

TESL -- An Undergraduate Major Program

BY WILLIAM D. CONWAY

Increasing recognition of the problems of language acquisition for non-native speakers of English and growing attention to "disadvantaged" children and their language problems have brought TESOL into prominence as a profession. As undergraduates contemplating careers in this area examine the catalogues of universities and colleges across the country they usually find that undergraduate programs in TESOL don't exist--most schools offer programs on the masters level.

Programs Not Available

These same catalogues feature undergraduate majors in such demanding subjects as physics, biology, English literature, mathematics, etc. but rarely a degree in TESOL. Must students possess a degree before they are qualified to approach the subject? Is the field so specialized and difficult that undergraduates can not understand it? Examination of the curriculum of many masters' programs suggests that the answer to both questions is NO. According to the TENES survey over 75% of the elementary teachers surveyed who are employed in TESOL have a baccalaureate degree, and somewhat more than half of the high school teachers.

Certainly a master's degree is desirable but do program aims fit the needs? Typically, a master's degree offers greater specialization and greater depth of knowledge, yet is this possible if there is no supporting undergraduate program such as is found in English literature, for example? The master's program of one well-known university seems to have a three-fold objective: preparation of teacher-supervisors and teachers, instruction in materials development, and possibly research. While valuable, this is not the type of preparation needed by the typical classroom teacher in the public schools.

Needs Not Met

Further evidence of the failure of the masters program to fulfill the need of students whose desire is simply to be a teacher is the failure to provide practice teaching. In "A Survey of Twelve University Programs for the Preparation of TESOL" made in 1965, three, and possibly four of the fifteen program variations offered in the survey schools required practice teaching. In two programs

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the requirement was optional; thus, in as many as eleven or twelve of the programs, students do not receive a type of training which is considered the sine qua non of most teacher education programs in the United States. Some of the graduates enrolled in these programs undoubtedly had come directly from undergraduate programs and had never taught. Do most public schools in this country hire teachers without student teaching experience? Of course, many of the graduates of these programs are foreign students and practice teaching might be difficult for them yet, unquestionably, it would make them better teachers.

It is interesting to speculate as to the type of in-class-behavior a teacher is likely to have following graduation from such programs. With possibly as many as sixteen or more years in traditional teaching situations as a student, and perhaps as a teacher, will his year or two of theoretical study make a significant change in his behavior and allow him to function effectively in his new role?

B.A. or M.A. Needed?

It seems evident that TESOL needs both graduate and undergraduate programs similar to those found in most subject areas. Data from Harold B. Allen's TENES survey (196) tend to support the need for this type of dichotomy. Of the groups studied (a major sample of over 1000 is involved) 85% of the elementary and secondary teachers had not had work in methods of teaching English to speakers of other languages. 91% had not had practice teaching in the field. 75% of all teachers (more than 85% of elementary teachers) reported no work in three areas immediately applicable to TENES teachings: phonetics, morphemics, and syntax. There are logical reasons why much of this is true, but certainly the fact remains that future classroom teachers and should be provided the training needed on the undergraduate level, the source of most public school teachers.

Baccalaureate Degree

The typical elementary and high school teacher does not hold a master's degree. It seems likely that this will continue to be the case for many years to come, yet these are the teachers that are involved in the classrooms of the nation each day, teaching as well as their preparation will permit. At least a partial answer to the need for qualified TESOL personnel in the public schools is to train them on the undergraduate level just as they are trained in other academic subjects. We must place a far greater emphasis on the training of undergraduates who will have knowledge of TESOL pedagogy and terminology; undergraduates who will have supervised practice-teaching experience before entering the classroom; undergraduates who can qualify for teaching credentials; in short, undergraduates who are prepared to be classroom teachers of English to speakers of other languages.

There seems to be little doubt that the state-of-the-art in TESOL,

while still rapidly developing and changing, has reached the point that curriculum development for a teacher training program need not be entirely an exploratory effort into the unknown. The similarity of many of the offerings found in many programs presently offered suggests that there is some unanimity of opinion. By modifying existing programs to fit the specific objectives of an undergraduate program and by developing new programs, most colleges and universities might attempt a teaching major equivalent to that for English literature or some other common undergraduate subject. Graduates of such programs would do much to raise the quality of TESOL as a profession. The master's programs, by no means obsolete, would have students to draw upon in creating a true graduate program that would provide the in-depth study and specialization needed to further enhance the prestige, knowledge, and achievement of TESOL.

1. Allen, Harold B., A SURVEY OF THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH TO NON-ENGLISH SPEAKERS IN THE UNITED STATES. Champaign, Illinois: National Council of Teachers of English, 1966.

2. Ohannessian, Sirarpi and Lois McArdle. A SURVEY OF TWELVE UNIVERSITY PROGRAMS FOR THE PREPARATION OF TEACHERS OF ENGLISH TO SPEAKERS OF OTHER LANGUAGES. Washington, D.C.: Center for Applied Linguistics, 1966.

This article is part of a speech delivered by the author at the 1968 TESOL Conference in San Antonio.

