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English Medium Education in Hong Kong

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English medium education has long been a controversial issue in Hong Kong, arousing passions among parents, teachers, school children, and language educators. Some are convinced that pupils learn most effectively through the mother tongue (Cantonese) than through the second language (English) (Yu and Atkinson, 1988; Bruce, 1990). Others maintain that proficient mastery of English contributes so much to Hong Kong's economic well-being and the educational opportunities of its citizens, that it is well worth teaching it to all children from the time they enter school, and to attempt to ensure its mastery through using it as the medium of education at the secondary level (Lord, 1987).

The Learning of English in Hong Kong

At present, there are essentially three basic types of secondary schools in Hong Kong: Chinese middle schools using Cantonese as the medium of instruction in all subjects except English language; Anglo-Chinese schools theoretically using English as the medium of instruction for all lessons except Chinese Language, Literature and History; and prevocational schools which provide a vocationally oriented curriculum for weaker students. The first type of school now belongs to a minority (about 13%) due to strong parental preference for their children to be educated in English. Although Anglo-Chinese schools claim to use English as the medium of instruction, Cantonese is regularly used alongside English, and code-switching is common in most lessons (Johnson, 1988). In practice, very few Anglo-Chinese secondary schools attempt to use English exclusively as the medium of instruction.

There are seven degree-granting higher institutions in Hong Kong, all offering English-medium education except on Chinese related subjects. On completion of the secondary education, students will either further their studies locally or overseas mainly in one of the English-speaking countries such as England, Australia, Canada and the US. Hence, achieving a high level of English is of paramount importance for students to pursue tertiary education. When one further considers that Hong Kong has for years engaged in international business transactions with the world of commerce, one would appreciate more deeply the need for proficient mastery of English if Hong Kong is to thrive as a commercial and economic centre. It can be seen clearly that English plays an essential role in the educational and business sector.

With the iminent advent of 1997 when Hong Kong is to revert back to full Chinese sovereignty, the question of whether English will still be important in Hong

Kong continues to be controversial (Pennington and Yue, 1994). One would anticipate that the focus should now shift to the learning of Chinese to increase the involvement by Hong Kong citizens in the Chinese public affairs. However, when one considers the social and economic background of Hong Kong, one would certainly favour the implementation of English medium education all through the secondary level. The reality is that the majority of pupils in Hong Kong are not able to cope with it. Bruce (1990) observes that there is a high incidence of code-switching between English and Cantonese, and Johnson (1985) showed that on average there was more Cantonese spoken than English. Johnson (1989) reports on the positive humanistic role of code-switching and its educational necessity when, even with code-switching, at least 30% of the school children have difficulty following an English medium curriculum. Kwo (1987) suggests that these pupils are often so poor in English that they switch off when the teacher switches to English.

Over the years, most teachers have within the confines of the classroom walls, felt increasingly compelled to call upon Cantonese to help struggling learners when the lesson is supposed to be taught entirely in English. With such increased use of mixed code switching between the second language and first language, learners have understandably grown used to tuning in closely when the first language is used, and waiting patiently for comprehensible input eventually to appear after the second language has been used. In fact, a bizarre notion seemed to underpin much of the Hong Kong language planning policy at the time: that all the problems associated with language teaching could be solved at a stroke if Cantonese was to be used as the medium of instruction or if mother-tongue teaching was to be used to fix concepts prior to reteaching them in English. Although the claim that learning and teaching are most effective in the first language is firmly supported by experience and research (Siu *et al.*, 1979; Yu and Atkinson, 1988, Bruce, 1990; Hong Kong Education Department, 1990), there is no firm evidence that the standard of English has been unaffected as a result of the increasing use of Cantonese. Furthermore, Lo (1992) demonstrates that when information is taught in one language, it is likely to be encoded within long-term memory in the same language, suggesting that learning is most effective when the language of instruction is the same as the language of testing. This shows that the common practice of code-switching may not be very helpful, although Johnson (1988) thinks that it is sometimes necessary because of the humanistic role it plays.

Efforts Towards Improving the Learning of English

The government in Hong Kong has always been enthusiastic in promoting the learning of English in Hong Kong. As a result of the introduction of universal, free and compulsory junior secondary education in 1978, additional teachers were provided

for remedial teaching to pupils who were weak in Chinese or English, or both. In order to further enhance bilingual literacy, a $HK320 million language package was offered by the Government in 1981 (British Council, 1986), including the establishment of the Institute of Language in Education (ILE) in 1982 to raise the quality of language teaching in schools through inservice training of teachers and research, the provision of extra language teachers in Forms One to Three for remedial teaching in English and Chinese, and recruitment of expatriate lecturers in the ILE and in Colleges of Education.

There has never been a shortage of resources in the area of Teaching English in Hong Kong. In 1986, in an effort to encourage wider reading, reading in English for pleasure, a $HK16 million Pilot Extensive Reading Scheme was launched in nine secondary schools. The purpose of the scheme was to provide schools with a wide range of carefully graded readers, packaged by the Institute of Applied Language Studies of the University of Edinburgh (Yu, 1993). In 1987, the Government launched a $HK53 million, two-year Expatriate English Language Teachers' Pilot Scheme, involving the placement of native English speakers in language departments in secondary schools to teach junior form pupils (Forms One to Three) (Hong Kong Education Department, 1984). The scheme was later extended to senior forms and cost a further $HK42 million. The intention behind the move was to provide native speaker models of training to students, boosting their confidence to speak English among themselves and to foreigners.

Realising the utilitarian value of learning English, parents have a preference for their children to be educated in English, and even the children themselves seem to recognise the purpose of the exercise. In actual fact, English is greatly emphasized at all levels of education in Hong Kong: Kindergarten, primary, secondary and tertiary. Parents judge whether a school is good or not by the amount of English taught and the number of English textbooks used. Although the Education Department is strongly opposed to the teaching of English at kindergarten level, many of these schools ignore this advice, introducing English through the teaching of the alphabet, isolated vocabulary items and simple English conversation. English activities such as choral recitation and drama are included in extra-curricular activities held on Saturday. In order to enhance their reputation, many kindergartens employ native-speakers of English as teachers. Parents are keen for their children to be educated in these kindergartens because they provide a stepping stone for entry into a good primary school.

In the predominantly Chinese-medium primary school, a child is taught both Chinese and English from the age of six. Written Chinese is particularly difficult to learn as the construction of characters relies heavily on memorisation. Hard as it may be, Chann (1976) claims that to learn English is doubly difficult because it is completely alien to an average child in Hong Kong. The Education Department does

not recommend primary schools to use English as the medium of instruction except in English lessons. Hence, all subjects are taught in Cantonese. Some prestigious schools, which feed directly to prestigious sister secondary schools, take very firm steps to raise the standard of English. This is achieved through the use of supplementary grammar exercises and simplified English readers in addition to the normal school curriculum.

There seems to be a strong inclination in all parties concerned (the government, schools, parents and students) to improve the learning of English in Hong Kong. How can such incredible educational determination to improve English be reconciled against the suggestion that the majority of the students cannot follow lessons taught in English? There is always the impression in the teaching profession that students nowadays are not as good as those in the past decades.

There seems to be no simple answer to this question. One explanation for the decline in English standards put forward by the Education Department (1989) is that, with the introduction of the nine-year compulsory education, a greater proportion of the normal population now had the opportunity to receive education in English, compared with the very elitist educational system in the fifties, when English was taught to the brighter and wealthier young people. The traditional teaching methods which were accepted without dissent by the elite stayers-on at school, were quite unsuited to the normal range staying on at school as the eighties broke. In addition, the great economic success of Hong Kong has created a new demand for English to meet the needs of commerce, the financial sector, government and service industries, leading to the misconception that standards of English are declining and that teachers and students alike are not as good as they once were. However, it is difficult to convince practising teachers that the falling standard in English is due to a mismatch between supply and demand and constant complaints about students' poor English are often heard in the staff room.

The Importance of Linguistic Environment in Learning English

In analyzing why children do not learn English well in Hong Kong, one also has to examine the environment in which learning takes place. Outside the English classroom, pupils rarely have to use English in their daily life. The use of English in Hong Kong is severely limited to social interaction with non-speakers of Cantonese, with government and academic field. Although radio, television, films, newspapers, magazines and other written materials in English are available in English, school children make little or no use of them in school and home and they seldom use English on the street, in the society or for social purposes. Most teachers and pupils have no contact with foreigners and, indeed, the English they do

know is rarely heard in the society, although English mass media are available. Pierson et al. (1981) found that many school children think that it is bizarre for two Chinese to speak in English in public, and Lin *et al.* (1991), more than a decade later, observes that such an attitude has not changed.

