GENERATING LANGUAGE THROUGH MEDIA
AUDIO-VISUAL PRODUCTION BY THE ESL STUDENT

By Linda New Levine

As a language teacher, my definition of the nature of language is necessarily different from that of the linguist or the anthropologist. Rather than perceiving language as a system, as linguists do, I see language as a method of communication within a social context, a vehicle for getting things done, a set of skills useful for completing specific tasks.

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With this definition in mind, the job of the language teacher acquires new meaning. Teachers can no longer teach language in the abstract as a body of knowledge that students must absorb, rather they must teach students to *use* language. Bernard Spolsky made this point in his article "The Limits of Language Education" in *The Linguistic Reporter* (Spolsky 1971:2) when he said, "language teachers have seen their task as teaching language; they have not realized that it is teaching students to *use* language."

The ability to use a new language within a social setting for the purpose of completing tasks is sometimes termed "communicative competence." Wilga Rivers refers to this ability as "spontaneous expression." Both terms imply a student's linguistic competence in the language or his ability to produce grammatical sentences. Communicative competence also implies a student's grasp of the social meaning of language, an understanding of the cultural and social amenities as well as the non-verbal behavior that occurs in language contexts.

For my discussion, I prefer the term "conversational competence" used by Bruce Fraser in his paper "The Development of

Communicative Competence in Second Language Acquisition" at the 1974 TESOL Convention. Conversational competence excludes the area of non-verbal behavior which I will not be focusing on in this paper. Rather, I will discuss some general methods for developing conversational competence in second language students and then some of the specific methods involving task completion and the use of media which I have employed in my own middle schoool and high school ESL classes.

In my attempts to teach students how to use language, I have made several assumptions about developing the most efficient system of learning. To maximize learning efficiency I assume that:

1) Learning is an individualized procedure. Students differ in intelligence, achievement levels, rates of learning, interests, and styles of learning and cognition. Therefore the most efficient learning situation takes these differences into account and attempts to provide various ways for learning a particular skill.

2) Language learning is socialized behavior. To learn to use a language a student must have ample opportunity to practice using language as a skill. Therefore, the most efficient language learning situation must provide a high density of interpersonal communication.

3) Learning is most efficient when it is self-directed. The language learner who is actively involved in the selection, sequencing, and timing of his own learning program will use his learning time in the most efficient way. Tourists traveling abroad are proof of this assumption as they quite easily learn the corresponding phrase for "How much?" in as many languages as they find necessary. Therefore, the most efficient learning system should provide for student input.

In my own middle school and high school classes of Italian and Spanish students, I have found that these three criteria may be met by implementing a program for student production of media. Students who produce their own slide shows, filmstrips, and movies are learning to use language to complete tasks and they are working on these projects according to their own individual styles within a

social context of cooperating with others. and to a large extent, under their own direction. I will discuss six specific techniques which second language teachers can employ and adapt to their own curriculum in order to increase the conversational competence of their students.

Student photography is a good way in which to introduce second language

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Linda New Levine, a doctoral student in ESL and Linguistics at New York University, is currently teaching ESL in the Bedford School District, New York. She has taught ESL with the Peace Corps in the Philippines and in the New York City School system.

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students to the world of media. They quickly learn how to use an inexpensive Polaroid camera and are highly motivated by the fast 15-second results to produce. more pictures. The job of the teacher is to suggest appropriate topics as photographic subjects. When students are involved in a language lesson concerning a school building, they can take a Polaroid camera and shoot a roll of eight black and white or color pictures of their own school and the facilities within the building. Other language lessons which focus on the community, the house and the furniture within the house, the family, or the drugstore provide a good setting for photography. Conversation necessarily occurs as an offshoot of the assignment as students must interact verbally in planning sessions prior to the actual photographic session. The newly taught vocabulary and structures are more likely to be used by students during the planning session if the photographic topic is specific and directly related to the original classroom presentation of the new material. Therefore, if students are planning to photograph their community, they will be likely to use the target vocabulary and structures identified by the teacher if these structures have been questioned during the student planning session.

After the actual photography is finished, students must then cooperate on an appropriate means of sharing their project with the others in the class. This involves the

student in a form of peer teaching and provides a goal for the completion of the photographic assignment. They must write a story on the assigned topic and use the pictures as a visual accompaniment. This becomes an attractive photo book if the students write the story neatly on unlined paper, cover the book with an attractive cover, and bind the pages together with a plastic punch binding or with brass fasteners. The book can now be included in the classroom library for other students to read.

Another method of sharing student photography is the photographic wall chart. Here, students write a story on a large sheet of chart paper in letters large enough to be read by the class. The photographs are placed on the chart as a visual accompaniment to the text. These charts can be shared by the entire class. Here again, the conversation that occurs as part of the planning and completion of the project enables the student to use the newly acquired language skills for the completion of a task. This is, in my view, the real goal of language learning.

Student photographs can also be used to create decorative and informative bulletin boards on particular subjects. Again, the bulletin boards are created to be shared by all the students in the class. Because these projects are really a variety or experience chart, they are especially effective for those students in the class requiring reading remediation as the reading involved is usually well within the student's aural-oral command.

