of grammar drills for homework. He was organized, had a daily plan, and seldom diverged from his prearranged agenda. As I sit here and write this paper, I realize that I do not do any of these.

Yet, somehow, part of what I believe as a teacher derives from my interactions as a student with Phil. Given the directions of S/FL pedagogy research since I've been teaching—and how I have been influenced by it (the topic of the next section of this paper), I must admit that my approach to teaching lies far what what Phil did in my French II class. But something is there: his sincere and personable approach to his teaching, believing in what he was doing, and maintaining a noticeable dedication to what, for him, was obviously a vocation with a true purpose. And he was serious about it all. I know it has been these affective issues that have become an integral part of what I believe about language teaching today. I believe it *is* important to be sincere, approachable, and dedicated. The bottom line for me is that teaching *is* a serious business.

During the 20 years after I successfully passed French II in high-school I attended college, worked at a number of jobs with not-for-profit and governmental agencies, and tried my hand at high school French teaching myself. Eventually I entered an M.A. program in ESL/Bilingual Education Studies at UMASS/Boston, where what I believe about teaching was further shaped by Vivian Zamel whose work in S/FL writing pedagogy has creatively, significantly influenced the direction of teaching writing. By that time (1991), of course, approaches to the teaching of S/FL writing had changed immensely, and it was largely due to the research and publications of Vivian Zamel that many changes had come about. Within the contexts of a few graduate classes I took with her, I found myself

immediately and consistently inspired—to be innovative, to listen to students, to take risks. I still believe these characteristics are important for me as a teacher.

Interestingly, when I think about it, Vivian's classes were not at all like the French II class I experienced in high school. There were no rows of painstakingly placed desks and no teacher who managed her teaching on the basis of detailed notes and plans. Instead, classes were invitations to know myself—as a writer, as a graduate student, as an S/FL teacher. It is clear to me that much of what Vivian did naturally stuck with me and changed my thinking about teaching forever. Beyond the small group work, frequent peer feedback on my writing, the keeping of journals, and so on, were the myriad of personal connections she always made with each of us who were her students. Her energy and sense of professional devotion to what I might call a quality pedagogy left an unquestionable mark on what I now believe about language pedagogy. Her feisty spirit of dialogue engaged me (and others) in a conversation about language education that ran throughout the two-year period of my graduate studies. It has continued to this day as I contemplate my status as a doctoral candidate in second language acquisition at the University of Hawaii.

Believing, as I know Vivian must, that a dynamic personal engagement of language issues with students is at the core of an effective and meaningful pedagogy, I immediately understand where this idea was first fostered in my thinking. As one of my gurus, Vivian unassumingly challenged me to be the very best ESL teacher I could find within myself. I believe I can be innovative listening to students, which involves a great deal of risk-taking. I believe that dynamism in an S/FL writing class can go far in stimulating students to enter the process of writing and to emerge from it with, at least, the beginnings of a writer's identity.

Perhaps that's the point about these two teachers: Although they were engaged in two very different approaches to language teaching, they were not necessarily incompatible. Much more than "what" they did in the classroom, "how" they did it taught me immeasurable lessons about teaching. Their ways of interacting with me as a student have stayed with me and have influenced my decision-making about what I will do on "Monday morning". I know they led me (I'm sure without knowing it) to want to be a teacher with a vision about the linguistic abilities and possibilities of the students I teach. Part of what I believe is that this is even imaginable.

Considering the Work of Researchers

Recently Lad Tobin (1993) wrote a book about the teaching of writing in which he asserts the importance of interpersonal relationships on the writing processes and habits of learners. As I read the text, of course I thought about my two (as well as other) gurus. I began to think about Clarke's (1984) meaning of "guru" more personally, wondering how

relationships which took place in Phil and Vivian's classrooms may have impacted both my writing and my approach to teaching S/FL writing on the college level. In some sense, the issue *is* the nature of these interpersonal relationships that emerged as the key factor which informed my own approach to pedagogy. But I know that what I believe has been shaped by other, less personal relationships as well. For instance, there have been the researchers with whose published work I had had multiple relationships during the time I have been teaching.

Specifically, having nearly completed (as of this writing) two graduate degrees in S/FL teaching, I have considered a seemingly limitless amount of research that has spoken to me from a number of academic disciplines: applied linguistics, linguistics, education, anthropology, etc. One effect of all this has been an approach to pedagogy that is based upon thinking about more technical aspects of classroom teaching (e.g., unconscious acquisition vs. noticing, the effects of small group work, or the possibility of a critical period in S/FL learning) than my gurus made apparent. Of course, I have reflected also on other research that has focused on the nature of literacy, the ways in which S/FL teachers and learners may interact in classroom settings, and how writing teachers respond to student writing. In other words, upon the foundation of enviable role models within my own learning experiences I have also built a solid understanding of how (on the other side of the desk) language learning actually might occur, and how S/FL teachers might invite and facilitate that process. I haven't been operating in a vacuum that suggests that a "good" pedagogy means simply following the more attractive approach of the teaching styles that resonated with me the most. There has had to be a significant academic, research-based reason for what I believe, as well.

An example might serve as a case in point here. When I think about why, in a writing class, I tend not to focus on grammatical issues except within the context of an individual student's writing, I know that it is much more than a matter of realizing that Phil did (focus on grammar) at a time when most language teachers did and Vivian didn't—and that I preferred Vivian's approach. What I believe on this issue has been largely informed by worthwhile S/FL research (e.g., Zamel, 1985: responding to student writing; Auerbach, 1993: how to engage learners in a participatory curriculum; Brown, 1994: communicative teaching as real and authentic; Freeman and Freeman, 1994: whole language for SL Learners; Long and Porter, 1985: small group effectiveness for SL learners; and, Gee, 1991: analyzing the meaning of literacy), which converged with models of teaching I found in both of these outstanding, memorable instructors. There was more to it than finding a guru and following their lead. In this sense, I have experienced a sort of flowing back and forth between effective teachers and reasonable research. I continue to believe that a communicative, whole language approach that invites S/FL students to engage each other in small groups supports students' needs and desire to improve their S/FL fluency.

The Insights of Colleagues

Yet what I believe about language teaching has also been driven by colleagues and the impact of their thinking. For example, for the past 2 years I have been an ESL teacher at the University of Hawaii English Language Institute (ELI), and English for Academic Purposes (EAP) program for a host of international and immigrant students. The Director of the ELI is Kate Wolfe-Quintero, a holder of three degrees in linguistics who has an uncanny understanding of effective language pedagogy, especially for the teaching of writing. Her collaborative approach to pedagogy, as well as program administration, has served as an indelible reminder of how what I learned from my gurus, and what I also learned from my study, may naturally emerge in a personal and meaningful way through conversation. No one aspect (i.e., gurus, research, colleagues) of this development can be omitted from my thinking as I consider what I will do in a particular writing course or, even, on a specific day. Kate, who undeniably knows both linguistics and effective pedagogy inside and out, consistently teaches me through conversations which, while intellectually stimulating, engage us in a healthy bantering back and forth that, ultimately, leads me to consider what I believe about S/FL pedagogy and why I believe it. Part of what I believe about effective teaching is that conversations with colleagues like Kate are not only helpful, but essential, to my teaching.

Another colleague is Tom Hilgers, the Director of the University of Hawaii Manoa Writing Program (MWP) which directs the university's writing-across-the-curriculum program for all undergraduates. During the Spring semester 1995 Tom asked me to conduct a qualitative needs analysis of bilingual students who were then enrolled in writing-intensive (WI) courses in a variety of academic disciplines. Again, it is the regular conversation with Tom (e.g., comparing his research with native-speaking students to my own with bilingual learners) that has helped me to understand more directly the nature of what I believe about language teaching. For example, based upon extensive conversations with Tom, I know that I believe in the value of "modeling" for academic writing assignments that confronts all WI instructors who teach both native- and non-native speakers of English on the college level. All of this is run through my filter of "guru + research". As with writing, it is a process of coming to know what I think and what I believe. And I believe that it is important to include collegial conversations in my professional life as I think about S/FL pedagogy and learning.

What Students Think

Last of all (but not really), there are also the students I teach. So much of what I believe about teaching has been informed by their input through: classroom conversation, one-to-one conferences, student self-assessments, small group interaction in class, etc. No

matter that I can easily point to gurus, refer to the most up-to-date research, or dialogue with colleagues. What learners have shared with me places all of these other factors in a dynamic and purposeful context. When listening to students, I usually find that that is the context in which these other factors make the most sense—good, bad, or otherwise. I have appreciated the ways in which my interactions with learners have given me contextualized questions to consider. You know, questions like "Al, why are we doing this?" or "Do you really *think*, Al, that teaching me grammar will not improve my English?" Questions with life in them—at least the academic life of the students I teach.

I have been asked questions, for example, which remind me that, even though much of what I believe about teaching has been shaped by the examples of gurus like Phil and Vivian, that other questions are "out there", e.g., How does what I believe about pedagogy and learning impact the academic and personal lives of students I teach? It has never seemed to be the result of my simply imitating what my gurus taught me. Other pertinent questions relate to my reliance upon research finding: Even though researchers like Freeman and Freeman (1992) have suggested the value of teaching S/FL in holistic settings, what do learners think about that? Are the researchers heading in a helpful direction? Again, it has never seemed to me a matter of direct implementation of someone else's research findings within my own classes—but there *is* a connection. And, then, what about my colleagues, like Kate and Tom? Are they always offering ideas and support that 'work" in my own classes? Students easily help me to figure out where I might discover alternative answers to that question. Finally, what about learners themselves? Do they always suggest ideas and offer input to my teaching approach that reinforce or at least offer a balance to what I have found in other sources? Generally, yes, but their input doesn't always address issues which I may have been thinking about in a more studied, academic fashion. Ironically, though, students' input has been the most valuable to me.

What Do I Believe?

