

# TESL

Teaching English as a Second Language

# REPORTER

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## TESL In The Total School Curriculum

BY ALICE C. PACK

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Often a foreign student's discouragement and failure, or near failure, in college classes is attributed to "cultural shock." How much of this "shock" is due to his previous inadequate English preparation is difficult to evaluate; however, early concentrated English training should provide the student with additional communication skills which might alleviate the shock and help make the necessary adjustments to life in a new land somewhat easier.

Many students feel that almost native proficiency in a second language can be attained by attending a daily one hour high school or college class--simply by memorizing the dialogues and vocabulary presented and dutifully writing out the required exercises.

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After completing a few courses, these students often feel confident that they have mastered the language and can converse fluently in it because they can communicate with each other and an instructor (who may also have limited language proficiency).

Despite the number of years of study, the foreign student's oral English experience in his native land has usually been carefully structured and carefully articulated, with limited experience in idiomatic usage. This is true even when instructors have been native English speakers.

Common complaints of many of our new students are, "I can't understand because everyone

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speaks too fast," and "I can't understand even when I know what the words mean." One new student who had been in school a few weeks even told me that no one on our campus spoke English. I asked him what they did speak, and he replied "slang." When asked to elucidate he said that no one pronounced his words understandably or made complete statements in asking or answering questions. Then I spoke to him with exaggerated articulation and juncture, in typical textbook sentences, "Do you think that I am now speaking English correctly?" His relief was manifest in his smile as he realized that I could speak "correct English" when occasion required it.

## Dialectical Differences

Dialectical difference between British and American English may account for some discrepancies in English pronunciation and usage, but this was not the basic problem here. This student had encountered real native language proficiency for the first time--and he experienced an often unrecognized form of cultural shock. His reaction was the natural one--he thought that what he had previously experienced was right, his new experience, which he did not understand, was wrong.

## Language Proficiency

Most colleges do not accept students whose English proficiency is below the standard required for Freshman English and thus do not face the English Problem we share with the elementary and high schools of this state--the problem of helping foreign students master enough English to succeed in the regular classroom. Many teachers and administrators mistakenly feel that students will pick up the language on their own or that they can simply enroll in a daily remedial English class and language difficulties will automatically solve themselves. Too often

the student who is left to learn for himself picks up his classmate's pidgin (then we have the additional task of convincing him that he needs to learn an academic or "school" dialect of English). Too often the remedial English teacher has a heterogeneous classroom of English problems--in addition to the English second language students, there are many other students with English problems of pathological and psychosomatic origin.

## Importance of Motivation

Almost any student can learn an acceptable dialect of English if he is convinced he needs to, but until he feels this need, it can be an almost impossible task. How to motivate the student to learn a socially acceptable English dialect is not the subject of this paper, but the necessity of acceptance is such an important factor in English Second Language teaching that some mention of it should be made. Bilingual teaching in American public schools under the ERIC program is one way many schools are providing this acceptance.

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## TESL REPORTER

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# 'Password,' Anyone?

BY NORMAN J. YOSHIDA

A major difficulty the TESL instructor faces is that of maintaining student interest. In the case of the advanced learner of English, the student who has had his fill of pattern practices yet still needs to polish off rough spots in his conversation (pronunciation and grammar), this is especially true. More pattern practices and too many pronunciation drills only bore him; still, he needs to be guided gradually from structured to free (unstructured) conversation to avoid his perpetuating errors in both pronunciation and grammar. One possible solution to the problem of working on conversation with advanced learners has been outlined by Robert G. Bander in his article "From Pattern Practice to Conversational English" (TESL REPORTER, vol. 2, no. 2, winter 1969).