Polaroid photography requires few equipment demands on the part of the teacher. However, the next technique I will discuss, student made slide shows, requires more equipment but produces more satisfying results. Slide shows may be of two types. One type of slide show is in the form of a picture story. The student may select a topic such as "My Neighborhood," and then represent the topic pictorially. Ideas for shows of this type are endless, for example: "My Country," "My Family," or a slide show on jobs and occupations. Another type of slide show may be prepared to provide practice of a particular grammatical structure. For example, the present progressive or the simple present tense may be illustrated in a show titled *What People Do*

All Day. Here, pictures will show the teacher teaching, the children playing, the farmer working, and so on. Slide shows may also be produced to illustrate comparative adjectives such as *big, bigger,* and *biggest* or the plural of nouns.

A slide show project involves either the use of a 35 millimeter camera or an Instamatic camera and roll of color slide film for twenty or thirty-six pictures. Students must again plan their photographic session before they begin to photograph so that they can cover the topic thoroughly and not waste their film allotment. The teacher can aid in these planning sessions by appropriate questioning. In this way students may be directed toward using the target structures and vocabulary to accomplish their planning task.

After the slides are returned from the processer, students may arrange them in a logical sequence and write a script accompaniment which they can then tape on a tape recorder for presentation to the class. Another method of presentation is to ask students to relate the slide show extemporaneously. This is a more difficult skill, however, and most students will require many practice sessions before they can extemporize before a class.

If the teacher has access to a Kodak Ectagraphic Visualmaker, students may produce slide shows of more extensive subjects than those found in their immediate environment. The Ektagraphic Visualmaker consists of an Instamatic camera with a close-up lens attached to a camera stand.

The camera is permanently focused onto a table top background. Using this device, students can produce quality slides from pictures found in magazines and books. Thus, students can produce slide shows on a wide variety of topics: zoo or farm animals, scenes from their native countries, various kinds of air, land, and water transportation, biographies of famous people, and many others. These slide presentations and their taped accompaniments may be shown on a slide projector and then made a part of the ESL classroom library or catalogued in the regular school library.

The concluding installment of "Generating Language Through Media" will appear in the next issue of the *TESL Reporter*.

THE ART OF CHANGE IN ESOL OR HOW TO CREATE AN ELEPHANT

By Larry E. Smith

Recently I read of a man who, as a sculptor, creates amazingly lifelike figures of elephants. When asked how he did it, he replied, "I just take a big rock and chip away until I've eliminated everything that doesn't look like an elephant." At first I found his answer merely humorous; perhaps even flippant, but later I began to realize that he had offered a clue for successful change in ESOL.

Many of us in ESOL are not satisfied with our present "state of the art" and desire change. Our professional journals frequently have articles like, "New Directions in Language Learning" and "Let's Change Our Base of Operations." We continue to seek better and more appropriate methods, books, and teacher training techniques. I say "we" because I am a part of this search.

As you are well aware, there are many things we don't know in language learning and language teaching. We don't know how people learn languages—first or second. We don't even know if people who learn more than one language learn them in the same ways. We don't know if all people go through the same stages in language learning—some faster than others—or if each person has his own individual learning strategies. We don't know if one skill (reading, writing, speaking, or listening) should precede another or if they should be taught in some integrated fashion. We aren't sure if we get better results by teaching the language directly or by teaching a subject like math in the language. No doubt, you can give me other examples like these. With all this ignorance, it is little wonder that our profession is in a state of confusion.

Of course experiments have been done and are being done to provide us with clues to the answers of these questions. Frequently however the results offer us conflicting evidence. I don't mean to imply by this that we need fewer language experiments. We should continue to seek solid empirical evidence as guideposts; however we need not wait until a consensus is reached on these questions before we begin to implement change.

I am suggesting that looking at existing programs with a felt desire for change, we begin by chipping away those things which don't contribute to a good ESOL program. Let me describe a situation. In an Asian secondary school we find the students required to "take" (I didn't say study or learn) English three hours a week. According to the written policy of the school, the main objectives of English instructions are: 1) To help the learner acquire the skill to communicate in English, orally and in writing. 2) To help the learner acquire the skill to read for information and enjoyment. 3) To enable him to use English in commerce and industry. 4) To provide him a window to the English speaking world. There are between 45-50 students in each class.

The teachers are like teachers everywhere; some are competent, others are not. Most of them cannot carry on a conversation in English with a native speaker except of the most superficial kind. i. e., "Where do you live? How many brothers and sisters do you have? What is your favorite sport? Can you use chopsticks?" They have difficulty in understanding these same questions if asked by a native speaker because their opportunity for such an exchange is so limited. Most teachers cannot write a descriptive essay or a friendly letter in English with any originality. They can read and translate. Traditional grammar rules seem second nature and their penmanship is almost always outstanding. Most

of them have never left their country and very few read novels, short stories, or plays in English for pleasure. They frequently watch American and British movies and some of them listen to the Voice of America and BBC news broadcasts.

