Minnesota Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages


# Journal

Volume 11

1993


Volume 11, 1993

*A Journal for Minnesota Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages.*
*MinneTESOL is the Minnesota affiliate of TESOL.*



Grateful thanks is given to our typesetter, Cathy Zemke, and to the Department of Curriculum and Instruction, University of Minnesota.

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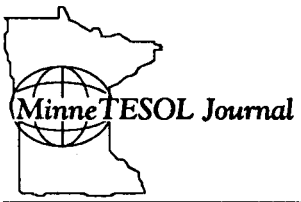


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- **Editorial policy**
  The *MinneTESOL* seeks to publish articles of importance to the profession of English as a second language in the State of Minnesota. Articles in the following areas are considered for publication: instructional methods, techniques, and materials; research with implications for ESL; and issues in curriculum and program design. Book reviews and review articles are also welcome, as are short descriptions of work in progress on any aspect of theory or practice in our profession. Reports of work in the areas of curriculum and materials development, methodology, teaching, testing, teacher preparation and administration are encouraged, as are reports of research projects that focus on topics of special interest. Descriptions should summarize key concepts and results in a manner to make the information accessible to our readership. We also invite commentary on current trends and practices in the TESOL profession, and we encourage responses or rebuttals to any articles or remarks published in the *Journal*.

- **Manuscripts**
  Manuscripts should conform to the style book followed by TESOL (Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages), the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*. They should include a brief (e.g., 100-word) abstract.
  Submit six copies of each manuscript, along with six copies of an absract of not more than 200 words. **Submission of a computer diskette (labeled with system and software used) is STRONGLY encouraged.**
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MinneTESOL Journal

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## ARTICLES



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## REVIEW

MinneTESOL Journal

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# Introduction

As we end our tenure as co-editors of the *Journal*, Adele Hansen and I are pleased to offer you a volume that is rich with articles which should prove to be of interest to ESL educators at all levels. All of the articles are theoretical or research-based and offer strong pedagogical implications. We hope that you find the contributions as stimulating and thought-provoking as we do.

We begin with two articles that deal with issues of expression in language learning. In the first piece, Catriona Moore, Judith Koller, and Maria Kreie Aragó explore the role of art in language learning. The authors review the literature, summarize the results of interviews with language educators, and discuss the outcomes of their own experience with incorporating art-based curricula in a variety of ESL and foreign language settings. Of particular interest is the way in which they show how students of all ages, native language backgrounds, and educational backgrounds benefit from being encouraged to express themselves through art and language.

In "Confucian Orthodoxy Meets ESL: Teaching Across Academic Cultures," Patrick Dunham and James Robinson explore how linguistic expression is based on cultural orientation. In reviewing Confucian orthodoxy, they describe how East Asian students' styles of interaction in academic settings are influenced by cultural philosophies. They explain how ESL teachers can help to minimize the academic culture shock that East Asian students experience by developing culturally sensitive educational materials and strategies that incorporate the academic culture of East Asian students.

The next two articles describe the results of research studies that were conducted with ESL students at the university level. Patricia Eliason compares Japanese and American students in "Perceptual Learning Style Preferences of Second Language Students." In addition to providing suggestions for the application of learning style research in the language classroom, Eliason critiques current methods of assessing learning style preferences, particularly with respect to their applicability across cultures.

Contrastive rhetoric is the focus of "Friday Prayer: Describing a Process in Arabic and English Writing." In this piece, Salah Ayari and Elaine

Tarone report the results of a study they conducted with American and Arab students writing in native and second languages. They investigated the extent to which students' writing reflects the rhetorical conventions of their native languages and the degree to which native language writing skills influence writing in a second language. Of particular interest to ESL educators is their finding that a critical factor for all ESL students learning to write in English is their ability to write in their native language.

The final three articles compliment one another well—particularly because they provide different perspectives related to ESL students (especially the Hmong) and academic achievement. In "Comparing Perspectives on ESL Education: The Case Study of Pine Tree School," Karen Duke examines the case of one elementary school whose ESL population comprises approximately 20% of the total school population. She creates an "academic perspective" by reviewing current literature and contrasts it with the perspectives of the school's principal, a parent, several ESL and mainstream teachers, and a school board member. Her findings are disturbing in that they highlight some of the major misconceptions plaguing ESL education in the metro area.

Also disturbing are the dilemmas highlighted in Jeff Dufresne's "Mainstreaming LEP Students: The Case of the Hmong." Defresne discusses the difficulties immigrant students have and summarizes a compilation of SRA test statistics for Hmong 10th-graders, which reveals the instructional and programming problems faced by ESL students and teachers at the secondary level. He offers a variety of program options that better meet the academic needs of ESL students while also providing support for the students' culture and affective development.

While the Duke and Dufresne pieces uncover many of the problems facing ESL students, Diane Rubright helps us to end on a more positive note by describing the experiences of three Hmong women who beat the odds and found ways to pursue higher education. In "Breaking Barriers: Three Hmong Women's Perspectives on Attaining Higher Education in the U.S.," Rubright provides detailed discussion of indepth interviews that she conducted with three Hmong women who are involved in post-secondary study. Their experiences, comprised of both obstacles and successes, have much to offer all ESL students who aspire to continue their education

beyond the secondary level.

The next section of the *Journal* contains poetry, essays, and illustrations done by ESL students in the metro area. We are honored to be able to publish their work and hope that we continue to see it in future volumes.

The last section of this volume contains a book review. Lisa Boehlke provides a most positive review of *The Multicultural Classroom: Readings for Content Area Teachers*, edited by Patricia Richard-Amato and Marguerite Snow.

Adele and I are grateful for the opportunity we had to serve MinneTESOL in our capacity as co-editors of the *MinneTESOL Journal*. We thank our readership and the members and officers of MinneTESOL for their support.

Diane J. Tedick

*MinneTESOL Journal*, Vol. 11, 1993

# The Role of Art in Language Learning

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Art and language are intimately related systems of human communication and representation. This article explores the role of student-created visuals in the process of second language learning, in theory and practice, then suggests specific ways in which art activities facilitate and enrich the second language teaching and learning process. The authors researched existing professional literature, informally interviewed educators, and taught art-based curriculum units in several ESL and foreign language settings. The resulting article is a thorough synthesis of current research and a useful resource for interested teachers.

As teachers of ESL, French, and Spanish, we have become increasingly interested in the role that student-created images play in the language learning process. We have witnessed first-hand the excitement that art creation brings to our students. We have seen how such activities decrease inhibitions and improve the classroom atmosphere. We have learned through artwork about the individual personalities and experiences of our students. We have even watched art develop into language. Therefore, in a time in which learning and teaching theory is urging the integration of academic disciplines, we are especially drawn to the integration of language and art. We see great potential for language success within such a combined setting.

Previous research has provided intriguing reasons to support the integration of art and opportunities for non-verbal artistic expression with second language education. Drawing on this research and our own discoveries, we have written this article with two principal aims: first, to lay a theoretical foundation for the integration of artistically-inspired activities into the second language classroom; and second, to demonstrate how art and language learning may be combined within a broader unit of study.

We recognize the need to clarify our definition of what constitutes art. For the purpose of this study, we recognize that most of the activities to which we are referring are not art for art's sake, but rather art activities: we are not teaching *about* art, but rather *with* it and *through* it for the sake of second language learning. Both forms of activities, however, tap into the affective domain, which is the area that we are seeking to activate. The activities are student-centered and student-initiated, and they involve a great deal of imagination and creativity. Throughout our study, we will refer to such affective activities as student-created artwork, student-created visuals, or student-created images.

## *WHY USE STUDENT-CREATED ARTWORK IN THE LANGUAGE CLASSROOM?*

Many education professionals (Bassano & Christison, 1982a, 1982b; Franklin, 1989; Richardson, 1990; Shier, 1990;) advocate the need to fuse affective and cognitive domains of knowledge in the second language classroom. The affective domain includes emotions, attitudes, feelings, and other intuitive ways of knowing, while the cognitive domain refers to intellectual, rational ways of thinking. Shier (1990) contends that in everyone's daily interactions there are always both affective and cognitive variables at work, and thus effective classroom instruction should automatically address both.

Christison (personal communication, March 24, 1993), believes that student-created images enhance language learning in her ESL classes in three different ways. First, as a result of using student-created images, her students are more involved, confident, and productive. Next, she notes a positive change in the classroom environment that is uninhibiting and conducive to language learning. Finally, she finds that the cognitive level of learning is enhanced through the use of drawing out activities. In this environment, students are able to perform cognitively-demanding tasks, which are less successful without the incorporation of student-created images, and the quality of their written and spoken language shows marked improvement.

It would be difficult to deny the ability of art activities to motivate

students to participate and pay attention. By granting their students opportunities for sharing their own artistic creations with classmates, Bassano and Christison (1982a), Shier (1990), and Wright (1989) credit art activities with increasing student motivation. Shier (1990) maintains through her case studies that art more actively engages students in their own learning processes on a personal, intellectual, and physical level. Bassano and Christison (1982a, 1982b) attribute this engagement to the emotional quality of art, suggesting that both actions and reactions to art are emotional. Recognizing the ability of the arts and art activities to engage and motivate students, Allen (1990) believes the process of acquiring language comes naturally when students are involved in activities in which they can find meaning and purpose.

The classroom dynamic also improves as a result of the incorporation of art experiences in the classroom. Shier (1990) suggests that when students have the opportunity to develop their skills in a number of areas, they feel more confident; and when they have the opportunity to share their creations with others and see that everyone's work has its own story, they tend to hold more respect for each other. Bassano and Christison (1982a, 1982b) comment that when students cooperate with each other to create visual images, the class develops a sense of group unity, which in turn serves to enhance the classroom atmosphere. Within this type of environment, individual and cultural differences of the students are accepted. Classrooms that observe, value, and respect differences are better learning environments, suggests Franklin (1989). When students create images and tell their stories together, there is a greater sense of unity, camaraderie, and acceptance in the classroom.

Art-inspired learning experiences provide a focus or context for conversation, discussion, and communication (Andrade, 1990; Bassano & Christison, 1982a; Shier, 1990). Andrade (1990) writes that the arts and artwork can provide an impetus for communication. Such conversation or student oral production is vital in the second language classroom, and in the process of language acquisition in general. Art activities provided Bassano and Christison's (1982a) students with cues for conversation as well as topics for narrative writings and journal work; the authors point out that input for language learning comes from aural, oral, and visual sources.

Similarly, student-created images provide content for language courses (Shier, 1990). A visual created by a student can introduce subject matter that leads to further exploration and study. The content and context introduced by student-created artwork are often very effective in any classroom because they are more real and meaningful to the students. Richardson (1990) suggests that the arts contribute to learning both by adding vividness and by integrating material that is relevant to the students' lives. Bassano and Christison

(1982a) describe the content and context created by student visuals as very real to the students, resulting in dialogue that is both relevant and personal. Similarly, Mann (1988) emphasizes that students' drawings provide a guide for verbal expression: she requires of her students that their writing not contradict their drawing; thus the writing is contextualized and personal.

Second language education goes beyond language itself to the study of culture and society, and here also the integration of art experiences has an important role to play. Shier (1990) suggests that art helps students to link the language they are learning to its culture. She observed her students developing awareness of the culture in which the target language is spoken through their participation in art experiences. This gave them a broader perspective for interpreting cultural materials they heard or read outside the classroom. Steiner (1986) advocates cultivating children's appreciation for the beauty of language by integrating art experiences with language learning in order to help them develop a sense of international and intercultural acceptance.

Through student-created images, the teacher can learn a great deal about the students' personalities, experiences, and interests (Franklin, 1989). Franklin explains that the teacher can study the content and style of the students' artwork in the same way that one would study a master work of art, which can lead to a teacher's greater respect and value for the students. It can also help the teacher learn about the students' literary and aesthetic preferences (Franklin, 1989). Bassano and Christison (1982a) describe how the teacher can become more aware of and sensitive to the attitudes, needs, interests, and personalities of each student. As the teacher gains access to new knowledge about his or her students, it becomes much easier to individualize instruction and to plan lessons and units (Franklin, 1989).

In addition to helping the teacher discover more about his or her students, student-created artwork helps the students to discover more about themselves. Bassano and Christison (1982a, 1982b) contend that such self-discovery can help increase the students' self-esteem as they uncover their unique learning styles and resources and apply them to language learning. This happens in part because through drawings and other artwork, barriers are lowered, and the students feel a freedom from anxiety which makes them more apt to learn (Bassano & Christison, 1982a, 1982b).

## *HOW CAN STUDENT-CREATED ARTWORK BE INTEGRATED INTO THE SECOND LANGUAGE CLASSROOM?*

Theorists of art education have outlined four steps to integrating art content into the curriculum. Shier (1990) suggests that the first three—history, criticism, and aesthetics—provide subject study and discussion, while

production, the fourth step, is a medium of instruction. Art production provides the opportunity for developing writing and speaking skills. Shier stresses that teachers must make a creative and deliberate effort to incorporate student-created art activities so that they are truly integrated rather than merely diversionary. Integrated visual work contributes to the contextualization of written work (Bergstrom, 1991), and encourages the development of critical thinking skills (Andrade, 1990; Shier, 1990).

Franklin (1989) describes her experience with art integration in her second language classroom, with reference to Patricia Carini's (1979, cited in Franklin, 1989, p. 78) process of "reflective observation." The process is specifically designed for the ESL classroom, and it provides the students and teachers with a means of getting to know one another. According to Carini, the process involves three steps: student creation of visual or written work, teacher analysis of student work, and the teacher tailoring instruction to meet the students' needs as revealed by the creation and analysis.

In Franklin's 1989 study, reflective observation was done with kindergarten ESL students whose native language was Spanish. The process involved looking at the conceptual similarities between student artwork and student language, presumably based on the premise that art and language concepts are deeply related and develop in parallel, similar ways. Franklin found that observation of several aspects of children's artistic and verbal styles gave her valuable insights into the children's personalities.

The value of this type of diagnostic reflection is supported by research done in the area of children's aesthetic development. Franklin (1989, p.78) cites King's (1987) contention that for children at this age, "the aesthetic mode is the primary mode of cognition"; children express themselves in a variety of ways including gesture, play, and artworks. Perhaps the underlying theme here is that language and art are forms of representation. When children begin to draw and write, they seek out similarities between a real object and the one they are depicting in their written or visual work (Golomb, 1988).

Finally, Andrade (1990) emphasizes the value of incorporating art and art activities in second language classrooms at the secondary and post-secondary levels, recognizing the need to justify such activities at those levels. She cites increasing evidence that content-based instruction in secondary and post-secondary language classrooms is highly successful.

## *WHAT IS THE CONNECTION BETWEEN ART AND LANGUAGE?*

In establishing the link between language and art, one cannot ignore the similar elements that exist within both. Boyer (1985) points out how language

and art were two of the first developments of early civilizations. With their nearly identical components, one wonders if the two naturally develop parallel to one another. Shier (1990) points out that expression of thoughts and feelings, as well as the spontaneity of the learner, are parts of both language and artwork. She also describes the importance of abstract thoughts, creativity, personal experiences, and personal interests to both language and art. Finally, Shier claims that art and art activities provide a unique opportunity for teacher and students to focus in on specific aspects of oral language use, such as intonation and pronunciation, in a way that may not otherwise be possible.

Betty Edwards' two books on drawing instruction, *Drawing on the Right Side of the Brain* (1989) and *Drawing on the Artist Within* (1986) are written with the belief that the artist sees and thinks non-verbally in order to create art. Edwards (1989) calls this type of seeing a right-brain activity, one that requires different perceptual skills than those we use with language, which is connected with the left-brain.

In some circumstances, Edwards contends, verbal language can be inappropriate and may even hinder creative thinking. Furthermore, she reminds us that "drawings, like words, have meaning—often beyond the power of words to express, but nonetheless invaluable in making the chaos of our sensory perceptions comprehensible" (1986, p. xiii). For adolescent and adult students, applying techniques for tapping into different modes of thinking and perspective-taking can be valuable in second language learning (Andrade, 1990). Edwards (1989) applies the same belief in her approach to the teaching of drawing.

Christison (personal communication, March 24, 1993) refers to Betty Edwards' book, *Drawing on the Right Side of the Brain*, with respect to the "right brain" capacity to see things from a different perspective. By utilizing the types of activities that require the "right brain," where non-verbal reasoning dominates, students are able to approach language and culture from a broadened perspective. Through the creation of images, students have the opportunity to use skills that may be stronger for them than more traditional academic skills, granting students a more balanced, holistic cognitive and educational experience.

For Christison (personal communication, March 24, 1993), there is clearly a visible advantage to creating and perceiving another kind of image. She finds that art activities help teachers and students to take perspectives other than their own. She suggests that we view the world so much from our own experience, that when we go beyond that, it really opens up the doors of communication. The activities used to open these doors include unfinished

pictures, self-portraits, cooperative drawings, and cultural collages. Christison finds that all students, even those who are initially hesitant, participate eventually. All the activities are meaningful endeavors through which the students are able to communicate.

As Bassano and Christison (1982a) wrote in their book, *Drawing Out*, the use of student-created visuals has clear benefits in the ESL classroom. They stress the value of these activities for both the teacher and the students. They believe so strongly in their role in the process of second language acquisition that they are now integral, almost second nature, to their teaching.

Gardner (1985, cited in Good & Brophy, 1990) suggests that there are similarities between one's human development and the artistic process, and that the workings of the human mind can be better understood once the artistic process is studied as a form of intellect (Shier, 1990). Shier and Arnheim (1969, cited in Shier, 1990) both consider art a way of knowing in its own right. It is one form of intelligence. Furthermore, Boyer (1985) recognizes artistic creation as a form of knowing, and suggests that children need to use this with other intelligences as tools for learning. Only by utilizing many kinds of knowledge can children reach the full potential of their mental abilities. When teachers integrate a variety of methods in their classrooms, their instruction is more apt to encompass and appeal to individual learning styles. Through this diversification of instructional content, a holistic "learning paradigm" is created (Shier, 1990, p. 314). Andrade (1990) maintains that consideration of multiple measures of intelligence can provide teachers with a wider assortment of effective instructional techniques and students with a more thorough learning experience.

In her rationale, Shier (1990) states that "the capacity of art to both connote and denote provides another way of knowing language" (p. 314). Franklin (1989) supports this idea in suggesting that writing and creating visual art enhance ESL children's learning about both verbal and artistic expression. Bassano and Christison (1982a) state that the creation of visual artworks strengthens students' creativity and their second language verbal skills. Student artwork helps students to develop vocabulary, improve comprehension, and think in the new language. Striker (1992) takes this a step further to suggest a natural connection between art and language. She claims that artistic creation precedes and prepares linguistic development. Striker also stresses the need for teachers to become aware of the relationship between visual representation and verbal expression; teachers can capitalize on this relationship to help students develop literacy skills.

Rhonda Tarr (personal communication, April 13, 1993) believes that affective, artistic activities are one way to achieve balance in education.[1]

Schooling, she believes, tends to be overly mechanistic and technical, and art is a necessary but missing element. According to Tarr, "art speaks to the soul..it opens up people in mysterious ways." Art has the power to transform everything, and it is naturally an essential part of all life. Education without art is "dehydrated education, like a box of Lipton soup, lacking the spirit, authenticity, flavor and spice of grandma's homemade chicken soup."

Teachers have the duty to connect with the whole student: the body, the soul, and the intellect. Education speaks not only to the intellect: it also speaks to the soul. It is clear to Tarr that affective factors are natural and integral to second language learning and to human learning in general. Moreover, classrooms that fail to address this and respond to it creatively and professionally are incomplete at best.

Waldorf Education stresses the incorporation of artistic experiences in all subject areas (Harwood, 1967). With respect to the study of a second language, Waldorf School founder Rudolf Steiner (1986) suggests that the development of a sense of the aesthetic is particularly important to language development. Steiner believes that language is essentially logical, but that on a deeper level, it is creative. For Steiner, learning a foreign language goes beyond grammar: the student must also be encouraged to develop an appreciation for the artistry of language. This may be thought of as one element of Steiner's rationale for the integration of art experiences with language learning.

Ingrid Halverson and Virginie Olson (personal communication, April 30, 1993), foreign language teachers at the Minnesota Waldorf School, confirm the importance of art. According to the Waldorf philosophy, art is seen as the spiritual element of human life, too often ignored in a materialistic society such as ours. Participation in art creation, according to Halverson, has a way of connecting us to certain parts of ourselves that often remain untapped. In the Waldorf School, this artistic or spiritual element is tapped as students and teachers together create art and color, exercising their imagination.

At the Waldorf School, reading is taught through visual images. Halverson believes that this connection has been made because of the historical pictographic development of letters and alphabets. She says that as the students go through the curriculum in a Waldorf School, they experience a type of "evolution of human consciousness." Thus, in learning to read and write, the students go back in time or consciousness to a level where letters and words have "more tangible reality for them." For example, the children will hear a story of "the swan swimming on the sea" and their illustrations of that story will gradually be abstracted to the letter "s." In that way, "s" holds more meaning for the children and is not a foreign symbol. In the second language

classes, students are taught orally for three years before learning to read or write. Halverson comments that this results in fourth graders who can read and write German and French at a high level of difficulty from the outset.

The children at Waldorf create their own textbooks throughout the school year, and that activity contributes to their language learning. In the beginning, the students may copy some writings from the board about a story they have dictated to their teacher. Then they make illustrations for their story and form their own books. Later on these books become good references for what the students have learned throughout the year.

Olson advises always having a visual element of what the teacher is trying to express; otherwise the story makes little sense to the students. This can be especially effective if students create their own characters and props. Thus, the students take ownership and show pride and interest in the language. This visual component is very important for younger learners. The children's interest is often lost if the teacher does not do something to "create surprise or tickle them." Students are curious about teacher-created images and they enjoy imitating the illustrations and narratives that go along with them.

Both teachers believe that visuals are a valuable way of communicating in the target language without having to translate to the native language. Olson described how she tells a story, draws it out, and moves visual elements of the story to illustrate action. The story is told completely in the second language!

In discussing their artistic activities in the language classes, Olson and Halverson point out that the projects are successful in that they connect well to work in other subjects. This integration of content at the Waldorf School is often missing in other schools' curricula. One way, then, to see more evidence of the enhancement of language through art is to integrate art throughout the entire school's curriculum. Art not only benefits language learning, it benefits mathematics, science, social studies, and every other subject area that draws the students' interest.

## *CLASSROOM APPLICATION: ONE CASE STUDY*

### Incorporating Art in a High School French Class

Koller designed a unit on French Impressionism with several goals in mind. Linguistic goals focused on the development and enhancement of students' speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills. Cultural goals included the exploration and understanding of a significant artistic, cultural, and social movement. Humanistic goals centered on the development of a sense of community, cooperation, and teamwork. But the unit was written

with one additional goal in mind: to explore the role of artistically-inspired learning activities in the secondary-level second language classroom. Through the implementation of this unit, Koller sought to answer two questions. The first concerned how students of this age group would respond to being given an opportunity to create art in their language class. The second was whether or not such an opportunity would enhance their language-learning experience.

Because at the secondary level, the existing research on the art/language relationship seemed to be most sparse, we provide a detailed example that specifically targets high school students. High school language programs tend to neglect or, at best, de-emphasize the incorporation of non-verbal forms of expression into the language classroom. Such de-emphasis may be especially true of the visual arts, including drawing, coloring, and painting.

The curriculum unit was implemented with five sections of high school French students at three levels: third year, fourth year advanced placement, and fifth year. The unit combined language skills development with the study of art history and the study of works of art. It required students to complete several writing projects and an original work of art. Students in all five classes were given class time in which to create their art work and to write. Thus the language classroom was transformed into a studio of sorts, and the students became, for a while at least, artists. The use of class time for the creation of artworks permitted Koller to observe and to speculate not only on the work the students produced, but also on the artistic process and the atmosphere of the classroom-turned-studio.

Approximately fifteen students chose to submit their work to Koller for the purposes of this project. Each contributed two pieces of work. The first was a piece of art work done in crayon, colored pencil, chalk, or paint and emulating Impressionist style and technique. The second was a French-language essay in which the students described and reflected upon their art work. The students' visual and written works are varied and personal, each reflective of the individual student's style of self-expression. Observations and reflections are made without regard to individual differences in artistic talent or to personal aesthetic preferences. The findings resulting from the implementation of the unit are summarized on the following pages.

## Students' Response to the Art-Inspired Learning Experience

The students in the five classes in which this curriculum unit was implemented knew from the beginning of the unit that they would eventually have the opportunity to try their hands at Impressionist artistic technique. The student-created images in this way provided a long-term goal for the

students to anticipate and work toward as they explored French culture, history, artists, and art. The students seemed to look forward to creating their own works of art. When the day arrived for them to begin their artwork, though, some anxiety surfaced. This anxiety centered upon the evaluation of the artwork: some students voiced an understandable concern that their artwork would be graded according to its "quality." Their definition of "quality" was based on a particular concept of what is "good" art: that which is perceived as worthy of being framed, sold, and displayed. To alleviate their anxiety, two steps were taken. First, students were assured that the evaluation of their artwork, in which they would have a part (a self-evaluation is included in the unit), would be based entirely upon effort: their attempts to apply what they had learned about the unique aspects of Impressionist painting. Second, students were encouraged to recall the fundamental belief underlying the Impressionist movement: that personal impressions, or interpretations, are paramount. Such personal works as the students would create would not be judged on the basis of any predetermined notions of what is "good" art or what makes an artist "talented." Once the nature of the evaluation had been established, the students became clearly more relaxed, and displayed a good deal of interest and engagement in the artistic experience.

In getting started on their artwork, the students were asked to recall what an Impressionist artist such as Monet or Morisot might choose as his or her subject: for example, a nature scene or an ordinary person. Next they discussed what the unit activities had taught them about Impressionist style and technique, such as imprecise forms, broad strokes of the brush, the effects of light on an object, and the use of pastel colors. The students then took their knowledge and applied it to their own artworks. They succeeded admirably; that is, they chose subjects and colors appropriate to Impressionist style, and rendered them in techniques reminiscent of Impressionism. The subjects of the students' images included an eclipse of the sun, a pair of ballet slippers, a picnic scene, a bridge over a stream, oceanside cliffs, hills dotted with flowers, sailboats, a chapel at dusk, and sunsets over water.[2] Sunsets were the most popular theme, recurring in several works; this is probably because the students had learned of the Impressionist artists' passion for the effects of sunlight on objects. The popularity of this theme and other outdoor scenes—the image of the ballet slippers was one of the few not incorporating the outdoors—suggests the students' internalization of the essence of Impressionism. Thus, the artworks serve as a vehicle for assessing student learning as a result of the curriculum unit.

Although the students who requested help getting started represented a

minority, their concern implies the importance of building context into artistic experiences in the language classroom. Striker (1992) stresses that just as a teacher would not give students a writing assignment without some guidance, students should not be expected to just spontaneously create art. This seems an especially important point with respect to the language classroom, which is for many students a stressful environment. Related to the importance of providing students with a context to guide their artistic creations is the notion of cognitive challenge. Because this curriculum unit focused on a particular artistic genre, the students were required to do more than simply draw a picture. They were expected to demonstrate their knowledge of Impressionist style and technique by applying elements of the genre in their own artwork. All students remained within the established parameters of Impressionist style and technique, yet no two images were alike or even very similar. For example, there were many unique variations on the sunset theme: suns ranged in color from pale yellow to bright pink, setting over water, in forests, or behind cliffs. Similarly, two students diverged from the quintessential Impressionist technique of broad brush strokes to use, instead, the tiny dots of Pointillism; Pointillism is an offshoot of Impressionism, which was also studied over the course of the unit. Students seemed to feel security in the parameters of subject, color, and technique, while at the same time taking pride in the uniqueness of their artistic creations.