The importance of a rich linguistic environment is receiving increased attention from linguists and language educators, who seek every opportunity to broaden language pedagogic paradigms, simulating the "real-life" situation in which the second language can be introduced in natural contexts in order to maximize the learner's participation in naturalistic language exchange. Immersion programmes, for example, are attempts to saturate the school learning environment with the second language to replicate as closely as possible the condition in which children acquire their first language. The psycholinguistic rationale for immersion programmes, claims Carey (1987), includes the view that since language is basically rooted in communication, an ideal acquisition context would include communication in the second language in a great variety of social settings.

The success of second language acquisition through immersion has been demonstrated extensively both in Canada (Lambert and Tucker, 1972) and in the United States (Politzer, 1980), involving the use of the target language in classroom instruction and communicative interaction. Hammerly (1987) claims that immersion programmes are the most sophisticated form of Second Language Acquisition through Classroom Communication (SLACC) and a manifestation of the validity of second language acquisition theories. Krashen (1984), the champion of the naturalistic approach to language teaching, points out that the approach is in line with his theory of second language acquisition, claiming that it is the most successful programme in the literature of language teaching. Transmitting all "meaningful academic and interpersonal content" through the use of second language, immersion approaches are far more effective than conventional class teaching as the language is used as a medium rather than a subject (Cummins, 1982).

Lambert and Tucker (1972), and Swain (1978) are advocates for an early start of second language learning, suggesting that young children are more responsive to language learning in natural settings. Whereas early immersion is beneficial in second language learning, late immersion seems to have no deficits at all, with older learners acquiring second language competence more rapidly than young learners (Genesee, 1978). Stern and Cummins (1981) remark that younger children are more likely to develop "basic interpersonal communicative skills (BICS)" which are required in a social situation, whereas older children are more readily to develop "cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP)," which emphasizes decontextualised textual processing.

Although immersion programmes demonstrate great success, it seems unwise to jump to the conclusion that merely immersing the learner in a second language

saturated environment will inevitably bring about linguistic advancement, as it will in the case of first language acquisition. Despite extensive empirical evidence supporting the effectiveness of immersion approaches, a number of studies show that it is difficult for immersion students to achieve a high level of second language proficiency, claiming that the linguistic output of immersion students "linguistically faulty" (Pawley, 1985; Hammerly, 1987). Gustafson (1983) comments that thirteen years of immersion are insufficient to produce linguistic competence.

Lo (1987) examined the effects of exposure to a second language saturated environment on learning English with a group of Cantonese speaking university students who had newly arrived in England to start an undergraduate course. She monitored their linguistic progress in an experimental period of one year, anticipating that , in theory at least, their cultural knowledge and proficiency in English should be enhanced as a result of total immersion in a second language environment at the end of the period. Results turned out to be rather disappointing in that only little progress was shown both on linguistic and cultural knowledge. Replicating the above study, Doland and Lo (1990) compared the performance of two Cantonese speaking groups; the first, a group newly arrived in England and the second, a group who had been in England over a year. One of their hypotheses was that the latter group should demonstrate better knowledge about English and the British culture in a computer generated language task due to their extra exposure to and interaction with the environment. Results again did not bear out this hypothesis and a detailed examination of the data and individual background of the subjects led to the conclusion that mere exposure to a second language environment would not lead to automatic linguistic gains. The extent to which the learner participates in the process of learning determines the ultimate second language proficiency.

It appears that the road to second language proficiency is difficult and that second language mastery requires much more time than many educators would like to believe. Even with the most favourable condition, learners do not seem to make great progress in learning English. One is, therefore, led to postulate that the learning of English is extraordinarily difficult in the 'bilingual' context of Hong Kong, where opportunity to engage in English is so rare.

Possible Solution

If successful second language learning is to be achieved, it must be supported by massive exposure to, and use of the target language. Otherwise, very little will be learned and the little that is mastered will soon be forgotten. Since Hong Kong is essentially a monolingual society in which everyday communication is effected through Cantonese, exposure to the target language (English) is extremely limited outside the classroom. For thoroughly successful learning, what is needed is for students to be placed in an English saturated school environment in which English medium is used in an immersion fashion, ideally beginning from the primary stage,

with the amount of English used being increased proportionately to the class level. Such a recommendation is well grounded because research findings show that an early start of second language learning is beneficial, taking advantage of the fact that children are more responsive to language in natural settings (Lambert and Tucker, 1972; Swain, 1978).

To ensure a smoother transition from the Cantonese-medium primary to English-medium secondary, it is advisable to increase exposure to English at upper primary levels to alleviate the pressure accruing from the sudden change of language medium. In order to assist English learning at an earlier stage, the mother tongue can be used in greater proportion to allow pupils to express what they want to say but its use should gradually be reduced at later levels. Atkinson (1978) suggests that the mother tongue in the language classroom is a potential resource that should merit considerable attention, pointing out that at early levels a ratio of about five per cent native language to about ninety-five per cent target language may be profitable. Similarly, Katchen (1990) also supports the use of the mother tongue in small amounts because this helps pupils understand, saves time and enhances teacher rapport with students.

Simply postponing the use of the English medium to as late as secondary or tertiary levels and offering remedial teaching when problems have already arisen is probably too late. Despite huge amounts of remedial work undertaken to improve students' English at this stage, the general impression is that the standard of English among pupils is still falling. The late introduction of English medium education at the tertiary level will complicate matters because there is the problem of coping with the learning of subject knowledge and a language problem at the same time. Many language educators worry that the early phasing in of the English medium education to the curriculum would have an adverse effect on the development of the mother tongue. Such a fear may not be necessary as Cantonese is used so widely at home and outside school, one would expect that students would have sufficient exposure to the language to develop competence.

Conclusion

In this article, I have reviewed the case of English learning in Hong Kong, highlighting the importance and necessity of English medium education from the perspectives of parents, school, students, government and society. I have also examined the linguistic environment of Hong Kong which causes difficulties in English learning, concluding that increasing exposure to English at upper primary level will be able to smooth the transition from Chinese medium primary schools to English medium secondary schools and compensate for the insufficient second language input in the environment. The immersion approach should definitely benefit children in the progress towards genuine bilingual education.

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CNN Newsroom: A World of ESL/EFL Possibilities

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It's the first day of school and the textbooks won't be in for at least another week. Meanwhile, what can the panicked teacher scrape up for class materials? On another occasion, the term is obviously a little longer than the text can make provisions for. What can the teacher use during the last two weeks of school? If the ESL or EFL program is sufficiently prepared to receive it, CNN Newsroom can rescue nearly every intermediate through advanced ESL materials-deficient situation.

What is CNN Newsroom?

Every Monday through Friday at 3:45 AM Eastern Time (USA), a fifteen-minute, commercial-free, cable-delivered news program is aired via cable throughout the world on the regular CNN TV channel. Unfortunately, copyright laws restrict videotaping and later classroom exhibition of most programming—including regular CNN. However, fortunately, since August 14, 1989, Turner Educational Services, Inc. (TESI) has been airing a daily program for classroom use.

Any school may use this program free of charge, the only requirement being to fill out and mail a simple and free "School Enrollment and Licensing Form" to Turner Educational Services, One CNN Center Box 105366, Atlanta, Georgia 30348-5366 USA (the form may be obtained by calling 1-800-344-6219). Upon enrolling, educators may tape CNN Newsroom at school or at home for use in their classrooms, and the tapes may be kept as long as they are needed, provided they are used only within the enrolled school's curriculum. And any country that has access to CNN through cable also receives CNN Newsroom and may take advantage of the educational opportunities that accompany it.

When the new service was first provided, Turner signified his generous intentions as follows: "We want teachers to use CNN Newsroom as they see fit, so we will not ask any school or teacher to sign a contract. CNN Newsroom will be a public service of TBS and the cable industry, without ads. We will offer our nation's schools the best that CNN's 1600 superb television journalists can provide, with our 21 bureaus worldwide and our extensive network of international and domestic broadcast affiliates. We will provide free teaching aids daily by electronic mail. Then we'll let teachers and students decide whether to join in" (as quoted by James M. Haney in 1989 at the Annual Meeting of the Speech Communication Association in a paper entitled "TV 101: Good Broadcast Journalism for the Classroom?").

Though CNN Newsroom's intended audience seems to be principally middle and secondary schools, because of the usually slightly simpler news context, CNN

Newsroom is easily adaptable for ESL or EFL audiences. The fifteen-minute broadcast includes a short (40 second to 1 minute), catchy opener usually announcing three news headlines, which is followed by the day's (3 to 4-minute) top story.