Like the teachers, the textbooks are many and varied. Some are very old and were used by the teachers when they were students. Others are experimental in nature. Some seem to stress speaking (pronunciation and dialog memorization) while others tell of the life of Mark Twain and Sir Walter Raleigh with exercises for translation. The students in the first year classes seem fairly interested while the seniors are quite evidently bored. Classroom activities consist of "Repeat after me." "Translate the passage for us to hear." "Copy these sentences in your notebooks." and "Write your paragraph on the board." Grammar rules and literary excellence are often discussed in the native language. When asked why they are teaching English or what the objectives are for a semester or

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Larry Smith is a Research Associate at the East-West Center Culture Learning Institute. He has travelled extensively in the Far East and presently heads two programs: one for Inservice Teacher Trainers and one for Preservice Teacher Trainers.

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a particular class, most teachers act as if those are irrelevant questions. The students know why they are there. English is required and in order to pass the college entrance examination they must be able to read and translate as well as know some rather esoteric grammar rules. Of course some students realize that 85% of them will not pass the examination and would rather be doing almost anything else than studying English.

In a situation like this, where do we begin the chipping process? The analogy of the elephant's creation from a rock is pretty good here. The task is enormous. The resistance for change is hard and solid. If you aren't careful, you can damage the entire piece of work. We shouldn't try and accomplish too much with each blow. Slowly and with caution the work should begin and continue. It will take patience

and skill. I suggest we begin by chipping away some of the objectives. It's not that they aren't worthy goals but with only three hours a week, they are impossible. We may not be able to erase them from the policy handbook but we can erase them from our minds and thereby ease some of the frustration of never being able to reach our goals. I would certainly delete objective 3) "To enable him to use English in commerce and industry." I would keep objective 1) "To help the learner acquire the skill to communicate in English, orally and in writing," but with modifications. I would "chip" the emphasis on pronunciation since that is a weak area for teachers, accent the need for listening comprehension in communication, chip away at the correctness syndrome for speaking and writing and put a sharper edge on getting one's message across. Objective 2) "To help the learner acquire the skill to read for information and enjoyment," is one I would use to defend "fun in the classroom," as well as an emphasis on the art of taking tests. We would read the newspaper for editorials, advertisements, want ads, and news articles when we "read for information" in addition to office memos and business letters. We would discuss the grammar rules as well as the organizational strategy for each one. For objective 4) "To provide him a window to the English speaking world." I would chip away some of the classroom activities like "Repeat after me." and "Copy this in your notebooks." and replace them with a Dick Via production or a visit to a Saturday matinee followed by a classroom discussion. Popular English and American songs might even be sung and discussed. I'd consistently chip away at the idea that English should be a required subject and that the entrance examination system is the most practical one. I would, however, be extremely careful with these issues because the potential for marring the entire figure is very great.

The effective implementation of change is an art. It is a slow process. The need for change in our profession is urgent and yet because of its immenseness, it is sometimes difficult to know where to begin. I would encourage us, beginning where we are, to chip away those things which we are confident impede us in our English teaching/learning experience.

TOWARD COMMUNICATIVE AND "ANN"

By Kenneth G. Aitken

One of the most abused rights of the second language learner is the right to make a mistake. There is a tendency by ESL teachers to control classroom conversations and impose corrections on students so that only the most audacious students speak out. The other students speak only when spoken to. Hence, few mistakes are made in the classroom, and the teacher assumes the language is being learned. Although teachers claim to be teaching their students how to use a second language, there is a lack of free, meaningful conversation in most ESL classrooms. Seldom do we provide opportunities for students to communicate their feelings on issues, problems, and experiences.

David Wolfe (1967) suggests that progress towards natural, meaningful conversation in the ESL classroom is hindered by the artificiality of language learning through drills and exercises that force the student to lie. He says that from the point of view of true communication sentences like

'Yesterday I went to the movies.
'Last night I went to the game.
'Last week I went to the game.

border on the nonsensical. Stern (1970) concurs when he writes that teachers are often so preoccupied with the forms of language, the patterns of sentences, points of pronunciation, etc., that they entirely forget that language is used for communication of something to somebody. Yet the basic goal of TESL is to enable the student to successfully send and receive messages of his/her choice in English. Oller (1971) tells us that to accomplish this goal we must involve the student in active, meaningful communication in the target language-- the sooner, the better.

In this article I will discuss one way I have used to involve intermediate level, adult ESL students in active communication using selected letters from the "Dear Abby" and "Ann Landers" columns in the daily newspapers.

The technique I employ in conversation sessions is based on the notion that certain communication activities are easier than others, and that certain easy activities tend to "warm up" the conversationalists so that they feel more comfortable and are therefore more willing to respond to others. The communication activities, from easiest to most difficult, that I use are: listening to one person speaking or reading aloud; talking and listening to two friends; reporting to a group of twenty acquaintances on the ideas and opinions of oneself and friends; and writing to a stranger giving advice that has been requested.