That the students cared about their artwork was clear not only from their artworks themselves, but from the artistic process as well. Many students took extra time in choosing their paper; different sizes and textures were provided to assist students in personalizing their artwork. Most were also highly selective of their medium; crayons and colored chalk were provided, but some students chose to supply their own colored pencils and watercolor paints. The students were equally selective of colors: all used pastels, shades which constitute a hallmark of Impressionist-style art, but in unique combinations. For example, one sunset was done all in pale gray and pale brown, while another was a veritable festival of color: vibrant pink, yellow, blue, green, and chartreuse. The time thus spent in planning the images they would create is certain evidence that the students cared about the project they were undertaking.

This positive attitude on the students' part toward their artistic process and products carried over to the general classroom atmosphere. It would be an understatement to say that the students were "on-task" during this part of the curriculum unit. Most were certainly engaged in the process of creating a work of art, demonstrated by, once again, the time they took in selecting their artistic tools. But even more, the experience of working side-by-side in the

classroom-turned-studio lent an air of cooperation, sharing, and community to the classroom. For instance, some colors in crayons and chalk were limited in number; to facilitate the sharing of resources, several students moved their desks to form small work tables on which they piled crayons or chalk within the reach of everyone at the table. The students did this on their own initiative.

Even more inspiring, some students could be found on occasion sharing their unfinished images with classmates, and trading opinions or advice. Such behavior was rare for these students, who had not frequently been observed spontaneously sharing opinions on other types of expressive or communicative work, such as essays or oral presentations. The artistic experience thus seemed to encourage a greater penchant for sharing not only work but ideas as well. Similarly, some students were openly admiring of the work of their classmates: on more than one occasion one student called the teacher over to admire the artwork of another. This enthusiasm, admiration, and praise for the work of classmates is a phenomenon seldom before observed in these classes when the task was a verbal one.

To summarize these findings, the key factors in the success of the experience include the following: a clearly articulated and non-judgmental evaluation procedure; a cognitively challenging artistic project; an established context and guidelines; and, finally, the positive attitude and supportive classroom atmosphere that developed along with the creative process.

### Second Language Enhancement as a Result of the Artistic Learning Experience

Turning now to the question of second language use, the students' essays provide a vehicle for examining their use of French in response to the artistic experience. While developing their Impressionist-style images, the students were asked to reflect on their work: especially, to consider what inspired them to select a particular subject and particular colors and techniques. The students would, upon completion of their artwork, record their thoughts in a descriptive/reflective essay in French. In anticipation of this essay, the students had earlier in the unit written descriptive essays about famous Impressionist paintings. While no quantitative measure was done to compare the two essays written by each student, observations on the second essays prove insightful regarding the artistic experience and its relation to second language acquisition and use.

Many of the reflective essays were quite lengthy, even those of the less proficient students for whom writing long compositions posed a particularly significant challenge. Several of these essays were noticeably longer than the

preceding essays, in which the students described works of well-known Impressionist artists. The increase in the amount written is partly attributable to the nature of the assignment: while the first essay was intended to be mostly descriptive, the second was to be both descriptive and reflective. But the increased length may also be a function of the students' caring about the task. The artworks they created with their own imagination and their own hands became a part of the students' personal experience; it is reasonable to believe that they had many ideas they wished to express about their own works. Whatever the reason, the ultimate benefit to students was increased French writing experience.

Related to the amount of writing students accomplished in their reflective essays are considerations of grammatical accuracy. No quantitative measure of accuracy, such as counting errors, was done, but general observations were made regarding the students' use of French in their writing. Almost without exception, the students drew extensively on new vocabulary learned over the course of the unit. Even where grammatical errors were present, the new vocabulary was consistently used appropriately; that is, it appeared in a context in which it made sense.

In terms of grammatical accuracy, then, the students succeeded in communicating in written French their reflections on their artwork. But more telling than *how* the students communicated in their essays is *what* they communicated. The students all included a description of their work: the subject, the colors, the medium, the artistic techniques used. But more challenging to them was to reflect on their artwork: to explain, for example, why they chose a given subject or why their image was an example of Impressionist art. Many of the students met and exceeded this challenge with truly impressive and intriguing results. From the students' written reflections, four principal themes emerge: interpretation of the symbolism in their artworks; expressions of liking for their artworks; expressions of positive feelings toward the artistic experience; and the identification of self as artist. Each of these themes will now be discussed in turn.

First, some students wrote interesting interpretations of their work, finding in their images not just a subject rendered in pastels, but symbolism. For example, one student used chalk to create his impression of a boat manned by a lone sailor, moving rapidly in the wind; the artist wrote that "*Plus important que le sujet, c'est l'émotion.*" (More important than the subject is the feeling.)[3] Another student described her image of ballet slippers as having "*l'aire gracieuse et équilibrée*" (grace and poise). A third student who also chose to create an image of a solitary person on a sailboat wrote, "*Il va chez lui après une longue journée. Tout se calme.*" (He is going home after a long day.

Everything is calming down.) These personal interpretations suggest that the students genuinely cared about their artwork and had put a good deal of thought into it. The artwork seems to have motivated the students to express their thoughts in writing as well, with the result that they challenged themselves to stretch their use of written French beyond mere objective description.

The second theme common to many of the students' essays is that of appreciation for their own artwork. In one example, the student expressed the conviction that her painting was a good example of French Impressionism. Another wrote that he liked his picture, although he wished to work on it even more. A third student was particularly enthusiastic; she wrote: "*J'adore peindre! J'adore les fleurs et la nature, ainsi, je les ai peintes...j'aime cette composition assez bien.*" (I love to paint! I love flowers and nature, thus I painted them...I like this work quite well.)

Third, other students expressed in their writing positive feelings toward the artistic experience as a whole and to the genre of art they were producing. Several students expressed their love of nature, of pastel colors, and of Impressionist art. Such comments refer to essential elements of the Impressionist genre, and may thus be taken as indications that the students had learned as a result of the unit, and had applied this knowledge in their own artwork. In addition, the positive nature of their comments suggests that the students enjoyed the assignment to create an Impressionist-style work. Ultimately, both the knowledge and the enjoyment gave the students something more about which to write.

Finally, some students identified themselves in their essays as artists, or compared themselves with famous Impressionists. One student, for example, stated that "*Comme Monet, je préfère les sujets de la nature comme les marines et les paysages.*" (Like Monet, I prefer subjects that come from nature, like seascapes and countrysides.) Another opened his essay with the statement, "*Cette peinture a été faite part l'artiste DuPont...Les sujets préférés de DuPont sont du dehors.*" (This painting was done by the artist Dupont...The favorite subjects of Dupont are those that come from the outdoors.)[4] This student went on to comment that the style of his image is "*très impressionniste*" (very impressionist). Regardless of whether or not these students viewed themselves as artists prior to the curriculum unit, the art creation seemed to help them to get in touch with their artistic side. Ultimately, this provided increased engagement in the artistic experience as well as in the writing.

To summarize, it is reasonable to conclude that the experience of creating a work of art was a positive one for these secondary students of French. Almost

all of the students responded positively to the opportunity to create their own artwork: they devoted substantial time and effort to the artistic process, and created truly unique and personal images in Impressionist-inspired style. Moreover, the students' positive response to the creation of artworks had implications for the classroom, which became a community of artists sharing ideas and support. Finally, this positive attitude carried over into the students' written self-expression in French. In their essays students not only communicated effectively using new vocabulary, they also went beyond description to provide interesting insights into their artwork.

## *IMPLICATIONS FOR THE SECOND LANGUAGE CLASSROOM*

The theoretical and practical evidence presented in this paper makes a strong case for the integration of art-inspired learning experiences, specifically student-created visuals, into the second language classroom. Such experiences can benefit the total language learning experience. The use of art activities can help build an atmosphere of cooperation and community in the language classroom. In addition, it can increase student motivation and enthusiasm for language-oriented activities. Of paramount importance, art experiences can also lower the anxiety felt by many second language learners. This last point is an especially crucial one, because unchecked anxiety may interfere with students' motivation and their learning. The integration of student-created visuals with language learning helps to focus students on the activity, allowing language to grow within the safety of a non-verbal task.

It may be argued that self-expression through art is also potentially threatening, since it leaves a lasting product vulnerable to criticism. But if students are assured in advance that the evaluation of their artwork will encompass neither "quality," "talent," nor personal aesthetic preferences, they will approach the artistic experience as Koller's students did, with zeal and confidence. It is also fair to argue that the Impressionist genre lends itself to a more relaxed approach to artistic creation, since this genre is by definition a highly personal form of artistic expression. But any artistic genre or movement can have the same positive effects on student motivation and classroom atmosphere. It is up to the teacher to help his or her students realize that within any genre, no two artists produce identical interpretations of a given subject. Artistic expression is always personal, and it should be stressed to students that therein lies the value of art-inspired learning opportunities.

For young second language learners, art activities are generally accepted as appropriate. Beyond the elementary school, however, there is much more skepticism toward the use of art-inspired activities in the curriculum. Once basic verbal literacy has been established, the artistic element is left to whither.

Yet artistic experiences can provide cognitively challenging content for secondary-level language learners. Koller's curriculum unit provides an example of how student-created visuals may be effectively combined with a broader unit of study. The unit's focus on the Impressionist genre provided built-in guidelines for the students' own artistic creations. By adding an element of cognitive challenge, the guidelines rendered the art activity appropriate to the age of the learners. Although Koller's unit focused specifically on foreign language instruction, it suggests clear implications for ESL classrooms. We have had the opportunity to incorporate art into ESL instruction as well, and the benefits reflect those described throughout this article.

Moore, for example, implemented a secondary ESL curriculum unit called "A Nation of Immigrants" while student teaching at Como Park Senior High in Saint Paul. The circular process of writing, illustrating, responding, and revising resulted in a book, *The Call of Freedom*, selections from which are included in the Student Work section of this volume of the *Journal*. Sandra Hall, ESL teacher at Como Park, has been publishing student work in this manner for over ten years. The quality of work from this carefully planned, integrated approach to writing is always excellent.

Used with careful consideration for the age, language proficiency level, needs, interests, and experiences of the students, art-inspired learning experiences can play an invaluable role in the second language classroom. Educators who recognize this can incorporate art activities into their instruction to enliven and enhance language learning. In doing so, they can mobilize the language student's whole learning potential, rather than over-using the verbal thinking strategies upon which most education focuses so one-sidedly. Educators must respond to the fact that human beings express themselves both verbally and non-verbally, and that there is not clear line that separates these domains in real language or real life or real learning.

Teachers of language may do well to ask themselves just what it is about the artistic experience that fosters the development of language as well as the development of positive attitudes toward the language learning experience. Once teachers begin to tap into those factors, they will be able to enhance students' learning in all aspects of self-expression, the verbal as well as the non-verbal and artistic. It is hoped that this paper will inspire future research in that direction.

We firmly believe that art and language are inextricably connected symbolic systems. The words of Boyer (1985) convey the essence of this connection: "the visual arts are languages that reach all people at their deepest and most essential human level. Thus, aesthetic literacy is as basic as linguistic

literacy...art is expression that words can't convey" (pp. 8–9).

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## *NOTES*

[1] Rhonda Tarr, a Ph.D. candidate in Second Languages and Cultures Education at the University of Minnesota, is very interested in the relationship of aesthetics, challenge, and a community spirit to language learning. She is currently involved in exploring these issues through the study of Suggestopedia (Lozanov, 1978).

[2] Unfortunately, it was a condition of this research project that no student works, either artistic or written, be included in the paper in either original or

reproduced form.

[3] Where necessary, minor grammatical corrections have been made in the French-language quotations drawn from student essays.

[4] Students who submitted work for the purposes of this project were assured that their identity would be kept confidential; therefore, a pseudonym has been substituted for this student's name.

*MinneTESOL Journal*, Vol. 11, 1993

# Confucian Orthodoxy Meets ESL: Teaching Across Academic Cultures

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Confucian orthodoxy serves as a lasting cultural influence in China, Japan, and Korea, yet often results in "academic culture shock" for East Asian students entering the classrooms of American universities. This paper will show how ESL teachers can help to alleviate academic culture shock through the development of culturally sensitive educational materials and strategies that incorporate the academic culture of East Asian students.

> From the Son of Heaven down to the mass of the people, all must consider the cultivation of the person as the root of everything besides.
>
> Confucius (Legge, trans., 1960, vol. 1, p. 359)

The historical and cultural developments of China, specifically the ancient precepts articulated by Confucian orthodoxy, serve as a lasting cultural influence for a billion and a half people throughout China and Taiwan (Chance, 1987; Yang, 1970), Japan (Rohlen, 1983; Singleton, 1967), Korea (Robinson, 1991), and Vietnam (Erbaugh, 1990). Confucian orthodoxy has been instrumental in shaping the philosophy of education throughout East Asia for nearly twenty five hundred years. The teachings of China's Great Sage, Confucius, and the subsequent body of literature produced throughout the centuries by many of his disciples, referred to as the Confucian classics, have had a principal role in shaping the underlying philosophy of Chinese, Japanese, and Korean education (Carson, 1992: Oliver, 1971). This

philosophy, in contrast to Western educational tradition, formally shaped by the philosophy of the ancient Greeks, is fundamentally different in methodology, teaching techniques, and classroom practice (Erbaugh, 1990; White, 1987).

For the East Asian student entering the classroom of an American university, these differences in educational philosophy and subsequent classroom practice can cause a peculiar and unexpected kind of culture shock referred to as "academic culture shock" (Cleverly, 1985; Robinson, 1990). This cross-cultural academic shock stems from the contrasting perceptions of the East Asian student and the American-trained teacher concerning the educational process. For example, substantial research shows that East Asians are oriented toward indirect, or circular patterns of communication, whereas communication patterns in the United States emphasizes more of a direct or linear approach (Cheng, 1987; Kaplan, 1966; Yum, 1991). As a result, this difference in communication patterns affects classroom practice on both sides of the Pacific. Students in East Asia tend to employ indirect patterns of communication within the classroom in regards to classroom discussions or relating to the instructor. Reischauer (1977) concluded that the Japanese embrace an indirect pattern of communication because "they have a genuine mistrust of verbal skills, thinking that these tend to show superficiality in contrast to inner, less articulate feelings that are communicated by innuendo or by nonverbal means" (p. 137).

In contrast, Americans tend to adhere to a direct or linear approach to communication, especially written communication in an academic setting (Kaplan, 1966). As a result, when East Asian students employ an indirect pattern of communication in an American university classroom, they are often thought of as different, peculiar, or even strange. The breakdown in cross-cultural communication results from the tendency to judge the classroom behavior of East Asian students based on Western patterns of direct or linear communication. Students educated in American schools, from an early age, are encouraged to be interactive, aggressive, and critical of the text and subject matter in their respective courses. Consequently, it is not only unfair, but also highly inappropriate to impose Western standards of "successful" communication on recently arrived East Asian students. This often results in misconceptions that exist because ignorance is allowed to persist, even between highly developed and educated societies.

The noted professor of Oriental languages, H. G. Creel (1960) once declared that, "It is not China that is ignorant of or indifferent concerning the culture of the West, but the West that knows almost nothing about China and makes little attempt to learn. And the West is paying and will continue to pay the price of ignorance" (p. 39). Creel was referring to the fact that most

educated East Asians have spent a tremendous amount of time studying the historical and cultural traditions of the West, whereas the West has nearly ignored the cultural thought patterns of East Asia. Although the body of literature concerning the theory and practice of communication in East Asia has been expanded in the thirty years since Creel penned those words, the consequence of this ignorance has led to innumerable obstacles in communication between the East and West. This obstruction in communication is very evident when the students and teachers from these two parts of the world interact with each other in classrooms (Robinson, 1991; White, 1987).

The focus of this paper is two-fold: first, the research will show that fundamental differences exist between the academic cultures of East Asia and the United States; second, the writers will endeavor to demonstrate how ESL teachers can develop effective teaching techniques that will serve to bridge the gap between the academic cultures. From the writers' perspective, it is essential that American-educated teachers bridge the cross-cultural communication gap and alleviate the academic culture shock experienced by their East Asian students. This bridge can be made by educating teachers in order to gain an understanding of the communication patterns and academic culture prevalent in East Asia and developing culturally sensitive curricula and educational strategies that incorporate the academic culture of East Asian students. Cross-cultural training will in turn help American-educated teachers become acquainted with the cultural values and communication patterns, essentially the academic culture, of their East Asian students. As a result, educators will be better equipped to develop and implement educational strategies and teaching techniques that can be incorporated into a culturally-sensitive curriculum and used as a part of classroom practice to enhance the learning process of East Asian students.

## *HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF CONFUCIAN ORTHODOXY*

Confucian orthodoxy was a fundamentalist and monolithic view of the interpretation of the Confucian classics (Rohlen, 1983). Essentially, the view was that this moral and ethical canon could only have one true interpretation. Scholars might argue about what interpretation was the true one, but they could never allow for two interpretations—heterodoxy. From the perspective of Confucian orthodoxy, heterodoxy was heresy. Toward the end of the last century, the major philosophical debate in the governments of China, Japan and Korea was whether to maintain Confucian Orthodoxy in spite of the military defeats at the hands of Western powers or to combine Western and Confucian methods— heterodoxy. Scholars lost their lives as one view and then the other became dominate in these countries (Robinson, 1988).

Historically, this world view began with a relatively unsuccessful government official who was almost a contemporary of both the Buddha and Socrates. Confucius (551–479 B. C.), a name derived by Jesuit missionaries from his original name of Kong Fu Ze, possessed great intellectual ability and, through his rationalistic philosophy, made a significant and lasting contribution to the philosophical and pedagogical systems that form an important part of cultural tradition in China, Japan, Korea, Taiwan, and Vietnam. Because of his quest for learning, Confucius later formed a school to develop the mental and moral discipline that he associated with the attainment of knowledge. Creel (1960) suggests that Confucius, as a teacher of mental and moral discipline, became a "transmitter of the Way" (pp. 122–123). Chung (1988) cited Fingarette (1972) in his definition of the "Way" as "the right way of life, the Way of governing, the ideal Way of human existence, the pattern or course of existence that points us to the ideal path of human life" (p. 38). According to Confucius, if people followed the "Way," good moral order could be achieved in society.

While Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle took a critical view of the Hellenistic world in which they lived, Confucius believed that China had once achieved the truly good society and that according to the classics (i..e., *Book of Documents* and *Book of Poetry*), the ideal society would be achieved when people regained the splendor of earlier dynasties (Chung, 1988, p. 39). As a result, Confucius considered learning as essentially imitating and reproducing the wisdom of the ancients, yet he was unconventional in many of his ideas, such as the thought that any man might become a gentleman or scholar (Waley, 1956, p. 78). In effect, Confucius denied no one acceptance as a disciple; the only prerequisite was a hunger for knowledge. He once stated, "I never refused to teach anyone who wanted to learn... (Confucius, *Analects*, Waley, trans., 1938, p. 7). Consequently, China's great Sage probably did more than anyone in preventing education from becoming the exclusive privilege of the aristocracy (Waley, 1938, p. 7). Moreover, Confucius promoted the revolutionary idea of universal education centuries before it was to become a reality anywhere in the world.

As mentioned above, learning, according to the writings of Confucius, essentially entailed copying the ideas, the form, and the way of the ancients (Oliver, 1971, Waley, 1938;). This perspective was later reinforced through the many disciples of Confucius, including Mencius (371–289 B. C.), the most illustrious thinker of the Confucian school. These disciples, and later masters, stressed the appropriateness of ancient models, thus "the study of the Confucian classics became a habit of the student class who held tenaciously to the sayings of the ancient sages" (Kuo, 1915). Consequently, the educational

systems of East Asia were more concerned with presenting moral precepts than with the advocation of a method of critical thinking (Cleverly, 1985). "Learning was not a heuristic endeavor but an effort to learn the correct form, the correct answer, the correct way" (Robinson, 1990, p. 6).

Even at the present, the idea that lessons should focus on moral principles remains the traditional function of education throughout East Asia. Cleverly (1985) supports this idea by commenting that the modern-day rulers of China, like their dynastic predecessors before them, "...prize education as a means of ordering relations on earth according to a supreme blueprint, and...want a schooling devoted to ethical and collective ends...." Furthermore, the emphasis of education in Taiwan, China, and Hong Kong is that it should foster the four basic moral principles, which include love of country, service to others, willingness to abide by the group's decisions, and respect for authority (Unger, 1977).

In Japan, the Confucian heritage influenced education by stressing respect for learning and educational endeavors that lead to personal and societal improvement. According to Dorfman (1987), the goals of the educational system in Japan include the following: respect for society and established order; values for group goals above individual interests; diligence and moral commitment; well-organized and disciplined study and work habits; and self-criticism (quoted by Carson, 1992). In this environment, hard work, diligence, and commitment are considered as beneficial to both the individual and society. What Japanese most desire out of life, stability, security, and support, are acquired through effort and commitment; this lesson is stressed from one's youth, both at home and at school (White, 1987).

One can see how the words of Confucius resound in the philosophy of education embraced by the Chinese and Japanese alike, "Do not wish for quick results, nor look for small advantages...If you are led astray by small advantages, you will never accomplish great things" (Confucius, *Analects*, Waley, trans., p. 33).

## *ACADEMIC CULTURE SHOCK: A DIFFERENCE OF PERCEPTION*

The historical background of Confucian orthodoxy provided above allows the Western reader to more fully comprehend the unique differences that exist between the underlying cultural philosophies of the East and West. Given their respective academic cultures, it is evident that students from East Asia will experience certain difficulties upon entering an American classroom; likewise, an American educated teacher will encounter difficulties when confronting the academic culture of East Asia. The underlying differences between the philosophy of Confucian orthodoxy in East Asia and the more heterodoxic views allowed in the United States directly affect academic

culture both in the preferred patterns of communication and in the relative importance of groupism or individualism.

Communication patterns are just one area in which teacher- student interaction in the classroom differs between East Asia and the West. For example, communication between the East and West differs in who is responsible for successful communication. That is, should the sender or the receiver take responsibility for the correct interpretation of a message? Specifically, communication in the United States is considered sender-oriented. Meaning is inherent in the message created by the sender, and emphasis is placed on how best to formulate the message, how to improve delivery skills, and how to develop the credibility of the source (Yum, 1991). On the other hand, communication in East Asia is receiver-oriented, where meaning is in the interpretation. In this context, concentration is on listening, sensitivity, and removal of perception (Cheng, 1987; Hinds, 1987). Thus, successful communication in East Asian cultures tends to be the responsibility of the receiver. For Japanese, Lebra (1976) makes reference to what is called "anticipatory communication," in which the burden of communication falls on the message receiver, not on the message sender.

In general, the cultures of East Asia tend to place emphasis on a group-oriented society while the culture of the United States advocates a rugged individualism. The group mentality apparent throughout East Asia is based on maintaining social harmony and the obligation to adhere to lasting social norms. As a result, East Asian students are taught to express what is shared by the group rather than personal views or opinions (Duke, 1986, p. 25). Inamoto (1985) explains that expressing the opinion of the group is based on the Japanese values of *on* (favor) and *giri* (obligation). These cultural values are concerned with meeting group expectations and involve the mutual responsibility of the participants where the emotional connection emphasizes human feelings over logic and reason (pp. 46, 76). An old Japanese proverb illustrates the point quite clearly, "The nail that sticks out gets knocked down."

On the other hand, the ideology of individualism embraced throughout the history of the United States stresses personal independence, fierce competition, and a striving for uniqueness. In contrast to the homogeneous societies of East Asia, the U.S. typifies a unique heterogeneous society in which the concepts of individualism and competition are interwoven into the very fabric of its culture. Varenne (1991) shows that as early as the 1830's, the famous French social philosopher Alexis de Tocqueville, believed that individualism was the most notable characteristic of American culture (p. 53). The spirit of individualism is the overwhelming principle that regulates the

interaction of relationships in American society.

Consequently, East Asian students experience a peculiar kind of culture shock related to their immersion into Western academia. This "academic culture shock" results from the perceptions and expectations of East Asian students that are in sharp contrast to what is typical classroom practices in the West.

## *EAST ASIAN CLASSROOM PRACTICE*

With Confucian orthodoxy providing the cornerstone of the educational systems of East Asia, classroom practice advocates teacher-centered instruction in which rote learning tends to be the most widely accepted approach for China (Chance, 1987; Erbaugh, 1990; Kuo, 1915; Maley, 1986; Yang, 1970), for Japan (Rohlen, 1983; Singleton, 1967), and for Korea (Robinson, 1980). Almost all teaching is whole group, especially after the primary level and in early secondary levels, and instruction tends to be quite regimented, including the use of drills, with an emphasis on memorization (Unger, 1977). Moreover, choral recitation is often used, with particular attention paid to diction, enunciation, and self-confidence in speaking and performing (Carson, 1992). Students are encouraged to become proficient in their oral skills in order to be productive members of society; this is especially true in China.

Historically, Confucian-influenced classrooms in East Asia generally restricted or treated with disapproval originality, individual initiative, and inventiveness (Oliver, 1971). The structure and order of society as a whole was perceived as more important than the whims and fancies of an individual at any given moment. Reischauer (1977) suggests that cooperativeness and understanding of others are the most admired virtues in East Asian cultures; likewise, group consensus is highly regarded, while displays of self-assertedness are considered as evidence of immaturity (p. 135). As a result, students in East Asian classrooms strive to keep equality among their peers, preferring to maintain the harmony of the group. This results in an interesting method of turn taking among the teacher and students in the East Asian classroom. For example, a student would signal his or her desire to speak by eye movement (perhaps making eye contact), and the teacher would call on a student by nodding the head. This non-verbal exchange is a very indirect and inconspicuous style of communication that contrasts with the more direct exchange in American classrooms, where students would raise their hands or merely call out an answer to a question that the teacher has raised, and where the teacher might call out the name of the student (Kitao, 1985; Robinson, 1990, 1991).

Learning by rote is another example of the influence of Confucian Orthodoxy on classroom behaviors. The lasting cultural traditions of China,

Japan, and Korea place emphasis upon detail, precision, and exactness, both in the microcosm of the school and the macrocosm of society, again because the cultures of East Asia traditionally place a higher value on conformity to societal norms and group consensus than on individual subjectivism (Nakamura, 1964). As a result, students in Confucian-influenced classrooms are expected to copy in exact form, with emphasis upon detail, the notes from the text written on the blackboard by the teacher. In fact, it is a common practice in Korean elementary schools that classroom notes are extracted entirely from the textbook (Robinson, 1982, 1991).