Video or sequential pictures may then roll across the screen which often relate to the top story or desk presentation, always with background music (obviously with American middle and high school youth in mind) and the news in words flowing by in timed-reading fashion at the bottom of the screen.

A similar type of news presentation is the "On This Day In (i.e. 1960)" special historical events series wherein three to four events that occurred on this given day are described in pictorial and written form with background music. Another is the "Can You Name This Country?" map and sequential picture series with descriptive words about the country, its culture, and/or historical events. Each day's news also includes a few minutes of a news desk, scheduled thematically as follows: "Future Desk" on Monday; "International Desk" on Tuesday; "Business" on Wednesday; "Science Desk" on Thursday; and "Editor's Desk" on Friday. Finally, "Our World" is a daily feature of issues interesting to most youth in United States schools.

Supplemental Teaching Aids

To supplement the broadcast, free teaching aids are provided daily by such independent electronic mail services as those following(mostly for a nominal transmission fee): MCI Mail, XPress/XChange, GTE Education, FrEdMail, America On Line, Learning Link members such as the national Introlink as well as numerous state-specific guide carriers. Recently, "The Guidelines" have also been available by around 4:00 AM (U.S. Eastern Time) via electronic mail through subscription to <majordomo@tenet.edu> and a message body requesting "subscribe cnn-newsroom".

Each set of guidelines begins with a program rundown of what is included in the 15-minute broadcast, including time lengths for each news section so that a teacher will know how a section of news will fit into a limited class period. A short vocabulary list is followed by substantial groups of discussion questions and then usually by a student activity section, such as completing a chart, doing further interview or library research, doing an experiment, completing an inventory, filling in blanks with jumbled CNN Newsroom headline words, or responding with opinionated answers to discussion questions.

Creating ESL-Related Guidelines

As the guidelines are predominantly prepared with US middle and high school students in mind, most ESL teachers prefer to prepare their own comprehension materials that will build their students' vocabulary and understanding from a more

multi-lingual, multi-cultural perspective. For example, the March 22, 1994 guidelines spotlighted only ten significant words. In our adaptation for in-house use, fifty-two new regular vocabulary words were added, thirty-nine names of places, people, companies, etc. and six idiomatic phrases, including "tinker with stuff," "get some training under their belts," and "hard to come by."

Our in-house ESL guidelines almost always include a leading multiple-choice question wherein students select the three news headlines among five or six options. The questions immediately following are usually easy true/false or multiple choice; thereafter, students begin to fill in blanks with significant numbers, identifications, and ideas or events. Often a matching exercise is included involving people, places, achievements, and events in a particular news story. Some open-ended question sections conclude the questionnaire: one for reading compre- hension, and another for speaking interviews, classroom discussions, or writing assignment topics.

Teachers may opt to create their own grammar, discussion, or pronunciation-oriented exercises. A typical grammar exercise may include the script of a selected news story with blanks where the base forms of given verbs are to be written in correct form and tense, or as a script with articles incorrectly used and x's at the end of each line wherein an article error is to be found by the student. Discussion type questions may relate the news to the students' home countries and cultures. Pronunciation may be enhanced by class repetition of the vocabulary words, in imitation of the teacher's articulation. Indeed, the types of exercises which an ESL teacher can create are quite open and endless.

In creating ESL-related activities, captioned CNN Newsroom videotapes are generally felt necessary in order to obtain correct name spellings as comprehension questions, grammar exercises, and topic discussion questions are prepared. And in fact, captioning is also helpful to the students in the development of certain skills. For example, the sound could be turned off and the captioned message left for the students' reading practice or the sound and captions can be combined for pronunciation improvement. If an educator's TVCR unit was made before July 1993, a closed-captioning decoder unit can be attached to the VCR to record the video with permanent captions; otherwise, the decoders are built-in to the TVCR. Also, since all news, including CNN Newsroom, is presented very quickly, a device to copy the text from closed-captioned programming directly to a PC or Mac is useful, for then the captioned text can be printed for teachers' questionnaire preparation and/or students' comprehension development. (Such a device can be obtained through Pacific Lotus Technology, Inc., 411-108th Avenue NE Suite 235, Bellevue, WA 98004 @ 1-800-243-2710.)

A noncaptioned version of Newsroom can also be provided for advanced listening classes, and is valuable in respect to the fact that closed captioning often overlays and

thus blocks out important original CNN captions below head figures and other originally printed screen messages.

Finally, if desired for some unusual reason, still another videotaped version could be produced with the picture blanked out for listening comprehension without nonverbal gesture support.

Networking and Other Possibilities

Yes, if the school is enrolled, CNN Newsroom could save the day in an urgent materials deficient situation. But one does not have to wait for an urgent situation until students are permitted to benefit from the up-to-date vocabulary and content Newsroom has to offer. Almost any ESL or EFL program can make this dependable broadcast part of its curriculum, with teachers rotating the responsibility to create general comprehension questions, discussion topics, idiom usage studies, and/or grammar exercises.

Upon creation, these exercises can be exchanged within a local network of other teachers within one ESL program or among several international ESL/EFL programs whose educators make use of worldwide electronic mail.

What is more, once an educator gets started with Newsroom, s/he will find that educational opportunities do not end there. Indeed, Turner Educational Services, Inc. (TESI) also offers interactive distance-learning, online resources, and low-cost educational videos, videodiscs, CD-ROMS, etc., as found in TESI's publication, *Television, Technology and Teaching* (T3).

The boundaries are certainly limitless when an educator begins to use CNN Newsroom. It is only appropriate that we as ESL and EFL educators and students take the opportunity to extend our appreciation to Turner Educational Services, Inc. for making these resources available and affordable.

About the Author

Priscilla Fawn Whittaker, Director of the Language Center and an ELI Instructor at BYU-Hawaii, recently presented "CNN: Caught Locally Networked!" at TESOL 94. Her E-mail address whittakf@BYUH.edu welcomes ESL-related Newsroom exercises and ideas (preferrably in Wordperfect), which she will forward to others interested in sharing Newsroom activities.

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Discovery Writing: ESL Student Research with a Purpose

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Research is a word that sometimes strikes terror in the hearts of ESL students, who visualize hours of combing library stacks for information to copy. Teachers, too, often dread the thought of student research, foreseeing endless hours reading and grading sometimes unimaginative and often plagiarized papers. But ESL student research doesn't need to be dull. When students are given the opportunity to uncover and process information they want to know, work in collaborative teams, and publish their findings, real learning occurs and research becomes a friendlier word.

Engaging Students in Research

For students to learn, "engagement" must take place; students must see themselves as "doers or owners" of knowledge that will "somehow further the purposes of their lives" (Cambourne, 1988, p. 52). This is especially true for writing and researching. Too often writing instruction focuses on skills and isolated activities for which students may perceive no authentic purpose (Popken, 1988). An emphasis on decontextualized language skills ignores the fact that college students use reading and writing to learn; reading and writing skills are not automatically transferred to subject matter learning (Vacca & Vacca, 1993). Research, too, often focuses on analyzing and reformulating irrelevant data, a task which invites limited personal engagement (Langer & Applebee, 1987). Studies suggest that writing must be relevant to students if they are to learn from the process (Freeman & Freeman, 1989; Fox, 1990; Zamel, 1982).

Students who plan to continue their academic careers beyond the ESL classroom will not only need to know how to conduct and report research in their various disciplines, such as business, science, and humanities, but will also need to read and analyze research-based text. These skills form the foundation of American higher education. Students who are not adept at gathering and reporting research data are at a grave disadvantage in the academic setting, not to mention their future careers.

Researchers also claim that learning to work in cooperative teams can benefit students in their academic pursuits (Johnson & Johnson, 1984). American universities, influenced by the use of cooperative management models in the business community, are increasingly turning to small group interaction as a means of preparation for life beyond the university. By giving students tasks to accomplish in groups, teachers convey the message that teamwork matters. Students perceive that they can reach their learning goals "if and only if the other students in the learning

group also reach their goals" (Johnson & Johnson, 1984, p. 27). Teachers and students alike have begun to recognize that cooperative teamwork supports both individual and group learning.

Research becomes more powerful for students when the results not only have meaning but also reach a broad audience through classroom publishing. A number of studies cite the value of publishing student work, claiming that it enhances motivation, communication, and collaboration (Burnham, 1986; Osterhaudt & Wilking, 1992; Willensky & Green, 1990; Witt, 1991) as well as focuses "meaningful attention on writing conventions such as grammar, punctuation and spelling" (Brown, 1989, p. 19). Another study, examining ESL students' perspective of publishing, illustrated that students valued their writing more when it was published (Moulton & Holmes, in press).