Dates Announced

The following dates are announced for the administration of TOEFL during the 1969-70 academic year.

Monday, October 27, 1969
 Monday, January 22, 1970
 Monday, March 23, 1970
 Monday, June 8, 1970

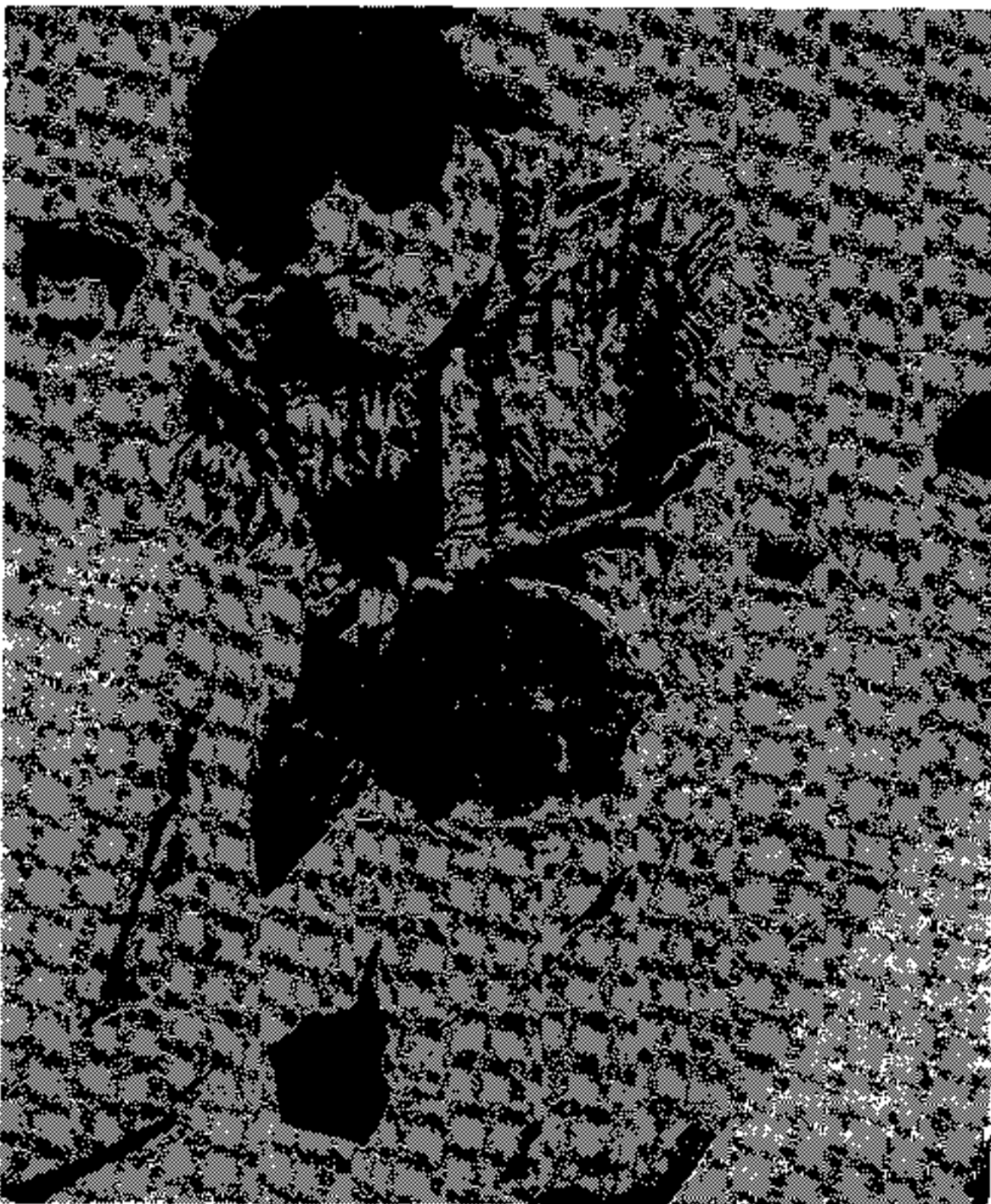
Language, Literature, Methodology Are Features of BATESL Curriculum