To a certain extent, what I believe about S/FL pedagogy is the thread that runs through this paper: effective teaching begins with teachers who think about what they believe and who act upon those beliefs. I suppose that my point about all of this is that I think we, as S/FL teachers should consider what beliefs and values underlie the work that we do each time we face a new class, especially when it seems apparent that so many of us believe so many different ideas about pedagogy and learning. Yet believing in what we do is lacking if we do not also consider where our beliefs come from, with the willingness to shape our thoughts differently if we find that we are operating in a sort of exclusive vacuum. It is significant for me that my ideas have been informed by at least 4 groups of individuals gurus, researchers, colleagues, and students—and I continue to let a pedagogy emerge that is sensible flexible, and meaningful. This is why I agree with Lucy Calkings (1994) when

she emphasizes the significance of teacher's beliefs on pedagogy: We really "need to be able to teach according to our beliefs" (emphasis added). But it is equally critical for me as a teacher to understand where my beliefs come from and to keep myself as informed as possible. An additional point is that it has been important for me to let my input factors "converse" with one another as they converge in my thinking. I am satisfied that I am influenced equally by a number of discourses, none of which I attempt to privilege over the others. When I see that they do not all agree with one another, that is precisely when I sort them out, think about them, and choose to enact a belief that I do find appropriate—but avoid ignoring the input. What I believe depends upon it.

This may appear as a somewhat eclectic way to figure out "what to do on Monday", but I believe it is quite like the way I figure out *any* worthwhile issue in my life—by seeking input through dialogue and thinking, by taking risks through trying out ideas, by striving to maintain a certain flexibility—within the boundaries of my own vision about teaching. There is a direction here, and it happens to be informed by as many viable sources as I can find. And I believe the direction will change and, along the way, be useful to students I teach. Happily, the direction I take will renew my own sense of teaching and invigorate me to continue asking questions, to consistently seek effective responses, and to keep listening to what I hear. Far from being eclectic, what I believe about teaching—and the approaches I hope I will always be willing to take—will emerge from a sense of purpose or mission, a need for helpful, understandable input, and a desire to teach in a way that is not, at its heart, elitist or smug.

What I also believe is that, if more of us who are actively engaged in S/FL teaching or in TESL teacher education are willing to believe something and to consider the sources of our beliefs—to expand them and to engage them openly—what we believe may reliably serve as the basis for how we teach, with the caveat that there will always be additional input (in my case, from gurus, research, colleagues, and students). What we believe will be the result of an intention to be informed by those factors which can best serve our professional needs as well as the learning needs of the students we teach.

For me, this has involved an uncomfortable (at first) process of letting go and *letting* myself be informed. It has meant gathering the wheat and discarding the chaff from more than one field, always asking and listening, thinking and reflecting. In her recent book *The Peaceable Classroom* (1993), Mary Rose O'Reilley writes about how teachers have been conditioned to think of less than all of what is possible. "One of the teacher's hardest jobs," she writes, "is to break conditioning" (O'Reilley, 1993, p. 69). Directly, she was describing for teachers an important task in our work with students in light of their

previous learning experiences. Interestingly, as both a graduate student and a language teacher, I felt her visionary voice speak to me.

I believe her, as I do the other voices I've written about here.

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A Possible Approach to Improve Teaching of Writing

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Background

Stewart (1988) comments that writing is an excellent tool to express oneself as well as develop the mind, and has the valuable function of spreading new information and discoveries to readers. Perl (1980) also suggests that writing is a tool for discovery of personal ideas, and writing instruction should be based on developing creativity. However, secondary students in Hong Kong and elsewhere seem to find writing English (their second language) a source of frustration rather than self expression because what is done in the composition lessons does not seem to conform to the purposes of writing described above.

The pressure of examination exerts great influence in the style of teaching writing in many places around the word, with practice being strictly modeled on the format of examination papers. At all levels, writing takes place in a very stressful atmosphere with no opportunity for interaction between the students and the teacher. Students are required to observe rigidly the time limit and essay length and are made to understand that if they cannot produce the required number of words in the daily lessons, they will likely fail in the assessment. Even if students cannot finish their compositions in class, they are not allowed to complete them at home but must hand in the assignment on the same day using recess lunch time to finish it. It is not uncommon to find students agonizing for a whole day in school to meet a particular target word number. Every writing lesson is a testing lesson within which students can seek no help either from classmates or the teacher. It seems clear that under such circumstances, students do not enjoy writing at all in school.

Students are usually unable to produce an organized piece of work of examination standard. They lack appropriate vocabulary to express their thoughts and they are unable to present arguments logically. There are also serious problems in their grammar. To solve these problems in writing, compositions are usually heavily guided, with teachers providing a fixed outline, as well as vocabulary and grammatical structures for students to follow. Teachers also tend to reward students for compliance to the prescribed outline and structure because the resulting product will look better organize. Some students will try to write creatively, deviating from the set outline, but their efforts are rewarded by numerous red marks from teachers, indicating all the errors they made.

In marking students' compositions, heavy emphasis is placed on accuracy and teachers are expected to highlight every grammatical error students make and hence many spend hours and hours painstakingly marking compositions. They always feel disappointed because their students' work is often disorganized and laden with all sorts of grammatical errors. Demoralizing comments are usually written by the teachers to vent their indignation about students' poor performance. Composition corrections usually take place during the following week. Students, on receiving their compositions, often feel disappointed because their work is full of red marks and sporadic one- or two-word comments that do not make much sense to them. Cohen (1987) investigated the effect of feedback given to students on their writing, observing that students do not understand many of the general comments directed to them by the teacher. Teachers cannot often afford the time to clarify their intentions to the students. Students are then asked to copy the corrected composition or the problematic sentences again as corrections.

It seems that writing is an ordeal to be completed by students and that marking compositions becomes a chore to be completed by teachers. The problem is that despite such painstaking efforts on the part of the teachers to correct errors, students do not seem to make much progress in their writing and the same kinds of mistakes occur repeatedly with no sign of eradication. One would question the effectiveness of this long—established approach to the teaching of writing and doubt whether such an approach which examines only the end product without giving help to students in the process of writing will benefit students in the acquisition of L2 literacy.

Process Approach to Teaching of Writing

Whereas traditional approaches have failed in producing competent writers, the more recent process approach has shown to be very effective in tertiary settings (Ng, 1994). In contrast with the traditional approach which focuses on providing students with grammatical instruction and writing exercises for assessment, the process approach sees writing as occurring in a recursive and convoluted manner: A process in which the writer begins with developing and organizing ideas, writing multiple drafts, receiving constructive feedback from peers or teachers, and editing before the completion of the written product with emphasis on meaning rather than form all through the various stages.

Although the process approach has significantly improved writing instruction in some of the English-speaking countries in the last decade (Daniels and Zemelman, 1985), it is neither fully understood nor widely adopted by many ESL practitioners in South East Asia (Nga, 1994). Despite vigorous efforts by training institutions to conduct courses on process writing, the traditional product paradigm continues to exert great influence on the writing pedagogy in these countries. Teachers' worries are that the process, approach

emphasizing free expression of ideas and writing of several drafts for feedback, is too time consuming to fit in the tight schedule of classroom teaching which is heavily geared towards examinations. Whereas such apprehension is justified, a number of studies have shown that the approach can be successfully implemented even in rigid and restrictive settings through adaptations and modifications of the basic framework (Stewart, 1986; Cheung, 1989; Stewart and Cheung, 1989; Cheung et al., 1992; Zellermayer, 1993; Lo, 1994; Peyton et al., 1994).

Research demonstrating the effectiveness of the process approach in Hong Kong has been conducted by Stewart (1986) with a group of tertiary students and Cheung (1989) with a class of Form One (12 year old) students. In both occasions, the adapted process approach was superimposed on the traditional product-oriented model. Results show that students make improvement on their quality of writing in terms of an increased amount of information in their content, more appropriate use of language and a stronger sense of the writing purpose. Lo (1994) reports her successful experience of using the process approach to improve the writing skills of a class of Form Three students in Hong Kong. Stewart and Cheung (1992) remark that the process approach can be implemented smoothly if it is introduced gradually with appropriate modifications to address the constraints imposed by the traditional framework. It is encouraging to know that the process instruction can also be used effectively to prepare L2 students to write examination answers (Lynch, 1988).

There are also attempts by teachers in the United States to apply the notion of the process approach to conduct writing workshops to teach English language learners whose first language is Spanish, from elementary to high school levels (Peyton et al., 1994). Here, the teachers modified the process-oriented model to negotiate with the severe constraints of limited time, space, and resources present in the school system. To solve the problem of limited time, for example, teachers integrated the writing workshop with content area study to achieve learning objectives. Teachers in the writing workshop all reported positive changes in students' writing performance in that they showed better attitudes towards writing, overcame the need to write error-free compositions, interacted more successfully with their peers, and scored better on the district writing test than their counterparts who had not participated in the workshop.

In Israel, the demands of the highly centralized educational system are constantly presenting challenges to teachers who attempt to incorporate the process approach in the current writing curriculum which places heavy emphasis on examination assessment. Teaching of writing is conducted in a very severely restrictive condition of having to follow a rigid syllabus, tight space, limited time, and sometimes poor teaching facilities. The Tel Aviv University conducted workshops and follow-up meetings to train secondary

teachers to use process writing-oriented methods. Findings suggest that the traditional curriculum has not deterred teachers from practicing the process approach and that they manage to integrate some essential elements of the model to the existing writing instruction (Zellermayer, 1993).

It seems that the process approach can function well even in adverse conditions of resource constraints and rigid school curricula if teachers show a clear understanding of the approach and make judicious adjustments and modifications to suit a particular teaching context. Pennington and Cheung (1993) point out that it is important for teachers to identify "uncontrollable, as well as controllable factors, in their teaching contexts" so as to work out realistically, modifications that suit the work situations (p. 31). Heng and Heng (1995), in a Malaysian context, observe that teachers' own experience with the process approach is essential to the understanding of the notion before effective adaptations and adoptions of the features of the process approach can be made.