## Variety Is Needed

Such a conversation class as described by Bander provides an opportunity for students to engage in dialogue that approaches real conversation despite, of course, the limitations of an artificial environment created by their being in a classroom with an instructor. The sequence of activities outlined by R. Bander offers enough of a variety to prevent boredom. But not every hour of class can be spent on conversation and on making oral presentations (e.g. reports on magazine articles, book reports, storytelling, etc.) There would need to be occasional "breaks" now and then, times when students could feel they were engaging in activities that were fun as well as educational. I would

suggest, then, playing the following word game (I have patterned it after the TV game show "Password") to provide a respite from the rigors of purely academic activities.

## Procedure

1. The instructor prepares a set of cards for each two players in his class ahead of time. (This assumes that the class is small--that there are no more than eight students at a time. If the class is larger, the instructor might divide the class up into smaller groups.) On each of these cards the instructor prints a word, possibly taken from a vocabulary list the class has studied or is studying. There should be a word card for each two players (each team).

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2. The students sit, each facing a partner. The instructor gives one member of each team a card on which is written the "password." The object is for that member to give his partner a clue as to what the "password" is. For example, the word might be CUP. The member of the team who has the word card might say to his partner, "Drink." The response from his partner, "Coffee." The next clue might be "Mug"; the response, "Beer." Only one-word clues may be given at a time, and these clues may not contain the "password." (For example, if the word is cup,

## **“Password” ..**

then “CUPcake” may not be used as a clue.) This process of clue-giving and responding goes on for ten seconds. If the responses within that time are, as in the example above, incorrect, the next team gets the chance to start guessing.

3. The opportunity to question and answer is passed from one team to another until one team succeeds in guessing the “password.” That team that successfully guesses the word is then given the chance to begin the next round of questioning, this time with the opposite member of the team giving the clues.

4. Scoring is done this way. If the team that begins the round guesses the word on the first attempts, it is awarded five points. If the first team misses the word and the second team gets it, the second team is then awarded four points, and so on. Should the round go full cycle without any team guessing the word--that is, until there are no more points to be awarded--the instructor then passes out another set of cards and the next round begins.

## **Students Enjoy It**

Advanced students really enjoy playing this game occasionally, for not only does it break the monotony of the everyday lesson, but it also affords them the opportunity of ranging the extent of their vocabularies, searching for synonyms or other words related to the “password.” While some TESL instructors might consider a game such as this rather “gimicky” and therefore of little value in the classroom, I feel it is a good way of maintaining student interest. Not only does the student feel that he is exploring the range of his vocabulary--he has fun!

# **TESL In The**

(Cont. from page 2)

We do not participate in the government subsidy of classes of this kind, but we have had a little experience with the principle involved.

Let me briefly tell you about a comparable project at our college this semester:

## **Tahitian Students**

We have approximately twenty French-speaking Tahitians in our English Language Institute. Equated Michigan English comprehension scores of ten of these who entered school last September and were placed in our beginning ELI class ranged from 35 to 59. Most colleges (including Michigan) do not take any student with scores below 85 and any accepted below 90 must take intensive non-credit English courses--students with scores below 65 do not have the English proficiency to succeed in academic work on the college level.

As most of you are aware, ours is a religious institution and our students--Church and non-church affiliated--are required to take, in addition to the usual college academic load, 2 credit hours in religion per semester. None of these Tahitians belonged to our church and so I placed them (where possible) together in one section.

## **Anti-Attitudes**

Although these students all had below 60 Michigan test scores and were struggling with an unfamiliar text in an unfamiliar language, they were in a regular college classroom. I suppose the teacher, who knew nothing of TESL techniques and less of their language than they knew of English, was as frustrated as the students. This is a similar situation to that found in our elementary and secondary schools.

# Total School Curriculum

The students complained they were failing and wanted to drop the course, so we approached the religion department with a proposal to teach one religion class in French (the academic language of Tahiti).

Although students may receive an X (non-credit) grade in ELI classes when they try and fail, this is not possible in other departments. The students knew their failing grades would put them on probation and, if continued into a second semester, might flunk them out of school. We began to notice some anti-church feeling with this discouragement, and there was a carry over in both attitude and study habits into their English classes. No matter what the topic was at the beginning of a discussion group, it always ended up with the complaint that they could not understand anything at all in their religion class although they attended the bi-weekly sessions regularly.