In addition, questions from the students, often viewed as a challenge to the position and authority of the teacher, are not a typical part of classroom behavior in East Asian cultures. Rather, questions, used for the purpose of formal instruction, are the responsibility and the duty of the teacher. For example, it is not uncommon, especially at higher levels, for the teacher to ask a rhetorical question, then provide the answer; students diligently copy both the question and the answer in their notebooks (Robinson, 1982, 1988). Students are expected to memorize both the question and the answer even when the meaning is not understood. In this context, critical thinking is reserved only for those teachers who have mastered the Confucian classics. The teacher, according to Confucian precepts, always commands the respect of the students, both in and outside the classroom. This is evidenced in the third of the "Ten Commandments" as put forth by more recent Confucianists: "Thou shalt not forget about the dignity of teachers or show signs of ingratitude" (Hsu, 1967).

## *AMERICAN CLASSROOM PRACTICE*

In contrast to East Asian academic culture, the modern American classroom is marked by the pursuit of self-actualization and self-awareness, thought by many educators as a crucial part of the learning process. These concepts can perhaps best be seen in speech. Americans generally express themselves as the center of nature, while East Asians tend to express themselves as a part of nature (Kitao, 1985). Furthermore, modern American teaching methods strongly encourage critical thinking on the part of students. Learning tends to be student-centered, in which students are responsible to direct and to take control of the learning process (Hsu, 1981). It is primarily regarded as the students' responsibility to learn the material presented in any particular course. Lectures sometimes do not even make reference to texts that are designated as required reading.

In addition, course grades are partially given in direct relation to student participation during class time, which often includes a large amount of verbal activity in both small group and whole class activities (Duke, 1986; Rohlen,

1983). Verbal activity in university classes in the United States takes the form of questions, discussion, persuasion, and even argumentation, and is strongly encouraged, especially at higher levels. On the other hand, direct forms of argumentation and debate are often discouraged in East Asian classrooms because of the position of the teacher and the role of philosophy and religion (Becker, 1986). In the U.S., the emphasis on verbal activity in classrooms is rooted in the main function of communication, which is to assert individualism, actualize autonomy, and achieve self-fulfillment (Reischauer, 1977).

Furthermore, the role of the teacher in the Western educational system, such as the in U. S. and Great Britain, tends to be that of facilitator in the learning process. The instructor, at nearly all levels of education, serves as a resource person whose primary function is to stimulate, facilitate, and challenge each student to achieve individual potential (Maley, 1986). Moreover, students are taught to look within, search themselves, and trust their own instincts in order to enhance creativity and develop originality throughout the learning process. Teachers endeavor to create a classroom environment where learning is active, interesting, and fun. This description of classroom practice in the United States stands in sharp contrast to the function of the East Asian "master" who has been entrusted with passing on the moral precepts of the Confucian classics with detail and in the precise way that the educational system has dictated for over two millennia (Waley, 1938). In addition, teaching methods throughout East Asia stress the development and nourishing of group solidarity in the classroom (Duke, 1986). In short, it is little wonder why East Asian students would experience "academic culture shock" upon entering an American classroom in which student behavior entails asking questions, discussing points of view, and expressing personal opinion and where critical thinking is emphasized and creativity is stressed as an important part of the learning process.

## *MISCONCEPTIONS*

The contrast between the philosophy of education in East Asian countries and that of the United States causes a variety of expectations for both the East Asian student and the American-educated teacher concerning the learning process. These expectations are often polarized. The stark contrast between the educational philosophies of the East and West often results in misconceptions concerning the classroom behavior of East Asian students. According to studies done in several universities in California, Asian American students were found to be more verbally reticent than their Anglo counterparts. Suzuki (1977) suggests that this was partly due to East Asian cultural norms, but the nonverbal tendency was strongly reinforced through

the misconceptions and prejudice of American professors (p. 209). Misconceptions arise out of an unfamiliarity and a lack of understanding between academic cultures. They persist because of the tendency to judge the behavior of East Asian students based on cultural standards of Western orthodoxy. Some of the common misconceptions concerning East Asian students are that they are unwilling to participate in classroom activities and discussions; they simply do not understand (or they are dumb); they have no personal opinion; they force a mechanical response; and they do not appreciate individual initiative (Robinson, 1991). At the same time, classroom reports also indicate that East Asian students will participate if the teacher asks them to speak, that their silence does not mean a lack of understanding or that they are dumb, and that these students are very creative if the teacher is patient enough to wait for them to respond. Unfortunately, destructive stereotypes have been fostered and in turn have limited the potential of students from East Asian countries. It is therefore crucial that teachers, especially those in ESL and bilingual education, should receive information on the historical and sociocultural factors that influence East Asian classroom practice.

*EXPECTATIONS OF EAST ASIAN STUDENTS*

The perceptions and expectations of East Asian students are based on their Confucian-influenced academic culture. As a result, East Asian students enter the American classroom with an expectation of teacher-centered instruction in which the instructor teaches at a regular, even pace, teaching the group as a whole (Duke, 1986). Students follow the lecture in identical textbooks, always on the same page. The East Asian teacher "makes a Herculean effort to keep the whole class progressing in concert" (Duke, 1986, p. 28). Thus, in many East Asian classrooms, the teacher directs her lesson to all students while standing at the front of the class, using questions and examples for explanation and clarification. If questions are asked by the teacher, the East Asian student carries an expectation that the teacher will either call on the student by name in order to provide the answer or will provide the answer, such as in the case of rhetorical questions. Moreover, students understand that questions normally have only one correct answer, and the teacher will not accept other answers as true in part. Furthermore, if a question is directed to a particular student, the expectation is that the student addressed should be allowed "sufficient" time by the teacher and the other students to search for the best way to express meaning (Robinson, 1990). In addition, the East Asian student comes to the Western classroom with a strong background in a prescriptive rather than descriptive approach to language instruction (Robinson, 1991), along with a preference for a teaching method

that is repeated with little variety. East Asian students prefer a textbook for reference and memorization and expect the use of a notebook to record information presented in class by the teacher (Duke, 1986). Other cultural traits, such as a reluctance to make eye contact with the teacher, surprise when called upon or asked to participate, and embarrassment (loss of face) when unable to answer a question, all result from the Confucian-influenced cultural philosophies inherent in the classrooms of East Asia.

*EXPECTATIONS OF AMERICAN-EDUCATED TEACHERS*

American-educated teachers have expectations concerning teaching methodology and classroom practice that are in many cases diametrically opposed to those cited above concerning the East Asian student. Generally, teachers in the United States view each student as an individual with unique talents and abilities. With this in mind, teachers strive to encourage each student to take responsibility and direct their own learning process. For example, in a typical American elementary classroom, students in a reading classroom would normally be divided into homogeneous groups depending upon reading proficiency. The teacher would circulate among the reading groups, providing as much personal attention as needed by individual students, yet allowing groups the freedom to direct the learning process. At various times throughout the semester, the teacher would move students from one group to another if progress is achieved (Duke, 1986). This philosophy of teaching stands in stark contrast to the methods employed by the East Asian teacher at all levels: where a keen sense of group loyalty is consciously developed and where teachers do not readily accept the American innovations of the open classroom or team teaching (Rohlen, 1983).

In addition, standard ESL classroom practice in America tends to focus on process-oriented teaching which incorporates a strong component of free-writing, brainstorming, or role play in order to better convey the lesson, emphasizing hands-on experience among the students. Because of the inherent ideology of individualism described above, the higher one moves through the education system, the more American teachers try to encourage students to express real opinions, sometimes playing the devil's advocate in order to stimulate debate. However, East Asian high school and college students, in particular, tend to reject these practices as "playful wastes of time" (Erbaugh, 1990). Moreover, American-educated teachers, and students alike, think little of questioning the text, often criticizing parts of the text that are controversial. In the context of higher learning institutions, free speech, the ability to express individual opinion and the freedom to question those in authority, whether the text or the teacher, is viewed as a basic right. This is

clearly in diametrical opposition to the exalted position of the model text in the East Asian setting. Throughout East Asia, the model even outweighs the position of the teacher. For example, Chinese texts are ordained by the State Commission of Education, thus teachers who criticize textbooks are viewed as ignorant (Erbaugh, 1990).

## *SUGGESTIONS FOR ESL TEACHERS*

Accordingly, as part of the educational process mentioned above, ESL teachers should become well acquainted with the cultural values, communication patterns, and academic cultures of their East Asian students. The following suggestions in teacher preparation and teaching practice should assist teachers in this cross-cultural learning process.

First, ESL teachers need to become more aware of who their students are and what their preferences are in educational practice. One can begin by simply going to the home of an ESL student in elementary or secondary school or, if that is not possible (as might be the case for college students), by attending a festival such as the Chinese or Vietnamese New Year celebration to show one's appreciation for the other culture. Next, one might want to read about the educational system of other cultures in order to understand better the differences in educational practice. For East Asia, the bibliography at the end of this work could provide a beginning. At the same time, one must always reserve judgment until there is further interaction, both verbal and written, with the student. Be careful not to "label" the student based on initial behavior. It might be valuable in some cases to carry out additional diagnostic tests or interviews with the student and his or her family before making any final assessment. This first suggestion, if carried through, would not only assist teachers in their efforts to help East Asian students survive cross-cultural academic shock, but would also go a long way in building bridges between academic cultures and destroying the destructive misconceptions and stereotypes that persist out of ignorance.

Second, ESL educators should develop and implement teaching strategies and techniques that could be incorporated into a culturally-sensitive curriculum and used as a part of classroom practice. The following suggestions would be particularly helpful during the first term that East Asian students have American teachers. In these initial classes, the teacher should:

- use a textbook and follow it fairly closely, so that the student will be more comfortable with the learning situation, as Confucian Orthodoxy uses text almost as catechism;
- when not using a straight lecture method (typical of Confucian influenced education but not of ESL), teach with a consistent

method and introduce new teaching techniques slowly, as the students will not be able to learn with a new method until they learn the method itself and so too much variety could negatively impact language learning;

- with an emphasis on the teacher-centered nature of the Confucian-influenced classroom, use eye contact by students to identify who is ready to answer, and call on students by name rather than waiting for them to volunteer answers, so that, at least, it appears that you, the teacher, chose the student rather than the student chose to speak;
- when encouraging greater participation in class, ask questions for which each student could regard him or herself as the expert (such as asking how Korean women might view a specific phenomenon) so that the student would be encouraged to reply as an expert (someone with at least one answer) from their personal experience and cultural background knowledge;
- in a similar vein, ask questions about their cultural adjustment to the U. S., as each student would then be expert for him or herself and so will have the one answer again;
- use reading and written assignments, such as dialogue or other journals, to initiate topics that will be discussed orally in class, as Confucian orthodoxy emphasized the importance of the written word; and
- in advanced classes, discuss differences in academic culture, as they are encountered in the ESL classroom.

In conclusion, fundamental differences exist in the educational systems and teaching philosophies of East Asia and the West and these differences are manifested in a wide variety of contrasting classroom practices. These differences often result in "academic culture shock" experienced by many East Asian students upon entering the American classroom. However, differences between the academic cultures of the East and West should be kept in perspective. Oliver (1971) reminds us to accept the challenge of these differences "not as barriers to understanding but as invitations to inquiry" (p. 6). Indeed, the challenge for all educators is that bridges of understanding can be constructed that will serve to integrate and unite two seemingly incongruous academic cultures. Kim (1985) denotes clearly and concisely the vision for ESL professionals: "our task is to find our human unity and simultaneously to express diversity" (p. 407).

Cross-cultural academic shock can be alleviated when American teach-

ers allow themselves to become acquainted with the cultural values and communication patterns, essentially the academic culture, of their East Asian students. It is necessary for educators to develop and implement educational strategies and teaching techniques that can be incorporated into a culturally-sensitive curriculum and used as a part of classroom practice to enhance the learning process of East Asian students.

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*MinneTESOL Journal*, Vol. 11, 1993

# Perceptual Learning Style Preferences of Second Language Students

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The concept of learning style has been examined extensively by educators, particularly since the 1960s, and more recently within the field of teaching English as a Second Language. This paper will discuss current relevant issues in learning style, particularly in the area of perceptual learning style, as it relates to ESL students and instruction. A research study will be presented and discussed in which a perceptual learning styles inventory similar to that developed by Reid (1987) was administered to American and Japanese language students. The Japanese students stated a stronger preference for auditory, kinesthetic, and tactile perceptual modes than the Americans; the Americans were higher than the Japanese in visual preferences. The paper calls into question current methods of assessing learning style preferences, particularly cross cultural assessments; suggestions are given for the practical application of learning style research to the classroom.

What exactly is "learning style," and how or why is it relevant to students and instructors? Can a person's learning style be adapted to the environment he/she is in? How important is a "match" of learning style to instruction? Questions similar to these have been examined extensively by educators, particularly since the 1960s, and more recently within the field of teaching English as a Second Language.

The concept of "learning style" is difficult to research for several reasons. Probably the single most pressing problem is that of finding a satisfactory working definition; the term "learning style" has been used in various and sometimes confusing ways in the literature. It is often used interchangeably with the terms "cognitive style," "learning strategy," or "affective style."

Perhaps the most salient definition has been offered by Keefe (1979), who describes "learning style" as a general term for the conglomerate of an individual's *way of learning*, including all of his/her cognitive, affective, and physiological styles. Learning styles are "hypothetical constructs that help to explain the learning (and teaching) process...[and can be defined as] persistent qualities in the behavior of individual learners regardless of the teaching methods or content experienced" (p. 4). In contrast, "learning strategies" refers to the methods employed by a learner in mastering material (e.g., review, monitoring, practice, negotiation of meaning) (Reid, 1987). The idea of pervasiveness or consistency in learning style seems to be a theme common to all the various definitions; according to Schmeck, a learning style is "simply a strategy that is used with some cross-situational consistency" (1983, p. 233).

More research is needed to lead to a more refined theoretical basis for a working definition of learning style (Claxton & Murrell, 1987). The definition as it now stands is still somewhat vague and encompasses multiple factors. It is therefore of utmost importance that anyone writing about or doing research on learning style specify exactly which aspect of learning style is being studied.

Because of the difficulty in defining learning style, there is some vagueness in the literature regarding the issues involved in research, and subsequent difficulty in accurate and consistent assessment of learning style (Claxton & Murrell, 1987). The question of how to ensure content and construct validity (whether the questions on the test accurately represent the material that is being tested, and whether the test is a true reflection of the theory of learning style) and reliability (whether a test is internally consistent, and consistent from one administration to another) is not easily resolved.

With students of English as a Second Language, research becomes even more problematic. Instruments designed for native speakers of English (NSs) may be inadequate for non-native speakers of English (NNSs), even in a translation, because the concepts themselves may be culture-bound.

In spite of these difficulties, the potential for learning style research to enhance the ESL classroom learning experience makes it vital that educators continue to attempt to refine work in this area. Research on learning styles to date has been done almost exclusively from a white, Western middle-class perspective and value system (Claxton & Murrell, 1987). But the research that has been done on other cultures within the United States has shown that students from these cultures may be at a disadvantage in most American schools, which emphasize certain styles of learning that may not be preferred by students from non-Anglo backgrounds (Claxton & Murrell, 1987; Cohen,

1969; Hale-Benson, 1982; Kirby, 1979). Research with speakers of languages other than English has also shown that different modes of thinking (cognitive styles) characterize different cultures, and ESL learners with unique learning style characteristics may expend most of their time and effort just trying to adapt to a new learning situation (Reid, 1987).

Gregorc (1979) in particular writes about the difficulties of *alignment*: some students can align themselves more readily to a given teacher's style, using both natural (inherent) and artificial (learned) means of adapting to the class. Other students are not as adept in this alignment process, and fall behind when their learning styles are mismatched. Often discipline problems can be traced to a mismatch in learning styles.

Research in second language learning before 1987 includes work on some areas of cognitive styles, affective styles, culture-specific modes of learning and cultural factors, and learning strategies (Reid, 1987). Reid's study (1987), however, is the first published research describing the perceptual learning style preferences of NNSs. Perceptual learning style refers to "the variations among learners in using one or more senses to understand, organize, and retain experience" (Reid, 1987, p. 89). R. Dunn (1983) treats perceptual learning style as a sub-category of the physical learning style elements, and divides this sub-category into four perceptual modalities. They are:

1. Visual learning: reading, studying graphs, charts, pictures
2. Auditory learning: listening to lectures, audio tapes
3. Kinesthetic: experiential, total body involvement
4. Tactile: hands-on experience

These perceptual learning style elements are part of the *Learning Styles Inventory* (Dunn, Dunn, & Price, 1975), a comprehensive, self-reporting questionnaire for grades 3-12, and the *Productivity Environmental Preference Survey* (PEPS), designed by Price, Dunn, and Dunn (1982) for adults.

An explanation following Reid's questionnaire (1987) describes and elaborates on the four perceptual modalities of Dunn as follows:[1]

> VISUAL: "You learn well from *seeing words* in books, on the chalkboard, and in workbooks. You remember and understand information and instructions better if you read them. You don't need as much oral explanation as an auditory learner, and you can often learn alone, with a book. You should take notes of lectures and oral directions if you want to remember the information."

AUDITORY: "You learn from *hearing words* spoken and from oral explanations. You may remember information by reading aloud or moving your lips as you read, especially when you are learning new material. You benefit from hearing audio tapes, lectures, and class discussion. You benefit from making tapes to listen to, by teaching other students, and by conversing with your teacher."

KINESTHETIC: "You learn best by experience, by being involved physically in classroom experiences. You remember information well when you actively participate in activities, field trips, and role-playing in the classroom. A combination of stimuli—for example, an audio tape combined with an activity—will help you understand new material."

TACTILE: "You learn best when you have the opportunity to do "hands-on" experiences with materials. That is, working on experiments in a laboratory, handling and building models, and touching and working with materials provide you with the most successful learning situation. Writing notes or instructions can help you remember information, and *physical involvement in class-related activities may help you understand new information.*" [Italics are mine—note here the similarity to the kinesthetic definition.]

A table of results from ten studies by ten different researchers in R. Dunn (1983) shows in each case how native English speakers learned better when taught various subjects through their different preferred learning styles (including perceptual), and conversely, how students who were mismatched achieved significantly less, from elementary school through the college level. "Research has verified repeatedly," states Dunn, "that when new information is introduced through the strongest perceptual strength, reinforced through the second, and used creatively, statistically significant increases occur in academic achievement" (p. 499). Other theorists agree that since perceptual learning style has proved to have a direct impact on how much information is processed and retained, awareness and utilization of an individual's preferred perceptual learning style will lead to more effective learning (James & Galbraith, 1985).

*REID'S STUDY AND RESULTS*

Reid (1987) reports on a study she conducted to examine perceptual learning style preferences of NNSs and to compare them to each other and to

those of NSs. Reid developed a self-report questionnaire of 30 questions with randomly arranged statements (5 each) in six areas of learning style preference; the four perceptual modalities of Dunn—visual, auditory, kinesthetic, and tactile; and two additional areas, individual vs. group learning. Preference means for each set of variables were divided into three categories: major, minor, or negative learning style preferences. The survey was validated by the split-half method and completed by a total of 1,234 students at 43 different university-affiliated intensive English language programs across the United States, representing 98 countries, 29 majors, and 52 different language backgrounds. One hundred and fifty-four NSs from Colorado State University also completed the survey. Reid statistically analyzed these responses along with eight student variables: age, first language, TOEFL score, length of time in the U.S., length of time studying English in the U.S., class (graduate or undergraduate), major, and sex.

The results of Reid's study showed that the ESL students in this study overall strongly preferred kinesthetic and tactile learning styles; native speakers of English, on the other hand, had a lower preference mean in the area of kinesthetic learning (although it was still a major learning style preference), and were less tactile than NNSs of all language backgrounds studied. Most groups also showed a negative preference for group learning; NSs rated group work lowest of all.

It is intriguing to note that the perceptual learning style preferences of the NNSs who had studied and lived in the U.S. the longest more closely resembled the perceptual preferences of NSs in Reid's study. For example, the longer students had lived in the U.S., the more auditory was their stated preference; those who had been in the U.S. more than three years were significantly more auditory in their stated preferences than those who had spent less time in the U.S.

This raises the question, Reid notes, of whether students who have more experience in the U.S. classroom adapt themselves to auditory learning (still an artificial modality for them), or whether they in fact *become* more auditory (changing natural modalities). There is evidence from research done with native speakers of English that perceptual preference evolves for most students from the tactile/kinesthetic modality to the visual/aural modality as the learner matures (R. Dunn, 1981, 1983; Keefe, 1979). Dunn (1981) reports that kindergartners tend to be strongly tactile/kinesthetic; around grade 3–4 the visual modality begins to develop, and by grade 5–6 most children begin to become auditory (girls become auditory earlier and faster than boys). If young NS children experience a change in their preferred learning style as they mature, might it not also be possible, as Reid suggests, that NNS adult

learners of English also experience a change in preferred learning style; in fact, might it not be possible that beginning language learners in general could have learning style traits in common that change as they become more proficient in the second language, or more comfortable with the second culture? Further research is needed to address these questions.

## *RESEARCH DESIGN*

The study I designed and conducted is a beginning attempt to determine whether or not there are learning style characteristics particular to language learners in general. Although Reid collected data from NSs in her study, the survey instrument was designed for subjects to respond to questions "as they apply to your study of English," and so the NSs responding would not necessarily be using the same frame of reference (second language study) as the NNSs. I felt a follow-up to Reid's study would also be important to address the issues of construct validity and reliability, and to examine the usefulness of translating assessment tools for learning styles of beginning language students.

### Subjects

I decided to administer a questionnaire to three groups of students. The three groups were:

1. American students learning French at The American College in Paris, France, or similar French as a Second Language programs in Paris, fall, 1988. Thirty-one American students completed questionnaires that could be used for this study.
2. Japanese students enrolled in the Summer Intensive English Language and Orientation Program (SIELOP), University of Minnesota, summer, 1988. There were 22 Japanese SIELOP students who completed the questionnaire.
3. Japanese teachers of English participating in the University of Minnesota's JET (Japanese English Teachers) program, summer, 1988. These teachers all had a considerable number of years experience both learning and teaching English. There were 21 JET participants who completed the questionnaire.

### Instrument

I had misgivings about the wording of some of the questions in Reid's questionnaire. For example, most of the questions use comparatives without the comparative dependent clause: "When the teacher tells me the instruc-

tions I understand better." (Better than what? Better than if I don't get any instructions at all?) Reid said she had initially designed the questions with the comparative dependent clause ("better than if I read the instructions," for example) but that when she went through the questions one by one with several NNS informants, she was told that the sentences were too complicated, and would be more easily understood without the comparative dependent clause (personal communication, 1988). I also was concerned about the abundance of ambiguous words such as "something," "someone," "things," e.g., "When I do things in class, I learn better;" and the use of "understand" as in "I understand better when I read instructions," since "understand" could relate to a language problem rather than a learning style preference. I decided to design a self-report questionnaire similar to that designed by Reid, with questions representing the same four perceptual modalities (visual, auditory, kinesthetic, tactile) as well as group vs. individual learning, but to make some modifications to account for the above concerns. By administering the questionnaire in the subject's first language I hoped to eliminate any misinterpretation of the questions, as well as any bias from students' trying to translate as they took the questionnaire.

I studied the *Productivity Environmental Preference Survey* of Dunn, Dunn, and Price (1979) as well as Reid's questionnaire before deciding on five questions for each perceptual modality. Some questions deliberately contrast one preference with another, as in #16: "I remember more of what I hear than what I read" (+Auditory, –Visual), and #14: "I would rather learn by experience than by reading or hearing about a subject" (+kinesthetic, –Visual, –Auditory). Although this makes these questions longer and more difficult to understand, I hoped this would give information similar to a forced-choice format.

I used the same 5-point scale as Reid, where each item requires a person to choose from 5 responses in a range from "Strongly Agree" to "Strongly Disagree." (see Appendix). I combined group/individual preferences into one category, since they represent opposite ends of the same scale. Questions #1, 6, and 9 on my questionnaire and the accompanying values in scoring are reversed to account for response set (the tendency of some individuals' responses on a value scale to be all on one side of the scale, which suggests they have not read the questions thoroughly and are responding in a "set" mode). Question 6, for example, "I like to stay seated in class," is negative kinesthetic and so a response of "Strongly Agree" in this case would have a score value of 1, and "Strongly Disagree" would have a score value of 5.

I randomly arranged the final set of twenty-five questions into a two-page questionnaire, including an introductory page almost identical to Reid's,

requesting background information from the subject (Name, Age, Native Country, Native Language, Sex, Years Studying English/French, Years in the U.S. /France, Major Field or Occupation, Number of Years in College/ Degrees) and explaining very generally what the questionnaire is about. The introduction specifically asks that the respondent answer the questions as they apply to his or her study of the second language.

The next major project was getting the questionnaire translated into Japanese, which I hoped would reduce the chance of error due to students' misunderstanding of the questions. For this I relied on two Japanese graduate students at the University of Minnesota; after a pilot run, we rewrote several sentences and had the questionnaire blind back-translated by an American graduate student fluent in Japanese. Several SIELOP students who took the questionnaire were still not happy with the translation; comments I received suggested that the translation was still awkward, "too literal" in places, and that some questions were ambiguous. One Japanese translator felt that there were two possible explanations: one, the difficulty with translating some of the concepts, which had no practical equivalent in Japanese classroom experience; for example, #7: "When I can get up and move around in class I seem to learn best" is a strange concept to the Japanese, since this type of behavior is not typical for students. The second concern this translator had was with administering a questionnaire to Japanese, who she said are "not good subjects" and who do not like taking questionnaires in general, or who may resist being singled out for study.

*RESULTS AND DISCUSSION*

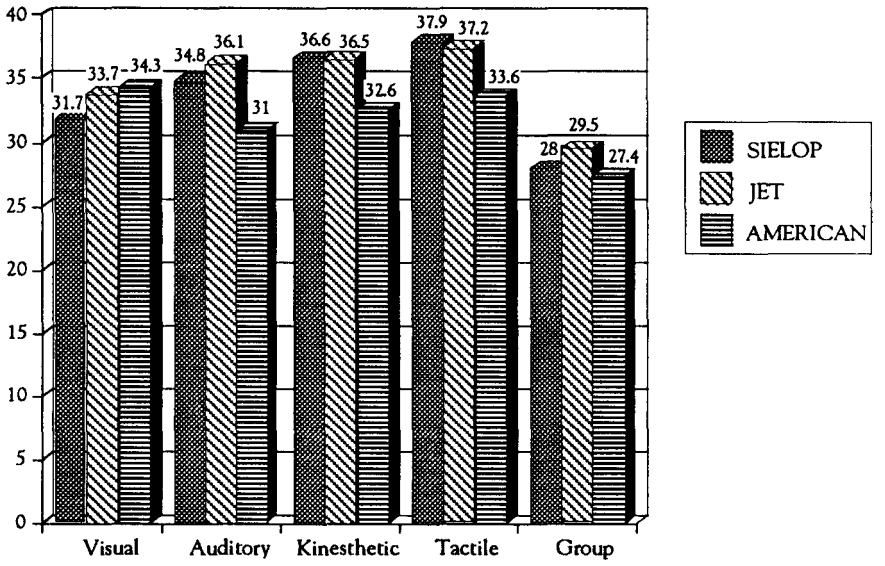
The questionnaires were scored according to a scale developed by Reid. Each response was given a value from 5–1, with 5 being the response most favorable to the modality being questioned. The five responses for each modality were added, and then multiplied by two. Major learning style preferences were considered to be final totals that were between 38–50; Minor learning style preferences, between 25–37; and Negligible preferences, between 0–24.