As a matter of fact, trying to change the long-established traditional practices may involve a tremendous amount of difficulties. To accomplish this, "teachers need time, flexibility, and courage — to try, change, try, and change again" (Peyton et al., 1994, p. 484). If encountering obstacles, teachers should persevere. Eventually, the process writing innovations will flourish and teachers can taste the fruit of success.

A Possible Approach that can Improve the Teaching of Writing

The following is a model for classroom practice in the teaching of writing, and providing input and assistance to students at various stages of generating, drafting, revising and editing in the process of writing.

Generating

Since student writers do not seem to have ideas to write in their composition lessons and the requirement of writing to a certain target word limit has always been a source of agony, teachers may help students gather ideas for writing at the beginning of the writing task so as to teach students how ideas can be stimulated. Keh (1989) tries out "a mixture of idea-generating activities" including brainstorming, reading, listening, doing surveys, quickwriting, and the like, with a group of students studying at a tertiary institution in Hong Kong. Hepburn (1992) also suggests that audio-visual input may be provided to the students at the generating stage to motivate them to write. The following is a list of activities that teachers may consider to help students develop ideas prior to the act of writing.

1. *Brainstorming*

Brainstorming is an idea-generating activity in which students are asked to think of as many ideas as possible related to a given topic (Keh, 1989). This can be done with the whole class with the teacher listing the ideas on the blackboard, or in small groups with the students writing down the ideas by themselves. For senior form students (Forms 6 and 7) who are required to write argumentative essays, the teacher can suggest a title for the students to agree or disagree with and give reasons to support their position.

2. *Quickwriting*

Quickwriting is a way to train students to develop ideas quickly on a given topic. Students are asked to write continuously without stopping for two minutes, for example, to express their own opinions or explore new ideas on the topic. Students are reminded that the importance of this activity is to discover meaning, and not the production of grammatical sentences, and hence, students can write in a stress-free atmosphere. Papers can be swapped between classmates who will further give comments to each other's ideas. Teachers should first show students how quickwriting should be done so that students have an idea of what the technique is like. Brainstorming and quickwriting are very good strategies particularly useful for students who have to produce a piece of writing within a specified period of time as in tests and examinations.

3. *Reading*

Articles from various sources such as books, newspapers, magazines and so on, related to the topic of writing are prepared for students to read in order to collect more ideas for writing. Students can also be involved in identifying appropriate articles for the reading task. Students are encouraged to read the text interrogatively and give comments. The reading is followed by small group discussions to obtain more ideas from peers.

4. *Listening*

Teachers can also read aloud articles related to the given topic for students to write down information which they can use in their writing. In addition to generating more ideas to write, such an activity can also train students in listening comprehension and taking notes, which are important examination skills. Tapes by a variety of speakers can also be played to expose students to different accents and voices.

5. *Doing Surveys*

This may be an activity that students take part in after school. People from all walks of life may be interviewed by students to gather various opinions on a given topic. Such first-hand experience in collecting information for their own writing will motivate students

for the task (Hepburn, 1992). A lot more ideas from various sources will be brought in to their writing.

6. *Using audio-visual input*

Teachers can make use of video-recording of funny cartoons from television or Education Television Programs (ETV) to help students extend their imagination in story writing. Audio-taped stories can also be used for the same purpose, simultaneously training students' listening comprehension ability.

7. *Building up vocabulary*

A lack of vocabulary in expressing what they want to say in the L2 is always a great hindrance to the smooth production of text. Although students may not lack imagination to write, they may not have sufficient vocabulary for the given topics, despite teachers' effort to help them. Teachers may start providing appropriate vocabulary about the topic, but given that every student will have different ideas to express, it may be difficult for teachers to detect what expressions are causing difficulties to students. Occasionally, teachers may allow students to say the expressions that they do not know how to express in their L2 by using their mother tongue and teachers may demonstrate how such expressions can be represented in the L2. Hence, students may be encouraged to communicative their intended meaning in spite of their inadequacy in the language. Pierson (1990) suggests that local teachers have the advantage of understanding students' difficulties and thus will be in a better position to detect problems and planning remedial programs.

To prepare students for examination, timed writing in the classroom is also an important practice. After students have been accustomed to the above methods of generating ideas, they should be given the opportunity to apply what they have learned under examination conditions. Since students have difficulties in writing to the target word limit for examination, the skills they have learned for generating ideas may accelerate the writing process and minimize the pressure of not being able to write enough words for assessment.

Drafting

Teachers should explain to the students that the first draft should focus on the ideas they want to communicate. It may be modified at a later stage either for clarification or elaboration of the meaning, or for stylistic changes based on the feedback by their peers or teacher. Students should be reminded to think of the purpose and the audience of writing. In order to deal with the time constraint, drafting can be done at home.

Revising

Revision is an essential component in the development of L1 and L2 writing competence. Flower et al. (1986) point out that revision is a way to improve content and structure of a piece of writing. Peer revision can sharpen awareness as writers and audience, enhancing "social growth" (Huff and Kline, 1987, p. 137). Hedgcock and Lefkowitz (1992) investigate the effect of oral/aural revision, requiring students to read out their compositions to their peers who would then give feedback after they had listened to their reading. The performance of two groups of students in their writing was compared, the first group receiving careful teacher feedback and the second group having peer feedback conducted in an oral/aural mode. Results show that the two groups improved in different areas, the teacher feedback group performing better in grammatical aspects, and the peer feedback group doing better in content, organization and vocabulary. Hedgcock and Lefkowitz (1992) conclude that peer feedback may not necessarily be more effective than teacher feedback, but it does provide an opportunity for students to comment on the content of one another's work in a stress-free setting.

Feedback, whether given by teachers or peers, has been proved to be beneficial to developing writing competence in students (Partridge, 1981). Collaborative revision helps to enhance audience awareness. Writing becomes a task for communication rather than a regular exercise to be completed for teacher assessment. The supportive atmosphere in the classroom helps instill confidence in students. Despite benefits brought about by peer revision, however, some researchers doubt the usefulness of such practice (Freedman, 1985). Flynn (1982) found that peers were unable to produce helpful and focused comments to their partners. In view of this, Stanley (1992) suggests that students should be adequately prepared in order to become peer evaluators. She concludes that peer revision cannot be a very productive activity without sufficient training and preparation work given to the students.

Guidelines should be given to students when carrying out the revision task. They should be make very clear that the focus of writing is communication. Hence, in evaluating their peer's work, they should concentrate on the content and idea development first. The following checklist may be used as a guideline for peer evaluation:

1. What is the main idea for each paragraph? Write them down briefly in the margin.
2. Are the ideas clearly expressed? Which idea is unclear to you?
3. Are the ideas related to the given topic? Any irrelevant ideas?
4. Are the ideas logically presented? If not, try to restructure them.

5. Are there any ideas you think are lacking?

6. Are there any ideas you find confusing? How would you clarify them?

The above list is by no means exhaustive. Teachers can tailor–make the revision checklist for various classes. The central idea is that when doing their revision, students should pay attention first to the content, structure, and organization of the composition rather than grammatical accuracy.

After students have done their evaluation, teachers may go over their drafts and give additional comments and input for improvement. Student-teacher conferences may be held to help weaker students clarify the comments given to them both by their peers and teacher. Before students attend the conference, they should go over their drafts very carefully, thinking on how their writing can be improved. During the conference, the teacher will also give immediate feedback to students.

Editing

This should be done after the revision of content and structure, mainly for the improvement of style and the elimination of mechanical errors such as spelling, punctuation, and other surface features. Corrections of the form at an early stage will discourage students from writing creatively and have negative consequences in the learning of writing. When doing evaluation at this stage, students should be told that the focus of the editing task will be rather different from that of the revision in that attention should be paid to the modifications of surface forms and the improvement of the language. On completion of the editing work, students will write the final version for submission to the teacher. Again, this part can be done as homework.

Corrections

The current practice of asking students to copy the corrected composition once may not be very helpful to students. For an essay of 500 words, students might need to spend one whole period to make their corrections, and the problem is that there is no guarantee that students will learn from this kind of copying exercise.

The Curriculum Development Committee (Hong Kong Ministry of Education, 1983) recommended the use of correction cards compiled by the teachers to deal with individual grammatical problems. The cards are classified into different grammatical categories, consisting of explanation on the front and exercises on the back for students to practice. Students having a particular grammatical error may identify the appropriate card to work on. The preparation of such cards may take a long period of time. To start, teachers may design a few in the first year and then accumulate them year after year till a full collection

of grammatical items are prepared. Although the preparation of cards is time-consuming, they may be very useful in the long run and save the time of students in copying. The valuable class time may be spend more profitably with students dealing with their own problems.

Publishing good work

It is highly motivating for students to have their work read out or published (Holmes and Moulton, 1994). Teachers may choose a few pieces of good work to be published in class magazines or on bulletin boards. Notes or comments on why a paragraph or an idea is good is a useful means of letting other students know the standard of good writing .

Afterthought

In retrospect, it may be seen that the model of writing presented above benefited students a great deal. Students develop better human relationships because the atmosphere in the peer discussion session is relaxing and non-threatening, and they are more willing to take risks in experimenting with the language they have newly acquired because there is no penalty for making mistakes. The model also provides students with enough ideas to write and creates a real purpose and audience in writing. The peer review sessions also give an opportunity for student to integrate speaking, listening, reading and writings skills, and students are encouraged to develop creativity and originality in their writing. The approach has given rise to a group of writers who are willing to exchange their ideas with one other and who have developed a better rapport among themselves.

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Integrating Language Functions and Collaborative Skills in the Second Language Classroom

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Introduction

Language learning materials frequently include group activities, and many books and journals for language teachers recommend that groups be an important part of teachers' instructional repertoire. Unfortunately, group activities sometimes fail because students lack the skills necessary to function effectively in groups. For instance, teachers often find that students do not participate equally in group activities, that they do not help one another, that disagreements lead to bad feelings, and that groups get off task.

But is spending time helping students learn to function together the language teacher's job? Wouldn't that just be a distraction from our main job of teaching the language? We've already got enough to do. Wouldn't it be better just to skip using groups and avoid the headache of trying to get students to work together?

