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**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 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.

It is expected that manuscripts submitted to the *TESL Reporter* are neither previously published nor being considered for publication elsewhere.

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**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 Campus.

# Facilitating Understanding Between the ESL Teacher and the Classroom Teacher

Emilio Cortez, Charles Drew Elementary School

The elementary-school classroom teacher plays an important role in the education of limited English-speaking children. Although ESL teachers provide supportive help, it is often the classroom teacher who decides whether a child is promoted or retained. Furthermore, the classroom teacher is perceived by many children as being very prestigious and influential; consequently, a classroom teacher's attitude towards an ESL child may have far-reaching consequences in terms of a child's enthusiasm for learning.

Marsha Santelli describes an unfortunate situation that sometimes poses an obstacle to good relations between ESL teachers and classroom teachers.

Our colleagues in the regular program, who have long been frustrated by their own inability to meet the needs of their limited English-proficient students...begin to resent us—especially us—when their friend down the hall with some seniority is transferred or laid-off while the brand new ESL...specialist is retained. The experienced teacher...who would hold friendly chats at lunch time... now gives only a cursory "hello" and fears for her own job. (Santelli 1982:15)

Despite such difficulties, it is important to enlist the support of classroom teachers since they can share with ESL teachers valuable information concerning the elementary-school curriculum. Drawing from the curricular concerns of the classroom teachers, ESL teachers can help pupils achieve immediately relevant and meaningful learning goals.

Carefully selected content from several of the subject-matter fields can be

used by the ESL teachers as content for language instruction. In the ESL class, pupils can learn basic elements of the social studies ... science ... and mathematical processes .... (Allen 1979:81)

This article centers upon appropriate behaviors and suggestions that elementary-school ESL teachers can implement in order to promote better professional rapport with classroom teachers. Suggestions for establishing and promoting good relations with classroom teachers will be discussed and followed by a summary of the ideas presented.

## Resolving Misconceptions

One situation that may hinder rapport occurs when classroom teachers' expectations of the ESL teacher's role are incongruent with the ESL teacher's actual responsibilities. For this reason, it is a sound practice to disseminate an overview of the ESL program as soon as possible so as to avoid any misconceptions. Elinor Gregor elaborates further:

One device that I have found effective in facilitating a collegial, working relationship is to spend a few minutes with each classroom teacher prior to the opening of school.... The first topic discussed is the nature of the ESL program...I have found it especially helpful to assure the classroom teacher that the ESL program is designed to provide non-English speaking children with the shortest and smoothest route to English language competence. (Gregor 1980:33)

An open and sincere invitation to classroom teachers to observe an ESL lesson can help nurture rapport. By having classroom teachers observe an ESL lesson, several positive outcomes can result such as: (1) the classroom teachers obtain first-hand information about the ESL program, (2) the classroom teachers may learn some techniques that would help them teach their limited English-speaking pupils, and (3) the classroom teachers can observe their own students in a different setting and learn additional information about them.

### Improving Interpersonal Relations

In her article, "Survival: The Itinerant ESL Teacher," Rose Davidson offers some excellent advice.

1. When teachers get sharp with you, realize it's often because they're worried or frustrated and you are the convenient person who gets it—it's usually not a personal slight.
2. Everyone will not always agree with you so be very clear about your reasons for doing or saying something.
3. Intimidation—someone can be doing it to you or you to them, and neither way is good. Work it out in the most positive way possible. (Davidson 1981:11)

Self-evaluation and introspection can help to identify and to remedy counterproductive patterns of interpersonal behavior. More specifically, better relations may result by carefully considering the following questions:

1. Are there recurring patterns of incidents that tend to undermine my rapport with my colleagues? If so, what are the patterns?

2. Can such incidents be avoided in the future, and if not what is the most tactful way to deal with the difficulties?

### A List of Recommendations

The following list presents other recommendations for promoting rapport in addition to a summary of the topics discussed thus far:

1. Clarify teachers' misconceptions concerning the scope and specifics of your teaching duties as soon as possible.
2. Demonstrate a genuine interest in the classroom teacher's curriculum and offer to incorporate such items in your own teaching.
3. Invite classroom teachers to observe you teach an ESL lesson. Communicate a willingness to exchange teaching ideas.
4. Whenever it is possible and appropriate, present some teaching techniques or cultural insights to your colleagues at faculty meetings.
5. If teachers are curt with you, try not to take it as a personal slight; handle such situations as tactfully as possible.
6. Everyone will not always agree with you so be very clear about your reasons for doing or saying something.
7. Strive to identify and to avoid incidents that tend to undermine communication; ask other ESL teachers how they have dealt with similar situations.
8. Listen intently to teachers and discuss issues in a calm fashion.
9. Cultivate patience and make it a habit to praise teachers whenever they merit it.