Assigning the Project

Using a communicative approach which utilizes original student research, teamwork, and publication, we have devised a strategy which integrates skills and provides a real purpose and real readers for student writing. Each semester, we engage our intermediate and advanced writing students in research projects we call discovery writing. These practical projects involve students in research by sending them out into the community to find information they are already curious about, write it up, and publish it for public consumption.

To begin a discovery project, we spend class time generating topics that students need or want to know more about. Some recent topics our classes decided to research were apartments in the local area, restaurants affordable on a student budget, American holidays, stores that sell "cool" clothes at bargain prices, and entertainment hot spots. Depending on the topics, a class either works in two- or three-person teams on separate topics or divides a topic into manageable pieces. Teams are then formed based on each student's specific interests. For example, in the holiday research project, the instructor matched two students according to holiday preferences while in the apartment research project, students selected their own three-person teams and then chose geographic areas to explore.

Once the teams and topics are decided, students figure out what specific data to look for and then begin to compile their research questionnaires. Queries may include anything from prices, to types of services or merchandise available, to customer opinion. Any question is fair game, but if the answers are to be integrated into a single document, the questions must be consistent across the groups. This activity requires students not only to think about what questions will elicit the information they are seeking but also to formulate questions with linguistic accuracy. We use this process as a diagnostic tool to check for individual understanding of question patterns and as a sensitizing session on the notion of social register.

Students next discuss possible sources of the data they need: newspapers, people, yellow pages, public offices, businesses, and other alternatives to standard library resources. Students not familiar with American culture are often surprised with the availability of information and the ease with which it may be obtained. They decide on the number and nature of sources and then divide up the tasks so that no one's effort is duplicated and the work is divided fairly. This promotes individual accountability as well as group responsibility.

Armed with their questions, students pursue their sources, collecting the information needed to write their manuscripts. They conduct interviews with key informants; read brochures, newspapers, and public documents; and take field notes as they infiltrate the community, searching for answers. For example, the source of information for the restaurant project included menus and a visual inspection of the properties while the "cool" clothes project used newspaper ads and yellow pages as well as trips to local stores.

With data in hand, the teams reconvene. They begin the task of making sense out of the information they have collected. Critical thinking skills are used to analyze and classify the data logically. Because not all the data always fits nor do people always interpret information in the same way, students must negotiate and make group decisions on which information to include. This process involves a number of functional listening and speaking tasks such as critical listening, asking for clarification, agreeing/disagreeing, and persuading.

When data analysis is complete, we bring in samples of possible formats—brochures, guides, manuals, even computer databases—to try to expand the students' publishing options. Visual conceptualization skills are called on as students then select and design a format for presentation, trying to make it as consumer friendly as possible. Students begin to realize that while the process of discovery is important, so is the product (Byrne, 1988).

Once the format is established, students, still in their original teams, write their findings. Some groups choose to write cooperatively while others choose to assign sections. Most writing is done outside the classroom, but we usually oversee the final editing process in class to assist groups with language use and style.

The next step is publishing. Depending on the tools available, students either type, word process, or enter the information into a database to get their document ready to go to press (which often means the office copier). Since the information contained in the document is useful to other ESL students, a distribution network is set up. Copies are placed in the hands of students, on a shelf of the library, at the counter of the international student office, and in the language lab where they can be easily accessed. Often we accompany this event with a celebration and an opportunity for students to congratulate themselves. With an air of festivity,

students sign each others' copies, share refreshments, and generally bask in the pride of authorship.

Evaluating the assignment is simple because we have the students evaluate themselves and each other. We distribute a form on which they evaluate themselves and their group (see Appendix). Rarely do students inflate their own grades; in fact, we have found that students tend to underestimate their achievements. Based on their evaluations, we then assign three grades: one for group cooperation, one for individual contribution, and one for final product.

In Retrospect

Aside from the multiple language skills the project integrates, discovery writing has also had several affective benefits for our students. Because it is a student-generated and student-centered activity, learners become engaged in the assignment. Students take ownership not only of the project but also of their learning. Because students work so closely together, they tend to develop a strong rapport, benefiting from an environment in which they feel comfort and a sense of membership (Gardner, 1985; Johnson, 1989). Risk-taking becomes easier, so students are more willing to try out their "newly acquired language, to use it for meaningful purposes, and to assert themselves" (Brown, 1994, p. 24).

Discovery writing has given our students an authentic purpose and audience for writing. It has provided an opportunity to integrate speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills. It has introduced our students to the critical thinking process and taught them how to learn from inquiry. And it has created a community of researchers and writers bonded by team spirit and pride of authorship.

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Appendix A

Self-Evaluation

Please evaluate yourself and your team by responding to the following:

Individual work

Rate your personal contribution to	circle one			
1. the planning of your group's project	very good	good	average	not so good
2. collecting data for the project	very good	good	average	not so good
3. interpreting and analyzing data	very good	good	average	not so good
4. writing up the results	very good	good	average	not so good
Give yourself a final project grade	very good	good	average	not so good

Group work

Rate your group on	circle one			
1. cooperation during planning	very good	good	average	not so good
2. cooperation during data collection	very good	good	average	not so good
3. cooperation during data analysis	very good	good	average	not so good
4. cooperation during writing	very good	good	average	not so good
Give your group a final project grade	very good	good	average	not so good

Project

	circle one			
Rate your final product	very good	good	average	not so good

On another piece of paper, write brief answers to the following:

1. What did you learn from this project? How?
2. What did you like best about this project? Why?
3. What did you like least about this project? Why?
4. What suggestions do you have for improving the project if we were to do it again? Why? How?

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Mentions in Action: Few Word Sentences, O.K.!

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A Short Story (Dec. 10, 1993)

The other day I hastily bought a new winter coat in a large mall with many stores. As I was leaving the mall I noticed another coat in another store that was the dream coat I really wanted. I agonized over having bought the other coat and wondered if my Japanese was up to being able to explain to the salesman in the first store that I wanted to return the coat I had bought. I spent ten minutes trying to figure out polite ways to phrase it and to explain that I had found another coat and would it be all right to return the one I had bought. I finally went back, and found the salesman, raised the bag, and said "Sumimasen...." ("Excuse me..."). And he promptly said, "Ah, kanseru?" ("Oh, cancel?") and took the bag and gave me back my money. We did in two words what just took me 139 words to explain to you. The context was worth the other 137 words.

Introduction

Ever had trouble getting some students to talk? Perhaps the trouble lies partially in their belief that they have to talk in long completely correct and grammatical sentences. Perhaps part of the trouble lies in tasks that teachers give that may not have a rich enough context to support short utterances.

This article describes activities that provide rich contexts and give instructions to students to use only a few words, or "mentions," so that they will interact and perhaps have their belief systems challenged. While I know the activities are extremely useful for coaxing language from shy students who have been through years of non-communicative language learning, as many Japanese have, they can also be a useful reminder to fluent students that often a few words are enough.

Let me give you one more appropriate analogy before going on. I used to teach a lot of tennis to pay for my studies. Most tennis teachers would start teaching their students at the back of the court with the long ground strokes. Most students would hit a fair amount of home runs, doing little good to their fragile tennis egos. I, instead, first brought my students up to the net and had them put their rackets up in front of their faces. I would hit the ball as closely as possible toward their faces and theywould just move their rackets the few inches necessary to meet the ball. Because they were right by the net, when they met the ball it would come back over and I

could hit it back to them again. Immediately there was an exchange. Immediately they could get the joy of "playing the game" of doing what all tennis players love in the game—the exchange. Then they were hooked and would work much longer and with more courage on the difficult ground strokes. However, I always made sure they did a bit of net play during every lesson, so that they would renew that feeling of really interacting. Doing activities with "mentions" in language learning is like "bringing them to the net" so they can enjoy what language is really used for.

Some Background

Bernard Py (1986) defines "*mentions*" as restricted utterances that act as a minimally adequate means for the transmission of comparatively complex messages. He notes that non-natives sometimes use mentions as calls for help, hoping that the native speaker might fill in the rest, as in the following example:

NNS: Dinner?
NS: Oh, you wanna go ta dinner?
NNS: Yes.
NS: O.K. Wheredaya wanna go?
NNS: Pizza?
NS: Do you wanna pizza restaurant ... or an Italian restaurant?
NNS: Itiarian? [Not understanding word]
NS: You know, Italian, like, from I-ta-li-a.
NNS: Ah Itaria!
NS: Yeah Italia. So whadaya want ... a pizza restaurant or Italian?
NNS: Itaria. . . Itarian?
NS: *Italian* restaurant?
NNS: Itarian restaurant. Yes.
NS: Great! Let's go.