In this article we maintain that helping students learn and practice collaborative skills is not a distraction from language teaching. Instead, the language necessary to use these skills involves basic language functions (such as greetings, information requests, and apologies) which students will find useful in the many ways they interact with other people.

This article has four parts. In the first part, we describe the teaching of language functions. In the second part, we discuss the teaching of collaborative skills. Next, we give examples of how, in using cooperative learning activities, we integrate the teaching functions with instruction in collaborative skills. Finally, we relate the story of one student who benefited from such instruction.

Language Functions

The teaching of language functions forms part of the general movement toward communicative language teaching (Richards & Rodgers, 1986). The idea is that the function of language is to communicate. Thus, language is taught as a means of communication, not as a system of grammatical structures. In other words, the emphasis

is on language use, rather than language usage, and a key aspect of language use are the functions to which language is put by its users. The functional approach to second language instruction began in the 1970s. Finocchiaro and Brumfit (1983) describe the perspective that led to the development of the approach:

> "Language was much more appropriately classified in terms of what people wanted to do with the language (functions) . . . than in terms of the grammatical items as in traditional language teaching models" (p. 12).

In a functional syllabus, rather than using grammatical structures as the basis for sequencing instruction, functions become the unit of language upon which sequencing is based.

Key language functions

Many lists and categorical systems exist for language functions. Here is an abbreviated version of Finocchiaro's categorical system (Finocchiaro & Brumfit, 1983, pp. 65-66):

Personal (Clarifying or arranging one's ideas)

1. Expressing one's thoughts or feelings: love, pleasure, surprise, likes, dislikes, distress, anger, fear, sorrow
2. Communicating moral, intellectual, and social concerns
3. Expressing everyday feelings of hunger, fatigue, cold, or warmth Interpersonal (Enabling us to establish and maintain desirable social and working relationships)
4. Greetings and leavetakings
5. Introducing people to others
6. Extending invitations—Accepting invitations
7. Refusing invitations politely or making alternative arrangements
8. Apologizing
9. Indicating agreement—Indicating disagreement
10. Interrupting another speaker politely
11. Complimenting someone
12. Expressing gratitude—Acknowledging gratitude

Directive (Attempting to influence the actions of others; accepting or refusing direction)

13. Making requests
14. Making suggestions
15. Refusing to accept a suggestion or a request but offering an alternative
16. Persuading someone to change their point of view
17. Asking for help—Responding to a plea for help
18. Giving instructions—Responding to instructions

Referential (Talking or reporting about things, actions, events, or people in the environment in the past or in the future; talking about language. This is often termed the metalinguistic function.)

19. Asking for a description of someone or something
20. Defining something or a language item— Asking for a definition
21. Requesting facts about events or actions—Reporting facts
22. Evaluating the results of an action or an event

Imaginative (Expanding ideas offered by others or by a listening or reading passage)

23. Creating rhymes, poetry, stories, or plays
24. Solving problems or mysteries

Teaching language functions

Most approaches to teaching language functions use methods which fall under the general umbrella of communicative language teaching (Richards & Rodgers, 1986). Important characteristics of such approaches include (Finocchiaro & Brumfit, 1983):

1) Meaning as the focus
2) Language taught in context
3) Fluency the main aim, although accuracy also important
4) Cultural appropriacy as a component of accuracy
5) Group activities used to provide opportunities for real communication
6) Rote learning infrequently or never used
7) Students encouraged to communicate about their backgrounds and interests

Collaborative Skills

A pervasive demand of the information age in which we live is that everyone be abl to do complex thinking, such as problem-solving. Complex thinking often takes place bes in groups, which means that people need to be able to share ideas and to collaborate witl one another (Dumaine, 1990). We see this trend in schools in the form of cooperativ learning (Slavin, 1990) and other methodologies. In order to prepare students fo successful learning and achievement in groups, at school and at work, educators– including those of us in language education—should help them learn the collaborativ skills they will need to work and to learn with others.

Many advocates of cooperative learning, (e.g., Johnson, Johnson, & Holubec, 1993 consider the teaching of collaborative skills to be an essential component of instruction i which group activities are used. What are the collaborative skills that students need t learn? As with functions, many lists and categorical systems exist. Below is one attemp at listing and categorizing some of the important collaborative skills (Jacobs, Gan, & Ball 1995, pp. 82-83).

Key collaborative skills

Group Forming Skills

1. Getting into groups efficiently Greeting others
2. Greeting others
3. Introducing oneself—Introducing others
4. Using people's names when speaking to them
5. Ending a group activity
6. Saying goodbye

Basic Group Functioning Skills

7. Saying thanks—Responding to thanks.
8. Attentive listening
9. Giving praise
10. Waiting patiently—Trying not to keep others waiting
11. Asking for help
12. Giving help
13. Apologizing—Accepting apologies

14. Encouraging others to participate—Responding to encouragement to participate
15. Asking questions—Responding to questions
16. Saying "No"—Accepting "No"
17. Giving instructions—Following instructions
18. Interrupting appropriately—Accepting appropriate interruptions
19. Using humour to help group functioning
20. Getting the group back on task
21. Paraphrasing
22. Observing and commenting on group functioning

Idea Exchange Skills

23. Making a plan
24. Making suggestions—Responding to suggestions
25. Asking for reasons—Giving reasons
26. Asking for feedback—Giving feedback
27. Giving negative feedback—Responding to negative feedback
28. Disagreeing politely—Responding to disagreement
29. Checking accuracy
30. Checking for understanding
31. Persuading others
32. Compromising
33. Summarizing

Teaching collaborative skills

Johnson, Johnson, and Holubec (1993) propose a six-part procedure for teaching collaborative skills. (See Dishon & O'Leary, 1993 and Kagan, 1994 for other ideas.)

The six parts are:

1) Explain the need for the skill
2) Help students see what the skill looks and sounds like

3) Provide opportunities for students to practice the skill in isolation from other course content
4) Encourage students to use the skill as they work together on other course objectives
5) Provide time for students to think about and discuss their use of the skill and plan their future use
6) Help students persevere in using the skill on a long-term basis

Integrating Language Usage Function and Collaborative Skills

There is much overlapping between the language functions list and the collaborative skills lists presented here, and it is not coincidental that such overlapping exists. After all, the key function of language is to communicate, and much of that communication takes one form or another of collaboration. The more skilled students become at using language, the better they become at collaborating. Language educators can help students learn language functions and collaborative skills by integrating these two key areas.

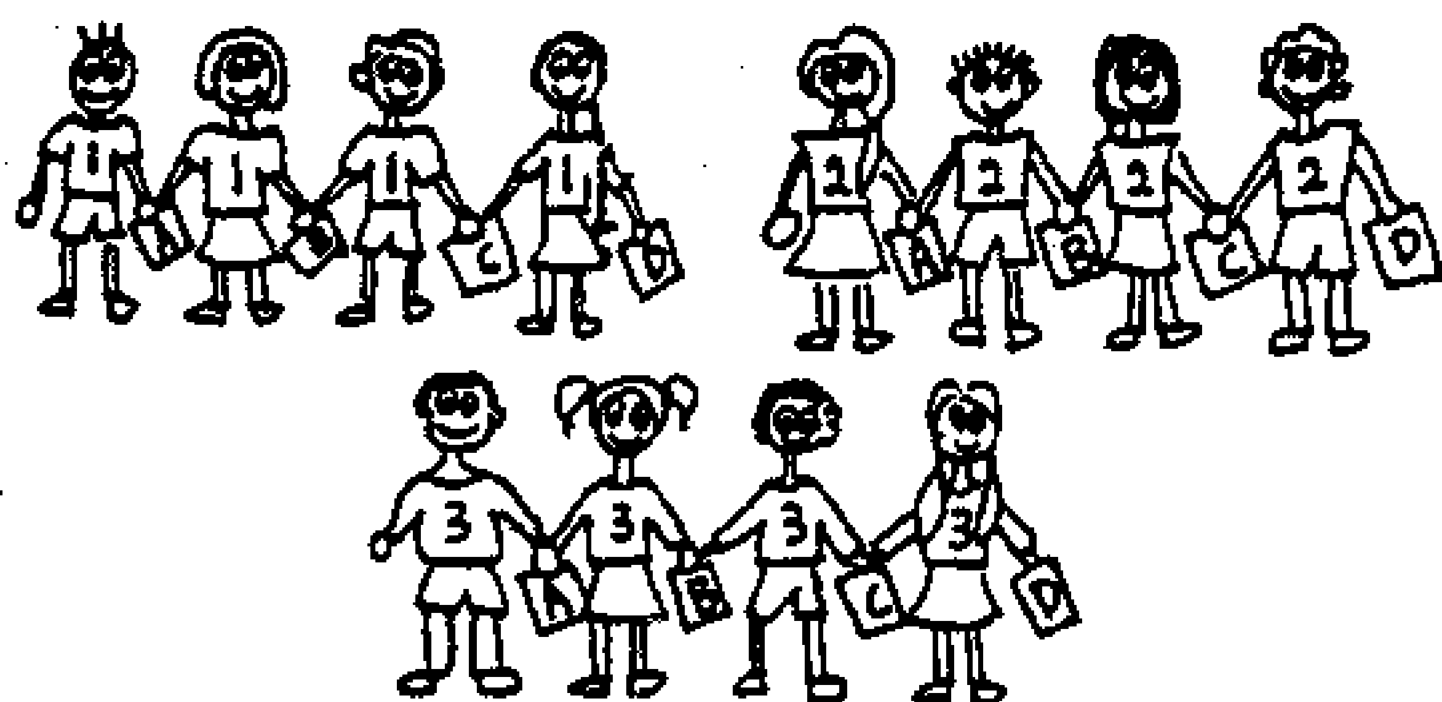
The following section presents some examples of how the authors of this article have integrated language functions and collaborative skills.