10. Attempt to exhibit the following behaviors equally: telling, suggesting, reflecting, and asking questions.
11. Try to schedule conferences at the teacher's convenience.
12. Don't overwhelm teachers by attempting to accomplish too much in a single conference.
13. Attempt to work up to important matters gradually.
14. Attempt to close your discussion on a positive note.
15. Avoid getting involved in school gossip.
16. Don't be reluctant to admit that you've made an error in judgement.
17. Maintain assertiveness without showing hostility or excessive aggressiveness.
18. When making a point, be tactful yet clear.
19. Intellectually, be broad without spreading yourself too thin, and deep without seeming too "bookish" or "pedagogical."
20. Be helpful but not solicitous.
21. Make promises judiciously and keep them faithfully.
22. Don't burden or depress those around you by dwelling on your personal problems.
23. Attempt to sympathize and to empathize with the classroom teacher's point of view and unique set of circumstances.
24. Focus on the topic under discussion; don't point out mistakes that teachers

have made previously just for the sake of winning an argument.

25. Develop a sense of humor. Making your point with a smile can be more effective sometimes than the most cogent polemic.

### Communication and Coordination Promote Success

In closing, it is extremely important that ESL teachers and classroom teachers share and discuss the salient specifics of their respective curricula so that one instructional program may truly complement the other. For without a well coordinated and relevant elementary-school curriculum and the genuine support of our classroom colleagues, the limited English-speaking child has little chance for academic success in the mainstream culture.

### About the Author

*Dr. Emilio Cortez has taught as an elementary-school ESL teacher for the past seventeen years. Currently, he teaches ESL at the Charles Drew Elementary School in Philadelphia, Pa.*

*Dr. Cortez's articles have appeared in journals such as: English Language Teaching, English Teaching Forum, TESL Reporter, Modern English Teacher, and TESL Talk.*

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## Summer Workshop for the Development of Intercultural Coursework at Colleges and Universities

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From June 23 to July 3, 1987, the Institute of Culture and Communication at the East-West Center will offer a workshop for college and university faculty who wish to develop courses in intercultural and international topics. Participants will examine possible texts, interact with East-West Center staff familiar with a variety of courses, discuss issues with the authors of texts currently used in intercultural courses, share ideas with each other, and develop full course outlines. The general areas within which courses can be developed are the behavioral sciences, social sciences, and education, and they include the following more specific areas:

- cross-cultural psychology
- cross-cultural research methods
- psychological anthropology
- intercultural communication
- cross-cultural orientation programs
- intergroup relations
- the human aspects of technology transfer
- management: an international perspective

- migration: adjustment to another country
- English as an international language
- language and culture
- English for cross-cultural communication
- combining TESOL with cross-cultural communication and adjustment
- curriculum development for international studies: elementary and/or secondary levels
- social studies: global perspectives
- bilingual education
- internationalizing student teaching opportunities

Faculty members interested in other courses should contact the workshop organizers to determine if East-West Center can be of assistance. The participants' tuition for the program can include dormitory housing. For more information write: Dr. Richard Brislin or Mr. Larry Smith, East-West Center, Institute of Culture and Communication, Honolulu, Hawaii 96848.

## ***Foreign Student Flows* Explores Impact of Foreign Students on U.S. Higher Education**

What opportunities and problems do foreign students create for U.S. colleges and universities? What long-term effects are they likely to have on U.S. higher education? How can college and university administrators anticipate future patterns of foreign student enrollment?

*Foreign Student Flows*, published by the Institute of International Education (IIE), explores these questions in the context of such facts as these:

Worldwide, the United States is overwhelmingly the primary destination of students going abroad.

Approximately two-thirds of the world's foreign students come from developing countries.

Fifteen countries account for 60 percent of foreign students in the United States.

Thirty percent of all foreign students in the United States are enrolled in only one percent of the institutions.