At the beginning of the session each student is given a copy of the letter to Dear Abby, or Ann Landers, that is the topic of discussion for the day. The response, however, is not supplied at this time. The teacher reads the letter aloud while the students follow the text. Following this, the teacher explains any vocabulary items or idioms that may be confusing to the students. (This should be kept as brief as possible.) The key issue in the letter is identified at this point. Initially the teacher might point it out and write it on the board. However, after some experience, the students should be asked to identify the issue during the small group discussions (Farid 1974).

The students are grouped in triads (groups of three) and asked to discuss, and respond to, the issue, question or whatever has been raised in the letter. In my experience, few students have wasted the opportunity to speak in English in these unsupervised conversations. In selecting those who are in each triad, it is wise to put your outspoken and opinionated students together so they can struggle in a group, rather than dominate conversation in a triad that has two less vocal students.

COMPETENCE WITH "ABBY"

With the outspoken students no longer monopolizing the conversation, the other students can, and do, have lively and stimulating conversations in English.

Before the topic has been completely 'milked dry' in the small group discussion, the groups are gathered together into a larger group discussion. For best results I have found that when sitting in a circle, without wide gaps or empty places between them, the students and teacher can carry on the conversation with maximum participation. The teacher now functions as a moderator and draws out of the group member's reports and discussion what was discussed in the triads.

During all these discussions the teacher makes no corrections of student errors. The students are encouraged to share their thoughts on the issue and not to focus on the language. The teacher should treat each response with respect.

If interest in the topic is keen, the teacher may ask the class to write a response to the letter. The response should be brief, and in letter form. I have found that students at this stage request some feedback on correctness of grammar. In reading and marking the letters the teacher should comment on a limited number of grammatical points, as well as on the content.

After the class has experienced a number of such communication sessions, they become used to the routine and begin to make generalizations about North American cultural patterns. When they reach this stage, rather than focus on the problem raised in a letter to a column, the teacher might direct the class to focus on the cultural implications raised by these types of newspaper columns. Blatchford (1973) suggests that a selection of many columns with a cultural focus, with the columnists' responses, be made available to the students. The groups then could come to grips with questions like:

'What bothers Americans?
'Why do they write to an impersonal party for professional advice?
'Why can't people discuss problems openly with friends or associates and get immediate help?'

These questions could be handled in the same way as the columns themselves were handled, moving through the various communication activities.
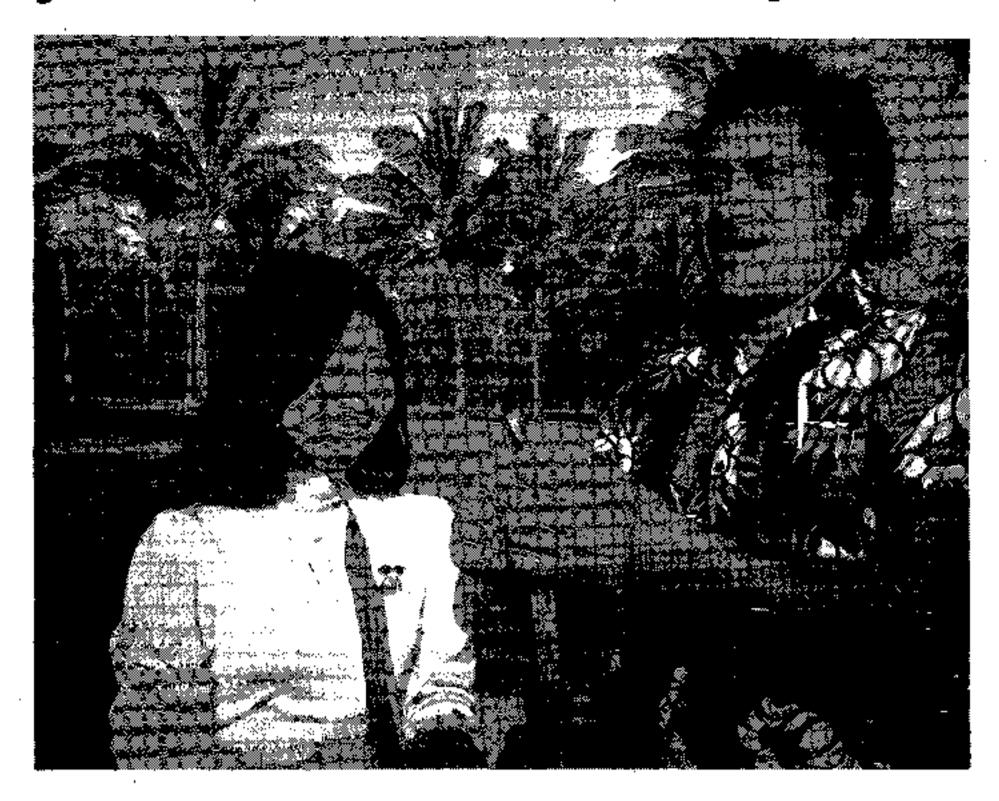
Someone is sure to object to these types of communication activities because they are uncontrolled. However Dulay and Burt (1973) have argued that the most important characteristic of a natural communication situation is that the attention of the speaker and hearer is on the content of the verbal exchange, rather than on its form. Yet we note that most language teachers and language materials focus on the structure to be taught. Frequently this results in messages meaningless to both teachers and students. "This may be because language teachers are supposed to teach language and not anything else, just as social studies teachers, or science teachers are supposed to teach social studies or science." (Dulay and Burt 1973:257). The fallacy is, that language is 'form' and cannot reasonably be compared to subject matter, which is 'content'. Communication activities, such as those I have discussed here, place emphasis on meaning and information exchange, and are steps to putting some content into ESL classes.