When you are learning a new language, you soon realize how difficult it is to put words together into long sentences to say the most simple things. At the beginning, very often just one- and two-word utterances can work for whole sentences when the context is rich enough. In fact, native speakers use them all the time. The Japanese unknowingly refer to the use of minimal speech in a rich context when they talk about a salary-man only speaking three words upon coming home at night: "dinner", "bath", and "bed". However, one only needs to think of a surgeon asking for tools, a bus driver calling out stops, or of a person ordering fast food, to see that mentions are really used in every language when the contexts are rich enough.

In Class

Several years ago I was teaching obligatory English courses to Japanese economics students who had had seven years of grammar-translation courses and were

quite reluctant to talk. I asked them to interact in a variety of simple exercises while I observed. Those who tried to use complete sentences (the ones that they had memorized to pass their entrance exams) were mostly silent. They spoke using three-minute long six-word sentences; the pauses were long enough to forget what the topic was and plan your next three vacations. The most interactive students were those who were using single words and partial sentences. I wondered what would happen if I made one- and two-word sentences the rule. So I did.

Exercise One

The first exercise consisted of telling students to have one-word sentence dialogs and to exchange as much information as possible. I demonstrated this with a student in front of the class. Only one word was allowed. It went something like this:

Hello.
Hello.
Name? (pointing)
Minoru.
(pause)
Name? (pointing)
Tim.
Hungry? (hand on stomach)
No.
Thirsty?
Yes.
Tired?
Little.

I wrote the dialogue on the board afterwards and I asked them to have similar conversations, and for each person to write them down as well. After they had done this once, they changed partners and did it again. By the second time, they became really active. They even displayed laughing and normal conversation-like noises that I used to hear only before class began. Suddenly, years of pent-up frustration at knowing so many words and not being able to use them exploded into laughter, gesture and fun conversation. They were actually using English to communicate with each other! They were finding "meaningfully personal uses" for what they were learning. For example, one girl pointed at a boy as she asked her partner "Pretty?"

Many of these learners had unconsciously been following a rule that goes something like, "You have to use a lot of words to be clear and not sound stupid and childish." Not only is this rule false, it probably slows down one's language acquisition immensely. Ideas can be expressed in just a few words if the context is rich enough. And often the fewer, the better.

In later classes I tried the following two exercises and have found they also work really well. It's important to actually demonstrate what you want with one of the students so the others see how easy it is.

Exercise Two: TIME

Give them a rich context that they know about. For example, write on the board, "What were you doing yesterday at _____[time]?" The asker (one partner), however, is simply to say the time, "6 a.m.?", "7:30?", etc. and their partner simply says one or two words explaining what they were doing *at that time* yesterday. So the conversation might go:

Student 1: 6 a.m. ?
Student 2: Sleeping
Student 1: 7 a.m. ?
Student 2: Still sleeping
Student 1: 8 a.m. ?
Student 2: Eating

After a few minutes they switch roles. There can be many variations of the same exercise using days of the week, months, years, etc. You can further liberate their language accessing by allowing them to use their imagination, as in, "What do you think your teacher was doing yesterday at _____ (time)?" And they make it up from their stock of known vocabulary (and laugh at their "sleepy" or whatever teacher).

Exercise Three: OPINIONS

Give students some area for a context, sports for example: "What do you think about _____[sport]?" One partner says the name of a sport, and the other gives their opinion. Part of one conversation I overheard went something like:

Miki: Baseball?
Yuki: Boring.
Miki: Sumo?
Yuki: Interesting.
Miki: To do?
Yuki: Me?
Miki: You do it?
Yuki: No, watch! [much laughing]
Miki: Oh, only watch.
Yuki: Mochiron. ["of course"]
Miki: Of course, ...

Of course, you can give them other categories, like hobbies, school subjects, movie stars, etc. Also, you may notice some of them going over the one- or two-word limit as they get excited and more spontaneous. And that's O.K., except for two things: 1) their partners may also begin wanting to have long sentences and not be capable of doing it; 2) they themselves may not realize how powerful mentions are and may not learn that they can be very useful. As you circulate and

observe, you can gently remind the more fluent to "play the game" of only a few words. (Sometimes I wish I could get some native speaker colleagues to play the game!)

Mention exercises seem especially appropriate to students who have learned language for several years and have a lot in storage but have never really spoken it. It activates this passive language first in small chunks instead of going for complete fluency all at once, which is unrealistic and may produce frustration.

Theory

We know from first-language development (Ferguson and Snow, 1977) and interlanguage studies (Corder, 1981) that children begin with short one- or two-word utterances and that these become longer the more proficient they become. Corder aptly talks about the "transitional competencies" that speakers have and that they hopefully pass through as they continually develop. Insisting that students speak in full sentences right away would be similar to insisting that babies do the same with their first language. Yet many materials imply that long sentences are the way you communicate in English.

We know that written texts typically have longer phrases than oral communication because the context needs creating, while in oral communication there are contextual elements that we take for granted. It seems that in societies (such as Japan) where written texts are the principal material in the foreign language classrooms (instead of authentic listening materials), students (and teachers) may over-generalize long formal written language to the spoken medium and thus become monitor-over-users (Krashen, 1985), frustrating their natural tendency to communicate in simple utterances.

Responding to Possible Criticisms

Some teachers, especially those in traditional educational systems, may fear that these activities 1) encourage the use of faulty or inappropriate forms, 2) lead to fossilized substandard forms, and 3) may make students sound like children. If these are the worst things that could happen, I would gladly accept these results rather than have my students remain completely unable to communicate out of an obsessive desire for complete, faultless, native-like forms. True, they will use some faulty English, but, more importantly they will USE IT! Mistakes are inevitable and part of the learning process. If these forms are fossilized, at least we've gotten that far and prepared the ground for de-fossilization should they go abroad. They may also sound a bit like children. So what? I wish my halting Japanese sounded as good as a child's. These pseudo problems can be worked on, but are too often excuses for not doing anything. Too much education keeps a baby from crawling while lecturing it on how to be an elegant dancer.

In most settings, people are praised for their willingness to try, no matter how little. Freezing up because you aren't sure if your verb-tense is correct, means never starting. An old aphorism goes, "Winners are people who don't stop trying; losers are those who never start." I fear that many students never start because they think they have to be perfect. We can still be adult and respected when we use reduced forms, and we can communicate many things with the help of the context. For many of my students, seven years of traditional English study has left virtually nothing operational in face-to-face encounters. Mentions seem to stir up this dormant language and their natural communication strategies. If students continue their language learning, these one-word utterances become two- and three-word utterances, formulaic idioms, and pat phrases. These exercises therefore are steps, logical and natural, along the way to more complete and complex expression. When students have the opportunity to be in the native environment, these restricted utterances will allow them to interact and generate more input and interaction (Krashen 1985). They will allow speakers to participate, integrate, and learn more. These exercises make English something useful.

Conclusion

It's no fun hitting the ball over the net if it never comes back. Mentions are often all we need. And it could be that practicing them will help our students learn to be more communicative. Just imagine. Your next class. Just ten minutes. Fun!

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Can a Leopard Change Its Spots? A Personal Account

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In the Beginning

As a teacher, I always thought that students showed an antipathy toward writing simply because they were frustrated by the grammatical problems that curbed their thinking path and their inability to express themselves. I often related their incompetence to master grammatical structures to their low motivation in self-learning and inattentiveness to correction work. Upon marking students' assignments, I spotted the grammatical errors and faulty expressions and rephrased the confused patterns. Provocative remarks were often made on the students' tasks to vent my dissatisfaction at their messy performances. In writing lessons, I played the role of an authoritarian figure by designing the lesson into a semi-instructional one. Students were apprehensive about seeking help from the teacher. I seldom monitored to see what they needed as I thought it was time for students to contribute and display what they had learned without the teacher's involvement of any kind. Writing was only regarded as testing. The writing lessons were disciplined and there was neither sharing between teacher and students nor among students themselves. I didn't derive pleasure from the lessons at all. I was eager to seek a "breakthrough" in my teacher career.

In Training

I underwent a training course designed for the teaching of process writing organized by the principal investigator, Dr. Martha C. Pennington, assisted by the trainer, Marie Cheung of Hong Kong City Polytechnic. I worked in a team of 8 members. The training lasted for a duration of 5 months beginning in August 1992. During this time, a process approach was adopted in the writing programme to help my class of Form 3 students to discover the meaning of writing. A meeting was held once a month on training how to apply and practise process writing in the L2 classroom. In the course of training, workshops concerning the sharing of resources and experiences were arranged to review the research progress and reactions of students in each process approach cycle. Valuable feedback was also given as the trainer paid three class visits to my school.