Compared to other host countries, the United States plays an especially important role in educating foreign students in engineering, the natural sciences, law, and social sciences.

The fields in greatest demand by foreign students—engineering and business—are also those in greatest demand by domestic students. Fields less in demand—humanities, health, agriculture, education—are also the same for both groups.

Foreign students are more inclined to opt for science degrees than are domestic students, and thus on the average are getting a more

expensive education than the average American student.

At all degree levels, the proportion of foreign degree recipients who receive any institutional subsidy toward the cost of their education is relatively small.

*Foreign Student Flows* is the report of a conference designed to deepen understanding of foreign-student issues among college and university administrators responsible for making decisions affecting the quality, scale, and composition of their student bodies and the financial health of their institutions.

IIE organized the conference, held April 13-15, 1984, at the Spring Hill Center, Wayzata, MN, with the support of grants from the Exxon Education Foundation and the General Service Foundation and a subsidy from the Spring Hill Center. It was designed to bring university administrators and international education specialists together with social scientists to identify and analyze foreign-student issues, as they may affect institutional policy, in a systematic way.

The conference was inspired by the reaction among academics to a 1983 IIE study, *Absence of Decision*, by Craufurd Goodwin and Michael Nacht. In the words of IIE Research Director Elinor Barber, "[the authors] found that, by and large, the issue of foreign students has rather low priority for campus policymakers (hence the title of their study) and that, when compelled to think about the issue, policymakers are often at a loss."

In addition to summaries of conference discussions, *Foreign Student Flows* contains

two analyses by social scientists of worldwide and U.S. foreign student flows. They include extensive statistics.

Single copies of *Foreign Student Flows* are available free of charge from the Communications Division of the Institute of

International Education, 809 United Nations Plaza, New York, NY 10017. IIE, founded in 1919, is a private, not-for-profit organization that administers international education and training programs, conducts research, and provides information on international education.

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## A Quiz for *TESL Reporter* Readers

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(Continued from page 40)

### Ideal Responses

1. Write down how you do that "thing" (whatever it is) so expertly, and send the manuscript to the *TESL Reporter*. Don't assume that simply because *you* know something, everybody else does.
2. Don't let others suffer from the same ignorance. Now that you have learned from experience, write about that "thing you wish you had known" for the *TESL Reporter*. It will help beginning teachers get off to a better start.
3. Explain the technique/procedure and why you changed your mind about it in a manuscript for the *TESL Reporter* that will encourage other teachers to try out what you now consider so essential?
4. If it still bothers you, write a convincing refutation of the idea for the *TESL Reporter*. Other teachers and administrators may join your cause.
5. Explain your criteria for "great" ESL/EFL teachers in a manuscript for the *TESL Reporter*. Discuss and describe how "ordinary" teachers can develop or acquire these characteristics.
6. Describe your success—what conditions motivated you, how you did it, and how others can achieve similar results—in a manuscript for the *TESL Reporter*. Other teachers and administrators are interested!
7. Recreate the class and the excitement. Make us see and feel it and explain what made the lesson successful. Then send the manuscript to the *TESL Reporter*. We all occasionally need motivation and inspiration.

### Discussion

It's probably obvious by now that if you are a *TESL Reporter* reader, we'd also like you to become a *TESL Reporter* writer. The purpose of this quiz was to get you thinking about what you can write about. Now it's up to you. Write and send in your manuscript. Guidelines for contributors are found inside the front cover of this and every issue.

Through the *TESL Reporter*, your ideas and experience can benefit other ESL teachers around the world!



# Sentence Blank Fillers—A Writing Activity

## Ho-Peng Lim, National University of Malaysia

Language is never acquired or used in a vacuum. Rather, it is part of the way in which a language user explores and describes the world he lives in. Through communicative use of the language, a student of English as a second language (ESL) not only learns about English but also about the world. Well-planned writing assignments are one way a teacher can help ESL students learn to interact effectively, directly or indirectly, with others in the English language.

This article briefly illustrates one way of preparing a writing exercise that requires the student to make a considerable amount of effort in completing it. Exercises of this type met with success when tried out in ESL classrooms at the Language Center, National University of Malaysia. The intellectual and often very creative contributions that the ESL students have to make to the exercise have so far proved to be highly motivating and stimulating.