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TEACHING CONVERSATION THROUGH STUDENT INSTRUCTION

By Kenyon Moss

A major problem in teaching conversation is that of maintaining student interest. This is especially true when the class is made up of advanced ESL students. Interest wanes when the topic is not situational. Pattern practice and most other drills do not provide the students with the necessary stimulation to converse with each other.

In an effort to overcome this problem, I assigned my conversation class to prepare to teach the rest of the class an outside game or activity.

There were four students from Korea, four from Tonga, four from Hong Kong, two from Japan, and one each from Tahiti and Taiwan in the class.

The first day one of the Tongan boys came to class with a large kitchen knife. Since he seemed to be prepared, I asked him to be first. As we walked outside, he cut coconut fronds and gave each of us a leaf, explaining we were going to make horns. He then had us stand in a circle and "told" as he demonstrated how to take the rib out of the leaf. When this was done, he used the knife to shorten the leaves and make them straight on the ends. He then told us how to roll what remained of the leaf into a horn. Several of the students made horns of varying lengths, resulting in varying tones. Some of us could get nothing but air from ours. The students were asking questions on how to fold it, how to hold it, and many other details. Those who were successful in making and blowing their horns were telling the rest of us how we, too, could accomplish such a task.

A Korean girl was next. She divided the class into two teams. One member from a team would go forward and stand face-to-face with a member from the other team. The object was to make the other person laugh first. The rule was that you could only talk. There was to be no touching or play acting. The first one to laugh lost and was replaced by another member of his team. The first team to lose all of its players lost the game. It was interesting to see a ninety pound girl from Hong Kong try to make a two hundred pound Tongan boy laugh.

A Japanese girl taught us how to play her version of "Drop the Hankie."

Another Tongan student told us how to make toy windmills out of the leaves of the plam fronds.

Every student in the class had his turn and demonstrated various other activities and games during the next two class periods. Some elicited more conversation than others, but all were situational and interesting to the students. New words, phrases, and sentences were learned in context and high student rapport was established. Students also enjoyed "teaching the teacher."

If writing had been part of the class, the students could have also written the directions to the activity. Then other students could take the written directions and try to follow them.

THE LEXINYM- A BRAND-NEW CONCEPT FOR THE LANGUAGE TEACHER

By Jason B. Alter

The teacher of English as a Second language has long had an extensive list of "nyms" to work with and, especially, to work from. There are the ordinary nyms: synonyms, antonyms, and homonyms. Then, there are the somewhat more esoteric: acronyms, heteronyms, eponyms, etc. These help the student to see the inner workings of the English language; his linguistic appetite is whetted; he gains more control over the vagaries of the language.

The use of the various nyms constitutes a mind-expanding language experience, a pedagogically valid adjunct, at the very least, to the workaday curricular agenda. Vocabulary gains are one spin-off. For example, the word "rate" might very well come up in a lesson. The teacher might ask the student to rearrange the letters of "rate" to make some other word, and the student might say "tear". Well, "tear" is a heteronym. It can be pronounced two ways: (1) /tár/ (to rip) or (2) /tir/ (a drop of liquid); but the spellings are identical.

It so happens that both pronunciations of "tear" have homonyms, which is admittedly a much richer category than that of the heteronyms. Language activity proceeds apace, as students make sentences using the words engendered. Again, the students and the teacher should work *from* the nyms, into communicative language-aware activities. Memorizing lists of nyms is non-productive.

Another fringe benefit of the use of nyms is in spelling improvement. Thus, the acronym for the Agency for International Development is "AID" (cf. "aid"), and the homonym is "aide", not to mention the suffix "-ade". The student and the teacher can get a lot of mileage out of the nyms.

Now I'd like to define the LEXINYM, which I am alleging could (in a far-fetched

sense) be construed as an embodiment of the "deep lexicon." The lexinyms encourage the student to read between the letters, as it were. The lexinyms also represent a kind of communication activity whereby the student is challenged to search for a meaning connection between the two words involved. Class discussion will flow, as various students see farther or closer connections.

(1) For example, take the word "unclear." If we reverse the "u" and the "n", we have "nuclear". One could readily posit that the issue of nuclear energy is an unclear one. Is it a blessing or a curse? Discuss!

(2) There's a lot of interest these days in the martial arts. "Martial" is a lexinym for "marital". The alarming divorce statistics in the United States attest to the close lexical connection between these two words. One is also reminded of Thurber's "War Between the Sexes," which advanced-level students might be invited to peruse; here we see a reading tangent from the nym.