In the implementation stage, process writing was conducted in 3 lesson cycles (about 6 or 7 lessons each). Every cycle represented a full range of writing processes

and included several procedures. In each writing process cycle, various types of activities were adopted and modified to meet the needs of the students and the design of each process approach cycle had a certain degree of likeness to serve this purpose.

The first lesson started off with written brainstorming to generate ideas on a topic from students under a time constraint. It was intended to develop their skill in concentrated writing and capturing any instant thinking in this speedy and brief writing process. It was ensued by "fastwriting" on a particular topic to train students to think divergently about a subject and to formulate ideas in complete sentences. Then peer discussion occurred in which students were provided an opportunity to share ideas and give positive comments on each others' work. Discussion guidelines for the fastwrites and drafts were handed out to facilitate the discussion and keep the students on track.

In order to help students evolve meaning, develop, and elaborate ideas, they wrote 2 drafts to discover their new intentions and purpose and to clarify what had been scribbled across the drafts. The first draft was written in the second lesson, and was followed by peer discussion and conferencing (more on this later). In the third and fourth lessons, the students worked on supplementary worksheets on organizational structures or devices of discourse (e.g. coherence, idea linking, paragraphing etc.) and grammar (e.g. tenses, pronouns, agreement of subject and verb, etc.). These activities served as input to expose students to rich resources and writing techniques. The second draft was a home assignment to be submitted on the following day. Students then exchanged their drafts for peer discussion. Coupled with this was teacher conferencing. Then, I collected the second draft for review, giving constructive comments on each individual draft.

In the fifth and sixth lessons, the students completed a supplementary worksheet on common errors made in the drafts and then a class discussion was held to elucidate problems and give feedback on all students' performances. In writing the final product, students concentrated on editing and proofreading as a means of self-monitoring.

On receiving the final products, the teacher marked them by giving her compliments and inspiring remarks rather than negative criticism. The marking scheme was based on the range and accuracy of grammatical structures, vocabulary and complexity of sentence structure, and organization of content. The assignments were graded according to the effort and improvement students made in different stages of the writing process. As follow-up, well-presented assignments were read aloud in class for appreciation. Some of the outstanding creations were posted on a class display-board for exhibition.

Of all the activities involved, the most effective ones were peer discussion and conferencing. In peer discussion, students were divided into pairs or groups, where

they responded to spelling, grammar, and clarity of expression. Students generally realized the change of role from a writer to a competent reader. They tried to express themselves in the negotiation to get ideas across to their peers. They asserted that they could learn about the merits and demerits of a piece of writing and the techniques in reading it critically. They perceived the vast importance of reviewing their own work and became more alert to their own inaccuracies. Examining the others' work stimulated their own thinking, too, they remarked. In peer discussion, I played the part of a facilitator, supervisor, and advisor, intending to narrow down the social distance between myself and the students.

The other successful activity was conferencing. While students were performing the revising task or engaging in peer discussion, some were called upon individually, in pairs, or in groups, to engage in a teacher-student conference. They were reminded to prepare before attending it so that the conference could be fully-exploited under the time constraints. I imparted feedback mainly on the length, clarity, organization, development, completeness of ideas, and the choices of words. I started by praising the credits of the draft and then discussing the vague points regarding the purpose of the students and to clarify ambiguous ideas. I endeavored to guide students in areas of grammar as well. Then I invited them to rephrase their ideas and ended with encouraging comments. In fact, I found conferencing to be a most effective teaching technique when students who had initiated the work could talk about how they had chiseled it out in their own unique way. Rather than controlling students' meaning in the text, the teacher plays the roles of consultant and mentor to establish a collaborative relationship with students. Through such conferencing, the teacher discovers the underlying intention and logic of students' texts and helps them reshape and modify the writing until the true meaning articulates itself intelligibly.

Out of curiosity, you may inquire, "Don't you feel exhausted with every minute in the lesson being occupied by students seeking help to tackle more or less the same problems? It was undeniable that I did encounter this typical dilemma. Conferencing is an extremely arduous task. Though students learned much from the negotiation and took initiative in making changes or corrections in regard to my advice, the only knotty point was that I was totally exhausted. I began to doubt my own persistence and the efficacy of conferencing in terms of my energy, classroom time, and the number of students being conferenced.

However, as I apprehended the close resemblance of most of the content of discussion among students, I decided that it would be more economical to do some preliminary tasks prior to conferencing. I collected all the students' drafts and detected the shared aspects of problem areas for giving feedback to all students in a class discussion. Among the drafts collected, two drafts were selected and copies of them were made for the whole class. In the class discussion, various techniques were

employed to introduce certain reviewing skills. I used the discussion guidelines to structure the content of the discussion and to guide the students to read the chosen drafts critically. Students were to focus on one discussion question and to review one or two paragraphs at a time. To begin with, I commented on the organization and development of the draft. Then I asked the students to take the reader's role cognitively while reading. I also invited the students to guess the intended meaning of the wrong verbs and words in relation to the context and to find appropriate alternative expressions to substitute for them. Finally, I directed the students to expand the content by introducing several examples. Then I moved on to dealing with certain linguistic aspects for the clarity of description. After the discussion, students tended to have a clearer understanding as to what they should review and monitor in their own drafts.

Since the global problems had been settled, students who then attended the conference could voice their own problems on a more individualized basis. While conferencing was underway, I pointed out some vague expressions and structural problems arising from an individual's draft and asked the student for further elaboration. At the same time, the other students present at the conference were also involved in giving their suggestions and viewpoints. The role of the teacher was to formulate stimulating cues and clues to direct students to liberate and voice their thoughts with confidence, and to encourage interaction, collaboration and sharing of ideas among students in solving a problem that might be similar to their own. Though only a few paragraphs of each draft could be studied and discussed intensively, because of the tight schedule, students found conferencing an extremely valuable source of communication with the teacher and the classmates.

In the Final Analysis

Upon reading the final products at the end of the 3 cycles of the writing programme, most students had distinctly improved in their writing skill. The final draft exhibited their obvious attempts to work towards an essay of a better quality and most of the major errors made in the previous written tasks had been removed. I was gratified with the final products as they evinced abundant variations and creativity across drafts. I saw the powerful effect of highly motivated discussions, adequate input, multiple drafting, fruitful peer discussion and conferencing—all forms of scrupulous guidance in assisting students to create a fine-tailored product.

In the implementation process, I also took note of the transformed attitudes of both the students and myself towards writing and teaching writing. Students no longer found writing lessons a headache to them. They were proud of being a critical but supportive reader for their peers. Their seriousness in writing was in sharp contrast to the light-hearted manner in the past and they became more confident and

independent writers. They were exultant that their viewpoints were accepted despite the grammatical errors. In addition, students accepted the fact that multiple drafting was essential to insure a better quality product. As more and more drafts were done, students developed the ability to initiate, develop, and revise better ideas in each writing stage. They learned to restructure the ideas recurrently in order to get the message across to the reader. Together, they plied the oar towards an objective and an audience, in order to accomplish a refined piece of writing.

As for myself, I discerned that drafting was central in the process approach. Indeed, it was almost impossible to demand a desirable product without its being planned and drafted carefully ahead. Likewise, it was ascertained that sharing ideas with one another in peer discussion was conducive to better creation and self-direction on the part of students. I had been over-worried about their intention to copy from others while exchanging their drafts for reviewing. But in fact, the value of peer discussion much outweighed the possibility of replication. Moreover, the comments given by the teacher were highly-motivating to students, as they signified the recognition of the efforts made by them. As I reexamined my own marking scheme of the past, I realized that I only counted grammar mistakes when grading a product, disregarding the writer's efforts made in the writing process.

As a great incongruity with the past, students savoured the inviting, lively and relaxing learning climate and environment in the writing lessons. In addition, there was a great change in my teaching attitude as well. I disengaged myself from my desk and heaps of books, and monitored the classroom, ensuring my availability in the students' vicinity in case they needed help. I recognized my assistance was essential in the students' writing process. I lifted my authoritarian mask and played the role of a companion in their discussion, accepting their ideas, giving reassurance and appraisal at appropriate times, bridging the social gap through conferencing with them, and giving suitable advice when necessary. I began to take pleasure in the writing lessons as less time was spent on preparing the lesson and marking and yet I could involve both the teacher and students in the writing process and the amelioration of the writing product was both remarkable and encouraging.