### Control and Freedom

Basically, the exercise involves "filling in the blanks," not with words but with sentences of the student's choice. For the most part, students are required to provide linguistic material of their own rather than merely juggling what is provided. On the one hand, the students are controlled by fairly detailed instructions and the large amount of context provided. On the other hand, the student is unable to run through the written tasks automatically since he has to provide something original himself.

### Levels

The exercises are not graded and in fact can be used by both intermediate and

advanced level students. The only difference between the two levels will be the quality of the responses expected from the students. For less proficient ESL writers, of course, the exercises would have to be adapted, using more simplified language, shortening the paragraphs, and/or providing more contextual information.

### Example Exercises

Three examples of how this exercise can be prepared follow.

Example exercise one uses two short paragraphs. Generally, every other sentence has been replaced by a blank. Occasionally, however, this rule is violated to preserve particularly important sentences in the paragraph.

Example exercise two differs from the first one in that parenthetical vocabulary items follow some of the blanks. These are to be included in the sentences the students write.

The third example exercise illustrates the use of a longer passage with more contextual information provided by a greater number of sentences between blanks.

### Example 1

#### FREE CHOICE SENTENCE BLANK FILLERS

Instructions:

In the paragraphs given below, each blank represents ONE SINGLE SENTENCE. Fill in the blanks with sentences of your own choice, ONE SENTENCE PER BLANK. The sentence

you choose must fit the preceding and following sentences and the text as a whole.

Paragraph 1:

It was a typical gloomy Monday morning at school. \_\_\_\_\_ We had to have the lights on in the classroom. \_\_\_\_\_ Mrs. Bright, our English teacher, was two or three minutes late. \_\_\_\_\_ Suddenly, Zainal said: "\_\_\_\_\_." We all agreed to ask Mrs. Bright when she came in. We chose Anna Lee, the prettiest student, to make the suggestion to her. \_\_\_\_\_ She looked pale and tired. \_\_\_\_\_ She smiled and reflected a moment. \_\_\_\_\_ She shook her head and said: "\_\_\_\_\_." We protested in vain. \_\_\_\_\_ Finally, Mrs. Bright said: "If you really want to invite me out, you can do so after the class." \_\_\_\_\_

Paragraph 2:

When I opened the door, the delivery boy handed me a slip of paper and a package. \_\_\_\_\_ The package was square-shaped. \_\_\_\_\_ It sounded rather like an alarm clock. \_\_\_\_\_ This thought possibly frightened me more than I cared to admit. \_\_\_\_\_ The more I looked at it the more dangerous it seemed. \_\_\_\_\_ My heart beating faster, I put my ears close to the package but still could not hear anything. The silence was awful. \_\_\_\_\_ As I ran, I could hear my heart pounding. \_\_\_\_\_ From this position I listened for the inevitable explosion. \_\_\_\_\_ I was still there when my father came home. When he came up to me, he was holding something in his hand. \_\_\_\_\_ He had opened the package to find it inside. \_\_\_\_\_

Example 2

FREE CHOICE  
SENTENCE BLANK FILLERS  
(with some vocabulary items given)

Instructions:

Each of the following blanks represents ONE SINGLE SENTENCE. Fill in the blanks with sentences of your own choice, ONE SENTENCE PER BLANK. The sentence you choose must fit the preceding and following sentences and the text as a whole. In some blanks, include the vocabulary items given in parentheses.

Two nights ago I had the fright of my life. \_\_\_\_\_ I spent most of the evening at Abraham's house watching a video program with his family. \_\_\_\_\_ (thriller) As a result I was fairly jittery by the time I was ready to leave Abraham's place. \_\_\_\_\_ (eventually) It was pitch dark. \_\_\_\_\_ (moon) The village street lights had all gone out at midnight. \_\_\_\_\_ (however) I have lived in this village for more than fifteen years. \_\_\_\_\_ I knew that I had parked my scooter by the second tree on the right of Abraham's house. \_\_\_\_\_ (groped for) When I came across the first tree I suddenly became aware of the old cemetery on my left. \_\_\_\_\_ (reminded) I almost felt as though I myself had become a participant in a horror movie. \_\_\_\_\_ There was total silence everywhere. \_\_\_\_\_ (my footsteps, echo) I continued to grope around in the pitch darkness. Where was the scooter of mine? \_\_\_\_\_ (nervous) My imagination began to work overtime. \_\_\_\_\_ Most of the village folks had been in bed for ages. \_\_\_\_\_ I moaned in pain. \_\_\_\_\_ I picked it up and tried to start it at once. \_\_\_\_\_ I tried again. \_\_\_\_\_ I cursed it under my breath. \_\_\_\_\_ Suddenly, the engine roared into life. \_\_\_\_\_ (the scooter's headlight) Instantly, I saw it in the spotlight. \_\_\_\_\_ He was near enough to touch me. \_\_\_\_\_ I backed the scooter away from him. \_\_\_\_\_ (the graveyard) I fled like a frightened bat out of hell on my machine, making so much noise I probably woke the whole village. \_\_\_\_\_ When I finally got home, I rushed to the kitchen to get a drink. \_\_\_\_\_ I told myself I was safe at home. \_\_\_\_\_ It was a long time before I got to bed. \_\_\_\_\_