(3) "Sacred" is a lexinym for "scared". The more timid among us might be a bit scared to tread on sacred ground. Outlandish? Maybe so, but I see the lexinym as a device to get the student into the language.

I interject the comment that I am limiting, in the nine examples given herein, the lexinym to words that result from single letters that are juxtaposed. One might expand the notion of the lexinym to include words where letters are more disparate, which would open up a much larger category. One that comes to mind is "parental"; cf. "prenatal." Etc.

(4) Consider "perfect" and "prefect".

Especially in British-school environments, the prefect system prevails. Ideally, the prefect sets a perfect example for the students in his charge.

(5) How about "tired" and "tried"? After you tried doing something ad nauseam, you may well literally be sick and tired of doing so.

The goal is not to have the student use both lexinyms in the same sentence; I am doing this here merely for effect. All we want the student to do is to perceive lexical affinities. What can s/he reason out? Vocabulary enrichment is an attenuating benefit.

(6) Then we have "owe" and "woe." "Neither a borrower nor a lender be." To owe too much often results in woe.

(7) Next, "use" and "sued". The used car turned out to be a lemon so he sued the dealer. In a cross-cultural sense,

"lemon" has positive connotations in the language.

(8) And, "craving" and "carving". She developed a craving for that particular carving.

I respectfully suggest that lexinyms offer multifarious possibilites to add sparkle to the language class. (Cf. "add" and "dad"; lexinyms are all around us.) The resourceful language teacher can use lexinyms for spelling, vocabulary, language-awareness, class discussions, code-breaking, pronunication, etc. Seek lexinyms, and ye shall find them; getting there is half the fun. The students will learn English and about English along the way.

(9) Finally, "diary" and "dairy". Students are invited to be on the lookout for lexinyms until the cows come home. Possibly, the dairy farmer does keep a diary.

PROFESSIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

For information on the following, please write directly to the addresses indicated. The TESL Reporter has no further information.

TEFL-Linguistics–Assistant or Associate Professor with completed Ph.D. and strong emphasis in TEFL, EFL and Applied Linguistics to act both as administrative director and instructor in Linguistics Programs. Rank and salary to be based on training and experience. Please forward resume' to Dr. Daniel J. Cahill, Head, Department of English Language and Literature, University of Northern Iowa, Cedar Falls, Iowa 50613. The University of Northern Iowa is an equal opportunity affirmative action employer. Women and minority candidates may identify themselves for purposes of affirmative action.

The Division of English as a Second Language, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, is accepting applications from persons interested in TEACHING/RESEARCH INTERNSHIP APPOINTMENTS at the Tehran University Language Center, Tehran, Iran. This is a GRADUATE PROGRAM open to students with BA/BS degrees, leading to the M. A. in the Teaching of English as a Second Language (MATESL) degrees, and to the students on doctorates in related fields. Applications accepted up to March 1, 1976. Transportation, stipends, benefits. PERSONAL INTERVIEWS REQUIRED. For further information, write or call Dr. Lawrence F. Bouton, Division of English as a Second Language, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 3070 Foreign Languages Building, Urbana, Illinois 61801. Phone (217) 333-1506 or 333-1507.

CLOZE TESTING-- AN ANSWER TO MR. AITKIN'S ARTICLE

by Roger K. Williams

See Volume 8 No.2 Winter 1975 edition, page 9; Volume 7 No.4 Summer 1974 edition, pages 7-9.

I was interested in Kenneth G. Aitken's reply to my article in the winter '75 issue. Hopefully, readers referred back to my article after reading Mr. Aitken's. If they did, they should have discovered that the ideas in each did not necessarily conflict and that each article still makes some valid points. Consider the following:

1. Mr. Aitkin stated, "Williams argues that reading and listening are decoding processes." On the contrary, I said that "reading is *primarily* the decoding of written symbols into meaning" but *also includes* encoding, as when one meets unfamiliar words and anticipates meaning from the context. One then is producing a word to fill in a blank. Just like a cloze test. So on very easy material, a cloze test parallels the reading process. On this point we agree, I think. However, my article went on to say that if the material is *difficult,* if *too many* crucial content words are omitted, then it may become impossible to fill in the blanks. Too much encoding is required. More encoding is required in that situation than is usually required in reading. Therefore, in that situation (reading difficult subject matter with too many crucial words missing) the cloze test only partially parallels the reading process. Mr. Aitken must agree with this point because he states (p. 17) that one would be wise to "use an *easier reading selection* to construct the test from "rather than change from the *n*th method deletion to selective deletion. So he is for easy selections. I am for easy selections. No conflict.

2. Mr. Aitken has said he's for the any-acceptable-word method of scoring cloze tests. So am I. But he did not reply to the problem I raised of where to draw the line of acceptability. Are choices acceptable only because natives would have made them? Natives wouldn't have made the errors I cited on page 7. They are unacceptable grammatically but might be acceptable semantically. The student apparently understood the passage. Should we give him credit or ot? It's a problem we both face in our cloze tests and should not be ignored.