Finally, I would like to make some recommendations for adopting the process approach in teaching writing. In light of what I experienced, the effectiveness of the process approach depends on a lot of factors. Among these, it is clear that the teacher is a crucial factor in determining the extent of its success. Teachers must understand thoroughly the characteristics of their students and adjust the process approach to meet their needs. On the other hand, I discovered that many students have very limited resources and vocabulary and they have a habit of relying on the teacher's input. How can we as teachers help them build this "resource bank"? I believe extensive reading under a teacher's guidance should be encouraged. It is also

significant to notice that writing regularly every day is the most effective resolution to the writing problem. Ideally, the variety of writing tasks adopted will range from small paragraphs and short essays, to reports and journals.

On the other hand, it has been a "breakthrough" to have tried process approach on a large class. In regard to the experimentation, well-designed activities can ensure maximum participation of each student in the learning process and adequate teacher attention can, to a large extent, be evenly distributed to each student. For instance, in peer discussion, the discussion guidelines given to students facilitated their draft-reviewing process with the whole class being kept on the right track and following an explicit direction. Moreover, conferencing with pairs or groups of students proved to be suitable for large classes. In addition, the discussion of common errors on a class basis was noted as both a natural and effective way of learning, since students could be aware of their own mistakes in the most convenient way and have them eliminated in advance of the conferencing stage.

Furthermore, we must not neglect how fascinating the mixed role of a teacher is. You could never imagine how much more a teacher, acting as a facilitator and a mentor, can achieve in helping students to cultivate their own potentials. The demand for individual attention is so pressing that we should respond to our students generously and patiently. Apart from this, students must also be educated in the importance of drafting. The effort students make in the drafts reflects how hard they work to get their meaning across to their audience. The drafts, therefore, should be commented on positively to help them realize how much the teacher cares about and appreciates the effort they have put in to the writing process.

To conclude with the last, but not the least point, the value of journal writing cannot be forgotten. As a matter of fact, asking students to keep journals regularly is an extremely constructive method to allow them to mirror and re-echo their suggestions and attitudes towards both teaching and learning. In this way, teachers can take responsive measures upon the students' reactions while students can also review their learning process in order to devise appropriate learning strategies accordingly.

In a Nutshell

In a nutshell, the process approach is a positive writing practice that can be applied to the learning situation in Hong Kong. Since it does not have an absolutely fixed and pre-determined nature, there is great flexibility in performing it. Teachers could implement the approach in their class of students while respecting their different characteristics, needs, learning attitudes, levels of intelligence, academic ability, and learning potential. It is crucial to notice that the persistence of both the teacher and students in working on the process approach requires much patience and

devotion in their trust to its feasibility to help the students. We need to do much convincing of students because the effects of the process approach itself are not immediate.

As for myself, it is by experiencing this research that I have realized the need to change my attitude towards teaching writing. And it is through the journey of this exploration of the process approach that I have rooted out the key to a locked door —that is, my responsibilities of being a teacher. Regarding the students' unsatisfactory performance in writing, it is unfair to lay the blame solely on their being idle, passive, incompetent, unintelligent, and irresponsible. It is in fact, the responsibility of the teacher to play the role of advisor and mentor in guiding the students, directing them to realize their own responsibilities of being a reader as well as a writer, and to discover the mirth and felicity of writing and sharing their ideas with other people.

About the Author

Judy Lo is a teacher at the secondary level in the Hong Kong Public Schools, and recently completed her M.A Degree at the City Polytechnic of Hong Kong.

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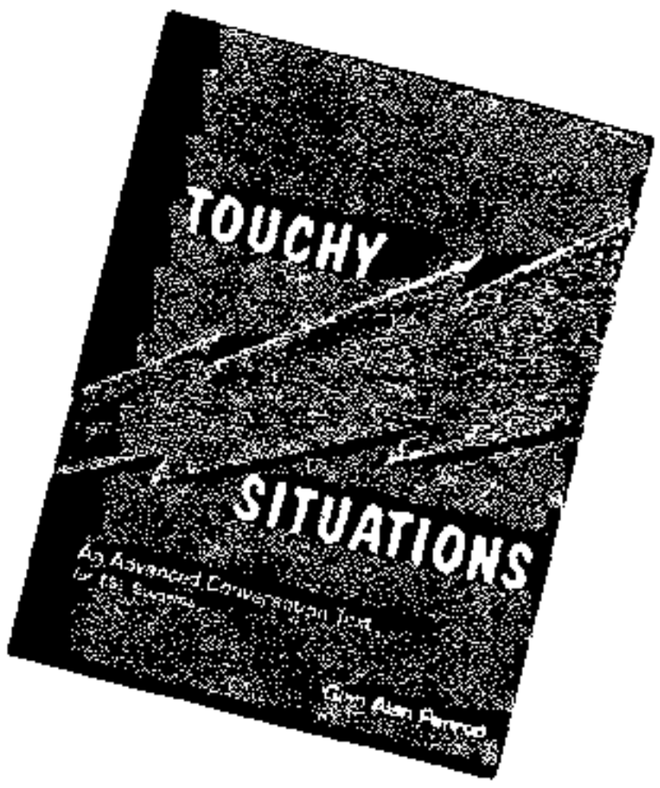

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Teacher's Handbook: Contextualized Language Instruction

Review by Natalia Bochorishvili,
Moscow State University

TEACHER'S HANDBOOK: CONTEXTUALIZED LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION. Judith L. Shram, Eileen W. Glisan. Boston, Massachusetts: Heinle and Heinle Publishers, A Division of Wadsworth, Inc. $18.00

As one would expect from the title, *Teacher's Handbook: Contextualized Language Instruction* was written for foreign language teachers (in both foreign languages and ESL) to assist them in their work and development. The sources of the teacher's professional growth are daily practice and experience and also interaction with other professionals sharing and generalizing these experiences, and that is how theories about language learning and teaching often develop. The *Handbook* leads the reader through theoretical knowledge back to classroom activities providing the opportunity to observe and discuss teaching situations in light of current theories and information.

The book can be interesting and useful from different sides. It provides the survey of theoretical findings and research concerning the key aspects of foreign language acquisition and teaching. Each chapter dealing with a certain problem opens with a "Conceptual Orientation" section describing the problem and different approaches to it. The main theoretical issues and notions such as conceptualized language learning or whole language approach, as well as terms and definitions, are introduced and explained. The readers will learn the most important names and publications in the field and update their theoretical knowledge.

Another goal of the book is to help teachers apply theories in their practical work in the classroom. This process is presented as a creative one, encouraging the reader's reflection. The sections "Observe and Reflect"/"Teach and Reflect," of each chapter contain teaching situations and observational episodes with questions to the reader, and the "Discuss and Reflect" section requires the reader's active participation by answering questions in writing such as, "How would you develop this lesson?" The interesting point is that the reader can also use the *Handbook* as a notebook: there is space left for notes, answering questions, writing plans, thoughts, etc. Thus the book reflects personal ideas and experiences which collaborate with the authors, and contribute to the book, making each copy of it personalized and individual.

The book consists of twelve chapters. Chapters 1-3 present general theoretical issues and approaches to language teaching. Chapters 4 and 5 explore the situation of teaching young learners. Chapters 6-9 deal with teaching techniques in developing

different skills: grammar, listening, reading, speaking, and writing. Chapter 10 is on handling student diversity in the language classroom. Chapter 11 is on testing and Chapter 12 is on the use of technology in teaching language.

The *Handbook* can be used both as a methodology textbook in foreign language teacher education and as a reference book. Each chapter contains reference materials. The book includes a resource section with all sorts of useful information like sources of free material, sample lesson plans, teaching evaluation forms and a list of professional organizations.

The *Teacher's Handbook* thus presents both information and challenges to its readers, involving them in active creative work with the book. It requires the readers' effort, but rewards it.

About the Reviewer

Natalia Bochorishvili is an Associate Professor at the Faculty of Foreign Languages at Moscow State University in Moscow, Russia.

TESL Reporter 27,1 (1994) , pp. 37-38

Focus on American Culture

Review by Lisa Maria Henschel,
California State University, Los Angeles

FOCUS ON AMERICAN CULTURE. Elizabeth Henly. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Regents/Prentice Hall, 1993. Pp. xiii + 144. Book/Video pkg. $65.00.

Focus on American Culture is part of the ABC News ESL Video Library, an interactive, task-based integrated skills package targeted for intermediate adult learners. Each text comes with corresponding video segments from such ABC News programs as *Business World, Prime Time Live, 20/20, Nightline, The Health Show,* and *World News Tonight*, providing authentic language (in actual situations) through current events oriented videos that are of interest to students and teachers.