No doubt some of the drag I felt in our English classes was due to other cultural adjustments, but with this group this should have been minimal because they were part of a large minority group on campus and conversed freely in their native tongue on campus and in the village.

## Class Placement

In January I was able to assign them into a French speaking Religion class (at present there are about 20 Tahitians plus 2 native English Second Language French students in this class). We are fortunate in having a fluent French-speaking teacher on campus who has excellent rapport with the students. I have visited the class a number of times and have seen the enthusiasm with which these

students carry on religious discussions in their native tongue. Again I have noticed the carry-over into our English classes, as students strive to master new sounds and sentence structures.

I don't suppose pidgin as a native dialect would be considered under ERIC, but we might get some remarkable results if we accepted it in designated classes and made a sharp distinction in intonation and grammar in others.

The foreign student needs special instruction in English from a teacher who has had training in this area. He needs to learn the distinctive sounds of the English phonemes, the function words of English, and the difference between sentence structures in English and those of his native tongue.

## Knowing What to Teach

Last spring a teacher on Kauai who attended a workshop in TESL learned why Filipino students speaking English produce a certain non-English sound, and how to help a student recognize and produce the English sound. She tried this technique in class the same evening. As he quickly mastered the new sound, an adult student turned disgustedly to his teacher and asked why she hadn't helped him that way when he first joined the class several months ago. She had to admit that she herself had just learned why this particular English phoneme sounded "foreign" and how to help a student correct his pronunciation.

## Everyone Must Help

But the English teacher, no matter how well trained in English second language techniques, can not succeed without the united help of all school personal. A

student must have the opportunity to communicate in his new language, he must recognize and produce this new language learning in meaningful situations. English class participation is limited and is, to a large extent, artificial--often similar to that which is taught in foreign classrooms. Others who teach the student should be aware of the structures currently being taught and try to incorporate them in their teaching of Math, P.E., Social Studies, etc. They need to be aware, too, of the foreign student's native language basic phonology and structure and to recognize when a student substitutes native sounds for English or uses native structures, substituting English words.

## The Key is Structure

When we conducted a TESL Workshop in Tonga last summer two teachers handed me a bunch of themes and asked me how to correct them. They couldn't decide specifically just what was wrong, but knew they weren't acceptable English. They seemed to need complete revision. It didn't take me very long to pinpoint the problem. The students were using Tongan sentence structure with an English vocabulary. The teachers were right. They couldn't be corrected; they needed to be rewritten, using English sentence structure in addition to English vocabulary.

## Everyone Teaches It

If a foreign student hears a structure, which he has learned previously, outside of the English classroom he will, in addition to recognizing it, impart somewhat more significance to it than he might have done otherwise. Learning reinforcement, through repetition of this structure in a meaningful situation, also occurs.

One of the least understood of our English structures for foreign students is the tag question. (A statement with a short question at the end such as: "He left,

didn't he?" or "She's not going, is she?") Many ESL texts ignore this, as they do some of the other confusing English structures. In their native tongue most students have previously listened to the speaker's original statement and answered with the completely correct Japanese, Tongan, or Samoan structure, "Yes, she's not."

## Automatic Responses

After students have been taught that English agrees with the situation, regardless of the phrasing of the original question, they need lots of practice outside of the English classroom before this way of answering becomes automatic. The Mathematics teacher can help by asking this student, "Two plus two makes four, doesn't it?" and "Two plus three doesn't make four, does it?" The Home Economics teacher can ask, "That hasn't enough salt, has it?" The P.E. teacher can say, "John hasn't the ball, has he?" etc.

Each teacher could adapt many of the structures currently studied in similar ways and use them to give the student immediate reinforcement in his English learning.