Jigsaw

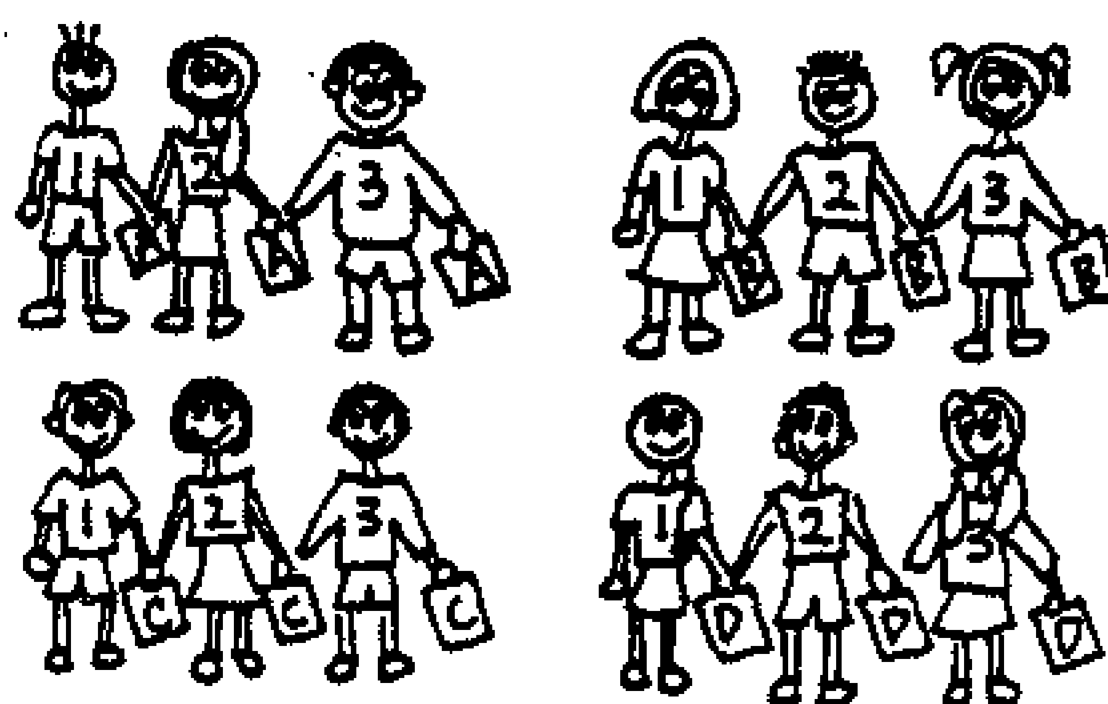
One of the best known cooperative learning techniques is Jigsaw (Coelho, 1992b). Here's an example of how we use Jigsaw. A reading passage on the causes and solutions to the problem of air pollution is divided into parts, just like a jigsaw puzzle is divided into pieces. Students form groups of four called Home Teams. Each home team member gets one piece of the passage. They then leave their home team and form an Expert Team with three people from other home teams who have the same piece of the passage. The job of the expert team is to learn their piece well and prepare to teach it to their home team.

Next, the expert teams disband, and students return to their home teams where they take turns teaching their pieces of the passage. Finally, the group does a task requiring information from all the passage pieces: they are to decide which of the proposed solutions for air pollution is possible and what they can do to make it happen. The drawing below illustrates one way of doing Jigsaw (Jacobs, Gan, & Ball, 1995, p. 16).

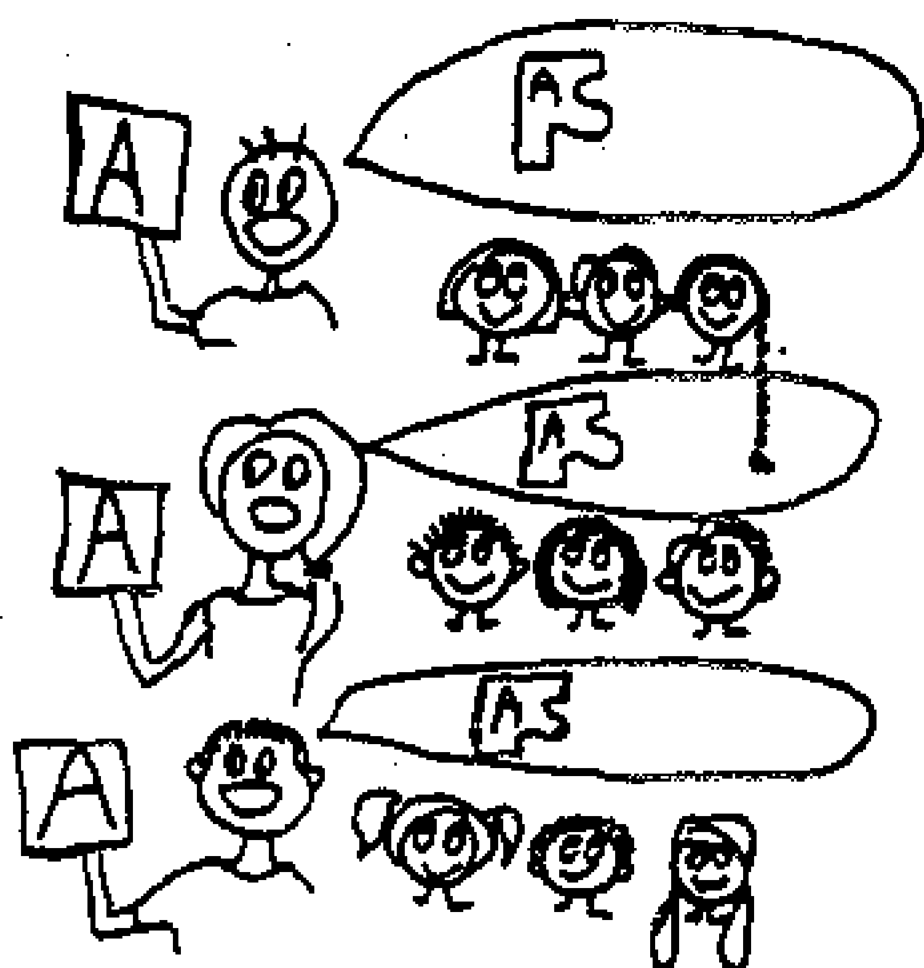
Figure 1.
Jigsaw 1.



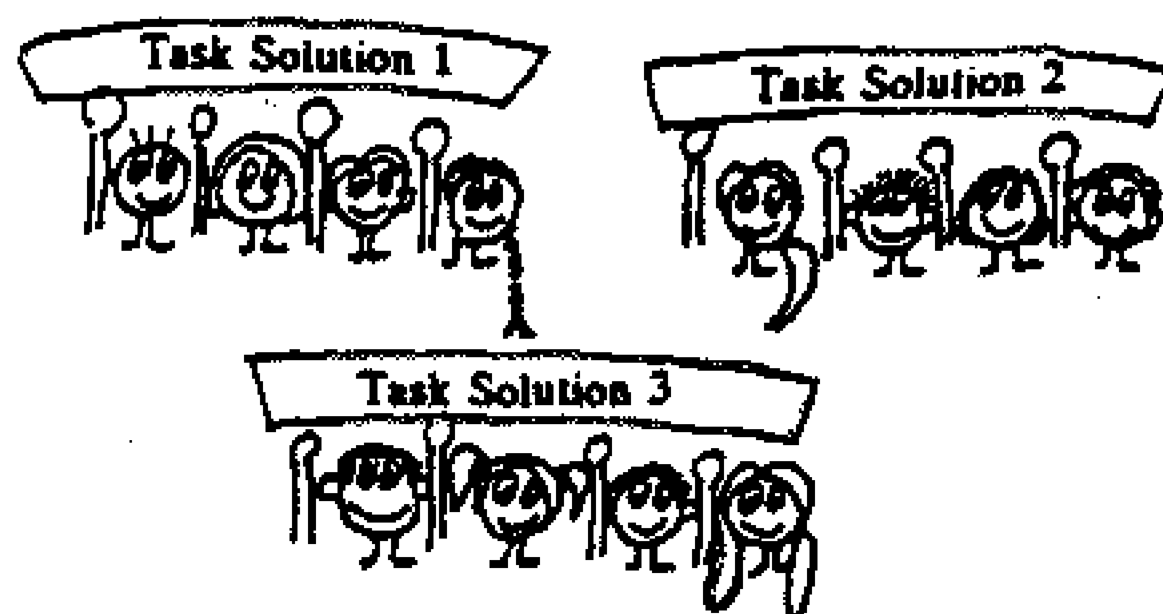
1. Each home team member gets a different piece of the reading material: Piece A, B, C, or D.



2. They form expert teams to become experts on their piece.



3. They return home and teach their piece to their home team.



4. Home teams combine the information from their experts with their other knowledge to perform a task.

Jigsaw facilitates learning of both language and content by providing a highly interactive way to structure instruction. Each student must learn the content and the relevant language to teach to their home team members, and then the home team must listen carefully and put together the information to complete the task.

Jigsaw could involve the majority of the language functions on Finocchiaro and Brumfit's (1983) list as well as the majority of the collaborative skills on Jacobs, et al.'s (1995) list. A few of these are listed in Table 1.

Table 1.