## Example 3

FREE CHOICE  
SENTENCE BLANK FILLERS

## Instructions:

Each of the following blanks represents ONE SINGLE SENTENCE. Fill in the blanks with sentences of your own choice, ONE SENTENCE PER BLANK. The sentence you choose must fit the preceding and following sentences and the text as a whole.

Mr. Lim was a very fat man in his forties. \_\_\_\_\_ Its name was Brownie. \_\_\_\_\_ Naturally, the dog and its master looked rather similar. \_\_\_\_\_ Every evening, on weekdays they only walked down to the end of the road and back. \_\_\_\_\_ So Brownie was always delighted when weekends came around. \_\_\_\_\_ One Sunday evening, Mr. Lim and Brownie were on their usual walk when a group of five teenagers ran up to them and started to shout. "\_\_\_\_\_!" This certainly made both Mr. Lim and his dog very angry and embarrassed. \_\_\_\_\_ But unluckily for them, the teenagers outran them. \_\_\_\_\_ From that weekend onwards, the teenagers made a habit of teasing fat Mr. Lim and his dog.

However, Mr. Lim decided that he and Brownie had better pay more attention to their diet as well as increase their exercises. \_\_\_\_\_ The naughty teenagers, however, did not notice the change in their appearances. Two weeks later, on a Sunday evening, these teenagers ran out as usual and shouted their favorite insults at Mr. Lim and his dog. \_\_\_\_\_ They ran away laughing, thinking that Mr. Lim and Brownie would not catch them. \_\_\_\_\_ One of the teenagers suddenly felt Brownie's teeth fasten firmly on to his pants. \_\_\_\_\_ The other four teenagers stopped running and turned around in surprise. In the meantime, Mr. Lim ran up, calling out to his dog. \_\_\_\_\_ Finally, the five youngsters escaped. \_\_\_\_\_ Brownie stood watching them, a large piece of blue cloth in his mouth. He was wagging his tail in great delight. \_\_\_\_\_ From that day on, the five teenagers were never seen again when Mr. Lim and Brownie were on their walks down the street. The youngsters never tried their trick again.

## About the Author

*Ho-Peng Lim teaches ESL in the English Department of the National University of Malaysia. He received his undergraduate education at the University of Malaya and later did his graduate studies in TESL and Applied Linguistics at the University of California at Los Angeles.*

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## Research Report Indicates that Quality of U.S. Higher Education is Primary Reason Foreign Nationals Choose to Study in the United States

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*Choosing Schools From Afar*, a new Research Report from the Institute of International Education (IIE), indicates that a large majority—75 percent—of foreign students are satisfied with the U.S. higher educational institutions they selected. However, over half of students want better advance information about living costs, the availability of financial aid, opportunities for employment, interaction with American faculty and students, and the availability of community services for international students. Some 30 percent found U.S. educational costs higher than they anticipated on the basis of the best information available to them in their home countries.

The information about U.S. colleges and universities most frequently used by foreign students in their own countries is that put out by U.S. schools in the form of catalogues and other information materials. Students also obtain important information from friends, relatives, and government and private agencies. They are least disposed to obtain information from recruiting agents.

*Choosing Schools From Afar* reports that prospective foreign students are often unaware of the resources of U.S. educational advising centers such as those maintained by the U.S. Information Service (USIS) and private agencies. The study suggests that students would benefit if the availability of high-quality information through USIS, IIE, AMIDEAST and other organizations active in counseling overseas were more widely publicized.