## TESL and Typing

One of our business teachers is developing a program for foreign students where the material practiced for speed and accuracy in typing will be structured to give additional practice in basic English structures as well. While linguists do not all agree whether English is a skill (like typing) or an art (like walking) active participation is necessary for both, and so the student's English language acquisition should benefit from such programs. Foreign students could enroll in typing classes with controlled structure and vocabulary earlier than in regular classes and have more meaningful experiences in them.

Counselors (who seem to

# Pssst! Pshsht! -- Teaching A Basic Sound Contrast

BY BETTY W. MCKEEN

Young teenagers at Waialua High School frequently substitute "sh" for "s" in their efforts to pronounce English. This lesson, told in story form, has proven successful in attracting attention to older students and in providing a basis for oral drill.

## Attract Attention

(Invite attention to the problem by casually telling the following story:) A long time ago, as I was finishing a snack in a plushly upholstered booth in the breakfast shop of the Regis Hotel in Mexico City, I began to get nervous because it was getting close to school time and I wanted the waitress to bring my check. But I was seated next to the wall with five other companions and none of us could see over or around the booth. This didn't bother a native Mexican who was with us. He calmly blew through his front teeth and



inherit most school problems) would normally be responsible for the coordination of these kinds of programs in a school. The counselor assigns the foreign student to classes and can work closely with his teachers, so he is in a position to elicit their cooperation in a united English Second language program.

Learning a second language is not an easy task for either the student or the teacher, and adjusting to life in a new environment can complicate it. However, cooperative effort can lessen the cultural shock for the student and lessen the frustration for both student and teacher if all school personnel will unite in an effort to solve this challenging problem of teaching English communication to the second language student.

quietly said, "Psssst!" Immediately our waitress came running right to us.

After that experience I began to notice what a powerful sound "Psssst" was in Mexico. I could stand on a busy street corner right in the heart of downtown Mexico City and if I wanted to hail a taxi all I had to do was say "Psssst." And even if he was clear across the busy street a cab driver would hear me, make a U-turn, and come right over to pick me up--in answer to "Psssst."

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A few years later I went to Portugal. By that time I was fluent in Spanish and I could read a little Portuguese because it looked a bit like Spanish. But Wow!--when I heard that language spoken I couldn't understand it at all. It sounded so different!

One afternoon, as I was walking with a crowd to a fiesta, there was a Portuguese lady in front of me carrying a baby. The baby kept peeking over the lady's shoulder obviously trying to attract my attention. When I looked the other way the baby said, "Pshsht!" (/ s /) Then the baby laughed and flirted with me.

I remembered what I had observed in Mexico and I began to watch these sound contrasts in Portugal. This "sh" sound for the "s" sound is definitely part of Portuguese--a sound so endemic that your ancestors brought it half way around the world gen-

erations ago--and it's still with you.

But in English you often use it in the wrong places and some times it can convey the wrong meaning. Look at these words--all spelled with "s:"

see  
Sal  
sun  
Oh, son!  
soul  
sigh

(Write these words on the blackboard or use prepared cards.) And now pronounce them after me. Again. And again. Do you know what all of these words mean? (Discuss)

Now watch--I'll spell all of these words with "sh" and they'll all mean something different. Look.

she  
shall  
shun  
ocean  
shoal  
shy

Now pronounce after me. Can you hear the difference? Study the two diagrams. Notice the difference in tongue position.

(Demonstrate positions using articulation diagrams. Draw the diagrams on the blackboard.)

Repeat both columns.

Let's go back and put these sounds on the end of some words instead of on the beginning. Say "gas" (write this on the blackboard, or show it on a card) You know what "gas" means--especially if you drive a car. Now say "gash." You couldn't walk

## First TESL Graduates



Seniors Ana La Barre and Noel McGrevy are the first graduates of The Church College of Hawaii undergraduate program in TESL.

if you had a bad cut, or gash, on your foot. There is a big difference, isn't there?

Pronounce after me as I write on the blackboard.

gas	gash
class	clash
mess	mesh
mass	mash
puss	push

(Have the class repeat the words comparing the two pronunciations.)

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