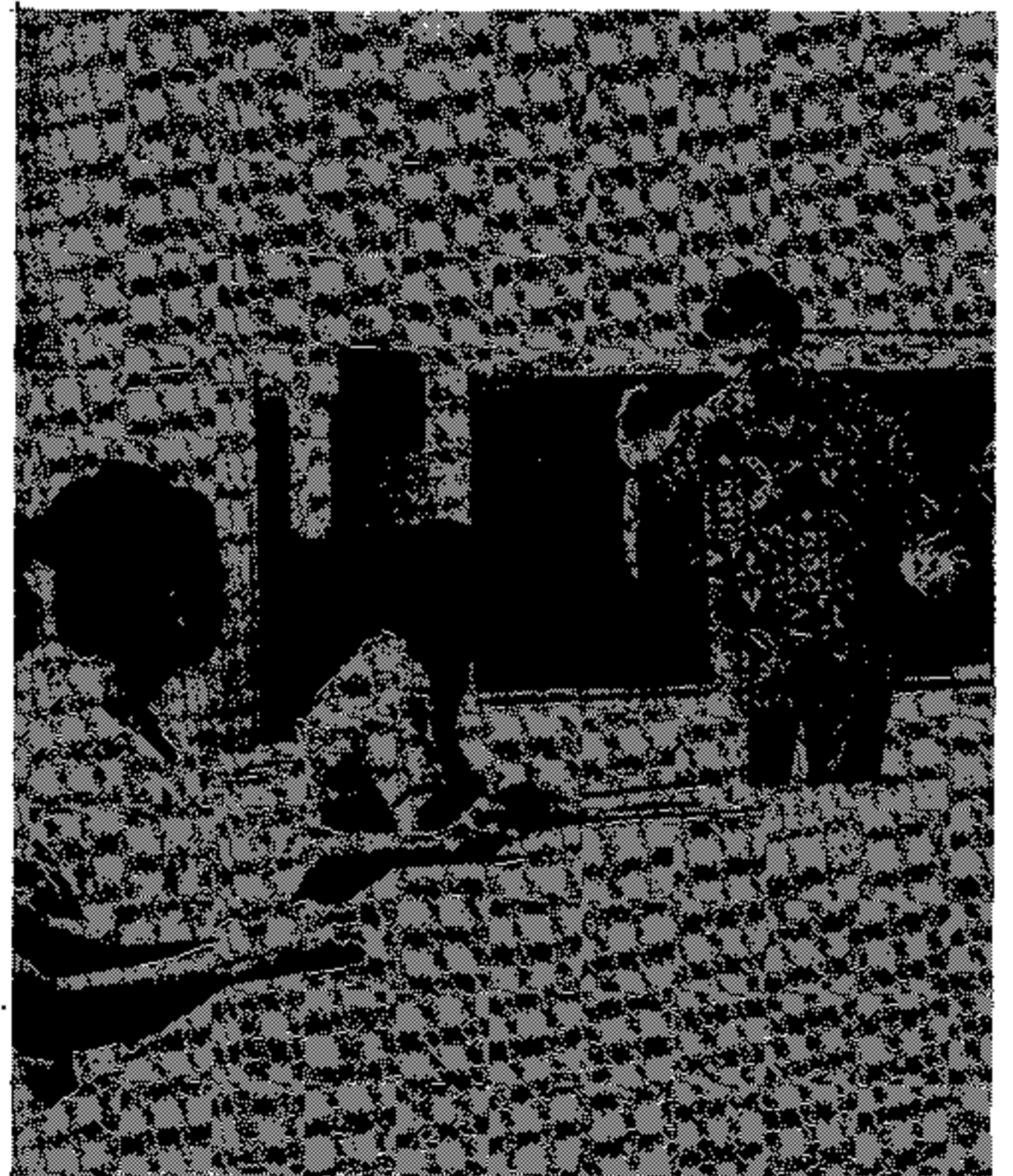
Prospective TESL teachers frequently enjoy close rapport with their instructors in small upperdivision classes.



Senior TESL major, Ropeti Lesa of Western Samoa, is shown giving English as a second language tutorial help to an English Language Institute student from Tahiti.



Senior George Hunt of Western Samoa helps a student in the college language laboratory where he is learning how to operate a variety of electronic aids for language teaching.



Mike Foley, senior BATESL major from Salt Lake City, Utah, leads a class in oral drill. Student teaching in the public schools of Hawaii is a feature of the TESL program.

Undergraduate TESL Major Curriculum Is Restructured

The undergraduate major in Teaching English as a Second Language (BATESL), an unusual program offered by The Church College in Laie, has recently undergone curriculum restructuring to fit into the school's new tri-semester plan commonly known as the 4-1-4.

The dual focus of the original program (reported in Vol. I, No. 1) has been retained. Recognizing that many graduates are required to teach in heterogeneous situations where only part of the students may be non-native speakers and that full course loads in TESOL might not be available in many schools, the English department designed a program that provides a complementary focus in literature and language. The dual nature of the program provides a means for avoiding over-specialization that might be an employment problem in some areas.

Revised Program

The revised curriculum consists of the following 4-hour courses: Phonetics and Phonemics, Morphology and Syntax, Advanced Linguistics, TESL Methods, Criticism of Literature, Shakespeare and Contemporary Dramatists, American Literature to 1900, Literature in Polynesia, Twentieth Century Literature, and an English elective. Anthropology is also required.



Undergraduate TESL majors learn to operate the console of a modern language laboratory at The Church College of Hawaii.

Because the BATESL major is designed for teacher training, no provision has been made to grant degrees to students who do not complete the requirements of the education department. Students are required to meet requirements for teacher certification in Hawaii, which include supervised student teaching.

Although in its second year, over twenty students are enrolled in the program with increased enrollment expected this year. The first two graduates will receive their diplomas in June and an additional four are expected to graduate in 1970.

TESL REPORTER

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