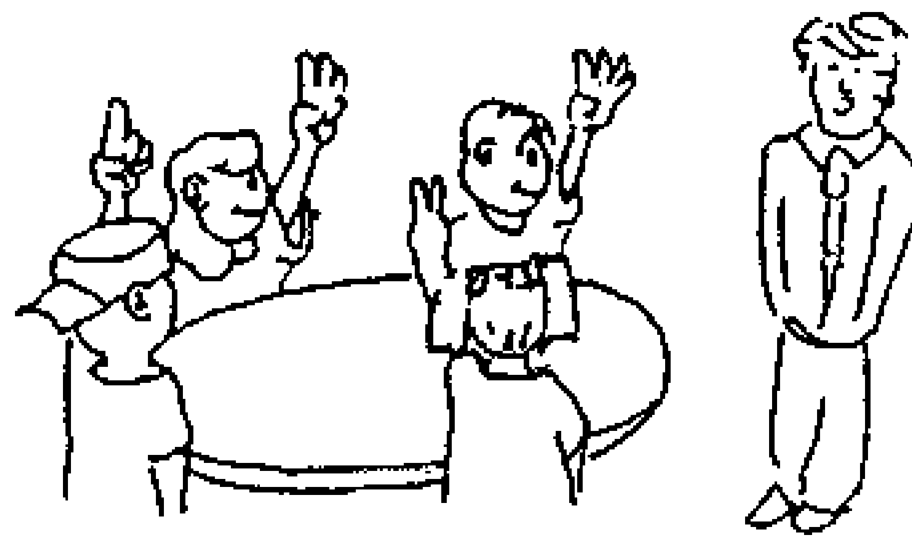
Language Function		Corresponding Collaborative Skill		Example
Category	**Function**	**Category**	**Skill**	
Personal	1.*Expressing pleasure	Group Forming Skills	2. Greeting others	When students form the expert teams and meet the other members, they might say, "Hi John, it's nice to work with you again."
Interpersonal	11. Complimenting someone	Basic group functioning	9. Giving praise	After someone finishes teaching their piece to the home team, some might say, "You taught us your piece very well. Thank you."
Directive	13. Making requests		15. Asking questions	If one team member doesn't understand what another has said, they might say, "Would you say that again please?"
Imaginative	24. Solving problems	Idea Exchange	24. Making suggestions	When the team is doing their task, one member might suggest a solution by saying: "I think it will be possible to reduce air pollution if we all try to walk more and take cars less."

Table 1 - Language Functions and Collaborative Skills Useful in the Jigsaw Technique

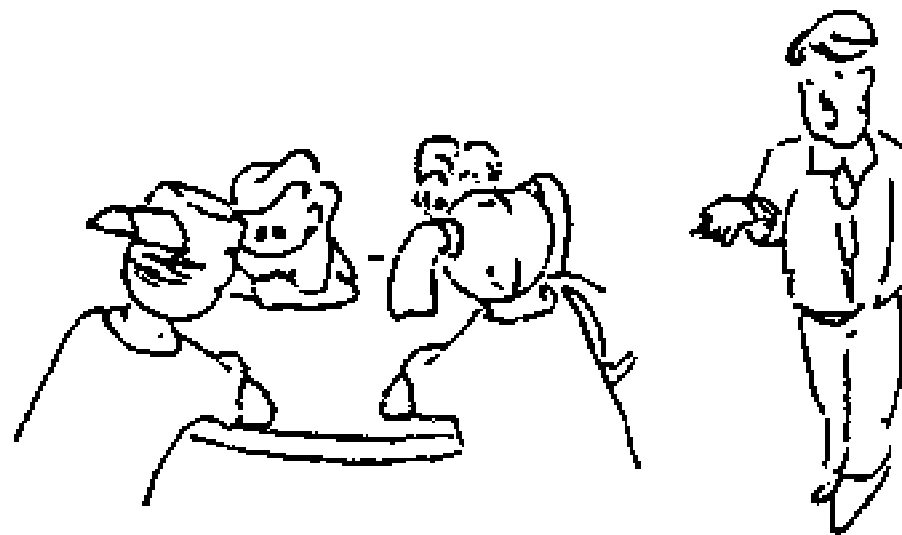
* Numbers refer to the numbers from the lists of language functions and collaborative skills given earlier in the article.

Another popular cooperative learning technique is called Numbered Heads Together. Here's an example of how we use it. Students form groups of four. Each group member gets a number: 1, 2, 3, or 4. That's where the "Numbered" part of the name comes from. Then, the class reads a passage. Next, the teacher or a student asks a question about the passage. (We try to include thinking questions, in addition to questions where the answer can be taken directly from the passage.) Group members collaborate to develop an answer to the question and an explanation for their answer. This is where the "Heads Together" part of the name comes from. Finally, the teacher calls a number, and the student in each group with that number presents their group's answer and the reasoning behind it. The following drawing illustrates Numbered Heads Together (Jacobs, Gan, & Ball, 1995, p. 57).

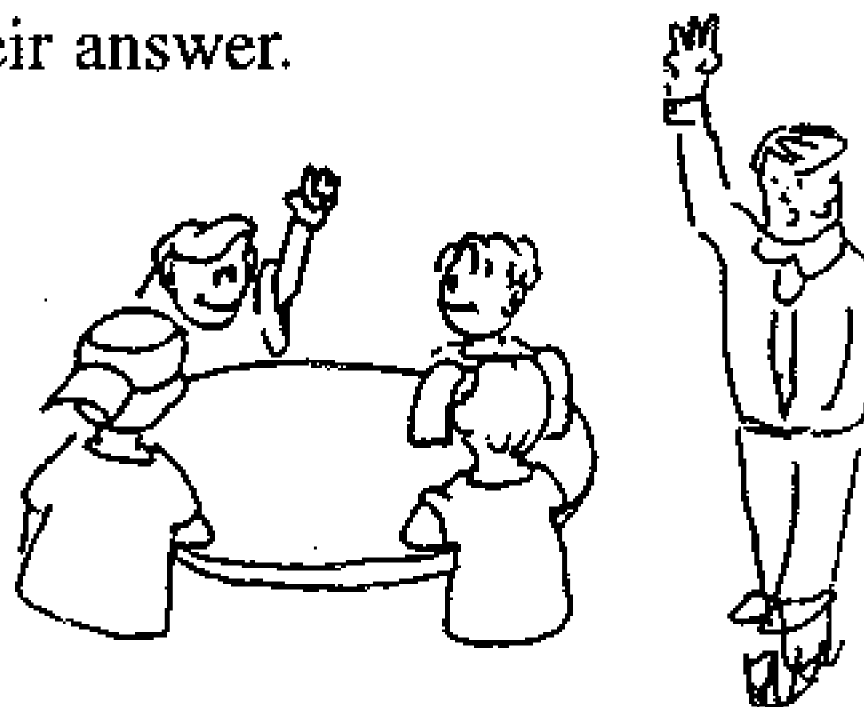
Figure 2.
Numbered Head Together



1. Each student gets a number: 1, 2, 3, or 4.



2. Teacher asks a question, and students put their heads together to develop an answer and an explanation for their answer.



3. Teacher calls a number: 1, 2, 3, or 4. The student with that number in each group gives their group's answer and explanation.

Numbered Heads Together encourages peer tutoring, because students need to explai their answers. It does not help students learn if their groupmates just give them the answe but learning is promoted when students see how the answer was obtained. Numbere Heads Together also encourages all members to participate and to learn in the grouj because they do not know which number the teacher will call; so, they all need t understand their group's answer and be able to explain it. In contrast, in typical grou activities, the top student in the group is the one who almost always acts as th spokesperson.

Numbered Heads Together, like Jigsaw, could involve most of the language function on Finocchiaro and Brumfit's (1983) list as well as most of the collaborative skills on th list by Jacobs, et al. A few of these functions and collaborative skills which may occu when the technique is used are listed in Table 2.

Table 2.

Language Function		Corresponding Collaborative Skill		Example
Category	Function	Category	Skill	
Inter-personal	9.* Indicating disagreement	Idea exchange	28. Dis-agreeing politely	A group member disagrees with another's answer and says, "You may be right, but here's another possible answer ..."
Inter-personal	6. Extending invitations	Basic group functioning	14. Encou-raging others to participate	A group member has not contributed any ideas to the group. Another member asks, "Susan, what's your opinion about this?"
Referential	20. Asking for a definition	Idea exchange	30. Checking for under-standing	A group member does not understand a word in the text and asks, "What does 'belligerent' mean?"

Table 2 - Language Functions and Collaborative Skills Useful in the Numbered Heads Together Technique

* Numbers refer to the numbers from the lists of language functions and collaborative skills given earlier in the article.

One Student's Story

Teachers who try cooperative learning often mention the problem of dealing with students who are behind others in terms of acquisition of academic language and skills.

Every term, we have a few such students with significantly lower proficiency than their classmates. Often, due to cultural reasons, the less proficient students don't want to publicly acknowledge their need for additional help by coming to us. One effective way to give such students the help that they need is to involve them in cooperative groups of mixed proficiency because they often feel freer to ask for help from their peers.

A case in point is Alexander, a professional from a highly oral Middle-Eastern culture who came to the United States for special computer training. Alexander needed to pass a series of English courses before applying to a technical college. His ESL teachers observed that his literacy skills in English were extremely low, that he suffered from a number of physical symptoms related to stress (severe headaches, eye strain, etc.), and that he didn't mix well socially with other students because of his low self-confidence.

Attempts to talk to him about his difficulties with English were unsuccessful due to his personal and cultural beliefs about what it means to be a slower learner. Work in cooperative learning groups proved to be the most successful method of helping him. Cooperatively structured work in small groups also helped him to improve his collaborative skills and his conversational ability in English. Furthermore, his self-esteem greatly improved from his interaction with other students.

Alexander remained in the U.S. and became a functioning member of the culture, capable of conversing with Americans and others in fairly fluent English. It is questionable whether or not he would have achieved any of these things if he had not had the exposure to cooperative learning and opportunities to practice the various functions of American English in a supportive setting.

Closing Comments

The purpose of this article has been to argue for the teaching of collaborative skills as part of the use of group activities. We believe that such teaching, far from detracting from language learning, actually aids it. As Coelho (1992a) states:

> The many parallels between linguistic functions and cooperative group skills suggest that cooperative learning can provide the foundation for a communicative curriculum design. In providing opportunities for students to develop specific group skills, we can focus on the corresponding language functions. (p. 39)

Group activities form an important part of modern communicative language teaching. By spending time helping students learn the collaborative skills necessary for successful group functioning, we language teachers also help students learn language which will be useful in and out of the classroom. The six-step procedure, described above, for teaching collaborative skills provides good ideas for doing this. However, in the rush to get through the syllabus or the textbook, there is a great temptation to skip some or all of these steps. Please consider the wisdom of omitting this potentially important element of instruction.