The results are shown in Figure 1.

Preference Means

All three groups (Japanese JET, Japanese SIELOP, and Americans) had all minor preference means, except for tactile learning for the SIELOP students; at 37.9 (rounded up to 38) it was a major preference mean. The Japanese groups were only 0. 1 apart on kinesthetic (36.6 – SIELOP, 36.5 – JET) and less than 1.0 apart on tactile preference means

(37.9 – SIELOP, 37.2 – JET). Both Japanese groups were higher in auditory, tactile, kinesthetic, and group preferences than the Americans. The Japanese groups were lower than the Americans only in visual preferences (SIELOP – 31.7, JET – 33.7, Americans – 34.3). An Analysis of Variance run on the preference means showed significant differences for auditory, kinesthetic, and tactile learning styles at the . 05 level:




STANDARD DEVIATION

| | Visual | Auditory | Kinesthetic | Tactile | Group |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| SIELOP | 3.87 | 5.78 | 6.08 | 5.33 | 5.76 |
| JET | 5.11 | 4.92 | 5.21 | 5.64 | 7.24 |
| AMERICANS | 6.23 | 6.83 | 6.39 | 7.53 | 8.32 |

*Figure 1.* ***Perceptual Learning Style Preference Means***

Auditory $F(2,71) = 5.1946$, $p = .0078$
Kinesthetic $F(2,71) = 3.8816$, $p = .0251$
Tactile $F(2,71) = 3.4947$, $p = .0357$

Preferences for the other two styles, visual and group, were not significantly different. The Scheffé test resulted in one significant difference at the .05 level

(although several others were close): between the Americans and the JET group in auditory learning style preference.

Comparison to Reid's Study

In Reid's study the Japanese had minor preference means in tactile (the highest means), kinesthetic, auditory, and visual learning; group learning had negligible preference means. The English speakers had major preference means for auditory learning (the highest means), and kinesthetic learning; minor preference means for tactile and visual learning, and negligible preference means for group learning. In my study all three groups had all minor preference means except for tactile learning for the SIELOP students when rounded up to 38 (it was 37.9), a major preference mean. In Reid's study the Japanese had higher visual and tactile preference means than the English speakers and lower auditory and kinesthetic preference means. Except for the tactile preference means, this is the reverse of my findings, which show both Japanese groups to be higher in auditory and kinesthetic preferences than the Americans, and lower in visual. Both studies show the Japanese to be higher in tactile preferences than the English speakers, and both studies show group learning to have the lowest preference means for both Japanese and Americans (with Americans having the lowest preference for group work).

Reid found the Japanese to be the least auditory of the language groups tested, whereas in my study their auditory preference means were higher than the Americans'. Reid found the Japanese to be the least kinesthetic as well; the NSs in her study were also low kinesthetic (second to last) compared to the other language groups. But for both groups the kinesthetic means were still high when compared to the other modalities. In my study the Japanese rated kinesthetic learning higher than the Americans did. In both studies the Japanese did not as a group have any major learning style preference. Reid notes that among all the NNS language groups in her study, the Japanese were most frequently significantly different from the others in their preferences.

The results of both Reid's study and my own show that kinesthetic and tactile learning were important to both the Americans and Japanese studied; this is interesting, given that Americans (and Japanese) have been traditionally taught with an emphasis on visual/auditory modes, and Americans have been considered to be primarily visual/auditory learners as adults (R. Dunn, 1981, 1983; Keefe, 1979). The low preference means for group work for NSs and Japanese in both studies also have interesting implications for the classroom, especially given today's emphasis in ESL on group work; as Reid states, "some reexamination of curricula and teaching methods by both ESL and university teachers [in regards to group work] may be in order" (1987, p.

98). At least an awareness of these preferences can help a teacher to be aware of possible resistance to group work, perhaps allowing for a gradual easing into the mode rather than jumping into groups on the first day of class.

## *EXAMINING THE PROCESS OF ASSESSING LEARNING STYLE*

According to Grasha (1984), the ideal instrument for assessing learning style should include a frame of reference; is it to be used in relation to work? school? which class/subject? etc. It should have test/retest reliability, and construct and predictive validity (the ability to predict correctly the performance of the test-taker in some future context). It should be internally consistent. Use of the instrument results should lead to greater learner satisfaction and superior performance. In other words, the instrument should be translatable to instruction.

### Recognizing the Limitations of Instruments

In examining the results of the present study, it is important to note that the questionnaire was not normed. Reid (1990) questions the reliability of questionnaires that are normed for NSs and used on NNSs, since she found significant differences in these two groups' responses when she was norming her instrument. A questionnaire that is not normed at all is certainly also open to criticism. It is difficult to write questions that cover each modality without becoming too repetitious; but it is even more difficult to determine what kinds of questions best measure the modality. The question of content/construct validity and reliability comes up again; what can we say is an adequate measurement of, say, a kinesthetic modality? Some items considered kinesthetic ask about activities in the classroom: "When I can participate in classroom activities I remember best;" others focus on seating arrangements, implying less activity if the student is seated: "I like to stay seated in class." But for the Japanese, to whom the idea of moving around a classroom seems strange, this may not be so much a measure of kinesthetic activity as a measure of cultural appropriateness. Similarly, as a measure of preference for group work vs. individual work, how can we determine that items such as: "I like to discuss class materials with a group of students" and "I accomplish more when I study alone than when I study with others" are diametrically opposed? Rather, both may be rated "Strongly Agree" for an individual, and neither may sufficiently discriminate between a preference for group versus individual work.

Another major issue in assessing perceptual learning style preference is in categorizing the modalities being measured. Although R. Dunn (1983) has defined the four modalities used by Reid and myself, Keefe (1979) recognizes

three perceptual modes; *kinesthetic* or *psychomotor*, *visual* or *spatial*, and *auditory* or *verbal*. James and Galbraith (1985) distinguish *print* (reading, writing) from *visual*, and include the modalities *interactive* (verbalization) and *olfactory* (smell). Reinert (n. d.) has developed a self-report inventory (Edmonds Learning Style Identification Exercise) based on four perceptual modalities, *visualization*, *written word*, *sound-understanding* (listening), and *feeling* (activity).

None of the researchers offer any justification as to why these categories are sufficient. It may, in fact, be argued that all of the questions posed on various perceptual learning style inventories could be separated into the two categories of *active* vs. *passive* learning (Park, Downing, & Tarone, personal communication, May, 1989). There simply is not a clear rationalization for one set of modalities as yet.

Cross Cultural Assessments

Cross cultural assessments also must take into account the English level of the students and the effect this might have on their interpretation of a questionnaire given in English; for example, the Kolb inventory (1976) relies on choosing between words such as "conceptualization," "concrete," and "reflecting."[2] As I found in my study, even having the questionnaire translated into the first language of the subjects does not necessarily end ambiguities.[3] Cultural factors can play a significant role, as with the Japanese SIELOP students' unfamiliarity with the concept of moving around a classroom. Cultural attitudes towards taking questionnaires should also be taken into consideration.

A factor I found difficult to control for in my study was length of time studying the language vs. length of time spent in the target culture. In my study the two Japanese groups were more similar in preference means to each other than to the Americans studied, even though the JET teachers had studied and taught English for many years. If learning style preferences related to second language study change over time, the critical factor is most likely that of being immersed in the target culture, since then the teaching methodology and other cultural factors would be possible influences. I had originally intended to study beginning language learners immersed in a target culture in order to get data to observe possible change over time. However, the groups I chose to study were made up of individuals who, although they were relative beginners in the second culture (JET teachers were in the U.S. for the first time Summer 1988; SIELOP students were also studying in the U.S. for the first time Summer 1988; most of the Americans in France had been there less than a year), they were not necessarily beginners in studying the second language

(the JET teachers had at least nine years of studying and teaching English; SIELOP students had a range of 6–12 years studying English; the Americans ranged from three months to nine years learning French). It would be interesting to control for these variables—length of time in the target culture and length of time studying the second language—to get more data on the possibility of change in learning styles over time.

*IMPLICATIONS FOR THE CLASSROOM*

Keefe (1979) has diagrammed the school learning process as a triangle of interaction between the learning environment, the teaching style, and the learning style of the student. Each area of the triangle needs to be fully explored and recognized for the role it plays in the process of learning. The problem, according to Dunn and Dunn (1979), lies in trying to isolate and emphasize certain points that are believed to represent "good" or "effective" instruction. Difficulty in objective interpretation, incorrect assumptions about what should be measured, and inappropriate instruments of measurement all contribute to the problem; however, even if these factors could be overcome, inattention to and mismatch of teaching style and student learning style could nullify the effort. "Effective" teaching becomes to some extent a relative notion, dependent on the balance of Keefe's triangle of learning environment, teaching style, and learning style.

The current accepted epistemology, or "way of knowing," in the United States is dominated by objectivism, which emphasizes detachment, analysis, and individual rather than communal learning. But many students coming from backgrounds other than Anglo may be more familiar and more comfortable with relational ways of knowing, depending more on the intuitive and subjective modes, which should also be honored in our schools (Claxton & Murrell, 1987).

Educators need to be aware of the issues surrounding learning style research, and the difficulties inherent in the procedures used to attempt to measure ESL learning style in particular. Problems with content/construct validity, reliability, English language and translations, cultural interference, etc. make anyone attempting research in this area likely to feel more than a little frustration and futility in his/her efforts. So what, then, can be finally said about the applicability of learning style research to the classroom—the *raison d'être*, after all?

In spite of the many ambiguities involved from a research perspective, it may be that from a teaching perspective the outlook is not so pessimistic. It may be most important, in fact, that teachers simply raise the issue of learning style with their students, perhaps using an instrument to assess learning styles,

but always with the students validating the results for themselves, discussing in class the implications of differences in teaching and learning styles. This introspection on the part of the students itself may serve the purpose of making students aware of a variety of modalities that exist, and how they may adapt their styles or compensate in order to enhance their classroom learning. As Claxton and Murrell put it, learning *how* to learn is an empowering experience, and the long-term impact learning style discussions can have is to lead to an "increase in achievement and self-confidence that comes about when faculty and students engage in an ongoing dialogue about how the student learns, how the teacher teaches, and how each can adapt to the other in the service of more effective learning" (1987, p. 54).

Claxton and Murrell give examples of how a teacher might design tests with learning styles in mind: for example, during a multiple choice test, impulsive thinkers may not be able to be deliberate enough to carefully consider each question, and reflective thinkers may become immobilized with the task. Pressure seems to intensify a person's reflective/impulsive style, and multiple choice tests may not elicit students' best performance for these reasons. Claxton and Murrell suggest instead questions that require a variety of forms of processing, such as those described in Kolb's learning style categories. Teachers who wish to accommodate a variety of perceptual learning styles in the classroom can make use of a combination of lecture/discussion, individual and small group work, board work, and activities using overhead transparencies, videotapes, audiotapes, role-plays, experiments, etc.

An awareness of differences in learning style can sensitize teachers to potential problems of match/mismatch, especially in an ESL classroom, where culture enters in as well (Reid, 1987). At the same time, making students aware of learning style can help them understand and accept some of the difficulties they may experience in coping with a mismatch; students can also make choices to adapt or compensate for learning style differences. Paige (1987) equates effective learning to a "fit" between the learning style of a person, his/her personal qualities, and the learning style of a culture; he explains how an international student can assess his/her fit, then improve on and adjust his/her fit to the system.

Reid (1987) raises the question of whether teachers of ESL students should attempt to match the learning style characteristics of their students, possibly in order to lower their affective filter, or whether they should encourage NNSs to adapt their preferences to those of NSs. The answer seems to be both. Through the use of an inventory, class discussion, and experience with a variety of learning styles, students and teachers both can come to appreciate and learn from their diversity while making the best possible use of

alternative, complementary learning styles.

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## *APPENDIX*

### AUDITORY

1. When I listen to lectures, I remember most of what I have heard.
2. I prefer to learn by listening to lectures.
3. I learn best by listening to someone lecture or speak on a subject.
4. I remember more of what I hear than what I read. (–V)
5. I like to learn new information by hearing a record, tape, or lecture.

### VISUAL

1. I learn more by reading textbooks than by listening to lectures. (A)
2. I remember best what I see or read in books, photos, or diagrams.
3. I like to learn new information by viewing pictures or diagrams.
4. I would rather read than listen to the teacher lecture on a subject.
5. I learn better when I read the instructions than when the teacher tells me what to do. (–A)

### TACTILE

1. I like to learn by drawing or making a model of what I'm studying whenever possible.
2. When I can draw or take notes I remember better than if I just listen or just read. (–A,V)
3. I find learning easier when I can make something with my hands.
4. I learn best if I draw or make relevant diagrams while I study.
5. I like to learn by working with my hands.

### KINESTHETIC

1. I would rather learn by experience than by reading or hearing about a subject. (–V, A)
2. I enjoy learning in class by doing experiments or role plays.
3. When I can participate in classroom activities I remember best.
4. When I can get up and move around in class I seem to learn best.
5. I like to stay seated in class. (–K)

### GROUP

1. In class I learn best when I work with other students.
2. I like to discuss class materials with a group of students.
3. I learn more when I study with a group than when I study alone. (–I)
4. I accomplish more when I study alone than when I study with others. (–G)
5. I study best by myself. (–G)

*NOTES*

[1]This explanation is credited in part to the C. I. T. E. Learning Styles Instrument, Murdoch Teacher Center, Wichita, Kansas 6720.

[2]Also see Wederspahn and Barger (1988) for a discussion of idiomatic language in the Myers-Briggs questionnaire,and its impact on ESL students.

[3]See Oller (1979) for a discussion of the difficulties inherent in attempting to translate tests.

*ACKNOWLEDGMENTS*

I would like to thank Joy Reid, Betsy Parrish, and Elaine Tarone for their assistance with this project.

*MinneTESOL Journal*, Vol. 11, 1993

# Friday Prayer: Describing a Process in Arabic and English Writing

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The academic writing of many foreign students sometimes deviates from the prevalent American rhetorical pattern, characterized as it is by linearity in text development; this deviation has often been blamed on the negative transfer of different rhetorical patterns characteristic of these other languages. The present study used evidence from the writings of Arab and American students to investigate the extent to which students' writing reflects the rhetorical conventions of their native languages, as well as the extent to which writing skills in L1 constitute a good resource for the ability to produce an acceptable piece of writing in the target language. Based on the compositions of three groups of students (five American students, five Arab students with no background in ESL; and 27 Arab students with a good background in ESL), it has been found that the students in all three groups vary in their ability to organize text materials chronologically. As to the third group (the learner group), there was a positive relationship between the students' ability to organize text materials chronologically in their native language, Arabic, and their ability to do so in the target language, English, suggesting that L1 writing skills can be very helpful (and do not necessarily constitute an obstacle) to the learner's ability to produce a high quality piece of writing in L2.

A great deal of research has been done examining the contrastive rhetoric hypothesis first put forward by Kaplan (1966). Contrastive rhetorical studies of Arabic and English have produced conflicting claims. Some of those who have studied Arabic-English interference at the rhetorical level have suggested that Arabic text organization in general is characteristically circular and non-cumulative (Allen, 1970), and that Arabic writing style is usually characterized by parallelism (Kaplan, 1966, 1987; Ostler, 1988),

while American writing style is linear (Kaplan, 1966; Irmsher, 1979). However, not all scholars agree with these generalizations. Sa'Adeddin (1989) shows that a linear mode of text development is in fact common in Arabic literature, while Leki (1991) and others maintain that a linear organization is not the only mode of text development adopted by professional native-speaker English writers.

The aim of contrastive rhetorical studies is to show that mode of text development is influenced by the language being used and the rhetorical tradition of those who use that language. But clearly, one's "mode of text development" must also differ in different genres of writing—some genres may demand more "linear" text development than others, regardless of the language being used. The interaction between the genre and the language of the text can only be studied systematically when these two variables are explicitly controlled and varied. In work on contrastive rhetoric, too many studies have focused solely upon the broad genre of exposition, and not enough upon other genres or more specific types of expository writing (cf. Swales, 1990, for a discussion of this problem). In examining the question of the transfer of rhetorical patterns from one's native language into one's interlanguage performance, it is important to obtain data on writing from a variety of genres and, within expository writing itself, a variety of types of exposition. The study described in this paper takes a modest step in this direction, focusing on the type of exposition called *describing a process*, as this enterprise is interpreted by individuals writing in Arabic (their native language) and English (their interlanguage), and by individuals writing in English (their native language).

Describing a process is seen here as an important type of expository writing because it falls in a natural order of organization, requiring the writer to tell things into a time sequence (i.e., to arrange the material chronologically). According to Donald (1991), the description of a process requires three things:

1. The process is analyzed according to a chronological sequence (first this, second this, next this);
2. The process evolves in a series of steps or stages;
3. The process has a particular purpose or end product.

## *THE STUDY*

### The Research Questions

The following research questions were examined in the study:

*Research Question 1:*
To what extent do native speakers of Arabic evidence a linear (chronological) order in describing a process in Arabic?

*Research Question 2:*
To what extent do native speakers of English evidence a linear (chronological) order in describing a process in English?

*Research Question 3:*
To what extent do native speakers of Arabic writing in English evidence a linear (chronological) order in describing a process in their interlanguage?

*Research Question 4:*
Do native speakers of Arabic use the same organization when describing a process in Arabic (their native language) and in English (their interlanguage)?

### The Subjects

This study examines the written performances of three groups of writers who are describing the same process: native speakers of English writing in English (Target Language Group), native speakers of Arabic writing in Arabic (Native Language Group), and native speakers of Arabic writing in both English and Arabic (Learner Group). All the subjects were Muslims.

The TL Group consisted of five university-level native speakers of American English; the NL group were five Arabic-speaking university students at the beginning level of ESL with little or no instruction in English composition; and the Learner group were 27 Arabic students with at least three years of instruction in English, and from three to ten years of study in the United States.

### The Writing Task

An important factor in task design, discussed by Brown and Yule (1983), is the familiarity of the students with topic. Because of the diverse backgrounds of the subjects who participated in the study (they were from 10 different countries), the task was selected in such a way as to reflect the same knowledge shared by all of them as Muslims (including the Americans): the procedure followed in the Friday prayer. The writing task was as follows:

> A non-Muslim friend of yours would like to know what the Friday prayer (Salatu-l-Jumua) consists of. Please give him/her a thorough description of the whole process of this weekly gathering of Muslims.

In addition to ensuring the familiarity of the students with the topic, the task clearly specifies as a target audience "a non-Muslim friend of yours," which means that the reader is one who is not familiar with the topic at all. The purpose of this specification is to alert the students to the fact that they should be responsible writers, i.e., writers who do not rely on the reader's cooperation to get their intended message across.

Essential Structure of the Writing Task

The task required the students to describe a process consisting of several steps performed in a sequential order. This task can be analyzed in terms of its "essential structure," which in turn will enable us to make a more systematic comparison of the writing performance of large numbers of subjects across languages. To our knowledge, this is the first time that the notion of "essential structure," first described by Brown and Yule (1983) as useful in assessing spoken skills in English, has been used in a study of writing in the area of contrastive rhetoric. We believe that this notion provides an important tool for contrastive rhetoricians to use in systematically analyzing differences in communicative performance due to both genre and language/rhetorical tradition of the writer.

The steps of the process for which the students were held accountable were the "essential structure" of the task: only those steps which turned out to be mentioned in all the highest-rated essays. The process used to establish the essential structure of the task is described in detail in Brown and Yule (1983). All subjects are given the same communicative task to perform—they are not "guided" or controlled as to the *form* of their response in the task instructions. This permits them substantial freedom to decide how to organize their communication, and often results in substantial variability in subjects' performance. As Brown and Yule (1983) point out, such freedom for the subject has in the past presented a problem for the analyst who is interested in comparing subject performance, sometimes across languages. The notion of "essential structure" is a device which permits the analyst to systematically compare variable learner performance in response to a communicative task.

In determining the essential structure of any given communicative task, each subject's performance on that task is analyzed in terms of the actions and objects mentioned in each performance. The essential structure of the task

consists of all those actions and objects mentioned by all or most of the subjects, or by all of that subset of subjects independently designated as skilled. Once those actions and objects have been established, it is possible to compare the ways in which different subjects, or groups of subjects, realized them. Actions and objects *not* included in the essential structure are not penalized: they are merely "extra," points of inter-subject variation which may be of interest for other purposes of analysis. The essential structure of the task provides the analyst with several points of comparison that can be used in an objective scoring procedure to compare the performance of large numbers of subjects across languages in terms of their communicative effectiveness and communicative style.

In this study, the use of essential task structure in the analysis was quite limited; we merely used it for objectivity identifying the five central steps in the process. Future analyses might use these points of comparison to examine the *way* in which these five steps are realized syntactically and pragmatically in the essays.

A preliminary evaluation of the composition written in response to the task was carried out by an English composition instructor, who subjectively rated the essays. It was found that five steps of the process of carrying out the Friday prayer were mentioned by all the highest rated essays as well as by most other essays:

1. Person 1 makes Adhan ( "call for prayer")
2. Person 2 gives sermon (Part 1)
3. Person 2 takes break
4. Person 2 gives sermon (Part 2)
5. Persons present pray

These five steps are listed here in the order in which they are actually performed in the Friday prayer service. Students were not penalized for giving other steps directly related to the process being described, even though such steps were not given in the basic scoring matrix (cf. Brown and Yule, 1983, for further discussion on scoring procedures using an essential structure).

## *DATA ANALYSIS PROCEDURES*

### Criteria for Evaluation

The subjects were compared in terms of whether they supplied all five steps in the essential structure of the task, and the order in which they presented those steps. The best essays presented all five steps in a chronologi-

cal order: that is, in the order in which the steps occur in real time. Steps were not repeated in the best essays. And, where additional details were supplied in these essays, these details were, in our subjective judgement, relevant details (i.e., details that contributed to a clear understanding of the process being described and did not disrupt the flow of ideas).

We were now able to proceed with a detailed rating of the essays, using criteria based upon this preliminary analysis of the essays. Evaluators were given four separate criteria to use in evaluating the student compositions, with emphasis proceeding in order from the most important to the least important:

1. mentioning all five steps of the process;
2. following a chronological order when describing those steps;
3. not repeating the steps;
4. putting in only relevant details (details that contribute to a clear understanding of the process being described and do not disrupt the flow of ideas).

Evaluating the Essays

Using the above criteria, two evaluators carried out their evaluation based on a scale ranging from 1 to 5 (1 being the lowest score, 5 the highest). To facilitate the evaluation procedure for the raters, the criteria for the highest rated essays as well as the criteria for the lowest rated essays were provided along with the grading scale, as illustrated below:

As part of the raters' training on how to use the pre-specified criteria and procedures for evaluation, two sample essays were provided for the two raters, illustrating what was to constitute "good" as well as "poor" writing.

Two bilingual raters assigned scores to essays written in both Arabic and English, and these scores were evaluated to determine the degree of correspondence between the performance of the students in English and their performance in Arabic in terms of their organization of the essays written to describe

| Lowest score 1.0 | Highest score 5.0 |
|---|---|
| 1) Steps of process omitted | 1) All steps of process mentioned |
| 2) Repetition of steps | 2) No repetition |
| 3) Order not chronological | 3) Chronological order |
| 4) Irrelevant details | 4) All details relevant |

the process involved in the Friday prayer service.

*RESULTS*

1) The Native Language Group

*Research Question 1:*

To what extent do native speakers of Arabic evidence a linear (chronological) order in describing a process in Arabic?

The native language group consisted of native speakers of Arabic who wrote only in Arabic and who had not been trained in English composition or in an "English linear organization" that could have influenced their Arabic rhetorical conventions. The results of this analysis are displayed in Table 1:

Table 1

Scores assigned to NL group Arabic essays

| Case # | Evaluator A | Evaluator B | Average |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 4.8 | 5.0 | 4.9 |
| 2 | 4.0 | 4.0 | 4.0 |
| 3 | 3.8 | 4.0 | 3.9 |
| 4 | 2.5 | 3.5 | 3.0 |
| 5 | 2.2 | 3.0 | 2.6 |

Mean = 3.68
Range = 2.6 – 4.9

Clearly, the students in this group vary quite a bit in their ability to exhibit linear text development in writing in Arabic on this task. Their scores range from an average high of 4.9 to an average low of 2.6, with a mean of 3.68.

2) The Target Language Group

*Research Question 2:*

To what extent do native speakers of English evidence a linear organization in describing a process in English?

Table 2 displays the scores assigned by the two raters to the compositions of the American students:

Table 2

Scores assigned to American TL students

| Case # | Evaluator A | Evaluator B | Average |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 4.8 | 5.0 | 4.90 |
| 2 | 4.7 | 5.0 | 4.85 |
| 3 | 4.5 | 4.0 | 4.25 |
| 4 | 2.7 | 3.0 | 2.85 |
| 5 | 2.4 | 2.0 | 2.20 |

Mean = 3.80
Range = 2.20 – 4.90

The mean and range of the American TL group is similar to that of the Arabic NL group. Note that the American TL writers vary even more than the Arabic NL group in the degree to which they use a linear text organization, as illustrated by scores ranging from 4.9 to 2.2.

3) The Learner Group

Let us now examine the written products of the Arabic-speaking students to see to what extent their writings in Arabic and English conform to the principles of linearity in text development, and whether such students use the same organization when writing in their native language (NL) and interlanguage (IL). Tables 3 and 4 below display the scores assigned to the Arabic-speaking students in both languages by the two raters. (The subject numbers in each table represent the same individuals; thus, the same individual is Subject 1 in both Tables 3 and 4, and so on.)

*Research Question 3:*
To what extent do native speakers of Arabic writing in English evidence a linear (chronological) order in describing a process in their English interlanguage?

In Table 3 we see the learner group's scores in writing in English. It is interesting to note that there is quite a bit of variation in the learners' scores, which range from 1.45 to 4.65. Comparing this range of scores with that of the TL group (2.2 to 4.9), we note that 22 learners fell within the TL range, while seven others achieved scores below this range. In general, the variation in the learner group seems greater than the variation in the TL group. Despite this

difference, however, a t-test shows that there is no significant difference between the mean scores of the two groups ($p > .05$).

Table 3

Scores received by the Learner group: English essays

| Subject # | Evaluator A | Evaluator B | Average |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 4.8 | 4.5 | 4.65 |
| 2 | 4.2 | 4.5 | 4.35 |
| 3 | 4.0 | 4.5 | 4.25 |
| 4 | 4.0 | 4.4 | 4.20 |
| 5 | 3.8 | 4.5 | 4.15 |
| 6 | 3.8 | 4.5 | 4.15 |
| 7 | 4.2 | 4.0 | 4.10 |
| 8 | 3.8 | 4.0 | 3.90 |
| 9 | 3.6 | 4.0 | 3.80 |
| 10 | 3.6 | 4.0 | 3.80 |
| 11 | 3.5 | 4.0 | 3.75 |
| 12 | 3.2 | 3.5 | 3.35 |
| 13 | 3.0 | 3.5 | 3.25 |
| 14 | 3.4 | 3.0 | 3.20 |
| 15 | 3.0 | 3.0 | 3.00 |
| 16 | 2.8 | 3.0 | 2.90 |
| 17 | 2.5 | 2.5 | 2.50 |
| 18 | 2.4 | 2.5 | 2.45 |
| 19 | 2.5 | 2.2 | 2.35 |
| 20 | 2.0 | 2.5 | 2.25 |
| 21 | 2.5 | 2.0 | 2.25 |
| 22 | 2.4 | 2.0 | 2.20 |
| 23 | 2.2 | 2.0 | 2.10 |
| 24 | 2.0 | 1.8 | 1.90 |
| 25 | 1.6 | 2.0 | 1.80 |
| 26 | 1.8 | 1.4 | 1.60 |
| 27 | 1.4 | 1.5 | 1.45 |

Mean = 3.10
Range = 1.45 – 4.65

In Table 4, we have the writing performance of the Learner group in Arabic. We note that there is an even wider range of scores, from 1.00 to 4.75. Thus, there seems to be substantial variation in the writing scores of the Learner group, whether they write in Arabic or in their English interlanguage.