The study is based on a survey conducted by Dr. Marianthi Zikopoulos and Dr. Elinor Barber, who direct IIE's research program, under the auspices of the National Liaison Committee. International students and staff of some 33 representative U.S. colleges and universities cooperated in the study. Financial support was provided by the Office of Student Support Services, U.S. Information Agency, and by the College Board.

The new book is tenth in the series of policy-oriented research reports published by the Institute of International Education, the largest U.S. higher educational exchange agency. The Institute's research program was established to conduct studies useful to decision makers in higher education, government, and the private sector.

IIE is widely known for its role in assisting the U.S. Information Agency in the conduct of the Fulbright Program of graduate international exchanges. The Institute serves over 9,000 men and women from the United States and 120 nations each year, administering grants offered by the U.S. and foreign governments, international organizations, corporations, foundations, and universities. IIE provides information on educational exchange to higher education and the public in the United States and abroad.

Single copies of *Choosing Schools From Afar* may be requested free of charge from the Publications Service, Institute of International Education, 809 United Nations Plaza, New York, New York 10017.

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# Communication Groups: Topics and Structure

William Hood, BYU-Hawaii

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Communication groups are a viable alternative to more typical classroom procedures. My experience has shown that communication group exercises can be rewarding for both instructor and students alike.

## Advantages

Communication groups offer a number of advantages. For instance, students naturally desire to communicate with each other in meaningful ways. Communication group exercises make use of this desire and provide a medium for students to develop their abilities to communicate in real life situations. Furthermore, instead of using the *text book's meanings*, a communication group uses the *participant's meanings*, as the students strive to communicate with one another.

In addition, communication groups help satisfy a basic concern of many language learners. As Stevick (1975: 131) explains, students often wonder: "How do my performance in the language and my ideas about its structure stack up against the realities of the language?" The communication group exercise helps students answer this question.

## Two Key Elements

Success in using communication groups in language teaching depends on two key elements. The first is the *selection* of a topic. The second element is the *structuring* of the groups themselves. A review of these two basic, but essential elements may result in both a greater understanding of this approach and a greater likelihood of success when using it.

## Selecting Topics for Communication Groups

The selection of a good topic is critical to the success of a communication exercise. First of all, the topic must be one that is of interest to the participants in the groups. The topic should also have relevance to them, so they can relate to it. It should be on a subject that promotes, rather than hinders, discussion and social interaction. The topic can't be on a personal subject, such as love, that embarrasses the students, and thus keeps them from speaking in the group. Finally, the topic needs to be within the realm of the students' understanding, and it should stretch their abilities if possible.

Another important consideration is whether a topic for group discussion should be selected before or after the communication groups are formed. The answer depends on who selects the topic. If, as part of planning the lesson, the instructor chooses the topic, selection will naturally come before group formation.

Topics can come from textbooks (there are many on the development of successful conversation groups) or from the teacher's own storehouse of imagination and experience. When the instructor chooses the topic, there is often the danger that the students may not be interested in it. This, of course, will influence their participation in the group.

An alternative (and often more effective) approach is to put the students into groups first and then have them select their own topic. This choice may be made from within the boundaries of a larger subject defined by the instructor, or there may be no limitations on their choice.

### Learning from Experience

After conducting several communication group exercises with my ESL students, I concluded that student input was important in the process of topic selection. For example, I once began using a textbook exercise called "Good Conversationalists" (Dubin 1977: 14). The exercise explored the qualities of a good conversationalist and listed a number of topics. Thinking the students would be interested in the general category of cultural differences, I selected three topics for discussion: 1) transportation, 2) housing, and 3) entertainment. Although the students conversed on these topics, and completed the exercise, something was missing. Although interested in each other's cultures, the students were not adequately stimulated by the topics I had chosen. More interest, involvement, and interaction between group members was needed.

A "reflection period," an activity common to Community Language Learning, provided the solution. "By introducing a reflection period at the end of class, a teacher can improve English teaching activities without changing the methodology he is using." Paul LaForge (1980: 10) has explained: "The reflection period makes explicit the underlying motivational factors and personality variables, that foster or hinder the language learning process...." Deciding to try this, I arranged a reflection exercise after the students completed the communication group exercise, and it was very revealing. Learning of students' ideas and feelings about the exercise, I made some changes. First of all, I allowed the students to select new topics. They chose customs, countries and travel, with each of the three groups choosing its own topic. This was in accordance with Community Language Learning principles also. LaForge (1980: 7) states: "In the CLL group the responsibility for learning lies with the student. The teacher sets up an English-speaking experience for the students, but he does not select topics for discussion; the subject for

discussion is the responsibility of the students themselves."