According to McDonell (1992), learning through groups provides students with many benefits, but teaching students to function in cooperative groups takes time and is a gradual process that requires patience and a guiding hand from the teacher while students learn to listen to and trust each other. Given time, cooperative learning can be a supportive and successful method of learning for many different types of students.

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Conference Announcements

TESOL Association of Aotearoa New Zealand, Hamilton, New Zealand. September 18-21, 1996. Contact Jill Hobden, Conference Convenor, c/o The University of Waikato Language Institute, the University of Waikato, Private Bag 3105, Hamilton, New Zealand. Tel. 64-7-838-4193. Fax 64-7-838-4194. E-mail: j.hobden@waikato.ac.nz

Association of Teachers of English in the Czech Republic, Ceské Budéjovice, Czech Republic. September 20-22, 1996. Contact Mr. Prokop Pitter, Pabláskova 5,37001 Ceské Budéjovice, Czech Republic. Tel. 42-38-58518.

Korea TESOL. Annual conference, Seoul, Korea. October 25-27, 1996. Contact Carl Dusthimer, Hannam University, Department of English, 133 Ojungdong, Taejon 300-791, Korea. Tel. 82-42-634-9235. Fax 82-42-623-8472. E-mail: bustman@eve.hannam.ac.kr.

The Slovak Association of TESOL, High Tatras at Poprad, Slovakia. October 25-27, 1996. Contact James Sutherland-Smith, Metodicke Centrum, Tarasa Sevcenku 11,080 40 Presov, Slovak Republic. Fax +42-7-497296.

Japan Association for Language Teaching. Annual International Conference, Hiroshima, Japan. November 1-4, 1996. Contact JALT Central Office, Florious Tokyo #301, 2-32-10 Nishinippori, Arakawa-ku, Tokyo 116 Japan. Tel. +81-33802-7121. Fax +81-33802-7122. Http://www.aichi-gakuin.ac.jp/-scott/jalt96.html

Teacher to Teacher Research in the ESL Classroom

Margaret Moulton and Vicki Holmes
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In recent years, a not-so-quiet revolution has been taking place in the educational research community. Teachers are getting more involved in research (Allwright & Bailey, 1991; Goswamie & Stillman, 1987; Nunan, 1992). In explaining how this has come about, Houser (1990) defines—from the teacher's perspective—three models of educational research, viewing the process both historically and hierarchically. Although Houser's terms differ from those of other authors, her parameters essentially incorporate their definitions.

Houser's first model embodies traditional research in which teachers in the research process are "minimally informed" or even reluctant participants who ignore researchers as much as researchers ignore them. In this model, researchers formulate their questions, observe classroom practices to collect the data, and exit the classroom to analyze and interpret the data. The teacher is a passive non-participant in the research process. Researchers, typically professors at the university level, research, while teachers—at any level—teach. The separation is profound, and as Eisner (1984) notes, this kind of research has had little impact on classroom practice. In fact, in Eisner's sweeping survey of educators and the research-to-practice connection, few teachers or researchers could mention specific examples of how research literature had changed their teaching.

Houser's (1990) second model of educational research considers teachers to be collaborators in the research process. In this model teachers are empowered as co-researchers to a limited extent, sometimes helping to form the questions but mainly functioning as collectors of data. The "expert" researchers, however, retain control of theory generation and data analysis. Rarely are teachers in this model invited to participate in the analysis and interpretation of the study. Teachers are more informed than in the first model but are still minimally involved, and, therefore, their practices seldom change because of such studies.

The third model in Houser's (1990) hierarchy places teachers at the center of the research process. In this model, referred to as praxis by Freire (1970) or action research by Houser and others (e.g., Allwright & Bailey, 1991; Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988; Nunan, 1992; Strickland, 1988), the teacher is researcher, teacher, and analyst—all at the same time. The teacher names the problems, poses the questions, gathers the data, and

draws the conclusions: conclusions which often directly change classroom practice. This process is both pragmatic and liberating. As Houser (1990) claims, by putting teachers at the heart of the research process, doing research in their own classrooms, teachers become experts capable of shaping their lives and profession. Those teachers who conduct their own research, suggest Berthoff (1987), Martin (1987), and Swart (1990), no longer give away their power to researchers distant from the conditions of the classroom. Furthermore, according to Shor and Freire (1987), teachers who do research are able to extract valuable knowledge about students and how they learn.

A fourth model of research not referred to by Houser (1990), but suggested by our own experiences and alluded to by Allwright and Bailey (1991) and by Faneslow (1988) is what we call the teacher-to-teacher research model. Our model involves action research with a twist. Teachers enter colleagues' classrooms for the purpose of answering both theoretical and pragmatic questions, sharing both the research experience and the outcome. We uncovered this model somewhat serendipitously in the process of completing our doctoral studies. As students, we were required to do research in each others' classrooms, using the traditional models that Houser (1990) described. But, as university ESL (English as a second language) teachers during the same time period, a funny thing happened on the way to the dissertation. We discovered that the unintended consequences of our teacher-to-teacher research had far greater impact on our teaching than did the studies themselves. That is, the studies were intended to teach us research methodology as well as answer specific research questions—and they did. But, more important to us, we gained insight into our own teaching practices, developed stronger collegiality, and experienced a sense of empowerment.

Changes in Teaching Practices

Our experience suggests that teacher-to-teacher research can result in meaningful changes in instructional practices. For instance, one of our studies was to determine a university ESL teacher's philosophy of reading and whether her classroom practice reflected her philosophy. What began as traditional research, involving the teacher minimally, became teacher-to-teacher research as the teacher assumed co-ownership of the project. Prior to being observed, the teacher was asked to articulate her reading philosophy by selecting from among a set of prepared statements (see Konopak, Readence, & Wilson, 1994). She was also interviewed about her practice after each classroom observation. Having defined her philosophy, however, the teacher began to question her own practices and subsequently made significant changes in her lessons. Specifically, a planned lecture on stems and affixes was changed to a small group activity in which students coined new words based on their knowledge and use of the text. Because of the research study in which she was participating, the teacher recognized that her philosophy

of active student involvement was not being reflected in her practice; with this change, it was.

Not only did the observed teacher make changes based on this experience, but so did the researcher as she saw her own practices reflected in the teacher she observed. For example, after transcribing a so-called classroom discussion in which the teacher solicited only one- or two-word responses from the students, the researcher realized she often did the same. The next day in her own class, the researcher overcame her tendency to control the discussion by taking a seat in the back of the room while the students discussed and outlined essays in small groups. Her students began to experience real discussion, not a question and answer drill trying to pass for one.

In a different study, an ESL teacher-researcher observed the composition class of another university ESL teacher. While the focus of the study was on the students' perceptions of dialogue journals, the observer incidentally noticed that the teacher introduced each type of formal writing with a concrete example. For instance, writing directions was not a theoretical exercise for the teacher's eyes only; students were each given a "treasure" to hide and then asked to write directions so that another student could find it (Holmes & Moulton, 1994c). The observer returned to her own classroom and began to include more specific examples of her own, using an origami demonstration, in one case, to introduce the process speech.

In each of these studies, teachers entered each others' classrooms with specific research goals to accomplish but left with more than they had bargained for. Not only had research goals been met, but teaching practices had changed. Teachers had learned from each other. As Faneslow (1988) opined, ". . . as I look at you with my lens, I consider you a mirror; I hope to see myself in you and through your teaching . . . Seeing you allows me to see myself differently and to explore variables we both use" (p. 115).

Collegiality

A second unintended consequence of teacher-to-teacher research is the sharing and camaraderie that develop between teachers who enter each others' classrooms to explore pedagogical issues. For example, the ESL teacher whose class was the focus for the study on dialogue journals originally had great misgivings about having the researcher in her class for an entire semester. Her doubts were soon allayed as she discovered she could discuss students and class activities with the researcher, someone who really knew what had taken place. While the two had certainly been friends prior to the study, they developed a greater trust because of their shared experience in the classroom.

A similar feeling of collegiality developed between the two teachers in the study on reading philosophy and practice. Prior to the study, the two teachers had not known each other very well. The project called for the researcher to interview the teacher after each classroom observation, and during the course of these daily interviews, the two teachers became friends who began to share teaching ideas. The relationship extended beyond the initial research project to shared visitations in each others' classrooms as a means of gleaning even more ideas from each other.

Another study, involving a grant to publish ESL student writing, resulted in collegiality among a number of faculty members. While they didn't observe each others' classes, they read and delighted in the work of each others' students. It was only one teacher's research project, but all pitched in to edit student papers and actually publish an ESL anthology. In the process, teachers shared their philosophies about teaching writing, which created a bond among them.

Sharing classroom experiences usually enhances teaching, but in our experience, the teacher-to-teacher research was the catalyst that allowed such sharing to take place. The collegiality and our interest in each others' teaching philosophies and practices even led to regular planned discussions based on research in second language issues.

Empowerment

The final unanticipated consequence of our teacher-to-teacher research is the sense of empowerment we have experienced from conducting research in each others' classrooms. For example, the research grant for publishing ESL student writing resulted in a presentation at a national conference and the publication of an article in a national journal (Holmes & Moulton, 1994a). We did not set out to present or publish in the initial stages of our research, but increased confidence in ourselves as researchers encouraged us to share our findings with a broader audience.

Another study, which examined ESL students' cartoons as a measure of their knowledge of the writing process, also led to teacher empowerment. It began as Houser's (1990) third model, action research, but sharing the data with another ESL instructor changed it to a teacher-to-teacher study. This interaction led both teachers to alter their in-class pre-writing activities and to publish an article about it (Holmes & Moulton, 1994b). While the original teacher had gained useful information on her own, it was not until she joined forces with her colleague that she became empowered to write about it.

The study on dialogue journals had a similar outcome. As a dissertation topic, the research followed Houser's (1990) second model: The researcher formulated the theory, designed the research, and observed the teacher's class; the teacher collected part of the

data while the researcher analyzed it. With the dissertation's completion, however, the two teachers revisited the data together, forming a new theory which resulted in two articles on dialogue journal writing (Holmes & Moulton, 1994; Homes & Moulton, 1995). The teachers' collaboration empowered them to reach for new insights in interpreting the data.