3. Mr. Aitken may have a point that the Carroll study was hasty and inexact. My experience has been that some students, good students, often panic on a cloze test, especially one of average difficulty, and leave a lot of blanks or fill in any word whether it makes sense or not. Many students, used to other types of tests, have balked at cloze tests. Results, in these situations, are not too reliable. A way to overcome this problem is to give the group very easy passages at which all or most of them can be very successful. Then gradually increase the difficulty of the tests so that you finally arrive at a test which discriminates the better from the poorer readers. I have also found in my experience that college students (who perhaps have more motivation) have more reliable scores than high school students-although this is simply an impression, not a scientific study. So, in short, the "special talent at cloze tests" might be in part overcome through more adequate preparation of the students for this type of test.

4. In answer to my point that natives should make high or perfect scores on cloze tests designed for non-natives, Mr. Aitken states, "It seems that this would be more of a language proficiency test than a reading test. This is an attractive possibility, but is this what Williams wants to use cloze tests for?" Answer: Yes. Reading is one component of language; most proficiency tests have listening, speaking, reading, and writing sections. Cloze tests could also be used as prognostic, progress, and achieve-

ment tests, but I have used them as a measure of reading proficiency. Perhaps I should have stressed I was referring to *intermediate to beginning* non-natives, not to those whose English is on the advanced or native levels. Obviously, if an ESL student has native fluency in English, his cloze test will be the same test that his native counterpart would have and both could get less than high scores reflecting their reading ability. --Actually this test would not reflect so much *basic* reading ability as experience with topics, ability to gain inferences, analytical skills, evaluation, etc. For beginning to intermediate students, however, it still seems that as a test of *basic reading skill*, a cloze test should do very well (if they are literate.) True, reading is a composite of many skills, but central to these is the ability to derive meaning (the author's intended meaning) from simple, unsophisticated, non-culturally bound, nontechnical prose on one's language level and within one's sphere of experience. I might add that the native-as-perfect-or-high-scorer seems to be the standard in most ESL listening, speaking, grammar, and writing proficiency tests for beginning to intermediate ESL students. Why should it be unreasonable to expect the same in reading tests?

5. Finally, Mr. Aitken seems to believe that the nth word deletion is a more sound and practical method than choosing which words to delete. It's certainly easier. And with good, easy passages some good tests could be made using the nth deletion method. I have seen and have made some. But why should this exclude any other approach? It seems to me that a teacher may occasionally wish to test the structural aspect of reading and may wish to choose structural words for deletion. Though the nth method can be good and satisfactory, what is wrong with accepting it *and* experimenting with other methods as well?

BOOK REVIEW

Conversation in ENGLISH: Points of Departure
by Julia M. Dobson and Frank Sedwick

Price $2.25

American Book Co., 1975.

This excellent text, suitable for all ESL students above the very beginning level, has fifty well drawn pictures depicting situations upon which student conversation is based. Specific vocabulary, pertinent to each situation is listed under each picture (always listed in the order of verbs, nouns, and other expressions). On the page opposite the picture--all lessons have this two-page format--are questions leading to an analysis of the picture or giving points of departure for conversation. These are followed by five challenging topics for oral or written composition.

This book is a welcome relief from the memorized dialogues and manipulated sentences usually used for structured conversation classes of the completely free talk-what-you-wish and use only-vocabulary-you-know type of classes.

Teachers, or students, may choose the topics that are pertinent or that interest them as each lesson is a self contained unit with no interdependence on other lessons.

Alice C Pack

letters to the editor . . .

Clarification

"Talk and Listen" by Richard Via appeared in the *TESL Reporter* Volume 8 No. 4 Summer 1975 edition, page 6.

Several people have asked me to explain the cards to them. The confusion was caused because my paper had A's lines on one side of the page and B's on the other, the printer read straight across the page and set it up as it appears in the *Reporter.* Perhaps a simple note will clarify this point for others. All that needs to be said is the unindented lines should be on one card and the indented lines on the other. Happily the double set is okay.

Richard Via

Saipan

Having recently read your Spring issue of *TESL Reporter,* I began wondering whether or not it would be possible for you to send one issue to each of the six District Language Arts Specialists in Micronesia whenever your publication comes out. That your own student body and your research staff deal primarily in cross cultural communication and specific problems is of major consideration in language arts development in Micronesia. We could benefit from readings in your *Reporter.*

Wisconsin

I have been receiving the *TESL Reporter* for some time and have been very impressed with the wonderful articles contained therein. I have eleven itinerant English as a Second Language teachers on my staff, and would like to have them have the advantage of having a copy sent to them. Would you please indicate what the subscription rate would be for receipt of eleven copies?

Arizona

I was recently introduced to your fine publication, the *TESL Reporter.* I am involved in a secondary school reading program and would like to be included on

Toward Communicative Competence

(continued from page 7)

Farid, Anne. (1974). "Developing Real Communication." *English Teaching Forum,* vol. 12, no. 2, pp. 27-29.

Oller, John W., Jr. (1971). "Language Communication and Second Language Learning." P. Pimsleur and T. Quin, eds. *The Psychology of Second Language Learning,* pp. 171-179.