Table 4

Scores received by the Learner group: Arabic essays

| Subject # | Evaluator A | Evaluator B | Average |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 4.5 | 5.0 | 4.75 |
| 2 | 4.8 | 5.0 | 4.90 |
| 3 | 3.4 | 4.0 | 3.70 |
| 4 | 4.5 | 5.0 | 4.75 |
| 5 | 4.0 | 5.0 | 4.50 |
| 6 | 4.4 | 4.0 | 4.20 |
| 7 | 3.8 | 3.5 | 3.65 |
| 8 | 3.0 | 3.5 | 3.25 |
| 9 | 4.4 | 4.5 | 4.45 |
| 10 | 3.8 | 4.25 | 4.00 |
| 11 | 3.0 | 4.0 | 3.50 |
| 12 | 4.0 | 4.5 | 4.25 |
| 13 | 2.4 | 3.0 | 2.70 |
| 14 | 3.4 | 3.0 | 3.20 |
| 15 | 3.0 | 3.0 | 3.00 |
| 16 | 3.0 | 2.5 | 2.75 |
| 17 | 1.5 | 1.5 | 1.50 |
| 18 | 2.2 | 2.5 | 2.35 |
| 19 | 1.8 | 2.5 | 2.15 |
| 20 | 3.0 | 3.5 | 3.25 |
| 21 | 2.4 | 3.0 | 2.70 |
| 22 | 2.5 | 2.5 | 2.50 |
| 23 | 2.5 | 1.5 | 2.00 |
| 24 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 2.00 |
| 25 | 1.0 | 1.0 | 1.00 |
| 26 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 2.00 |
| 27 | 1.4 | 2.0 | 1.70 |

Mean = 3.12
Range = 1.00 – 4.75

*Research Question 4:*
Do the learners use the same organization when describing a process in Arabic (NL) and English (IL)?

In order to examine the relationship between the writing performances of the learner group in Arabic (NL) and English (IL), we present the correlations among the scores assigned by the two raters to the Arabic essays and those assigned to the English essays.

Table 5

Pearson Correlation Coefficients
Between Raters and Across Languages

| | |
|---|---|
| Rater A Arabic with Rater B Arabic | r = .92 |
| Rater A English with Rater B English | r = .94 |
| Rater A Arabic with English | r = .86 |
| Rater B Arabic with English | r = .87 |

From the above correlations, we can make two conclusions: (1) The interrater reliability (i.e., the consistency between the two raters) is very high (r = .92 and .94), and (2) the correlations in Table 5 show that the consistency of the ratings across languages is also very high (r = .86 and .87). This means that there is a strong correspondence between the students' performance in English and their performance in Arabic. Most of the students who succeeded in describing the process of the Friday prayer in a chronological order in their native Arabic also succeeded in doing so in English. Similarly, those who failed to show this kind of organization in Arabic (NL) also failed to do so in English (IL).

Since a statistical and quantitative analysis can sometimes obscure important patterns in the data, we provide two sample essays in the Appendix to this article. One essay is drawn from among the eight highest-rated essays, and the other from among the eight lowest-rated essays. For a detailed analysis of these essays, see Ayari (1992).

Here we will merely point out that the writer of the lower-rated essay (unlike the writer of the higher-rated essay) fails to give a clear idea of the sequence of activities performed in the Friday prayer, thereby making it difficult for the reader to fit these activities into a pattern and recreate the whole process in his or her own imagination. As a matter of fact, the student does not even seem to be very aware of the audience, and uses a writer-based prose, a style that reflects the interior monologue of a writer thinking and

talking to himself (Flower, 1981, p. 63). This can be evidenced by statements reflecting his assumption that the reader shares some knowledge with him, e.g., "it is better than the day of Fitr and the day of Sacrifice...." No explanation is given about what the 'day of Fitr' or 'the day of Sacrifice' are.

*DISCUSSION*

We will examine each of the research questions in turn. First, did the native speakers of Arabic evidence a linear (chronological) order in describing a process in Arabic? The answer to this question is complex. First, some of the Arabic writers (none of whom had had ESL instruction) did use a chronological organization in their native language in describing a process. Second, the degree to which the Arabic writers used chronological organization in describing a process varied a good deal; there did not seem to be one single ' Arabic rhetorical style' revealed on this task. Finally, the range of variation in the Arabic writers' use of chronological organization overlaps substantially with that of native speakers of English.

The next question is, do native speakers of English all evidence a linear organization in describing a process in English? Certainly more of the native speakers of English seemed to adhere to a linear development of the text in describing a process than did native speakers of Arabic writing in Arabic. Nevertheless, it is clear that some of the native English speakers did not conform to the writing conventions of the English discourse community, as these have been described by experts such as Kaplan (1966), and Irmscher (1979). It seems to be the case that in the TL group, as in the NL group, some of the subjects were simply not very good writers (more on this below).

Did native speakers of Arabic use a chronological order in describing a process in English? We have shown that the writing performance of the Learner group and the Target Language group did not differ significantly. This means that the native speakers of Arabic are no less capable of organizing an English description of a process chronologically than native speakers of English. There was variation among the learners in both groups in the degree to which they followed a strict chronology in describing a process, but the speakers of Arabic in general did not differ in this regard from the native speakers of English.

Did the learners use the same organization when describing a process in their NL and IL? The high correlation between the learners' performances in both languages indicates that the learners did use the same organization when writing in their NL and IL; others used non-chronological organization in both their NL and IL. Those writers who followed a non-linear pattern thus

cannot be said to be transferring some kind of global rhetorical pattern typical of the Arabic culture into their interlanguage, since no such NL pattern was revealed in any of the Arabic subjects' Arabic writing on this task.

In fact, a strong argument can be made that those learners who used a non-linear organization in their NL and IL can be simply said to lack writing skills in both languages. Such learners also showed the lack of other basic skills, both in their native language and interlanguage. For example, many students who scored low on linearity, whether in Arabic or in English, also did not use reader-based prose (prose that evidences audience awareness) as opposed to writer-based prose (Flower, 1981), which a skilled writer in any language might be expected to have learned. For example, as can be seen in the sample essay in the Appendix, many of the low-linearity students failed to explain terms they used in their essays—terms such as the "day of fitr' "or the "day of Sacrifice," or "Athan'"—even though they knew very well that they were writing for "a non-Muslim friend."

## *CONCLUSIONS*

This study reveals some important facts about the relationship between L1 and L2 writing skills in light of the writing performances of some Arabic-speaking learners of English. First, in a writing task that required them to describe a process, a number of these learners seemed to possess skills of linear text development, which they employed properly in both Arabic and English. It may be that in tasks eliciting other types of writing, these learners might not follow a linear pattern of text development. But in describing a process in writing , many of them were quite successful. At the same time, some of the Arabic writers in this study did not employ this organizational skill in either Arabic (NL) or English (IL) descriptions of a process. This failure of some of the Arabic writers to produce a chronological process description, we argue, is analogous to the failure of some native English-speaking students and is due to a lack of skills and experience in writing in the native language. What often gets transferred in the written products of many Arabic-speaking students or, for that matter, of many foreign students writing in English, may not be so much a particular writing pattern peculiar to their native languages as to the *absence* of writing skills in the native language—skills which Cummins (1984) might characterize as cognitive, academic language proficiency (CALP) skills. It is at this point, we feel, that our study has implications for teachers of students who have native languages other than Arabic; it is possible that a crucial factor for ALL learners of English as a second language for their success in learning to write in English is their ability to write in their native language.

Nevertheless, it is possible that rhetorical differences between Arabic and English do exist in other genres of writing, and could be responsible for the deviation of Arabic writers from English rhetorical conventions. In order to investigate the nature of this kind of deviation, however, it is important to independently assess the native language writing skills of the subjects in a contrastive study, and to ensure that all subjects in the study are judged as proficient at writing in their native language. Finally, we have attempted, for the first time to our knowledge, to apply Brown and Yule's (1983) notion of "essential task structure" to a study in contrastive rhetoric, and have found this notion to be a useful tool in this sort of study. The notion allows the research to achieve a measure of objectivity in comparing the communicative performance of NL, TL, and IL writers while still allowing these writers a good deal of freedom of choice in performing the communicative task. We hope that other scholars will find this framework a useful one.

*ACKNOWLEDGMENTS*

We would like to thank Andrew Cohen and Teirab AshShareef for their helpful comments on early drafts of this paper. Many thanks also go to Adriana Sutherland, Omar Al-Saadoun, Houda Badawi, and Nihad Awad for their assistance in the evaluation of essays.

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## *APPENDIX*

(English L2, Comp. #1, Mean rating: 4.65)

Friday is the gathering day for Muslims, the same way Sunday for Christians and Saturday for Jews. This gathering takes place at noon and the time varies according to the seasons because the day in Summer is longer than the day in Winter. When the time is due, a person called (Mu'athen starts the (Athan) which is the Muslim form for calling people to prayer, the words of this Athan are as follows:Allah Akbar (i.e., God is Great,...) repeated 4 times; Ashhadu an la Elaha ella Allah (i.e., I bear witness that there is no god except Allah), repeated 2 times; Ashhadu anna Muhamadan Rasoulu Allah (i.e., I bear witness that Muhammed is the Messenger of Allah), repeated twice; Haya 'ala assalah (i.e., Come to the prayer), repeated twice; Haya 'ala falah (i.e., Come to the success), repeated twice; Allahu Akbar (i.e., God is great), repeated twice, La Ellaha illa Allah (i.e., There is no god except Allah).

Then the Imam (the person giving the sermon and leading the prayer) will stand up and start his sermon by praising Allah and invoking his mercy on the believers till the day of judgement. Then start a topic of his own choice and link it to the the Quaran ( the book of the Muslims) and Sunneh ( the tradition of the Prophet Muhammed p.b.u.h.). After that he asks the Muslims to make supplications for themselves and the others and sits down for a while, then stands up and starts then second part of the Khutba. He also starts by praising Allah and his messenger and continues the subject. Towards the end the Imam concludes by making supplications loudly and the Muslims say Amin. Then he asks the prayer to start and the person who made the Athen will repeat the same call (almost) and people would stand up and follow the Imam in his prayer. This prayer is called Sallat and consists of two units, eat of them is called Rak'a. In each Rak'a the Imam reads Chapter 1 of the Qura'n and any other chapter (or part of it) of his own choice. He repeats that in both Rak'as, and concludes by turning his head to the right and to the left and in each direction says: "Assalamu alaykum," meaning "peace on you."

Topic statement

1. Athan

Explaining

Atan

2. Sermon

(Part 1)

Explaining the sermon

3. Break

4. Sermon (Part 2)

Second call to prayer

5. Prayer

Explaining prayer

End of pr.

(English L2, Comp. #22, Mean rating: 2.20)

Friday is the best of the days of the week in which Adam was created. The best of the days is Friday. It is the greatest in

the account of Allah. It is better than the day of Fitr and the day of Sacrifice.

- It would be better for those who attend the congregation of Friday to be in the best appearance of dressing and cleanliness. — Preparation for f. prayer
- Friday congregation is a must on Muslims, who are free (well- minded, mentally able), mature, physically capable. As far as those ones who are not obliged to attend Friday congregation would include: women, boy, sick people, traveler and those who have an excuse such as (environmental) rain, mud, cold etc.. — People exempt from f. prayer
- Friday congregation consists of two (rak'ahs) and its time is noon. It must be performed in a group that consists of at least two people. It could be performed in any place and could be performed in more than one place. — 5. Prayer: its conditions
- Friday congregation must have (Khutbah) speech that starts with praising Allah (saying Shahadhs) and bear witness that there is no god but Allah and Muhammad is his messenger. The speech consists of two parts. Kateeb sits for a while after the first part. Then stands up and completes the second part. — Sermon
- The time of speech should be shorter than time of Friday prayer itself. — Sermon: 1st
- The speech contains reminding of principles of belief (Iman), in Allah, angels, book, messengers. — 3. Break
- After Khateeb finishes his speech he would lead the Friday prayer and attendance would follow him. — 4. Sermon
- The importance of Friday congregation would strengthen the ties among Muslims, make sure they are doing well in their studies, work, and in every aspect of their life. — Content of Friday speech

5. Prayer again
Importance of fr. pr.

*MinneTESOL Journal*, Vol. 11, 1993

# Comparing Perspectives on ESL Education: A Case Study of Pine Tree School

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This article examines the differences in perspectives on ESL education between the academic community and the members of an urban school community. Based on current literature, an "academic perspective" is constructed, which is in support of bilingual instruction and increased collaboration between ESL and mainstream programs. The academic perspective is contrasted with the perspectives of a principal, a parent, several teachers, and a local school board member from the Pine Tree School community. Within the school community, participants disagreed on the level of priority given to ESL by the district, the desirability of the various models of instruction, and the overall quality of the program. The academic and school communities differed in their approaches to instruction and in their apparent knowledge of the other "world."

In the field of second language education, there has been much research on how best to teach English to speakers of other languages. There have been various models for instruction proposed, usually based on theories of how children learn languages. Researchers, not always in agreement, have advocated numerous characteristics that they believe should be present in ESL programs. During my field experience as a student teacher in an urban elementary school, I did not sense that much theory had actually been applied in the establishment of the program in which I was teaching. Although I learned about the merits of whole language and progressive bilingual models at the university, I found myself overwhelmed by a self-contained ESL class of 25 students. What I was learning about and what I was experiencing seemed like two different worlds.

In addition to the discrepancy between the academic and the "real" world, I noticed a variety of perspectives within the school community where I was student teaching. While some of the staff were quite disturbed about the state of the program, others praised its progress. I sensed similar differences between the principal and some teachers. I began to wonder how parents felt, and what the position of the school board was about the condition of the program.

I decided it would be interesting to examine the differences in people's perspectives on the ESL program at the school. This article, therefore, addresses the question, "What are the differences in perspectives on the issue of whether students' needs are being met in the ESL program at Pine Tree Elementary School?"[1]

In addressing the question, I first review the current literature on ESL education and summarize it into an approximated "academic perspective." I then compare that with the perspectives of teachers, a principal, a board member, and a parent, gathered through interviews conducted with these people at Pine Tree School. In conclusion, I summarize the differences in perspectives and their possible implications.

## *THE STUDY—METHODOLOGY*

The research for this article was carried out with the goal of finding what differences exist in people's perspectives on the ESL program at Pine Tree School. The study consists of two parts. First, literature from the field of ESL instruction was reviewed and synthesized to construct what might be called an "academic perspective." For the second part of the study, interviews were conducted with various people in the school community. Participants included two ESL teachers, one mainstream teacher, the principal of the school, a district school board member, and the parent of a student in self-contained ESL.

Participants were asked 10–12 questions in interviews that ranged from 20 minutes to 1½ hours. The questions were slightly different for each type of participant (teacher, principal, etc.). The parent was asked primarily about her child's success in learning English and about what she believes the goals of an ESL program should be. Educators were asked to comment on their sense of how successful the current ESL program at Pine Tree is, as well as what they believe the priorities for the school and the district should be.[2]

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[1] The name of the school on which this article is based has been changed to protect participants' anonymity.

[2] For a complete list of interview questions, see Appendix.

## *THE LITERATURE—WHAT ACADEMICS SAY*

Few academics have done much critiquing of current ESL programs, especially English-only immersion programs. Freeman and Freeman (1990) offer case studies, but only in the context of informing mainstream teachers of how to work with children with other native languages. Brown (1991), in his examination of the current issues in the field of ESL, also does not attempt to evaluate the current "state of affairs." Instead, he describes the major themes currently being explored in the world of ESL research. Despite this lack of specifically stated perspectives on whether students' needs are being met, an academic perspective can be approximated based on a comparison of recommendations to reality. For instance, if research supports one model, but that model is not in use, it can be assumed that the researcher would not deem the current model to be as successful. It is in this manner that I construct the "academic perspective," which I later compare to perspectives gathered in field research.

The literature will be reviewed in three categories: opinions on the best models for ESL instruction; communication and collaboration between ESL and mainstream programs and the level of integration of ESL into the school; and the level of priority given to ESL by individual schools and districts. After reviewing the literature in these three areas, I will construct the "academic perspective."

### Models of ESL Instruction

There are four main models of elementary ESL instruction: bbilingual, pull-in, pull-out, and self-contained ESL. Currently there is no consensus on which is the best, and all of them are in use. Often schools construct programs with elements from more than one model.

Cummins (1984, 1986) advocates a bilingual education model, where the first language (L1) is used for instruction initially, and the second language (L2) is gradually introduced as a second mode of instruction and communication. He argues that proficiency in L1 and L2 are interrelated, and that literacy skills acquired initially in L1 are transferrable and can therefore aide in L2 literacy acquisition. Saville-Troike (1984) agrees, adding that the use of the L1 for conceptual learning will also enhance later learning in the second language. Auerbach (1993) shows that the use of L1 in English instruction can reduce the anxiety of the language learning process, facilitate the incorporation of the life experiences of learners, and allow for a learner-centered curriculum. Other researchers support similar arguments for bilingual education (e.g., Handscombe, 1989; Walker, 1985).

Unlike bilingual models, the other three, pull-in, pull-out, and self-contained classroom models, do not provide for the use of L1 in instruction. In the "pull-in" model, the ESL teacher is "pulled in" to the mainstream classroom. The pull-in model is based on special education programs where students with special needs are increasingly enabled to remain in the mainstream classroom through the presence of special education staff. In pull-in ESL, language and reading lessons are taught collaboratively, with the ESL teacher focusing on facilitating communication between LEP and English-proficient students. The advantages of such an arrangement are many: students are integrated with English-speaking peers, ESL and classroom staff collaborate regularly, and students can learn from their classroom peers. In addition, language learning takes place in the context of other subject matter (Mabbott & Strohl, 1992). The pull-in model, which is in use in Minneapolis, is praised by Mabbott and Strohl as potentially highly successful in integrating ESL instruction into the "regular" classroom.

While bilingual and integrative models such as pull-in do receive attention from researchers, the pull-out model, where students leave their mainstream classroom for a period of time with an ESL teacher, is rarely mentioned. The main benefit of a pull-out program seems to be that ESL students have a place where their needs are exclusively attended to. This advantage, however, is often outweighed by the disadvantages of the model—scheduling difficulties and a lack of collaboration between mainstream and ESL teachers (Mabbott & Strohl, 1992). An additional disadvantage of the pull-out program is the assumption that the short period of time spent with the ESL teacher *is* the children's learning for that day, and that the rest of the day is spent "marking time" until proficiency is acquired (Handscombe, 1989). ESL pull-out programs are also often viewed as a sort of remedial program for students with "problems," although such attitudes can be prevented by ESL staff encouraging the active integration of ESL students into all aspects of school life (Ovando & Collier, 1985).

The fourth model is the self-contained immersion classroom, which is usually used for students who have little or no English proficiency. In a self-contained classroom, ESL students are together in one classroom with an ESL teacher all day. They receive intensive language instruction as well as instruction in other subjects, tailored to their language level. This model seems to be hardly considered legitimate, as it is rarely mentioned in reviews of ESL models. However, it can be advantageous in that the students, who have often recently arrived in the United States, have a sense of belonging to a group they can relate to. In addition, they learn all content through the L2.

The main disadvantage of self-contained ESL classrooms is that the students are usually isolated from the rest of the school (Handscombe, 1989; Mabbott & Strohl, 1992). Despite some efforts at mainstreaming for such subjects as gym and music, they rarely have any contact with English-speaking peers (Handscombe, 1989). Such interaction, even when limited to hearing English used by native speakers, can be highly beneficial to ESL students, who can imitate native speakers' pronunciation and can feel a stronger sense of belonging to the school.

Despite the benefits of English-only programs such as pull-in, pull-out, and self-contained ESL, Auerbach (1993) argues against all models where L1 is not a part of the instructional program. English-only can lead to a sense of exclusion, she claims, especially for students with no school background. Also disturbing is Auerbach's conclusion that the English-only movement, which is widely reflected in public schools, has its origins in the political agenda of dominant groups, and not in pedagogical considerations. Seen from this perspective, the use of English only reinforces current power relations between language groups by not granting legitimacy to other languages.

Although there is no consensus about which of the above models is best, there seems to be a common belief in two factors. First, there is wide support for some use of L1 in content-area instruction for ESL students, such as that which occurs in a bilingual model. Second, it is believed that ESL students should be integrated in some way with their non-ESL peers. Examples of integrated models include two-way bilingual settings, pull-out models (with minimal time outside of the classroom), and the pull-in model.

### Communication and Collaboration/Integration of ESL Program

Collaboration among teachers and the integration of ESL programs are considered together in this section because one can affect the other. If collaboration between mainstream and ESL teachers is frequent, it is likely that the ESL program enjoys a more integrated, accepted position in the school community. In addition, with increased collaboration, ESL students are more likely to be an accepted and appreciated part of the student body. When a program is isolated, physically or through lack of collaboration, which can happen especially with self-contained ESL classrooms, the mainstream students are unaware of what happens in "that ESL room." The ESL students are viewed as "extra," outside the main student population.

Researchers seem to agree on the need for collaboration among teachers (e.g., Cazden, 1988; Mabbott & Strohl, 1992), and for the prevention of the fragmentation of curriculum, which often occurs when a child sees many different teachers in the course of one day. But, in a study of mainstream

classroom teachers' perceptions of LEP students and ESL teachers, Penfield (1987) discovered that mainstream teachers often know very little about what ESL teachers do. Indeed, in programs such as the pull-out, teachers rarely have time available to discuss the curriculum and progress of ESL students. But despite, and indeed because of, the difficulties, integration and collaboration are crucial. If ESL programs remain isolated, children are limited "by the invisible walls between teachers" that result from categorical funding and separate professional worlds (Cazden, 1988, p. 18). Handscombe (1989) calls for,

> a major effort on the part of the school to indicate clearly to *all* students how much they personally, and the cultural and linguistic group(s) of which they are a part, can contribute to the intellectual and social life of the school. (p. 6)

Level of Priority of ESL in the District

Interestingly, I was unable to find literature that directly addresses the question of the priority placed upon ESL within schools and districts. I could find no researchers who mention the role that school districts and administrators have to play in improving ESL programs. This theme is included here, however, because I will return to it later in reviewing perspectives gathered in field research.

Because the purpose of this article is to compare perspectives, the information gathered in reviewing the literature will now be used to construct an approximated "academic perspective" of whether ESL students needs are currently being met at Pine Tree Elementary. Since it would be impossible to consult every piece of research on ESL education, I have attempted to consult a wide sample of opinions. The reader should keep in mind, therefore, that the "academic perspective" constructed here is based on principles which seem to have widespread support in the academic community.

It is necessary here to briefly describe the characteristics of the ESL program at Pine Tree. Pine Tree Elementary provides instruction in grades K–6 for about 500 students. Of those, approximately 100 students participate in some form of ESL instruction every day. The school is in a district that has been overwhelmed by the influx of thousands of Southeast Asian immigrants, who comprise the vast majority of ESL students in the program.

Pine Tree School has two self-contained ESL classrooms, each with 25–30 students. All instruction in the self-contained classes is in English, except for about one half hour per week spent with a bilingual paraprofessional working with a small group (usually only for "lower level" students). There

have been some attempts to integrate students from the self-contained classes with mainstream students for gym, music and science; these attempts have had some success. Students stay in the self-contained classes until they are judged to be capable of functioning in a mainstream classroom. The limit is two years, and many do stay that long. A student rarely enters the mainstream within less than six months. Some students, based on their performance in the integrated kindergarten, where all ESL students receive only pull-out instruction, are placed directly in mainstream classrooms. In addition to the self-contained ESL classes, one ESL teacher staffs a pull-out program, working with small groups of mainstreamed ESL students in grades K–6 for one half hour per day.

In considering the best models for ESL, researchers agreed on two important characteristics for any program: use of the first language and integration with English-speaking peers. At Pine Tree, about half of the ESL students are in self-contained classrooms, where integration is severely limited. Because the self-contained classes are quite homogeneous, students often converse in their native language, using English only to speak with the teacher. However, while they do have the opportunity to speak L1 in school, that interaction is only with their peers. Because there are few L1 teachers, they have limited opportunities to develop conceptual or linguistic knowledge in that language, much less than they would in a bilingual model.

The pull-out program is somewhat different. There, because the children are in mainstream classes, they do have the opportunity to interact with English-speaking peers. (The amount of interaction varies among individual students, and is somewhat affected by how much the classroom teacher encourages and facilitates interaction.) However, they do not receive any instruction from bilingual paraprofessionals. In addition, the ESL pull-out teacher discourages the use of L1 in the classroom. In the pull-out model, then, the students rarely have the opportunity to speak their native languages in school.

Overall, then, on the question of whether the models in use at Pine Tree best meet the needs of the ESL students, researchers would probably say no. They most likely would recommend modification of the self-contained ESL program to make the time spent there shorter. In addition, it might be recommended that Pine Tree employ bilingual teachers to teach ESL students in self-contained classrooms, instead of conducting all instruction in English.

Because of the structure of the ESL program at Pine Tree, collaboration between teachers is difficult. There is no time built into the schedule for communication or team teaching for students who are "pulled out" for ESL classes. The staff of self-contained classes has little immediate reason to

collaborate with mainstream teachers. In addition, one of the self-contained classes is in a portable classroom, isolating that class from the rest of the school physically. The researchers would probably favor neither the pure pull-out structure nor the segregation of the students in self-contained rooms. To improve the program, they might recommend adding a pull-in element to the program, as well as increasing the opportunities for students in all-day ESL classes to be integrated for certain parts of the school day.

I will not address the issue here of whether ESL needs to be given priority, except to say that it is likely that researchers would recommend that the improvement of ESL programs be given high priority at both the individual school and district levels. Traditionally, as is the case at Pine Tree, ESL has not received resources at a level consistent with the number of students involved in some form of ESL instruction. It is my opinion that the lack of resources for ESL programs will become more of a political issue, especially as parents of ESL students become more active in the politics of school administration.

In summary, researchers would praise the program at Pine Tree School for its successful integration of ESL students into mainstream classrooms. However, they would probably recommend that integration be increased by further limiting the amount of time spent in self-contained classrooms. Some researchers might even recommend the elimination of self-contained classrooms in favor of extended pull-out or pull-in models, which would enable teachers to collaborate and students to be better integrated with native English-speaking peers. Finally, researchers would recommend the establishment of some form of bilingual instruction, especially for beginning English students, so that students could continue to develop conceptual knowledge as they learn English.