The outcome of this change was dramatic. First of all, getting the students to "invest of themselves" and choose their own topics was a successful strategy. There was a greater quality and quantity of group interaction. Interpersonal interaction was increased also since the students had a "stake" in what was going on within the group itself. Overall, I found that allowing the students to select their own topic enhanced group performance.

### Structuring Communication Groups

Communication groups should not be formed haphazardly. Before structuring a conversation group, an instructor should do several things. First of all, review the composition of the class carefully. Group structure decisions will be based on the number of students, their home countries, their native language, and their levels of ability in English. Other important considerations are the similarities and differences in the personality traits of the students and how they have interacted with each other previously. After considering these factors, the instructor will have greater insight as to how to place his students within groups.

After the groups have been set up and begun operating, the instructor may find that changes need to be made. Group A may be doing better than group B because there are personality conflicts in B. Or maybe there is a gap in ability levels that inhibits communication.

Before making any change, timing is an important factor to consider. Usually it is better to allow the groups to finish before making a change in members. One rule is paramount in making changes: Don't embarrass the student! If you do, it may stifle his participation in any group that you put him in. Here again, a principle from

Community Language Learning helps smooth the change process. Stevick (1976: 267) emphasizes "the importance of communicating nonverbally for the most part what Curran calls a counseling attitude." If the instructor is sensitive to what's happening around him, he will be able to make changes which will then benefit not only the individual student, but the whole group as well.

My experience has demonstrated the importance of teacher sensitivity to students' feelings. During the "reflection period" in the class previously mentioned, I learned that changes needed to be made in the structure of the groups as well as the topics. The feedback I received was that each group needed members from a variety of different cultures. I also learned that two large groups were more desirable than the small groups initially structured. Students found larger groups interesting because there were more members to interact with and more experiences to share. Once again, the reflection period was an excellent means for receiving feedback and then using that information to enact changes in the structure of the groups.

### Conclusion

Although setting up classroom communication groups may appear to be easy, it is by no means a simple task. One challenge is selecting a topic that is interesting and relevant to students but not inhibiting or hard for them to understand. Getting students involved in the topic selection process allows them to "invest of themselves" and thus increases both motivation and participation.

Group structure should be decided only after a number of student variables have been carefully considered. Even then, however, flexibility is important. In both topic

selection and group structuring, a reflection period after the communication group exercise has proven extremely beneficial.

As my experience illustrates, communication groups can be a learning experience for both instructor and student. The groups themselves can possess a life of their own as students interact with each other on an interpersonal and group basis. When a good topic is discovered and groups are properly structured and functioning well, the results can be rewarding and well worth the teacher's effort.

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### About the Author

*William Hood teaches in the English Language Institute at Brigham Young University—Hawaii Campus. He holds a degree from the University of California at Irvine in social ecology, with an emphasis in human behavior. He is particularly interested in the psychological and motivational factors that influence the language learning process.*

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## Conference Announcements

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The twenty-first annual convention of TESOL (Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages) will be held April 21-25, 1987 at the Fontainebleau Hilton in Miami Beach, Florida. For information contact TESOL, 1118—22nd Street., N.W., Suite 205, Georgetown University, Washington, D.C. 20037.

The 1987 CATESOL (California TESOL) conference will be held March 27-29, 1987 in Pasadena, California. The theme is "Teaching the Future." Contact Rick Sullivan, Alhambra School District, 15 West Alhambra Road, Alhambra, CA 91801.

The Eighth World Congress of Applied Linguistics will be held August 16-21, 1987 at the University of Sydney, Australia. Contact: Department of Linguistics, University of Sydney, N.S.W., Australia 2006.

The 1987 Georgetown University Round Table on Languages and Linguistics will be held March 11-14. The theme is "Language Spread and Language Policy: Issues, Implications, and Case Studies." Contact: Peter H. Lowenberg, Chair, GURT 1987, Department of Linguistics, Georgetown University, Washington, D.C. 20057.

