

Letter to the Editor

The article by Yao Shen in the Spring, 1970, TESL Reporter, inspires me to reply from my position as a lowly classroom teacher of ESL. I'm frustrated! So many of the questions presented are nonsense from my point of view. Methods of good teaching are just that in any field and a teacher can feel success or failure without seeking support from his neighbor. Other questions appeared to me to be response for the sake of response. The answers to most of the questions wouldn't be enlightening even if they were there. There is no need to consider how bad bad pronunciation really is because it can be correctly learned to begin with. I want concrete examples of successful methods in teaching ESL.

I work in the mass of debris inherited from years of confusion. I don't teach ESL, I unteach it! Ninth grade is my teaching level. I receive students who have been exposed to English for nine years. They have a vocabulary on the fifth grade level and a functional grasp of the language equal to any American three year old. Why is this? Possibly because of the extremely poor quality of English speakers. Our teaching power is on the upper level and our need is at the bottom. "We can't afford to spend the money it would cost to hire specialists of ESL on the primary level." This is what I have been told. But since when is economy synonymous with quality or vice versa? And just what is economy in the field of ESL?

Ideally, ESL should start with a knowledgeable teacher on a blank slate. Each year we receive here a small group of students from Tahiti. They have never been exposed to any English. At first they study only English for four periods a day. After four months

many of them are ready to be integrated into the regular program. By the end of a year their performance in English outshines the local student. Their pronunciation and mechanics are better and they are better equipped to use English as a tool for further learning.

I would like to have more definite information about ESL in the beginning stages. I am in need of the "what and how". ESL is my field, I'd like to be successful in teaching it. And what I'd like to know is, specifically, how are others teaching ESL?

Sincerely yours,
Mary Louise Pope
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Any teacher who has developed a successful plan for teaching a specific English Skill, and would like to share this with Mrs. Pope and others, is invited to submit a short article for publication in the TESL Reporter.

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Articles relevant to teaching English as a second language in Hawaii, the South Pacific and Asia, may be submitted to the editor through Box 150, The Church College of Hawaii, Laie, Hawaii, 96762. Manuscripts should be double-spaced and typed, not exceeding three pages.

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