

TESL

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ELI TUTORIAL

by Michael E. Foley

"Can't I stay a little longer?" asked one of my Japanese students. His question demonstrated the interest our students show in the latest attempts to individualize the English Language Institute program at The Church College of Hawaii.

The afternoon ELI Tutorial concentrates on individually helping students improve writing abilities. As many have observed, writing is hard

work. It's a skill which must be practiced, so all ELI'ers take a morning writing class. Our largest morning writing class has a 20:1 student/teacher ratio. With a class that size it's impossible for the teacher to spend much time on individual cases. And since one of the division criteria for these students to enter Freshman English is the ability to write a relatively error-free essay, we justify requiring them to spend an additional hour in Tutorial.

Tutorial operates on two basic premises: (1) Writing requires practice. 2) Students need more help. To provide the practice, we use a variety of locally produced materials, commercial texts, and adaptations from selected sources arranged in graduated form. To provide the help, the English Language Institute employs (in addition to the regular staff) several TESL and English undergraduate majors. The majors have been gaining some valuable experience, earning money in their chosen field, and doing an outstanding job working with the international students.

After a month and a half's operation everyone is familiar with Tutorial procedure. It almost runs itself. Students enter the ELI suite any time during open hours and record their own attendance. The materials are kept in large

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ELI Tutorial

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accordion-type folders. Students take the level they're working on and go to one of the air-conditioned classrooms to write. After finishing that short segment, they then work with one of the Tutorial staff, going over the exercises together.

The staffer marks errors and asks the students to make corrections. Grammar and vocabulary are checked thoroughly. Special attention has been given to include new words in the materials, and consequently students have grown conscientious about using dictionaries and no longer wait to be quizzed on vocabulary before checking meanings.

When one segment has been completed the students progress to the next. When questions involving grammar or novel structures arise, there are always enough staff so someone can devote the necessary time to help the student reach an understanding while the others continue. While it sometimes gets crowded and hectic, Tutorial students spend most of their time writing or working with a teacher.

Almost 50% of the Church College of Hawaii's student body are foreign students, many of whom speak English as a second language and who occasionally resent having to enroll in ELI after studying English for many years in their own countries.

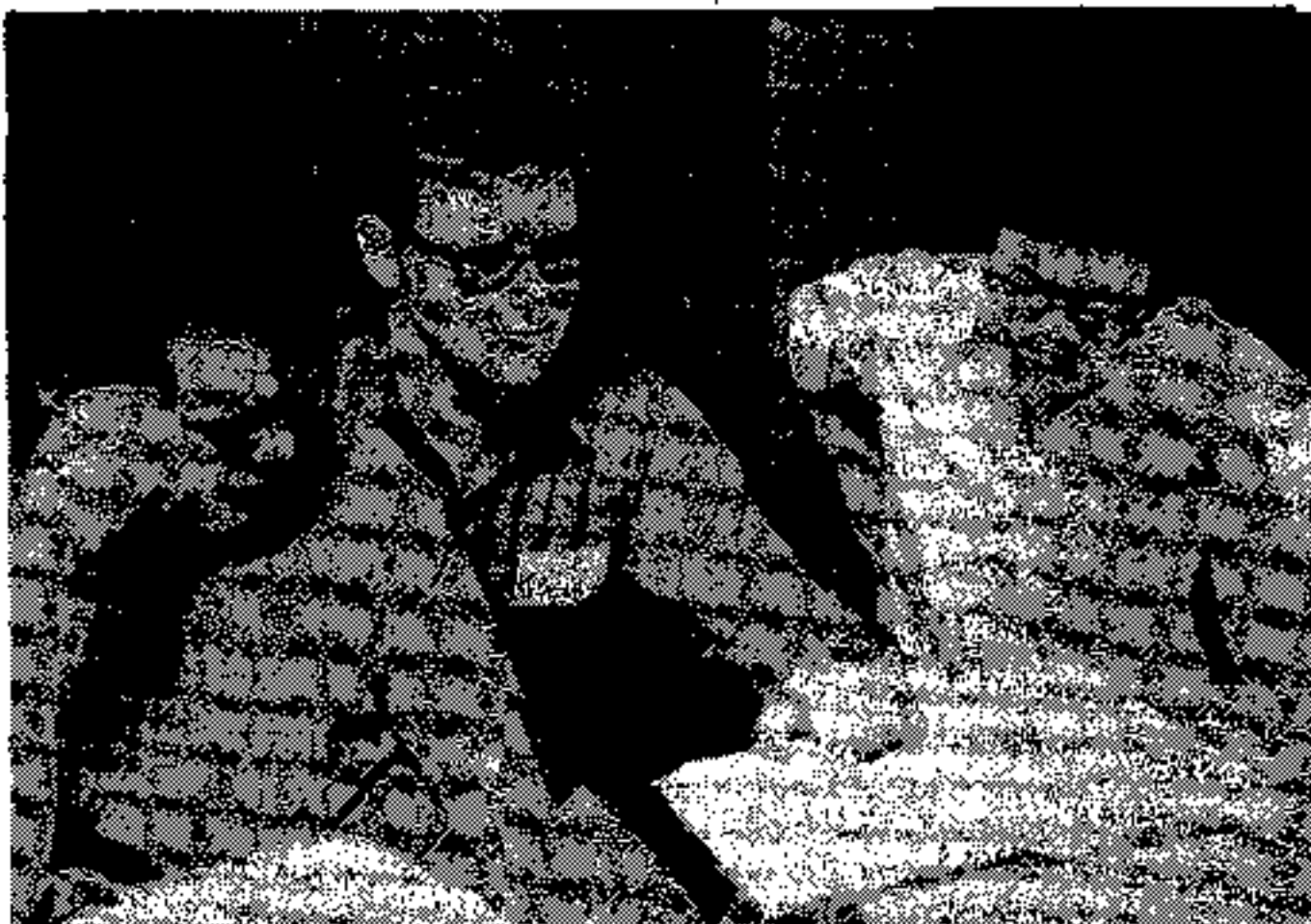
The Tutorial has injected some vitalizing enthusiasm against this resentment. Our students enjoy attending. A good deal of peer-tutoring, which is encouraged, goes on while they are writing. They do extra work and sometimes have to be told to leave so we can close for the day.

Lest I portray too glowing a program, there are problems. The process of practice plus help is the important technique used in Tutorial, and not the amount of work done or getting through all the materials. However, students long-conditioned to getting through the book (course, year, etc.) have been overly concerned with completing all the exercises although morning classes supply sufficient homework.

When a student is caught doing the exercises outside Tutorial we explain the rationale to him, but many students don't yet value the process as much as the product. Again, if a student does several segments before working with a teacher, that teacher has to spend much more time with him but at less frequent intervals. Lines would form while others waited their turn and our smoothly flowing operation would bog to boredom.

Of course, trying to get students not to do work is a problem other teachers might welcome.

BATESL major tutors assist students in the ELI program





A student works individually and frequently consults with her instructor Michael Foley.

Below

Sid Jenson, supervisor, assists student in the CCH Reading Clinic which is equipped with modern reading teaching devices, including Craig Reader and Persceptoscope.