Stern, H. H. (1970). "Psycholinguistics and Second Language Learning." Ontario Institute for Studies in Education. *Perspectives on Second Language Learning.*

Wolfe, David. (1967). "Some Theoretical Aspects of Language Learning and Language Teaching," *Language Learning,* vol. 17, no. 3-4, p. 175.

BOOK REVIEW

New Horizons in English, Texts, Teacher;s Guides and Workbooks, Levels 1-5

Lars Mellgren and Michael Walker.   Addison—Wesley Publishing Co., 1973

The final books in the series *New Horizons in English,* by Lars Mellgren and Michael Walker, have just been published. The whole set (six units in all) of student books, workbooks, teachers' guides, tape recordings, and charts is thorough, carefully planned and presented, and eminently entertaining. It is easily the best set of ESL materials I have seen.

In a note at the beginning of the student books, Mellgren and Walker say that there object is to teach English so that it can be used "in everyday situations. . . . The language should be used--and used in a meaningful way."

To make the students *use* English, the books, and accompanying teachers' guides, emphasize dialogues. The teacher is instructed to break the class up periodically into pairs or small groups and then to monitor discussion. There are many games and activities which involve dialogue, many questions to be answered, many situations contrived to evoke student response.

As I mentioned earlier, these materials are entertaining. So much of the dread of learning a second language is based upon the nagging rote that is involved--the monotony of the language lab, the memorizing, the sifting through of bi-lingual dictionaries to figure out the end of a story you weren't interested in anyway. Some of this is surely involved in all second language study, but *New Horizons* plays it down.

There are drawings, hundreds of them, in both the texts and workbooks. Stories are illustrated with provocative scenes that the students will want to read about. Much of the material is humorous or strange (there are ghosts and monsters in these pages).

The accompanying tapes have many voices and appropriate background sounds (traffic, weather, party noises); and there are nuances in the voices that express meanings the books themselves only hint at. There are many good jokes and comic endings to stories. (Since humor is such a cultural thing, this could be thought a weakness because the teacher would often have the apparently hopeless task of explaining the punch line. I see this as valuable, however, because of the acculturation that must result. To really understand a culture is to be able to laugh at its jokes.)

Before I convince you that *New Horizons* is a set of comic books, let me point out that these trappings are there to benefit the student. This makes the instructor's job a little more fun, but no easier. The teachers' guides are very extensive, and as long as the texts. Every possible suggestion to improve class work and to sustain student interest is explained in detail. Even a novice in the TESL field can have success if he follows the guides closely. But he must familiarize himself with the program, read aloud the prose and pronunciation sections, take an active roll in games and dramatized dialogues, and test the students continually (self-tests for students come after each two chapters, but there are many other tests and quizzes which can be given).

The teacher must, in short, work almost as hard as Mellgren and Walker have in presenting this excellent ESL series.

Steven Goldsberry

letters to the editor

the mailing list for your publication. Keep up the good work.

Singapore

I am at this moment reading a number of articles from your *TESL Reporter* and enjoying them very much. The thought has suddenly occured to me that I should tell you how much I appreciate receiving your quarterly, and also that RELC has changed its address--something that I should have done a long time ago.

The Philippines

We, the teachers and administrators of the school composed of 160 teachers are very thankful for the copy of the *TESL Reporter* sent us. We discovered that this is the very very magazine that would help us, for English is a second language to us . . . May I also request if you can send us copies of the *TESL Reporter* from 1973 to the present. Please let me know also as to how much I shall remit for the copies you will send us. With our very sincere gratitude and thanks.

Illinois

I am a TESL teacher of adults in Chicago. Our students come from thirty-four different countries. Recently I had the good fortune of seeing two copies of the *TESL Reporter.* I would like to be on the mailing list, but do not have any idea of the subscription cost. If it is possible, I would like to receive a copy of each of the *TESL Reporters* for the last year, too.

Laos

Will you please put me on your mailing list for the *TESL Reporter?* Please let me know if there is any charge involved. Is it possible to get about 10 copies of each issue so that I can distribute them among the teachers of English in the provinces of Laos?

Unfortunately, mail to Laos no longer goes through. (Editor)

Japan

We are very pleased with your cooperative response as we are eager to exchange our ideas on how to plan English teaching programs in Japan since our school is one of the most progressive English conversation teaching schools in the Kansai area.

Incidentally, we would like to let you know that it is more advantageous for me to receive your publication at our school than to do so individually.

I have enjoyed receiving and reading the *TESL Reporter* very much during the past few months. I have already found many ideas contained in the articles to be not only interesting but of great practical value in the classroom. Is there anyway I can continue to receive the *Reporter* while I'm overseas? I'll gladly pay any postage charges involved.

Taiwan

I find your *TESL Reporter* is of great value and conducive to our innovations in English teaching. It is my hope that I may receive the publication for the following issues. If a subscription should be made, please let me know the subscription rates.

Interested educators may receive the *TESL Reporter* by mail, without charge, by sending name and address to Box 157, Brigham Young University--Hawaii Campus Laie, Hawaii, 96762. Be sure to include zip code if served by United States mail.