The text is divided into four units: The Family in America, Work in America, Education in America and Trends in America. The topics, chosen by the author to represent four different aspects of the American lifestyle, provide a background for the development of analytical, communicative, and syntactic skills.

The chapters or "segments" in each unit are divided into five parts: Previewing, Global Viewing, Intensive Viewing, Language Focus and Postviewing. In Previewing, students try to uncover what the segment is about. This section helps to assess where students stand in regard to the subject content as well as introduce vocabulary that may be needed in order to understand the given segment. It also helps to gauge student reactions to the topic. Global Viewing encourages students' overall understanding of the subject matter through exercises and follow-up discussion where main ideas are stressed. Intensive Viewing focuses on specifics as students look and listen for details in activities such as note taking and cloze-style transcriptions of key passages. Language Focus develops vocabulary and idiomatic expressions as well as certain aspects of language structure. Finally, Postviewing wraps up the chapter with discussions, readings and other materials, bringing skills and content together for a cohesive whole.

As the introduction suggests, an interactive approach is desirable, with ideal conditions for use geared toward group involvement. Students are encouraged to learn from one another and interact. The teacher functions more as a facilitator, leading students through a series of exercises that encourage autonomous discovery learning. Many activities have been incorporated to reinforce interaction, such as discussion topics, team tasks and field work. With the exception of grammar, all skills are adequately covered.

Though the text and exercises are well designed and cover a wide range of skills assessment, the topic choices leave something to be desired. The segments covering

college entrance and bilingual education may be of general interest to second language learners; however, subjects such as "The Joys and Risks of the Daddy Track and "Mid-Life Moms" and the segment entitled "The Perfect Baby: A Follow-Up" which discusses *in vitro* fertilization might alienate students who feel insecure or shy about openly discussing such topics. Though disguised in a news-like format, these segments smack of sensationalism and display a bias toward "fringe yuppie" culture. Given our pluralistic society, this particularly narrow focus seems an odd way to introduce American culture. Even the cover, which features a baseball, seems out of context as there is no mention of sports whatsoever.

Despite the drawback of topic choice, Henly does a detailed job in her theme-based exercises, providing the student with a range of tasks in order to facilitate comprehension. Each segment provides running times for videos and VCR starting points. Henly has created an incredibly teacher-friendly text, as well as a format that might work well for independent study.

About the Reviewer

Lisa Maria Henschel is a graduate student majoring in TESOL at California State University, Los Angeles. Her main areas of interest are studies in literacy, especially visual literacy. She is also the managing editor of COAGULA, a bi-coastal, bi-monthly art journal.

TESL Reporter 27,1 (1994) , p 39.

A Writer's Workbook

Review by Stephanie Vandrick,
University of San Francisco

A WRITER'S WORKBOOK. 2nd Edition. Trudy Smoke. New York, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992, pp. 333. Paper. US $24.00.

A Writer's Workbook is an excellent text for a semester-long advanced writing class in a university setting. It even has enough, and good enough, readings that it could be used for a combined reading/writing class, with some supplementation. In fact, this second edition emphasizes the connections between reading and writing.

The book contains five units, dealing with such themes as family and growing up, language and communication, society and playing roles, and each unit consists of three chapters. Each unit contains a journalistic reading, a textbook excerpt, and a short story or excerpt from a novel. Thus students are exposed to a wide variety of types of readings, all of the level and type they might encounter in other university classes, and they can see the connections among the readings and between the readings and their own writing. The readings are very well-chosen, multicultural, and thought-provoking. They relate well to the students' own experiences, both as young people and as immigrants or international students. Some of the best readings are Maria L. Muñiz' "Back, but Not Home" and Nahid Rachlin's "Foreigner," both of which inspired thoughtful discussions and written responses in my classes.

This text presents the steps in the writing process well, with useful instruction in prewriting techniques, editing, and revising. There are also helpful sections on grammar in each chapter. The chapters build well on each other, with many linking mechanisms and logical progressions. The alternate tables of contents help the instructor plan the best use of the material.

The book is very accessible and inviting. Although it does not use flashy graphics, it is well laid out, with intriguing illustrations, wide margins, and a clear format. It is a well thought out combination of a textbook and a workbook. The instructor's copy of the book contains a bound-in instructor's manual, which is useful but not essential.

The author strikes just the right note in this book; she treats the students with respect, not condescension. She explains everything carefully and well, but does not talk down to them. I have used this text, in its first and now second editions, for several semesters, and recommend it highly. It is attractive, flexible, usable, useful, and holds the interest of both instructors and students.

About the Reviewer

Stephanie Vandrick is an assistant professor in the ESL Dept. at the University of San Francisco. Her interests are in writing, literature and sociopolitical issues.

Conference Announcements . . .

TESOL Institute: June 20-July 8 and July 19-Aug 5 (2 sessions). Iowa State University. Contact Department of English, 316 Ross Hall, Ames, Iowa 50011. Tel. 515-294-7819. Fax 515-294-6814. E-mail dandoug@iastate.edu

International Conference on Language Learning and Use in the 21st Century: June 24-25. Dublin, Ireland. Contact Jeff Kallen, School of Clinical Speech and Language Pathology, 184 Pearse St., TCD, Dublin 2, Ireland. Fax 353-1-712152.

The Eighth Summer Workshop for the Development of Intercultural Coursework at Colleges and Universities. July 13-22, 1994. East-West Center, Honolulu, Hawaii. Participants will examine texts, discuss issues with authors, and become familiar with exercises and simulations which can be used to introduce important concepts to students. Housing is available on the Campus. For more information write to: Dr. Richard Brislin, East-West Center, Program on Education and Training, Honolulu, HI 96848. Tel. (808) 944-7644; Fax (808) 944-7070.

1994 Internationalization Forum of the East-West Center. August 3-12th in Honolulu, Hawaii. The primary focus is to provide practical cross-cultural experiences for women and men with professional interests in government, education, business and voluntary organizations through lectures, discussions, and simulations. For more information contact: Program Officer, Program on Education and Training, East-West Center, 1777 East-West Road, Honolulu, HI 96848 USA. Tel. (808) 944-7549; Fax (808) 944-7070.

Second Language Research Forum (SLRF '94): October 6-9. "Perspectives on Input in SLA" Concordia University, McGill University, Montreal, Canada. Contact SLRF 1994 Symposia, Dept. of Linguistics, McGill University, 1001 Sherbrooke St., W. Montreal, Quebec, H3A 1G5 CANADA

Am. Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL): Nov. 15-17. Atlanta, Georgia. Contact ACTFL, 6 Executive Plaza, Yonkers, New York 10701-6801. Tel. 914-963-8830. Fax 914-963-1275.

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 aspects of teaching are especially encouraged.

Manuscripts should be typed and double spaced throughout, generally not exceeding ten to 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) bio-data 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.

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

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

Advertising information is available upon request from the editor.

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

The opinions and statements expressed by contributors are their own and do not necessarily reflect the views of the editors or of Brigham Young University—Hawaii.

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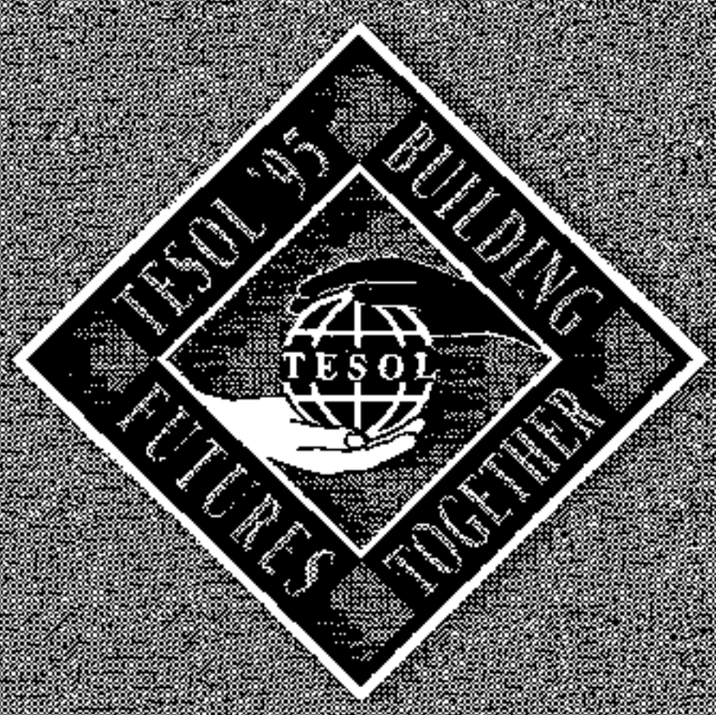

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