With the "academic perspective" complete, we can now turn to the study conducted to discover the various perspectives on the ESL program at Pine Tree Elementary.

## *INTERVIEW RESULTS—DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES*

Like the above literature review, participants' perspectives are arranged into three categories: models for ESL instruction; collaboration between ESL and mainstream teachers and integration of ESL students into the student body; and the level of priority given to ESL by the school district. Participants' overall opinions about whether the needs of ESL students are being met at Pine Tree will follow the comparison of perspectives in each of the individual categories.

## Models of ESL Instruction

To address the issue of models, participants were asked which of the four main models of ESL instruction they believe is best. All participants seemed to agree that none of the models is appropriate for every situation. As stated by the pull-out teacher, students who have recently arrived in the United States and have no English skills require very different services than students who have been in the country for a longer period of time. Therefore, different models should be used in conjunction within a school's program.

In response to the question of which ESL model is best, the school board member asserted that the actual model is not important. Instead of a certain model, what is needed for a successful ESL program are small class sizes, appropriate and common goals, committed teachers, and sufficient resources. According to the board member, Pine Tree Elementary, and indeed the whole city, does not need a new model to improve the program. Instead of reorganizing the program, the district needs to work on setting goals, providing staff development opportunities for current teachers and hiring new ones, and allocating sufficient resources to create smaller classes.

Although no participant advocated one model for every situation, each had opinions on the advantages and disadvantages of the various individual models (bilingual, pull-out, pull-in, self-contained). Interestingly, only one of the six people interviewed even mentioned bilingual models as a possibility for ESL instruction. The ESL pull-out teacher in this study believes that a bilingual program should be a process of weaning students away from their native languages, and not an additive English program. Although she believes that such a "weaning" program could be effective, she also claimed that there are ways of providing appropriate services for students without bilingual teachers. She advocated the use of more paraprofessional bilingual interpreters to support a basically English-only ESL program.

Self-contained ESL programs seem to be widely accepted as a necessary arrangement for newly arrived students who have little or no English proficiency. While no participant wholly praised this model, all accepted it and explained its advantages and disadvantages. In interviews, the principal, teachers, and school board member all remarked that some form of intensive English-immersion instruction is appropriate for students who do not possess the skills to participate in mainstream classrooms. When those students are in the same classroom, the teacher can work with all of them together. An additional advantage, according to the principal, is that the children have their own community, where they have camaraderie and mutual support with children from cultures and backgrounds similar to their own.

Despite the advantages of self-contained instruction, however, several of the participants cited negative features of the model. The ESL pull-out teacher, the self-contained ESL teacher, and the school board member agreed that the students in self-contained classes do not have enough incentive to speak English. At Pine Tree, both of the self-contained classrooms have almost 30 students; the children use English only with their teacher and the handful of classmates with different native languages. The majority of the day is often spent speaking L1 with their peers. The teacher of the self-contained ESL class in this study also mentioned the problem that her students have too little contact with mainstream children. Their isolation gives them even fewer opportunities to speak in English and, according to the ESL pull-out teacher, slows their language learning progress.

The ESL pull-out model was the model most praised by interview participants, although all agreed that some children still need self-contained ESL instruction before being placed in a mainstream classroom. Once the children are in the pull-out program, though, according to the ESL pull-out and self-contained teachers and the principal, they have the benefit of immersion. Immersion is important, participants said, because they become acquainted with native-English speaking children and cannot rely on using primarily L1. A further benefit of ESL pull-out, according to the pull-out teacher, is that students learn,

> ...social skills that I cannot teach them in class....They have the opportunity to learn how American students deal with problems and how they interact with each other, which I think is a valuable skill for them to learn in order for them to deal with living as adults in American society.

Despite the benefits of the pull-out model, though, the school board member pointed out that there is still somewhat of a stigma for the children, which comes from being "pulled out." ESL can be seen as remedial help, she said, or as something for children who have "problems."

The pull-in model, where the ESL teacher is "pulled in" into the mainstream classroom, solves at least part of the collaboration problem. The mainstream teacher in this study believes that pull-in would be a positive addition to ESL at Pine Tree, although the implementation could be somewhat difficult. Interestingly, though, the example she gave of collaboration was, "Here's what we're working on in class; could you help them out in this area?" Such a request is actually what the pull-out teacher referred to when

citing her biggest problem with pull-in programs. She said that ESL teachers are often treated as aides, and that they are asked to teach "mainstream support" instead of English language.

An additional problem which the ESL pull-out teacher cited with the pull-in model is that the theoretical collaboration and team teaching, which are part of the model, would be difficult at best. Especially at a school like Pine Tree, which has only one ESL teacher serving up to 50 students in 12 different classrooms, the ESL teacher would be unable, she said, to spend quality time planning and developing lessons with all of the mainstream teachers. Because she would not have the time to participate in lesson planning, she would be forced into the role of supporting lessons and materials developed by the mainstream teacher.

Overall, interview participants did not agree on one particular model. Pull-out ESL seemed to be most popular, but all cited advantages and disadvantages of each model, including pull-out. Rather than one particular model, all respondents advocated a program made up of components from more than one model.

### Communication and Collaboration/Integration of ESL Program

As with the question of models of ESL education, there was some general agreement among interview participants on the issue of collaboration among ESL and mainstream staff. All participants who addressed the issue (ESL pull-out teacher, self-contained ESL teacher, mainstream teacher, principal, and school board member) stated that it is very important for ESL and mainstream staff to collaborate on curricular issues and on individual student progress. Unfortunately, though, as all three teachers pointed out, there is little time in the school day for quality cooperation. As mentioned earlier, the pull-out teacher explained that collaboration is often limited to mainstream teachers asking the ESL teacher to help students complete a worksheet or other assignment from their mainstream classwork. In her opinion, a teacher regularly asking for the ESL teacher to support students in their classroom activities is ignoring the fact that the ESL teacher has expertise in the area of teaching language and that she should develop specialized curriculum for ESL students. The school board member remarked that, because of such misunderstandings about how to work together, the district needs to provide more staff development for mainstream and ESL professionals to teach them how to collaborate most effectively.

In addition to their opinions on staff collaboration, participants were asked to comment on whether ESL students at Pine Tree are sufficiently

integrated within the school community, or if they are isolated from their English-speaking peers. There was less agreement among respondents on the integration issue. The principal and mainstream teacher believed that the ESL children are integrated; both said that they are accepted and appreciated by their peers in mainstream classes. However, the self-contained ESL teacher and school board member see the situation differently. They believe that the ESL students in mainstream classrooms do "stick together," but that the bond is natural and is not a negative phenomenon. Even in adult communities, they said, people tend towards others with similar backgrounds and life situations. Friends who are "in the same boat" can give empathy and support which they cannot receive from others.

While mainstreamed ESL students may be somewhat isolated, there is no doubt about the extreme segregation of the self-contained ESL classroom from the rest of the school. Children in the self-contained program, their teacher said, rarely have contact with mainstream students. Their isolation stems from two factors. First, especially in the beginning of the year, the children often cannot speak any English. Therefore, the language barrier is too great (so the reasoning goes) for them to communicate with English-speaking children. As their skills begin to improve, usually around mid-year, the principal explained, the staff does attempt to systematically integrate the children into mainstream classes for gym, music, computer, and science. Their attempts have had moderate success.

The second reason for the extreme isolation of the children in self-contained ESL is the natural tendency for them to want to stay together. The teacher of the self-contained class explained that, even more than their mainstreamed peers, her students cling to the support and security that they derive from the other children in their class.

In short, participants agreed that quality cooperation between mainstream and ESL staff is important, but that the situation at Pine Tree is not ideal. While all seem to want the ESL students to be an integrated part of the student body, there is disagreement about how integrated they already are.

### Level of Priority of ESL in the District

Some participants in the study believe that the school district gives high priority to the ESL program. Others believe that it is not important to the district. Still others claim that it is important, but for the wrong reasons.

The school board member stated that ESL is a high priority for her, and that she believes it is a high priority for the entire district. In her words, "It is becoming a very visible issue, so they *have* to care" (emphasis hers). The principal at Pine Tree also stated that ESL is a priority for the district. Like the

school board member, he said that, as the parents get more politically involved with the district, the issue will become even more of a priority. He implied that the combination of parental pressure and the district's sense of "moral responsibility" to help ESL students will eventually bring improving ESL education to the top of the district's priority list. Currently, he said, the district is doing all it can, especially considering the limited resources available and the unpredictable numbers of new students in the district each year.

It is interesting to note here that, in discussing the history of the self-contained ESL program at Pine Tree, the principal implied that the program actually is less of a priority than he claimed. He explained that, at one time, the program had almost been moved out of the school to make room for a new magnet program, which was created to attract more "minorities" (his term) to the school. It is in fact typical that the district moves ESL children from school to school as they progress through the various stages of the ESL program. The constant transferring is one of the main complaints of ESL parents, according to the parent I interviewed and to both of the ESL teachers. That the transferring might take place in order to make room for another program leads one to wonder whether ESL really is a priority for the district.

The teachers I interviewed certainly wonder. None of the three—the ESL pull-out, the ESL self-contained, or the mainstream teacher—believes that the district is committed to improving the ESL program. The pull-out teacher stated her belief bluntly: "They have no commitment to our program whatsoever." Examples she gave of neglect included a lack of funds for materials and a lack of clear goals. In addition, when asked who is responsible for planning and evaluating ESL programs district-wide, with a note of sarcasm she replied, "No one."

The teacher of self-contained ESL has a similar opinion. She said that the administration is reluctant to look closely at the program. Instead of being concerned with quality, they are concerned with...maintaining the status quo. In her words, "I get the idea that I could sit back and drink coffee all day and no one would really be upset, even if they knew that." When they do pay attention to the program, she believes that their goal is to maintain a certain level of quality in the mainstream classes so that the middle class does not flee the district. Because middle-class parents are the ones who would complain, she said, they are the ones that the district is most eager to satisfy.

Although not as strongly as the ESL self-contained teacher, the mainstream teacher also stated that ESL does not seem to be a high priority in the district. Her opinion is that, although the district discusses making improvements to the program, they don't back it up. "They talk," she said, "and

nothing ever happens." In short, while the principal and school board member claim that ESL is a priority for the district, the teachers in the study disagreed.

To summarize, there are significant differences of opinion about various aspects of the ESL program at Pine Tree School. In this study, opinions about specific issues were used, in addition to responses to direct interview questions, to assess participants' beliefs about whether students' needs are being met overall in the program. With the summary of responses complete, we can now consider the differing perspectives on the actual issue of whether students' needs are being met.

## Are Students' Needs Being Met?

As with the specific aspects of the program, there are definite differences of opinion about the overall success of the ESL program at Pine Tree School. The principal appears not to be completely satisfied with the current program. But while he acknowledged that it is a "less-than-perfect" situation, he was not optimistic about it being improved, especially given current budget restraints. The mainstream teacher gave generally good reviews of the program: "I think that here it's great." She criticized only the high student-teacher ratio in the self-contained ESL classrooms. The parent had the same complaint, but she also seemed content with the education her son is receiving.[3]

While the principal, parent, and mainstream teacher are at least somewhat satisfied with the program, the other three participants, including both of the ESL teachers, expressed dissatisfaction with the current state of affairs. The school board member put it most mildly: she said that there is an awareness within the district of a need for improvement, and that improvement will eventually come. The two ESL teachers expressed more frustration with specific issues—the entire structure of the program, the large numbers of students with which they are required to work, and the apathy of the administration and the district with regards to ESL. Their comments suggest that they believe that the district could do a much better job of meeting ESL students' needs.

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[3] This parent is an active member of the Hmong Parent Group, which was organized this year at the school to put pressure on the district to provide better ESL instruction for their children. It is possible that, out of respect for the interviewer, a teacher, and because of a slight language barrier, the parent did not express her full discontent with the program. Of course, it is also possible that this mother is satisfied.

## *DISCUSSION OF DIFFERENCES AMONG PERSPECTIVES*

In the course of this study, while examining the perspectives of various members of the Pine Tree community and analyzing the academic research on ESL education, I have attempted to conclude what, if any, generalizations or conclusions could be made about the differences among the considered perspectives. The first and most obvious conclusion is that differences do exist. The main points of disagreement are the level of priority given to ESL by the district, the desirability of the various models of instruction, and the overall quality of the program. As demonstrated, participants disagreed to various extents in all of these areas.

The second conclusion from this study is that there is an enormous gulf between the academic community and the "real" world of Pine Tree Elementary School. The lack of attention given in research to the role of school district politics, and social and economic issues in ESL leads one to believe that the academics are either unaware of these issues or that they have chosen to ignore them. In reality, politics and social and economic issues are prominent in the lives of ESL teachers and district administrators.

The fact that some of the issues most important to teachers and administrators are not addressed in the research may be one reason for the school community's apparent lack of awareness of and interest in the academic perspective. The issue of models of instruction is an excellent example of their ignorance. In this study, all participants were asked to comment on bilingual and additive ESL programs such as those advocated by Cummins (1984, 1986), Saville-Troike (1984) and Auerbach (1993). Not one mentioned the possibility, widely supported by researchers, that students continue to be taught in L1 as they learn English. Although the pull-out ESL teacher did comment on bilingual education, she stated that it should be used merely to wean students away from L1 toward an English-only setting. On other issues as well, the participants of the study seemed to have little awareness of the recommendations and opinions of academic researchers. In short, there appears to be mutual ignorance between the two "worlds" of education. They are miles apart in their approaches to teaching English as a second language.

## *CONCLUSION*

It is beyond the scope of this article to state the implications or consequences of such broad differences of opinion among professionals within essentially the same field. However, if there is indeed a need for improvement in the ESL program at Pine Tree, that improvement could be hindered by the disagreements within the community about the state of the program. A first

step, therefore, might be to bring together parents, administrators, teachers, and academics in order to create a common vision. According to Dr. Robert Terry (1993), private consultant and former Director of the Center for Reflective Leadership at the Hubert Humphrey Institute for Public Affairs, University of Minnesota, the most important question that the leadership of any organization must consider, and eventually agree upon, is what the ultimate mission of the organization is. In the field of ESL, that question has yet to be considered. People are still squabbling about the lower-level issues of resources, structure, and power. According to Terry, it is only by first creating a common, realistic mission that an organization such as a school district can begin on the road to real success.

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*APPENDIX*

Interview questions were written so that the respondents' answers would help to determine their overall opinion as to whether students' needs are being met by the current ESL program.

1. Parents
    1. Does your child enjoy school?
    2. Has your child made new friends at school? Same native language or different?
    3. Is your child learning English? How do you know?
    4. What should a child learn in school, in your opinion?
    5. Is your child learning what he/she should, in your opinion?
    6. Are you glad that your child is in the self-contained ESL class, or would you rather have her/him in a mainstream class?
    7. How has the process of working out issues such as lunches, bus transportation, and school assignment with your child's teacher and school office been?
    8. Does your child sometimes act "American"? In other words, do you believe that your child has changed since enrollment in school? How do you feel about this?
    9. Given the choice between the current school and a school in your native language taught by native speakers (the children would learn English), which would you choose? Why?

2. School Board Member

    1. Are you familiar with the different models of ESL education in the area (self-contained, ESL pull-out, ESL pull-in, bilingual)? Which do you see as the most successful? Why?
    2. What is your sense of how satisfied families are with the education their children are getting?
    3. Do you foresee an increase or decrease in the level of parental involvement in their childrens' schools? Why?
    4. What do you see as the most important goals for ESL education?
    5. Do you feel that the district is currently successfully educating language minority students in English and in other subject areas?
    6. If so, what are they doing right? If not, what might students need from schools that they are not currently getting?
    7. What changes could be made in order to fulfill those needs?
    8. How would you characterize the relationship of ESL students to non-ESL students in this district's elementary schools?
    9. Who is responsible for planning and evaluating ESL programs and curriculum?
    10. What is your general sense of the level of commitment of the district to maintaining and improving ESL, measured in terms of resources given in this area (materials, funding, staff time, facilities, etc.)?
    11. How much energy is currently spent by the district considering the state of ESL education?
    12. How much is the school board directly involved? Is this a political issue?

3. Principal

    1. How much of your energy do you spend working on issues directly related to the ESL program at your school?
    2. What is your sense of how satisfied families are with the education their children are getting?
    3. Which model of ESL education do you see as the most successful? Why?
    4. Do your foresee an increase or decrease in the level of parental involvement with the school? Why?

5. What do you see as the most important goals for ESL education?
6. Do you feel that this district is currently successfully educating language minority students in English and in other subject areas?
7. If so, what are they doing right? If not, what might students need from schools that they are not currently getting?
8. What changes could be made in order to fulfill those needs?
9. How would you characterize the relationship of ESL students to non-ESL students at Pine Tree?
10. Who is responsible for planning and evaluating ESL programs, both at the school level and district-wide?
11. What is your general sense of the level of commitment of the district to maintaining and improving ESL programs, measured in terms of resources given in this area (including materials, staff time, facilities, funding, etc.)?

4. Teacher
   1. What is your sense of how satisfied parents of ESL students are with the education their child is getting?
   2. Which model of ESL education do you see as the most successful? (self-contained, ESL pull-out, ESL pull-in, bilingual, etc.) Why?
   3. What is the level of parental involvement in their childrens' schooling? Do you foresee an increase or decrease in involvement in the future? Why or why not?
   4. What do you see as the most important goals for ESL students, both in English and in other subject areas?
   5. Do you believe that the district is currently meeting those goals?
   6. What changes could be made in order to meet those goals?
   7. How would you characterize the relationship of ESL students to non-ESL students at Pine Tree?
   8. Who is responsible for planning and evaluating ESL programs, both at the school level and district-wide?
   9. What is your general sense of the level of commitment of the district to maintaining and improving ESL programs, measured in terms of resources given in this area (including materials, staff time, facilities, funding, etc.)?

*MinneTESOL Journal*, Vol. 11, 1993

# Mainstreaming LEP Students: The Case of the Hmong

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Focusing on Hmong refugees in Saint Paul, Minnesota schools, this article considers the difficulties faced by recently-arrived refugee and immigrant students and their families, including cultural-generational conflicts as well as academic difficulties. In addition to reviewing important language research, the study presents new data. The author has compiled SRA test statistics for Hmong 10th-graders at a high school in Saint Paul who fit into particular "time-in-country" categories. These statistics highlight instructional and programming dilemmas faced by students and teachers at the secondary level. Implications for programming include bilingual classes, "sheltered" content-area classes, partnerships with outside organizations to offer instructional and cultural support, vocational education, and classes in native language literacy and culture.

They are coming from all countries. Los Angeles school district alone must cope with eighty-one languages. Some immigrant children do well, but the "mass of immigrant children lack the advantages of education. More are coming poverty-stricken, malnourished, ill, or, in the cases of refugees, traumatized by violence they have seen or suffered in their countries.... It is something out of Dickens" (Nazario, 1989).

In the United States, which has experienced waves of newcomers since its inception, immigrant problems have a long history. However, recent years have witnessed a change in the world economy from an industrial to a technological age. The time seems to have passed when those who couldn't speak the language, or lacked education and skills, could support families through assembly line, agricultural or unskilled construction work. Today's emerging new jobs require more education. Given the economy's needs, all schools are stretched to their limits to educate well. But urban schools, with their larger percentages of immigrants and poor, cannot keep up. "Too much

diversity and not enough dollars" seems to be the routine answer to the complaint.

It is unclear if our society has ever been able to effectively provide a high level of education to the majority of immigrants or their children. But in the past, more employment opportunities existed for those who simply did not acquire a good education. Today, if a child fails to adequately learn English or cannot do the academic work required to gain an adequate education, it is quite likely that the child will be only marginally employable, perhaps joining the welfare roles. As with all students, the less adequately refugee students are educated the greater the likelihood of future costs to society in the form of unemployment, crime, social welfare, justice programs, rehabilitation, food stamps, low income housing, and fewer tax dollars.

*POSITION AND PURPOSE*

This article takes the position that the programs and structure of many American schools fit very poorly the needs of many refugee, immigrant and other limited-English proficient (LEP) students, and that as a result, we are indeed undereducating a substantial number of young people. An "assimilation" model underlies the structure of most schools. Schools stress "mainstreaming" as the best way to ensure an equal education for all and to keep at bay the specters of segregation and discrimination. Yet, many LEP students have language, academic, and cultural-adjustment needs which cause them great difficulty in making progress in "mainstream" academic classes—needs which may render the assimilation or mainstreaming model counterproductive under certain circumstances. To put it another way, providing an equal education for all may not be as simple as just putting everyone in the same classroom.

Although this article offers suggestions regarding alternatives or additions to the programs offered in most schools, these suggestions are merely possibilities. This article is not intended as a provision of all the answers or in any sense as a cookbook. Its purpose is to "spotlight" the issues and start discussion regarding ways of ameliorating the dilemmas facing schools and students.

To this end, and for the sake of making a complex problem a bit more concrete, this article will focus on the experience of only one group, Hmong refugees from Laos, in one large city school system, St. Paul, Minnesota. Information will be presented regarding the background and culture of the Hmong, as well as particular difficulties that many students are having, both in terms of cultural or generational conflicts at home, and academic or adjustment problems in school. Current research regarding academic needs of refugees will be reviewed, and recent research by the author will be presented.

The programs available in the St. Paul Schools will also be presented with attention given to the manner in which the approaches taken may ignore or exacerbate the difficulties faced by students and staff alike, that is, the extent to which the programs "fit" the needs of the students. Lastly, alternatives will be considered which may offer the promise of providing a better education for many Hmong and other LEP students.

## *THE HMONG*

### Background and Culture

The Hmong began arriving in the United States from Southeast Asia in 1975. Allied with the United States during the Vietnam War, the Hmong were forced to flee their native Laos. Prior to the war, the Hmong had primarily been an agrarian people who kept themselves separate from their linguistically different neighbors. Though money was occasionally used when dealing with ethnically different people, bartering with goods was a more typical way of doing business. Exchanges of goods and services were routine within a Hmong village. All members of the village were constantly aware that cooperation between community members and cohesiveness of the group were paramount in maintaining the social structure that served and protected the community. The cousin who assisted in the planting of crops could count on assistance in the event of sickness or injury. A clan structure evolved which codified the relationships and responsibilities of all members. A proper marriage of one's daughter to a boy of another clan in a neighboring village ensured harmony between groups and strengthened mutual assistance bonds. This sense of cooperation and cohesiveness necessitated a willingness of members to put the good of the family, the clan, and the village ahead of the particular desires of the individual. Discussion, compromise and consensus were important in decision making, and though a village leader might have the last word, group input had to be sought. A leader who appeared to be making decisions not based on group good could easily be voted out. It was, in essence, a democracy. When conflict arose between individuals, great care was taken that it be resolved with discussion and that a just settlement be found. Again, a central goal was harmony of the group. The clan structure, with its responsibilities and obligations, curtailed individual freedoms and choices, but provided both physical and emotional security and helped the Hmong avoid crime, juvenile delinquency, and other social problems (D. Yang, 1990a).[1]

Prior to the Vietnam War, few Hmong received any sort of formal schooling. As of 1984, 68% of the Hmong children in the St. Paul and Minneapolis school systems and 90% of their parents had *no* formal schooling

before coming to the United States (Sonsalla, 1984). The few who had attended school generally had acquired only a marginal education in Laotian or Thai schools, studying in a language other than Hmong. Except to the extent that individuals had been exposed to aircraft, radios, and weapons during the war, few Hmong had any real familiarity with the high-tech world most Westerners take for granted (T. Yang, personal communication, August 15, 1992).

Although formal education might have been lacking, children received continual instruction from parents, extended family, and neighbors in the history and traditions of the Hmong people. Social and moral values, the codes of conduct and ethics that acted as the glue of the clan and village system, were taught at the fireside rather than in a classroom. In the absence of television, discussion and storytelling drew adults and children together (D. Yang, 1990a).

As the Hmong fled Laos and were resettled in the United States, they encountered profound differences in language, culture, values, economic life, technology, education, and family structures. Some refugees have adapted to these differences and perhaps find themselves better off financially than they were in their home country. The impact of American culture, however, has had some alarming effects.

### Cultural / Generational Conflicts

> Over the last few years, the Hmong refugee community in the United States has been struck by a social phenomenon until now unknown in Hmong traditional society. Some call it a crisis of adolescence; others consider it as an urban problem; still others describe it as a result of culture shock. This social phenomenon is the generation conflict.... Hmong teenagers, uprooted from their own culture and thrown into the middle of an industrial society for which they are not prepared, find themselves torn between two different worlds.... They are buffeted by brutal social changes over which they have no control. This generation conflict is characterized by rebellion of the youth against traditional Hmong social order which, which according to elders, has preserved Hmong social harmony across the centuries. (D. Yang, 1990b)

To their credit, many if not most Hmong young people learn ways of accommodating both the culture of their parents and that of their American classmates, though they are often inadequately prepared to deal very well with either. Unfortunately, for many others, the situation becomes more dysfunc-

tional. While considering themselves "Hmong," they often have little knowledge of traditional ways and moral values. In America, the systems for transmitting traditional culture are missing or impaired, and seldom do these young people avail themselves of the opportunities that might exist to learn "how to be Hmong." Commonly young people reject their parents' concerns and values, feeling their parents know nothing of the new country and therefore have no real advice to give.

A sort of "role-reversal" often occurs which causes children to lose respect for parents. Because children attend school and learn English more quickly than adults, they commonly become the ones the family depends upon for all contact with the English speaking world: social service paperwork, bills, house rent. This creates a role reversal in which parents and other adults of the family are devalued (Hall, 1988).

> The youth lose respect for the elders who, they think, cannot teach them anything about the new world and who cannot help them at all with their adjustment to a new culture. As a result, they seek to impose their own rules at home, doing whatever they want, going out with whomever they please, and coming home at all hours of the night, without any restrictions. If they sense any opposition or receive any reprimands from the family, they may simply quit school and run away from home. (D. Yang, 1990b)

Minnesota's welfare system has also had a detrimental effect on the relationship of young people to their elders. Dao Yang points out that, while economic realities dictate that many Hmong people require some sort of assistance, aspects of the welfare system have been quite negative for the Hmong as a group. Welfare has contributed strongly to the destruction of the solidarity and cohesiveness of the Hmong social system. Welfare, public housing, and medical assistance are provided to individuals or to nuclear families. This frees individuals to ignore social pressures brought to bear by the extended family, the clan, and the greater Hmong community. The individual does not "need" the clan. Protection, security, shelter, and sustenance are provided by the state. Because the clan and greater Hmong community has lost much of its power to assist, it also has lost its power to force people to conform.

In Laos, if the individual ignored the will of the majority (the clan), he/she risked not receiving the assistance of the group at a future time when that help might be needed. In the United States, no such threat exists. Here, at worst, there is the social cost of gossip or backbiting. For teenagers choosing not to listen to their parents or to accept Hmong values, adult gossip may be

meaningless; therefore, there are few sanctions which might force them into line. Although corporal punishment was considered reasonable in Laos, in the U.S., Hmong parents voice the belief that they cannot discipline their child in any way or they will be arrested (D. Yang, 1990a).

If a teenager has rejected Hmong values as "old fashioned," the clan is unable to exact any psychological sanctions which might keep bad behavior from ever occurring or which would serve as a punishment. The welfare system may literally reduce the respect of the teenager for the parent who clearly is not providing for the family but is simply being taken care of, like a child (M. Mouachuepao, personal communication, 1989).