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## AFS Adds Five Countries to its Teacher Exchange Program

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AFS has expanded its teacher exchange program with the addition of Brazil, Ecuador, Mexico, Panama and Venezuela. The Visiting Teachers Program, entering its fourth year, already includes China, Thailand, Peru, Chile, and Costa Rica.

AFS International/Intercultural Programs, formerly known as the American Field Service, is the leading nonprofit international exchange organization. AFS's Visiting Teachers Program enables educators to undertake an intercultural living experience while at the same time enriching their teaching skills.

U.S. secondary school teachers live with a host family in one of the aforementioned countries, and observe and teach in the local school, while participating in cultural enrichment activities. Summer and six month options are available.

Teachers of English from these countries come to the United States for a six month period, commencing in December. They live with a host family and serve as a resource in the local high school, while observing English teaching methodologies.

Notes William M. Dyal, Jr., president of AFS: "The Visiting Teachers Program embodies the AFS philosophy: only by living in a host family and being fully immersed in a host community, can one truly understand another culture."

For further information on the AFS Visiting Teachers Program, contact Carolyn Yohannes, AFS International/Intercultural Programs, 313 E. 43rd St., New York, NY 10017. Telephone: (212) 949-4242, ext. 407.



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## *What's So Funny?* Review by Debbie Li

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WHAT'S SO FUNNY? Elizabeth Claire. Rochelle Park, New Jersey: Eardley Publications, 1984. pp. 151, \$7.95.

Humor is usually one of the last aspects of a language and culture that a non-native speaker is able to understand and master. *What's So Funny?* by Elizabeth Claire seeks to clarify some of the difficulties and nuances associated with American humor. It is geared towards intermediate and advanced ESL students in the United States, high school age and older. Basically, the book is designed for use in conversation classes or classes on American culture.

The volume is divided into a total of sixteen chapters, the first four of which serve as a basic introduction, giving information on what we learn about American humor, what makes a joke funny to Americans, the structure of a joke, children's humor, and stereotyping, etc. Chapters five through fifteen center around various types of American jokes, touching such areas as men and women, parents and children, college life, doctors, lawyers, and stupidity, just to name a few. Finally, the volume concludes with a chapter on how to tell a joke, which gives helpful hints to the non-native speaker concerning the appropriate place, timing, and manner for telling a joke.

This book can be used either as a supplemental text or self-study reference

guide. Each of the first fifteen chapters is followed by discussion questions and vocabulary exercises, with self-checking answers at the back of the book. Potentially difficult words are marked with asterisks and can be looked up in the glossary in the back of the book.

The "Suggestions for Instruction" section at the beginning of the book may also be a helpful guide for the teacher who uses this book in an ESL class.

With a useful body of information on American jokes, this book can be an effective supplement for ESL students who have overcome a large part of the linguistic barrier but who yet need to overcome the cultural barrier. However, due to the number of difficult words, its use should be limited to higher-intermediate and advanced students.

Volume one of the book costs \$7.95. Three additional volumes are planned for this series, each covering a different aspect and expression of humor. Information about the additional volumes should appear in the *TESOL Newsletter* upon publication, according to the publisher.

*Debbie Siu Ling Li, now teaching English in Hong Kong, is a graduate of BYU-Hawaii's TESL program.*

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## A Quiz for *TESL Reporter* Readers

### Questions

1. "We're *all* experts, but we're experts in different areas." In what aspect(s) of teaching English as a second language are *you* an expert? What thing(s) do you do well, have uncommon experience with, or possess special knowledge about—so that other teachers consider you the resident "expert"?
2. What's the single most important thing you wish you had known when you began teaching?
3. What teaching technique or procedure that is now basic to your teaching repertoire were you originally slow to accept? Why did you reject it at first? What made you change your mind?
4. What's the most infuriating idea about teaching ESL that you've encountered in the last few years? Why are/were you so incensed?
5. What qualities, characteristics, and/or behaviors make an ESL/EFL teacher "great"? Are these innate or acquired?
6. "We don't have money in the budget for it" is a standard response to most requests. What's one way you've learned how to do \_\_\_\_\_ (you fill in the blank) successfully without having much/any money?
7. What was the most successful original lesson you ever taught to ESL/EFL students? What made it so?

(Answers on page 28)

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