

Letter to the Editor

It was gratifying to see my *Easy Crossword Puzzles* and *More Easy Crossword Puzzles* referred to in the Fall 1973 *TESL Reporter* in the article by Kelly Harris, Jr. Crossword puzzles can certainly be used in many ways in teaching English, and many people have developed methods which tie in with their teaching methods, but I do object when my puzzles are called "negative" and "detrimental."

Harris' first objection is that I did not provide a list of words for the students to work from. I am sorry that he does not have a copy of Thorndike and Lorge, *The Teacher's Word Book of 30,000 Words* (New York, 1944), but I am sure the University of Hawaii Library could supply him with a copy. Even that is not necessary, however, since any frequency count that turns up a list of the 500 most frequently used words will of necessity produce a nearly identical list. A Michael West list would do. Of course any frequency count applies only to the materials counted, and may not be suitable for different application, such as an ESL class, but it is almost impossible to know a little English without knowing the 500 most frequently used words. The students for whom my puzzles were developed were foreign students at the Universities of Miami and Houston who already had recognition vocabularies of several thousand words and had production vocabularies of well over 500 words. There-

fore I did not consider lists necessary as aids to the students' recall and active practice of their vocabularies. Any observation of teams of three or four students discussing the possible solutions to the clues will prove that crossword puzzles do stimulate language use in a real situation.

The process of language learning involves mastering many language skills simultaneously. (See Bradford Arthur, *Teaching English to Speakers of English*, New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1973, p. 24) Making exercises based on one or two aspects of the language may be very handy for the teacher, but the students, if they are learning anything, will be learning several skills simultaneously. Therefore puzzles which ask not only for synonyms and antonyms, but also for morphological function words such as prepositions and conjunctions are only aiding the natural language learning process, and can in no way be labeled "detrimental."

Many thanks to you, Mrs. Pack, for editing your stimulating magazine and keeping us in *TESL* informed of theories and applications useful to the daily practice of our profession.

Sincerely yours,

WALTER P. ALLEN
Associate Professor
University of Houston

TESL REPORTER

BOX 157

The Church College of Hawaii

Laie, Hawaii 96762

Non-profit Organization
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
Laie, Hawaii
PERMIT NO. 1