A number of thoughtful observers have speculated about the difficulties which might be experienced by a cooperative, agrarian people who are suddenly thrust into a competitive, capitalistic urban setting. It would appear that the Hmong could provide an excellent case study. Presently 60% of Minnesota's Hmong people receive welfare funds and few adults have prospects for employment due to very limited English proficiency and few transferable job skills. Yet, in spite of employment difficulties, *it is the youth problem that most concerns Hmong leaders.*

If some Hmong youth seem intent on rejecting the culture of their parents, we might hope that they at least would embrace American culture, making a rapid, if somewhat painful, transition to their adopted home. Unfortunately, this is often not the case.

Hmong young people attend American schools but often have few close American friends. Much of what they know of American culture is learned from television, which provides a distorted view at best. Many pretend to live the American way of life but often have only a superficial understanding of the American system or American spirit. They often interpret the concept of "freedom" to mean that there are no restrictions on their actions or personal desires. To put it another way, many give up their Hmong values without truly acquiring real American values. Instead of interacting with adults around the fireside, learning traditions and moral values, they ignore the adults, watch TV and talk to other teenagers, usually other Hmong teenagers who are as disaffected as they (D. Yang, 1990b).

Clearly, not everything being absorbed from TV or from classmates has been positive. The number of arrests of Hmong juveniles has skyrocketed in the last four years. Auto thefts in St. Paul nearly doubled in 1989 alone, and based on arrest statistics, this doubling was due almost entirely to the increase in Hmong teenagers who became involved in stealing cars. Gang activity, seemingly nonexistent in 1987, is now accepted as routine, with Hmong gangs of more than 200 members reported. Several gang-related deaths have

occurred in recent years (deFiebre, 1992). This rise in gang activity baffles Hmong parents who feel unable to control their children. Hmong police officers and elders feel that while much of this is due to TV and a loss of traditional values, some of it is also a function of the fact that many Hmong live in St. Paul's toughest neighborhoods where they must contend with other non-Hmong gangs. Further, many gang members seem to be those who are having the greatest difficulties with school and therefore seek status and power elsewhere.

> The two leading indicators for Hmong kids being involved in gangs is one, having no father at home, and two, the kids who do very badly in school. We don't know if they join gangs because they are poor students or if they are poor students because of the gang. But most likely, the kids who have no success in school, they want something. If you can't be smart, be tough. (Cha, 1992)

## *A STUDY OF HMONG STUDENTS' ACADEMIC PROBLEMS*

The problems of the cultural/generational conflict are exacerbated by the general difficulties students experience in schools. The Hmong simply have not experienced the type of success some other Asian groups have had in school (Walker, 1988). This is not to say that all Hmong students are doing poorly. On the contrary, some are doing quite well. However, my recent study of tenth graders at a high school in St. Paul indicated that Hmong students who fall into certain categories based upon their time in the U.S. are without question facing an uphill struggle.

Of the school's nearly 1500 students, about 400 are Hmong, comprising roughly 26% of the total enrollment; this is somewhat above the district average of 20% Hmong.[2] Hmong students were surveyed regarding a number of factors which might relate to academic success in high school. The results of SRA (Science Research Associates) standardized test scores were then compiled to be considered as a measure of the success of individual students and as a predictor of future academic success. When the various test scores were compared, the factor that stood out as the strongest predictor of success was the length of time the student had been in the country ($r = 0.845$, Pearson Product-Moment correlation). Scores were then grouped into the following four categories: students who had been in the country eight years or longer, those who had been in the country five to seven years, those who had been here three to four years, and those who had been here two years or less. These categories correspond approximately to the following percentages of the school's Hmong population:

- 8 or more years in USA 49%, or roughly half of the Hmong students, about 200
- 5 to 7 years in USA 13%, about 50 students
- 3 to 4 years in USA 17%, about 70 students
- 1 to 2 years in USA 21%, about 80 students

The percentages shown are based on the responses of students surveyed. The student totals are estimates based on the general enrollment of Hmong students, not all of whom took the SRA tests during the 1991-92 school year. An examination of 188 Hmong 10th graders' SRA test scores in each category revealed the results shown in Figure 1.

These statistics reveal that Hmong tenth-graders who started American school in kindergarten, first, or second grade are performing as a group near national averages except in reading where their scores dip to 40%, indicating that these students are about one grade level behind the national average. This lag in reading development might be expected to be the result of a non-English home environment, a lack of English reading materials at home, and the inability of the parents to read to their children or otherwise encourage and assist with their academic development. We might also expect that poorer reading abilities could have a negative effect on progress in other academic courses. Yet, in an overall sense, the academic picture would not appear to be so ominous for Hmong youth who entered the U.S. as young children.

Statistics of this sort, however, tend to ignore the likelihood that by tenth grade, a fairly significant number of Hmong students may have already left school. This appears to be particularly true for Hmong girls who, even after being in the U.S. a number of years, still tend to marry in their middle or even early teens. Figures from the Minnesota State Department of Education (1989) reveal that statewide, 665 students who were classified as "Limited English Proficient" dropped out during the 1989 school year. By comparison, that year 389 LEP students graduated from high school, and 674 LEP students successfully exited from LEP programs to fully mainstreamed programs. In addition, anecdotal evidence suggests that many young people fail to register for school and simply disappear from the system instead of formally "dropping out." Hmong leaders suggest that these are the very students who are doing most poorly. Further, though the mean of the SRA scores for "8+ years-in-country" group appears to fall in the average range, one-fifth of the students were in fact scoring below the 25th percentile, indicating very substantial academic problems.

As we examine the scores of Hmong tenth-graders who began school in

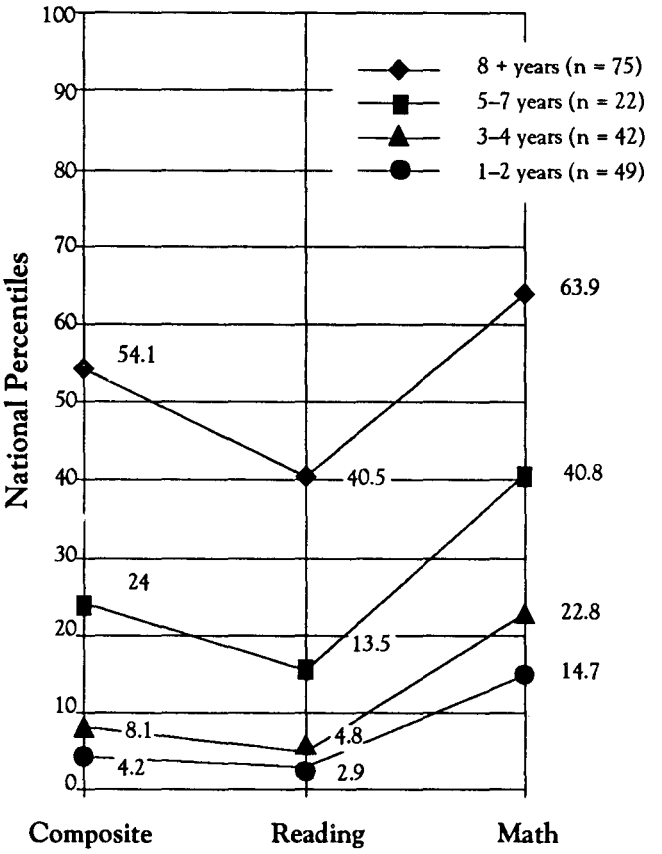


*Figure 1:* Mean SRA Test Scores of Hmong 10th-Graders at a High School in St. Paul, Minnesota (Fall 1991) (Relative to Time in Country)

upper elementary grades (5–7 years in U.S.), we see students who clearly have not caught up to their American peers. With a "composite" SRA mean of only 24% and a reading mean of only 16%, those students almost certainly encounter difficulties with most academic subjects, lagging at least three grade levels behind their American peers.

The picture looks even bleaker for those who entered U.S. schools even later. Few of them have a realistic hope of competing in a mainstream classroom. With an SRA composite mean of 8% and a reading mean score of

4.8%, these Hmong students with only three to four years of school in the U.S. face mainstream classrooms in which the vast majority of the other students are far better prepared to deal with the subject content than they are. The scores of students who have only been in the U.S. for one or two years are lower still. Students from this group who were interviewed after the test said that they understood very little beyond the section on math computation and that the reading was far too difficult.

It should be noted that for each "time-in-country" grouping, the math scores were the highest of the areas tested. This could reflect the notion that math is less "language-bound" than the other subjects, allowing all to compete more easily. It is also important to note, however, that math is one of the few areas in which St. Paul Schools has allowed a degree of bilingual instruction; that is, Hmong students have often had access to bilingual teachers and aides who could assist them in understanding the concepts and word-problems they encounter in math class.

Overall, these statistics suggest that schools should be most immediately concerned with those students who enter the country in junior or senior high school and perhaps even in late elementary school, and that we should be seeking alternative methods and programs for these students who presently appear to have little chance of catching up to their American peers academically. We should also be concerned about that percentage of Hmong youth who came to the U.S. as young children but have had little academic success and by high school may have become discouraged and disaffected. Though the statistics clearly demonstrate reasons for concern, we might further ask why students are not adapting more quickly.

## *OTHER RESEARCH ON THE ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT OF LEP STUDENTS*

For ESL and bilingual teachers, the preceding statistics are not particularly surprising, but for non-specialists, some explanations are in order. The results of the study above parallel those of a larger one done by Collier (1987), who studied the academic progress of students who had entered the country with education levels commensurate to that of their American age-peers. Collier found that students entering the U.S. at ages five to seven generally reached the fiftieth percentile on the SRA before leaving elementary school. She found that eight- to eleven-year-olds were the group which made the most rapid progress, requiring between 2 to 5 years to reach the national average. Twelve- to fifteen-year-olds required 6 to 8 years to reach the fiftieth percentile, though most in this last category would never be able to reach this level before age ended their high school careers. Collier's study pointed out

just how long it takes for LEP students to become competitive with native speakers of English, even when the students have entered the U.S. with an educational level equivalent to that of their American peers. Collier's work supports the view of Cummins (1976, 1980, 1981) which is that while basic interpersonal communication (speaking and listening skills) is generally learned within two years, cognitive academic language proficiency (reading and writing skills) takes far longer and that if students have become quite capable of dealing with abstract written language in the first language, these skills are readily transferable to the second language. Collier's findings that older LEP students require more time to "catch up" to native speakers is explained by the fact that the SRA exams become more complex with each grade level, requiring increasing content-area knowledge. Yet, while engaged in learning English for at least the first two years in the U.S., the content-area education of these students is interrupted. They are placed in a difficult position, analogous to trying to jump on a moving train which continually gathers speed. It is easiest to do at the beginning and becomes increasingly difficult as time passes.

Since Collier's subjects entered the U.S. with a fairly good prior education, it should not be surprising that as much difficulty as they had, they nevertheless did much better than the Hmong students of St. Paul, who, for the most part, have entered American school with little or no prior education. Without this education, students have no academic reading skills to transfer into the new language, little background knowledge of the various subject areas to bring into the new reading situation, and are even unable to translate unfamiliar words with bilingual dictionaries. Without this background knowledge, with few reading-comprehension skills, and with a limited vocabulary, much of the material they are expected to absorb is, in fact, incomprehensible.

Ironically, in spite of the fact that the students are surrounded by spoken and written English in mainstream classrooms, very little progress is made in reading, the crucial element in academic success. This irony is explained by related theories of linguists and reading specialists. The "Threshold" theory (Cummins, 1980; Laufer & Sim, 1985) suggests that below a certain reading and language competence level, or threshold, students are unlikely to apply effective reading strategies. This threshold reflects the students' background knowledge and has also been referred to as "receptive competence" (Tudor & Hafiz, 1989). The message of a given text is rendered useless if the receiver does not have the skills or background to understand it. Krashen's work (1989) suggests that "comprehensible input" appears to be responsible for far greater increases in vocabulary and reading comprehension than any sort of direct instruction of vocabulary or language structure. Students whose receptive

competence is very low, however, are unable to absorb and understand the writer's input, which therefore remains incomprehensible. "Schema theory" (Brandsford & Johnson, 1973; Rummelhart, 1982) suggests that as we read, we access schemata that seem to relate to what we are trying to understand. Some of these are syntactic schemata; others are information-based. The more knowledge we have of given topics and language structures, the better we understand new but related material. The more limited our background, the more likely it is that we will simply not understand what we are trying to read and will gain little from the experience except frustration.

Whether it is called comprehensible input, receptive competence, threshold, frustration level, schema, or simply "background knowledge," it all simply means that students who bring little into the reading or educational experience are not in the position to get much out if it. Elementary and reading teachers are aware of this and tend to do a variety of context and background building activities to generate interest, make up for deficits students may have, and improve comprehension. Some of the methods which have shown promise include story-mapping or charting to teach organization of stories (Gordon & Braun, 1983; Pearson, 1982); macro-cloze and scrambled stories which encourage students to finish stories or put them in sensible order (Whaley, 1981); advanced organizers to focus on structure and context of the reading material (Swaby, 1983); inferential strategies to encourage prediction based on what is known (Hansen, 1981); and a variety of questioning techniques which focus students' attention on the material, on the context, or on what is known or can be inferred (Aulls, 1978; Herber, 1978; Raphael, 1982; Tabs, 1975).

These are all worthwhile methods which focus on building background knowledge prior to the reading experience or which otherwise improve comprehension. Unfortunately, most are used only by elementary school teachers who know the needs of individual students very well and define their job in terms of building basic reading skills and basic knowledge. In secondary schools, teachers commonly see themselves as teaching a subject rather than a basic skill. They know the needs of individuals less well because they see 150 students per day instead of 30. The increased volume and abstract nature of the reading makes it more difficult to do pre-reading activities or walk the students through the written material. Secondary teachers assume that, although there will be a certain range of abilities, most students will have basic skills and knowledge on which to build, and of course, this is generally the case. If some students are remarkably deficient in skills or background, secondary teachers often feel it is beyond their abilities and/or job description to remediate them, which it may well be. LEP students "mainstreamed" into

these classrooms are quite unlikely to receive needed additional assistance.

Into this situation come the Hmong, who in terms of academic background, have had precious little to bring into the American school experience. It should, therefore, not be surprising that they have met with difficulties, particularly at the secondary level. In fact it should be surprising that they have done as well as they have, considering their lack of formal education in the home country, the persecution they have endured as refugees, their poverty, and their minority status in the U.S.

*ST. PAUL SCHOOLS: MAINSTREAMING + ESL*

Prior to 1978, St. Paul had so few LEP students that they could be pulled out of their regular school and transported to an elementary school for a portion of every day for special tutoring and instruction in English as a Second Language (ESL). After 1978, large influxes of Hmong and other refugees forced the district to establish ESL programs in various schools. Because there were so few people available who were trained to teach ESL and virtually no bilingual staff, teachers from a variety of subject areas were pressed into service to teach ESL. Some self-contained ESL classrooms were created at the elementary level, though the majority of students were dealt with on a pull-out basis, receiving one to five hours of ESL per week in addition to their mainstream instruction. At the secondary level, students were given one to three hours of ESL per day depending upon their level and mainstreamed into classes deemed most appropriate by counselors. In some schools, counselors tended to give the new Hmong students exactly the same required courses as all other students, while in other schools, students were assigned less academically challenging mainstream classes such as art and physical education, until it was deemed appropriate to place them in science, social studies, and more difficult reading-intensive classes. The only bilingual classes created were in math and health and these only in a few schools. In 1983, Minnesota mandated ESL licensure and from that point on, the district began to seek and hire trained ESL teachers (Dufresne, 1984).

Except for the fact that most of the ESL staff are now licensed, the LEP program in St. Paul today is largely unchanged from that of 1979. Because of the great difficulties that Hmong LEP students have had in certain academic subjects, ESL staff have often found themselves teaching or assisting with "content-material," such as science and social studies, within the framework of ESL classes. In some schools, this occurs within the context of regular ESL classes, whereas in other schools, ESL teachers have actually created "LEP social studies" classes. Still other schools have created "resource classes" which are devoted to assisting students with the problems they are having with

mainstream classes. While many ESL teachers have been willing to do this necessary task, they have been concerned about the precious time this takes away from the crucial job of teaching language. ESL staff and members of the Hmong community therefore requested that bilingual classes or LEP-targeted content-area classes (often called "sheltered classes") be created with staff licensed in those subjects. The concern was strong enough that a committee of all secondary ESL chairpersons brought the issue to the attention of the office of the superintendent. For these ESL teachers, experience had verified the theories discussed above; the Hmong students were simply not benefiting from the mainstream content-area classes, nor were the mainstream classes having any discernible positive effect on English acquisition. The ESL teachers hoped to see classes created where students with similar problems could receive instruction at a level and rate they could understand, with attention paid to their needs for extra background information and language development.

Though St. Paul has had a court-mandated Spanish-bilingual program since 1976, Hmong-bilingual programs have remained available only for math classes in four buildings. The school district has chosen not to endorse the creation of sheltered content classes using the certified personnel of the mainstream departments. ESL teachers in some schools have been allowed to teach sheltered social studies classes though permission has been inconsistent. While the rationale behind the policies has never been published by the school district, my discussions with various district administrators revealed the following concerns:

1. Special content classes just for Hmong or other LEP students could be construed as segregation, a situation which might cause the district problems with the Office of Civil Rights or other governing agencies and could perhaps lead to a lawsuit.
2. The district would be doing a disservice to Hmong students by *not* mainstreaming them fully. The students would feel "inferior" if they were placed in a special class away from the native speakers. Special classes would just delay the inevitable jump into the mainstream and in fact would provide an inferior education.
3. Some administrators revealed that they believed that bilingual classes were simply "Hmong language classes." Simply put, they did not believe that the students would learn English if they were receiving instruction in Hmong. Again, the view was that the child was being shortchanged and that English acquisition would be delayed.

4. Students should learn and come to embrace American culture and values. When issues of the school's role in maintaining the traditional values of the Hmong child were raised, the feeling was that this task is outside the role of the school.
5. ESL and bilingual classes are viewed as short-term solutions that should not be allowed to overly disrupt the regular school schedule. Prior to 1978, these classes were not an issue, but some administrators seem to feel that when Hmong immigration stops the problem is likely to go away. Unfortunately this attitude ignores the fact that other groups with problems similar to the Hmong (e.g., lacking prior education in their native language) will continue to arrive: Ethiopians, Central Americans, etc. Furthermore, St. Paul Schools now have a 22% Asian population which is not about to go away.

Many ESL teachers and some members of the Hmong community remain frustrated at the school district's failure to consider the research of Cummins, Collier, and others, and to alter its approach to education of the Hmong LEP students. At the 1990 MinneTESOL conference, a panel of linguists, ESL and bilingual teachers, and Hmong students concluded that the failure to embrace bilingual education and/or sheltered content classes has had the following ongoing effects in St. Paul and other districts:

1. *ESL teachers focus on vocabulary development and content area information, and spend inadequate time on crucial language structure issues*. ESL teachers become responsible for a wider variety of tasks than are normally expected or can effectively be done with limited time. As language teachers, they are normally expected to impart the basic structures of English, provide the students with the opportunity to practice these structures in oral and written forms until they are fluent in the language, and teach enough high frequency words to give meaning to the structures so students can communicate or converse in an ordinary manner. However, when students enter with large knowledge deficits, have few transferable reading skills, and cannot use bilingual aides to help themselves, the ESL teacher often finds it necessary to deal extensively with reading and vocabulary development. Furthermore, teachers must spend additional time teaching content area facts and concepts in order to assist the students in understanding the material being read and to deal with mainstream classes they are in (or soon will be in). A common result: inadequate time is spent on crucial language issues. Students often

never completely understand the structure of the language and exhibit ongoing speaking and writing problems and related reading-comprehension problems.

2. *Students exit ESL with inadequate general knowledge and vocabulary background.* In this case, students flounder in mainstream classes, expending much effort with little gain because the language level of the coursework is so far beyond them that they can understand little and cannot use bilingual materials to help themselves. Commonly students sit quietly, study hard (though ineffectively), copy answers from classmates or the text to hand in for homework, and are given passing grades because of conduct, attendance, attitude, and hard work.[3]
3. *ESL students pass mainstream content classes without truly understanding the material and are unprepared to deal with more difficult academic or work-related tasks.* Some are allowed to speak and write ungrammatically throughout high school and are thereby precluded from effectively continuing higher education and are excluded from many employment possibilities.
4. *Many ESL students become jaded or disaffected due to continual frustration, sometimes exhibiting behavior problems or choosing to drop out.* These become prime candidates for gangs.
5. *Mainstream teachers face great frustration and additional work when encountering LEP students in their classrooms. Either they ignore the special problems of the LEP students and teach the main body of students the appropriate material or spend large amounts of time in remediation of LEP students, perhaps ignoring the needs of others.* If the LEP students are quite deficient in language and general knowledge, if the gap is too great between LEP and regular students, the teacher is very likely to give up. More often than not, it is the LEP student who will lose out.
6. *ESL students are either allowed to flounder in classes over their heads or are continually scheduled into classes with little academic substance: physical education, art, industrial arts, home economics.* In either case, they are being denied the opportunity to learn skills and information needed for more advanced education or better jobs (Bosher et al., 1990).

The above dilemmas and difficulties can be explained by the research of

Cummins, Collier and others regarding the dynamics of academic language development and the lack of prior education of Hmong students. Additional factors also contribute to poor academic success and exacerbate the cultural/generational conflicts the students experience at home. Like most American secondary schools, those of St. Paul stress independence, individualism, and competitiveness rather than those elements that are strong components of traditional Hmong culture: interdependence, cooperation, and group cohesiveness. Each student is sent to six different teachers; they are remixed with a different set of students every hour; classes and teachers are changed at the semester. This structure does not encourage the formation of close, long-term helping relationships with either teachers or peers. In fact, helping one another is often viewed as cheating. Students are individually evaluated with grades which may place them in competition with one another, grades which are likely to be interpreted by each individual as his/her level of personal success or failure. This system fails to make use of the cultural strengths that Hmong students are likely to bring to class, and in so doing, slows their academic progress and increases their sense of frustration and inability. Further, the system gives the message that those elements so integral to Hmong culture really aren't very valuable.

While ESL, bilingual, or LEP "sheltered" classes are likely to be tailored to the cultural and academic needs of Hmong students, mainstream classes are not. Ironically, a central rationale used to support mainstreaming is that it lessens the chance of discrimination. Yet, for many Hmong students, mainstream classes are *more* discriminatory, not less, because they do not meet the students' needs—linguistic, academic, or cultural.

## SUMMARY

While it is perceived by the public that Asian immigrants in general do well in school, in fact a substantial number are encountering great problems. An examination of Hmong refugees in St. Paul reveals that *those students who do not enter American school before fourth or fifth grade have little chance of successfully competing in high school academic classes.* The difficult and lengthy task of learning academic English is, for these students, exacerbated by having little or no prior education in their native language before coming to the U.S. Language and reading research tells us that background knowledge and general cognitive academic skills, even in another language, are crucial to English reading comprehension.

The "mainstreaming plus ESL" approach of St. Paul schools appears to poorly fit the needs of this particular group of students, who, because of their

limited backgrounds, must be given particular assistance in content-area classes as well as in general language and reading development.

For Hmong students who enter in early elementary school, the gap in background knowledge between themselves and their American peers is not so great, and perhaps because of having additional years in school, it appears that the majority are able to eventually catch up and compete with their American-born classmates, at least by the time they reach high school. The mainstreaming approach seems to be fairly successful for this group of Hmong students, though for a sizable number of them, there appears to be a price.

That price seems to involve strong cultural and generational conflicts between the students and their parents. This may be due to the students' loss of cultural identity and ethnic pride, loss of traditional values, lowered self esteem, confusion about American values learned mostly from the media, and frustration and feelings of failure caused by always being behind the other students in class. Many of these students drop out or join youth gangs even in late elementary school.

## *IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAMMING*

The academic difficulties encountered by Hmong and other LEP students who first enter American schools at late elementary and secondary levels require attention unless the public is willing to accept the likelihood that these students in the future will be unemployed or under employed. Presently, over thirty percent of St. Paul's Hmong students fit this description, at least six percent of the district's total enrollment. The unique needs of many Hmong and other LEP students suggest several programming possibilities, some of which run counter to the general mainstreaming trend.

- *Bilingual classes in key content areas.*

The work of Cummins, Collier, and others seems to clearly establish the link between first language academic proficiency (ability to read and do academic work in the native language) and the development of second language academic proficiency. Much of this work reflects a very simple idea: the more the learners already know about a topic, the easier it is for them to absorb and comprehend additional information, no matter what the language of instruction. This research strongly supports bilingual education, in which key concepts and vocabulary can be clarified, sentences explained and questions answered in the native language. For students like the Hmong, who enter with such a poor academic background, this would seem to be particularly important. Either native language or English might be dominant in class

depending upon the English proficiency of the student, but the stress on English would increase as classes progressed during the year.

Bilingual classes would build the knowledge base in particular subjects while also building vocabulary and language skills. For many students, this would provide the needed step towards taking more difficult academic classes. For others, the later arrivals, it might be their only realistic chance for acquiring some of this content-area information at all. Bilingual classes would allow for a more efficient use of ESL staff, who would be free to concentrate on dealing with the structure of the language, seeing to it that students would be able to speak and write correctly rather than spending time on content area materials and specialized vocabulary.

Less measurable but perhaps equally important is the fact that bilingual classes can tailor instruction to the culture and learning style of the students. Bilingual classes often have the effect of building cultural pride and solidarity, maintaining traditional values, and creating positive self-awareness. In addition, parental involvement is increased because parents, whose English may be poor and who feel intimidated in their dealing with the schools, are often quite comfortable with the bilingual teacher with whom they share language and ethnicity. Because of the bilingual teacher's closer links with the community, because of parental involvement, because the students have greater chance of success in the bilingual class, and because the students' culture is given value, there is an increased likelihood that students will remain in school and put effort into their studies. In this manner, schools may prevent problems from occurring.

- *LEP-specific or "sheltered" content-area classes*

Sheltered content classes serve a purpose similar to that of bilingual classes but generally do not use bilingual techniques. Books and materials are selected according to the receptive competence of the students. Special attention is given to language development needs and the building of background information. Prior knowledge would not be "assumed." Vocabulary that might be overlooked in mainstream classes would be deliberately taught.

Sheltered classes are generally taught only in English unless the teacher or an aide is able to answer individual questions in the student's native language. Optimally, the teacher should be a native-English speaker licensed in the appropriate content area. Many of the instructional dilemmas of mainstream content classes would disappear. Teachers could tailor methods and materials to the language needs of the students. This would allow for a

more effective, efficient, and less-frustrating use of time for both students and teachers. The teacher would not have to choose between boring the mainstream students or losing the LEP students. One advantage sheltered classes have over bilingual classes is that children of several language groups can be taught together, the only issue being the English level of the student and their prior academic background.

In either bilingual or sheltered classes, it is generally found that students become more actively and productively engaged in their coursework. With material aimed at their level and vocabulary and concepts explained, students are likely to understand more and feel that their efforts are worthwhile and productive. Students experience more success. Surrounded by others with similar problems, students are more likely to ask questions. Fewer students become frustrated, disaffected, and jaded.