Adding Teachers' Voices

Our experience as teachers doing research in each others' classrooms demystified the research process for us. It gave us deeper understanding of our own philosophies about teaching and learning and how they relate to our classroom practice. It engendered collegiality among our faculty and empowered us to share our new-found understandings with a wider audience than our immediate peers. Teacher-to-teacher research has changed us both as learners and as teachers.

While it was our doctoral work that propelled us into researching, teachers need not wait for a formal program to begin doing teacher-to-teacher research. In fact, we have often speculated on how much more we might have discovered about teaching and learning had we begun this process earlier in our teaching careers. We wish we had taken to heart the advice of Piaget (1973), who argued that teachers must begin classroom research as soon as they begin teaching because it brings to consciousness the creative tension between educational theory and classroom practice.

Classroom research need not be the province of a small elite group of university professors (Kincheloe, 1991). Because Swart (1990), in her survey of major educational journals, found a preponderance of articles written by professor-researchers but only a handful by teachers, she urged teachers to take control of their profession by sharing their expert knowledge. We agree. We realize that teachers have myriad responsibilities that go beyond the classroom itself, but teaching schedules can have some flexibility that will allow for our kind of research. More teachers must add their voices to the not-so-quiet revolution; teacher-to-teacher research is a satisfying means to that end.

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Conference Announcements

English Teacher's Association of the Republic of China, Union Building of National Normal University, Taipei, Taiwan. November 8-10, 1996. Contact Peng-hsiang Chen, English Training Center of National Taiwan Normal University, 162 Hoping East Rd., Section 1, Taipei 10610.

Puerto Rico TESOL, Ponce Hilton Hotel, Ponce Puerto Rico. November 15-16, 1996. Contact Lionel Kaufman, 1996 Program Chair, 3 Benito Feijoo, Villas del Este, San Juan, Puerto Rico 00926. Tel. 787-761-9754. Fax 787-760-0280.

The 1996 Third International World Englishes Conference. East-West Center in Honolulu, Hawaii. December 19-21, 1996. Presentations will examine World Englishes in terms of Power and Ideology; Standards and Norms; Literature; Discourse Strategies, Pedagogy; Appropriate/Inappropriate teaching material; the Bilingual's Creativity in English; Evaluation and Testing; and Research. For further information contact: Larry E. Smith, President (IAWE), Program on Education and Training, East-West Center, 1777 East-West Road, Honolulu, Hawaii 96848. Fax (808)944-7070 or Tel. (808) 994-7338; E-mail: rabie@hawaii.edu or smithl@ewc.hawaii.edu

Thai TESOL International Conference, (JALT, Korea TESOL and IATEFL), the Ambassador Hotel, Bangkok, Thailand. January 5-7, 1997. Contact Thai TESOL, c/o Naraporn Chan-Ocha, Chulalongkorn University Language Institute, Phaya Thai Road, Bangkok 10330, Thailand. Fax 662-252-5978, 662-218-6031. E-mail: fflnco@chulkn.car.chula.ac.th

Breaking the Language Barrier

Review by Bill Schweers
University of Puerto Rico at Bayamon

BREAKING THE LANGUAGE BARRIER. H. Douglas Brown. Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press, 1991. US $14.95

In spite of what some commercial language teaching programs may try to make us believe, second languages are not learned in 30 hours or after listening to a set of 10 tapes. Developing communicative competence in a second language requires long hours of work, time, and persistence. Anyone involved in language teaching knows this, but given the onslaught of advertising to the contrary, it's good to remind ourselves of this reality from time to time. This is what H. Douglas Brown does masterfully in his book *Breaking the Language Barrier.*

This book realistically outlines what is involved in second language learning, yet it is upbeat and does not discourage the potential learner from giving it a try. Its message is that if you are persistent and seek out the appropriate learning contexts and techniques, you can be successful. The volume also offers a thorough overview of many of the basic principles of second language acquisition theory. This is presented in terms that the layman can easily follow.

Brown begins by reviewing how infants learn to speak their first language, discussing such concepts as the critical period, language as a tool for survival, the subconscious internalization of language, and the roles of comprehension and frequency of input in language learning. Brown emphasizes that children don't learn a first language by magic; it requires time, attention, concentration, and effort. He ends by listing ten insights from the first language acquisition process which are relevant to second language learning.

In the next chapter Brown explores child second language learning and contrasts it with first language acquisition. He concludes that, rather than comparing it with L1 acquisition, it is more useful to compare child L2 acquisition with adult acquisition of a second language. Again, he lists the strategies which can be gained from child learners and which are relevant to adult learning. These include: not worrying about attaining a native-like accent, not thinking too much about the language being learned, and not letting fears of making mistakes interfere with learning. Brown points out that although the first language is always behind the scenes influencing second language learning, we should not let it overwhelm us. Although analogies and comparisons can be useful mnemonic devices, we must strive to free ourselves as much as possible from the L1. Finally, he

suggests that adult learners must turn their natural tendencies upside down and put social relationships first, communication second, and grammatical correctness last.

In what follows, Brown presents nine practical principles involved in learning how to learn a language. He lists six of what he terms strategies for success. These include: becoming aware of our cognitive styles and discovering the specific strategies which best complement them, getting our two brain hemispheres to work together, finding a balance between field dependence and independence, learning to tolerate ambiguity, and putting receptivity above perceptivity in gathering information about the second language.

Next, Brown discusses the affective side of language learning and concludes that the emotions often play a determinant role in this process. He points out the need to believe in ourselves, to defend ourselves from assaults on our "language ego," to shed our inhibitions, to take risks, and to deal with foreign language anxiety. He suggests that we approach language learning as a game and recommends some useful games which facilitate language learning. At the end of this chapter, Brown considers how we can increase motivation by using language learning to meet a series of basic ego needs.

Brown ends by going over how we can make our mistakes work for us and by reviewing the principle classroom methodologies used in second language instruction. He encourages the learner to choose the method which goes best with his or her personal learning styles and needs. Finally, Brown presents a series of tests of characteristics related to effective language learning. This allows the reader to evaluate his or her potential and style as a language learner. These include tests of extroversion, ambiguity tolerance, left- and right-brain preferences, and visual and auditory learning. The final test is a language puzzle which examines the learners' ability to decipher vocabulary from an unknown language giving us an indication of one's potential as a second language learner.

Breaking the Language Barrier offers a realistic look at the second language learning process. It also offers abundant advice and practical techniques the learner can use to become an effective L2 learner. While not offering quick-fixes, this book portrays the language learning process as both stimulating and doable. If we make an informed and determined effort, anyone can join the "second-language club," taking on a new identity and becoming increasingly proficient in an additional language. The rewards are abundant, and perhaps the greatest is, as Brown says, "participating in, and celebrating, human diversity." Anyone undertaking the learning of a new language should take a serious look at *Breaking the Language Barrier.*

About the Reviewer

Bill Schweers has taught ESL for 27 years and has resided in Puerto Rico for the past 16 years. He holds a Ph.D. in TESOL from New York University. His research interests are language transfer and language planning. He has served as the editor and assistant editor of the Puerto Rico TESOL-Gram.

Writing Inspirations: A Fundex of Individualized Activities for English Language Practice

Review by William Corr
Osaka International University

WRITING INSPIRATIONS: A FUNDEX OF INDIVIDUALIZED ACTIVITIES FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE PRACTICE. Arlene Marcus. Brattleboro, VT: Pro Lingua Associates, 1996, pp vi + 90. US $20.00

Writing Inspirations is an index of ideas and activities intended to encourage thought, discourse and, eventually, written work. Published in book form, it is intended for the use of teachers who wish to use it as a reference and resource. The material has been deliberately designed so as to be easily photocopied and the copies then grouped to create a set of index cards, a 'fundex', to use the author's term. The material is appropriate for adult, college and high-school learners working in a classroom setting, in a library study center, or in a tutorial.

The underlying idea behind putting topics on cards and making them available in an index card box, or 'fundex', is to empower and thus motivate the students, to give them an opportunity of choosing freely from among the activities, topics, and tasks available. Equally, the teacher is at liberty to choose a single card in order to work with the whole class on a topic complementing other classwork.

The subject matter of the material in *Writing Inspirations* reflects the kinds of experiences teens and adults encounter in the U.S.A. and Canada. If the fundex is used in other countries, the teacher will need to be selective and will almost certainly wish to add additional culturally-appropriate topics under each activity.

A total of 176 fundex cards, neatly divided into fifteen activity areas, are provided to be photocopied and handed out for individual, pair, or group writing/presentation assignments. A topic and several tasks are outlined briefly and clearly on each card. Each card can then be photocopied, mounted, laminated, and used. For example:

WRITING INSTRUCTIONS #3 / PREPARING FOOD

WRITE DOWN THE PROCEDURE FOR PREPARING ONE OF YOUR FAVORITE DISHES. Use some of the following words:

1. a dash of	2. a pinch of	3. ingredients	4. chop
5. slice	6. cut up	7. mix	8. stir

9. fry	10. bake	11. boil	12. broil
13. simmer	14. oven	15. stove	

Since this is an excellent and thoroughly utilitarian word-hoard, this is a fine exam of what *Writing Inspirations* is about. Texts which may seem dull and pedestrian to teacher are often student friendly.

The only concern I have is that this (and other reproductible books) comes at a ti when the industry and profession as a whole are campaigning against the practice that many teachers have of indiscriminately photocopying everything and anything, to detriment of our colleagues authors everywhere. That reservation aside, it is hard to fa this useful and very student-friendly book—and every school should have one.

About the Reviewer

William Corr is a textbook writer, teacher and published historian who has worl and written in Europe, Africa, the Middle East and Japan. His most recent book is Ada the Pilot: The Life and Times of Captain William Adams 1564-1620, *Japan Library. L 1995.*

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.

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

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

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