Establishing classes of this sort takes into account the fact that students' time is limited. They need to learn important content area information as rapidly as possible because they are not five years old and do not have the luxury of starting at grade one. The object of the classes would be to teach information, concepts, and skills—not simply to fit a student into an existing class schedule structure.

The criteria for placement into either bilingual or sheltered classes would be language need. If tests or teacher evaluations determine that the child can indeed read and comprehend English at an appropriate level, he/she should be fully mainstreamed. (An exception to this might be for particular students who could be retained because of affective concerns; e.g., students who are likely candidates for gang activity or emotional difficulties if not kept close to a strong ethnic role-model such as a bilingual teacher.) It should be further emphasized that even from the beginning, these students should be mainstreamed into classes in which the amount and level of the reading is not overwhelming. It appears that classes such as physical education, art, home economics, typing, industrial arts, and choral music are very appropriate classes in which LEP students can mix successfully and beneficially with native-English speaking students.

- *Partnerships with outside agencies and organizations to offer tutoring and/or cultural support.*

The experience of one school, St. Paul's Highland Park Secondary Complex, may offer insight into ways in which partnership programs might be structured. Concerned about the academic and cultural-adjustment difficulties encountered by Hmong and other LEP students, teachers and admin-

istrators at Highland worked with voluntary agencies and ethnic mutual assistance associations (MAAs) to offer tutoring, counseling, specialized classes, and/or cultural activities both during and after school hours.

Starting in 1987, Lao Family Community, a Hmong MAA, came to Highland twice a week to offer counseling and special classes for Hmong students to encourage academic achievement and cultural adjustment. A pregnancy prevention program paired with health classes was a major component aimed at keeping more girls in school. Similarly, Hmong-American Partnership, a domestic MAA spin-off of the American Refugee Committee, offered after-school tutoring and assisted with Asian culture-club activities. Hmong Youth Association cooperated to offer an evening tutoring program and a "dial-a-tutor" service. Khmer Youth Leadership Project and Refugee and Immigrant Resource Center, both Cambodian MAAs, provided similar services for Cambodian students.

Workers from the above organizations cooperated with an in-school tutoring program administered and staffed by the Institute for Education and Advocacy (I.E.A.), another spin-off of American Refugee Committee. In lieu of the school district's mandatory study hall, LEP students at Highland could register for I.E.A.'s tutoring class. Tutors were recruited by I.E.A. staff from both inside and outside school. Highland mainstream students could earn credit by taking over a daily tutor group supervised by the I.E.A. teacher. Many of these tutors were Hmong, Cambodian and Vietnamese students who could assist their "tutees" bilingually if needed, but who themselves did not need ESL assistance. I.E.A. also recruited adult-volunteers to act as tutors and mentors. College students who were looking for "pre-student teaching" experiences proved to be excellent tutors. Ben and Irina Lasoff are examples of retirees who have also volunteered and brought with them a lifetime of skills and experiences to the tutoring sessions. He a retired psychologist and she a former fine-arts instructor, they are in their fourth year of tutoring. Irina Lasoff describes her experience:

> This [tutoring] is the high point of our day. It has just been marvelous to meet with these young people and feel like we're giving them a little boost. They're such nice kids and they have a tough road ahead... We talk about our students and plan what we're going to do. It's really good for us too; there's a sense of purpose. (personal communication, May, 1992)

The tutoring classes offered by I.E.A. have also provided a framework for the MAAs mentioned above to offer assistance. Students do not need to be

pulled from established mainstream classes to get special assistance. The bilingual workers from the MAAs often assist students in the I.E.A. classes, as do the bilingual educational assistants hired by the school district. During the 1991-92 school year, the three I.E.A. tutor classes served about a hundred LEP students per semester.

While these tutor classes have received positive response from students, community members and school personnel, the program faces many difficulties. Joan Hill Dehzad, I.E.A. executive director explains:

> Presently, we are providing these services entirely with private grant money; the schools aren't putting up anything. But funders need to see a commitment from the schools in the form of a more formal partnership and at least some sort of cost sharing. Our central cost in each school is the teacher we provide to recruit, organize and direct the tutors. Perhaps part of this person's salary could be paid by the district. Even a limited share would impress the funders. Otherwise, eventually, it'll be tough to keep it going.... A formal partnership is important also because then we become a more official part of the school; we'd have a few more rights and responsibilities toward one another. We'd like to be able to take over where the schools leave off, even going into after-school or weekend activities. We've created Saturday mentor programs already. But to be successful outside of school, you really need to be involved in the school, too, to build connections with the kids. The connections are important. These programs can't function in isolation from one another. (personal communication, July 16, 1992)

District critics of LEP tutoring programs point out that there are many native-English speaking students in the schools who could also benefit from tutoring programs and that by targeting LEP students the programs discriminate against others while isolating the LEP kids. Proponents counter that opening the programs to all causes a loss of focus and purpose. Outside agencies, particularly MAAs, are much less willing to become involved in programs which are not intended for the population they represent; for example, Cambodian MAAs are interested in assisting Cambodian children and are willing to provide their limited resources and personnel to that end. If asked to instead provide services for African-Americans, Vietnamese, or Whites, the MAA will choose to use its resources in a different location or a different manner. More importantly, it is the focus of the program which provides its strength and value. Hmong children are drawn to the bilingual classes, to the sheltered classes, and to the tutorial programs *because* they are

designed for their needs with special consideration for their culture. Opening the programs up would simply result in a loss of Hmong students. Proponents argue that perhaps similar programs should be created that cater to the special needs of other groups. Perhaps trying to include everyone means assisting no one.

Due to its large LEP enrollment and role as St. Paul's "newcomer center," Highland Secondary Complex was allowed more freedom to experiment with programming not otherwise endorsed by the district, within its ESL department and was provided with three bilingual educational assistants through a Title VII grant. Some "sheltered" content classes were created in science and social studies by the ESL teachers themselves using a bilingual component. Bilingual math classes which included geometry were available. These ESL and bilingual classes combined with the limited partnership arrangements with the MAAs and voluntary agencies appear to have had positive results. Outside consultants hired to evaluate the Title VII program discovered that, in spite of large class sizes, Highland was the only secondary school in the district in which LEP students had made statistically significant improvement in SRA scores from fall to spring in *any* of the three fields analyzed (reading, language arts, and math); Highland had done so in *all three*, at all grade levels tested. Further, surveys revealed a high level of student satisfaction and comfort with the bilingual aspects of the program (McCormick & McCormick 1989, 1991, 1992). The ESL staff as well as the evaluators were aware that it was indeed difficult to pin-point the reason for the success. Though the evaluation was for the Title VII program, in fact, the students had received assistance through a number of the programs described above. Nevertheless, some or all of the approaches described above appear to have had a positive effect.

Highland's enrollment of Hmong and other Southeast Asian students grew over a four-year period apparently because of the popularity of the ESL, bilingual, and tutorial programs. The district's open enrollment policies allowed students to come to Highland who might have attended a school nearer to their homes. Other schools also had ESL programs but were more constrained in their course offerings. Because of the large numbers of Southeast Asians, district officials determined that Highland's minority ratio was out of compliance with OCR guidelines and that students should be transferred to other schools in spite of the open enrollment policy. Staff were transferred out of Highland's ESL department, which was also constrained from offering "sheltered" courses that might be construed as "segregation" of Asian students. Thus ended some of Highland's attempts to create a better fit

between programming and the needs of many secondary LEP students. Nevertheless, the popularity and success of what was attempted suggests that similar programming should be considered in other schools.

• *Vocational education and apprenticeships*

Some refugee students and parents have complained that students entering schools in their middle to late teens have few options within school. The focus of the American high school is largely the completion of credits needed for graduation with the goal of college held out to those who are most capable. Often, many of the required classes offer little of direct value to the students, either because the classes are well beyond their abilities (science, social studies) or because they don't particularly contribute to solving the pressing language needs of the student (physical education, art, home economics). For some students, high school graduation is not a realistic possibility, or if achieved, may reflect only the completion of a set of minimal, watered-down, and mostly non-academic subjects. The statistics offered previously indicate that for many of these students, college is not at all a realistic possibility. Perhaps a different model is in order, one which simply starts with the needs of the group in mind rather than a concern about "state requirements." For many of these older students, the most pressing needs involve only English and vocational training. They could be treated as adults except to the extent that their ages allow for more extended training than might be available to an adult learner. Students could be given a regimen of ESL, some bilingual instruction in areas of greatest job-related concern, vocational training, and perhaps apprenticeship programs. The suggestion here is not that every student entering the country as a teenager be forced into this track, but that such a program be a possibility for those who could benefit from it and desire it.

• *Classes in native language literacy and culture*

The generational conflict within the Hmong community described earlier may well be due to a devaluing of native language and culture in the eyes of the young. The negative ramifications of this in terms of increased gang activity, juvenile delinquency, and school problems have led to suggestions that perhaps traditional culture and native language should be given support within the schools, starting as early as the primary grades. Research of Cummins and others suggests that simply on the basis of academic language development alone, native language literacy and bilingual education are needed from the beginning of school. However, affective concerns may be just

as important. A focus on native language literacy would preserve rather than extinguish an important skill, would provide a format in which the traditional culture and positive values could be supported, and would provide for the student the sense that his/her people and culture had merit. Classes could be offered with the cooperation and assistance of ethnic MAAs who have as their goals the preservation of native language and culture and the success and cohesiveness of their people.

The suggestions made above are simply possibilities of programs which might assist in better meeting the needs of LEP students.

## *CONCLUSIONS*

The programs offered in most school districts tend to focus on getting students into fully mainstreamed classes as quickly as possible, using ESL as the bridge. Though affective concerns are given little attention, the "mainstream + ESL" approach appears to work adequately for students who begin school in the primary grades, and perhaps for students who enter at secondary levels with an educational background commensurate with their American peers. However, many LEP students have had little or no education in their home countries and therefore require additional support and attention particularly as regards reading development and academically demanding content area classes.

A number of programs offer promise of better meeting the academic needs of LEP students while also providing support for the students' culture and affective development: bilingual classes, sheltered LEP content classes, tutoring programs, partnerships with outside organizations such as MAAs and voluntary agencies, native language literacy and culture classes, and targeted vocational training programs. By definition these programs segregate students for some portion of the school day, as do ESL classes, and therefore run counter to the principle of mainstreaming and its concern for the integration of minorities. While the situation represents a true dilemma, it is the position of this article that the first priority must be to provide as good an education as possible, particularly for those students most at risk.

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## *NOTES*

[1] Dao Yang was the first Hmong to earn a Ph.D. (Paris, 1972). An economist and sociologist, Dr. Yang is a leading authority on the Hmong, having an "insider's" knowledge as well as academic credentials. In writing this article, I have chosen to rely extensively on information obtained from interviews with Dr. Yang, rather than papers done by Westerners, who themselves tend to quote Dao Yang extensively. For those well acquainted with the Hmong, much of the information presented here regarding the culture and the adjustment problems of the Hmong is virtually common knowledge.

[2] St. Paul's overall minority count for the 1991–92 school year was 45%.

[3] Evaluations of St. Paul's Title VII refugee-assistance program revealed that very few students ever are given failing grades, with the average grade being being perhaps "C+," in spite of the fact that students often report that they really don't understand the subject and often fail all their tests. Program evaluators speculate that good attendance, completed homework and good behavior is rewarded by many teachers.

*MinneTESOL Journal*, Vol. 11, 1993

# Breaking Barriers: Three Hmong Women's Perspectives on Attaining Higher Education in the U.S.

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A review of the literature shows that few Hmong high school students are able to access post-secondary education in the United States. A series of ethnographic interviews of Hmong women who were successful in obtaining a higher education were undertaken by the researcher to get a clearer sense of the obstacles and successes these students experienced. As part of a generation who grew up in the U.S., yet strongly identifies as Hmong, this group has done much problem solving alone, yet has much to share to benefit more recent refugees.

> One obstacle that this group faces is that their needs have not been publicized. All we hear about are the valedictorians and the gang members.
>
> (Ranard, 1989, p. 7)

Ranard's quote rings true for those of us who care to learn more about why many Hmong students drop out of high school and why a majority of Hmong high school students never make the transition to post-secondary education. In the vast literature which looks at minority success and obstacles associated with obtaining higher education in the United States, comparatively few sources address these issues vis-a-vis Southeast Asian refugee students.

The goal of this pilot research project is not only to examine the existing literature which does relate to the Hmong experience within higher educa-

tion, but also to get a more in-depth sense about what factors—in addition to the obvious financial ones—contribute to the successful access to higher education from the perspectives of three Hmong post-secondary students. Two central questions guide this research: (1) How do students who have attained or are attaining a higher education view that education? and, (2) What were the obstacles and opportunities which helped these students obtain a post-secondary education? For the purposes of this research paper, higher education and post-secondary education will be used interchangeably and will signify any formal education beyond high school.

## *BACKGROUND*

### History: Hmong and the U.S.

Since the beginning of the mid 1970s, more than 6,000 Hmong have been airlifted out of Laos to the United States (Strouse, 1989, p. 22). When the Southeast Asian War extended into Laos, the CIA recruited Hmong and Mien to serve as mercenaries against rebel forces in that region. The Hmong, like the Mien people also of that highland area of Laos, lost more than one-half of their people due to combat, to ongoing bombing in the area, and to disease associated with displacement (Strouse, 1989; Walker, 1991). After the rebels "won," the Hmong were forced to leave their homeland for their own protection. The United States absorbed the majority of these hilltribe peoples.

According to Strouse (1989), the United States government drew up a plan for the "absorption" of the Hmong, which allocated financial assistance for their first 18 months in the country and encouraged church sponsorship to reduce any perceived burden to receiving communities. Public schools were regarded in the plan as the key in long-term adjustment to life in the United States. Strouse explains that "the job of the schools was to find the means to reach across this [cultural] gap and provide access to the larger society" (p. 5).

Despite this initial plan, statistics attest that illiteracy, unemployment, and poverty continue to be major issues for the Hmong people in the United States today. Over a decade after the first wave of Hmong arrivals, 85 to 90 percent of Hmong still have less than three years of formal education and a mere five percent of 18- to 24-year-olds attend college (Tokuyama, 1989; Yang & North, 1988). *Profiles of the Highland Lao Communities in the United States: Final Report* documented that the average one-working Hmong family earns $13,038 (while the non-Hmong, one-working refugee family earns $13,760), and in the three most concentrated states with Hmong people, only one highland family in 19 owns its own home. The study also showed that 37

percent of Hmong families nationwide are self-sufficient (Yang & North, 1988).[1]

Perhaps a part of why these issues continue to be prevalent for Hmong living in the United States is that our government has failed to fully take into account the cultural and educational background and traditions of these people. Unlike nuclear families in the United States, the Hmong family unit of the highlands was "the unit of subsistence production. Economic, social, educational, religious, and domestic activities were integrated and mutually reinforcing in a manner seldom found in industrial settings" (Goldstein, 1988, p. 8). These closely-knit agricultural tribes organized around kin and community membership, according to Goldstein, centered around the welfare of the group as well as around collective identity and action. Opposing this collective identity, Walker (1991) and Bullivant (1987) explain, are the concepts of "self" and "adolescence" as a rite of passage into adulthood, which are norms of western, industrial cultural behavior. It is not surprising, then, that the construction of possible occupational scenarios, the learning of obligations, rights, and expectations typically associated with the adolescent period in the U.S. would pose cultural conflicts with the collectively-oriented background of the Hmong. Similarly, cultural conflicts arise around gender roles and expectations of adolescents.

In the highlands of Laos, gender roles were clearly divided around labor. Men were responsible for the delivery of crops and the negotiation of their exchange which necessitated some travel to nearby communities. Fighting in the war and hunting were also part of men's roles. Few men were sent away from the village for schooling: traditionally, the Hmong did not have formal schools in their communities.

While men were decision makers in the public sphere, Hmong women's primary responsibilities included maintenance of the family, household, and the growth and harvest of cash crops (Goldstein, 1988; Walker, 1991). Goldstein goes on to say that the "good" Hmong woman was one who gave birth to many sons (important to prosperity in the public sphere), knew how to work hard, and married within the Hmong community.

## Literature Review: Hmong and Higher Education

An estimated 900,000 Southeast Asian refugees have relocated to the United States since 1975 (Goza, 1990). Reflective of this influx, the 1990 U.S.

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[1]A self-sufficient family is defined as one that does not receive cash assistance.

Census documented that the overall, minority portion of the population had grown steadily due to increased minority births and the dramatic increase in Southeast Asian immigrants since the 1980 U.S. Census (Nettles, 1991). Despite the increase in the minority population in the U.S., Richardson and Bender (1987) argue that this has resulted in little change for American minorities' attainment of higher education:

> Even though [urban minorities'] participation increased dramatically during the sixties and seventies, there has been little change in economic and social class mobility for minorities because their curriculum choices have been so concentrated in the career and vocational areas. Minority attainment of associate degrees has been limited, and their subsequent progress to the baccalaureate remains relatively unchanged (pp. 1–2).

Although Asian-Americans are one of the most rapidly growing populations to access higher education, underrepresentation in post-secondary institutions is still a reality for Southeast Asians who were not born in the United States. That 60 percent of Asian college students are enrolled in four-year colleges and universities (according to a 1987 report issued by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement of the U.S. Department of Education) is a very misleading barometer of access or success for all Asian American college-aged students (Nettles, 1991). This figure skews opportunities for scholarships and access to special programs for newer, non-American born Southeast Asian refugees who are lumped into a larger Asian-American pool and are forced to compete with native born Asians (Rumbaut & Ima, 1988).

There is widespread agreement in the literature that societal intervention, which focuses on the quality of education for non-native Southeast Asian refugees, needs to occur in elementary and secondary schools as less educated youth are more likely to do relatively poorly in school and are more likely to have fewer occupational options later in life. One of the largest studies of Southeast Asian high school-aged students who have lived in the U.S. for a minimum of five years to date (undertaken by Rumbaut & Ima, San Diego, 1988) found Hmong students the least likely to drop out, but the most likely not to continue on to obtain a post-secondary education (Ranard, 1989). This is hardly surprising since 94 percent of Hmong in that area live below the poverty level and would thus be unable to support their children's education (Ranard, 1989). Ranard says that the most difficult problem facing Hmong is the transition from high school to college. In addition, the San Diego study, *The Adaption of Southeast Asian Refugee Youth*, surveyed 24,000 South-

east Asian teenagers and found that all girls outperformed boys in high school with the exception of Hmong girls. The authors of the study, Rumbaut and Ima (1988), attribute the lower academic performance of Hmong girls to early marriage and childbearing, which affect economic self-sufficiency prospects. They expound:

> ...the insistence on patrilineality and the associated devaluing of female children further undermines an educational investment in their daughters, thus adding to the economic burden on families, very poor households. All this frustrates motivated Hmong girls out of going to college and fulfilling higher occupational aspirations (p. 21).

The San Diego study also found that longer length of stay in the U.S. is positively associated with higher levels of achievement and adjustment to high school, and that refugee children have fared better academically than those who arrived in the U.S. in their teens with little previous formal education.

In addition to early child bearing and marriage, Rumbaut and Ima found some of the largest obstacles to graduating from high school to be: the lack of access and knowledge of jobs and careers; family instability; a lack of role models for students; economic constraints that frustrate the achievement of educational and occupational goals; low levels of English, and a lack of bicultural strategies (1988, p. 18). For successful students, they found that access to cultural resources and the development of coping strategies facilitated retention in addition to a strong family belief in the value of education, self-discipline and hard work, respect for authority—both teachers and parents—and a family system which finds collective solutions to problems. Hsia's (1988) work in comparing access to post-secondary institutions among minority populations corroborates Rumbaut and Ima's work, indicating that length of residence, location, English proficiency, prior educational experience before arriving in the U.S., and family socioeconomic status are all factors that impact success. Newer refugees, according to Hsia, need to devote around six years to becoming proficient enough in English to be academically competitive with their classmates. He also points out that the newer group is less apt to have had the time to develop the kind of extracurricular experience valued for admissions by colleges and universities.

In *Barriers for Teenage Refugee Women's Education in the United States: A Comparison of Hmong and Mien Hilltribe Women*, Walker (1991) explores obstacles specific to Hmong women. She explains that although Hmong girls married older men when they were physically and sexually mature in Laos,

Hmong and Mien women are currently torn between this traditional role and an adolescence free from adult responsibilities, which is an inherent assumption in American schooling. Walker states that comparatively, Hmong girls are in less of a position to challenge the moral authority structure that Hmong men possess, adding that the only power Hmong women hold is over their daughters-in-law and over children. It is because of the perceived loosening of morals and lack of supervision associated with American schooling that many Hmong parents have begun to fear American schools and to demand their daughters prompt return home after school. Goldstein (1988) feels that this accounts for willingness to let Hmong girls drop out of school for domestic activities. Goza (1990) attributes low enrollment of Hmong women to isolation and to the consequently slower progress in English they experience.

Despite appearances, Goldstein (1988) notes that moving between two cultures in the United States has itself created some challenges to traditional Hmong gender roles. These students learn dominant societal concepts of gender roles and expectations at school through their literacy skills, observations, and exchanges with others. With new and/or contradictory information acquired at school, these girls introduce change into the home. They often challenge inherited expectations, according to Goldstein.

## *METHODOLOGY*

After interviewing three Hmong women from what Rumbaut and Ima (1988) refer to as the "1.5 generation" (for their unique situation of neither having been born in the U.S. nor having been the first generation like their parents), I decided to regard this study as a pilot for a much larger potential study on Hmong post-secondary students: the three, one-and-one-half-hour interviews generated enough field data, and consequent themes, to analyze for a project with a much broader scope. My original intent for this research project remained the same: to interview Hmong post-secondary students over eighteen years of age to learn more about occupational and/or educational factors that may have contributed to their success in accessing and obtaining a post-secondary education.

To test and refine my research questions before entering the field, I received consent from and conducted an interview with one Hmong graduate student that I did not utilize in the project. All interviewees read a consent form approved by the Human Subjects Committee of the University which described the interviewing process to them, and they had an opportunity to ask any questions of me, the interviewer. Anonymity and confidentiality were guaranteed to each participant in the research. Pseudonyms have been used

to replace names in all written research findings. Both the voluntary nature of the project and the acceptability of skipping any questions with which they were uncomfortable were articulated as well.

Largely based on the research results of a study on Southeast Asian refugee youth's educational and occupational aspirations in the Twin Cities by Baizerman and Hendricks (1988), in order to ascertain age, educational institution currently attending, work status, country of birth, languages spoken and written, and sex, the final research questions utilized in each interview were as follows:

1. What were your educational aspirations or vision when you were in elementary school, junior high, and senior high?
2. What were your career aspirations or vision when you were in elementary school, junior high, and senior high?
3. What goals for education and employment did you have when you graduated from high school?
4. What attitudes and values do you have about your own achievement currently? Are these attitudes the same or different from your family's or the Hmong community's attitudes and values?
5. What were your family's expectations of you in regards to education and work during your schooling and after high school?
6. Where did you go to school? In what city (cities)?
7. When did you come to the United States?
8. What kind of work do/did your parents do? (I added "did" to get at occupational status in Laos and because it is not safe to assume that everyone has parents.)
9. What kind of strategies have you pursued in obtaining education or work?
10. What do you remember about learning English? (I added this question after my initial trial interview because any information gained in this area could be helpful to the ESL field, and also because English proficiency seems an obvious factor in post-secondary access.)

## *FINDINGS*

The three Hmong women interviewed for this research project will be referred to, heretofore, as Judy, Phoua, and Bao. Judy is 24 years old and is

currently attending law school in the Twin Cities. Previous to law school, she studied at a small, four-year, liberal arts college in the area. Phoua is 25 years old. She is now finishing her third year of seminary school in the area. Her graduate studies fell upon the heels of four years of liberal arts education at a small liberal arts school in Minnesota. Like Judy and Phoua, Bao is studying at a small four-year liberal arts college in the Metropolitan area. Her major is biology, although she is increasingly interested in finding a job in medical administration after she graduates. Bao is 21 years old. Each of the women started their undergraduate educations immediately following high school. Judy and Bao arrived in the United States when they were seven years old, whereas Phoua arrived when she was ten. Two of the interviewees' families were sponsored and resettled by the Lutheran Church in their area. Each spent their formative years in a small town in the Midwestern region of the United States after having spent some time during their childhood in Thai refugee camps. Judy, Bao, and Phoua remember their pasts in Laos and in Thai refugee camps to varying degrees. Bao shared fond memories of her grandparents whom she said were responsible for her informal education in Laos. Phoua said her earliest memory of education was when she very successfully passed a "French-style, end of the year exam" in the Thai camp and was elevated to the next level. "I was thrilled. The UN programs gave us pencils and presents, and our parents came for a special event," she relayed about the experience.

Linguistic Background

I asked each of these women what their experiences had been like learning English and if they knew any other languages besides Hmong and English. Bao and Phoua told me that they speak bits and pieces of other Asian languages due to their experience in the Thai refugee camps. In addition to Hmong and English, Judy speaks and writes some Spanish and German and has spent time abroad in Switzerland and in French-speaking Africa. Much the same, their parents speak a smattering of Asian languages in addition to English and their first language, Hmong. When asked what they remember about acquiring English as a second language in the United States, each responded that it was a complete mystery to her. They all pointed out the fact that they were part of the first wave of immigrant children and that because of this, the schools were not equipped for them in terms of providing ESL instruction. Although Judy said that she does not feel "adversely affected" by learning English in an immersion situation, she does remember sitting in classes observing for a while and mainly succeeding in areas like math and art, where English proficiency mattered less. Judy and Phoua did remember being

pulled out of class once a week for some individualized instruction in English with their brothers and sisters who were also attending the same elementary school. In Judy's case, her tutor read lots of fairy tales which she says, reflectively, were important in teaching her about the "Anglo mind and moral system." Bao said that the benefit of being "immersed in English society" was that in one-half year's time she was already conversant enough to interpret for her family and receive compliments on how good her English was. Phoua explained that this immersion situation changed rapidly in the schools with the influx of Southeast Asian refugees to her area. By the time she was in sixth grade, most refugee students took ESL classes.

Bao and Phoua reminded me that they are still acquiring English as a second language. Phoua said that her American husband is constantly teasing her about her inventions in English and her occasional misuse of grammatical forms. Bao disclosed with some frustration that writing in English is still very difficult for her. She said that she approached her advisory teacher in high school about this difficulty and did not receive any extra help or direction. Consequently, she took high school classes where she could avoid writing. She said that she feels that writing is so foreign to her because the Hmong come from an oral tradition where it is natural to become a good verbal communicator. In her third year of college, Bao planned to attend a special summer class at a nearby community college, which is financially more accessible and which will offer her some specific assistance in writing. She said that instructors at the college she is currently attending could improve in their sensitivity to Hmong issues, such as the difficulty of writing for those who come from an oral tradition. Of ESL, Bao said:

> I have never had ESL or taken ESL classes. I sat in on one at [my college]. I felt that it was not for me. I've acquired a certain reading and speaking proficiency and the only thing I need to improve is writing. Her class was not structured for students like me. My sister and brothers take ESL. The impression given to me is a derogatory message that they are stupid because they are not with the rest of the group. There is a lack of attention. They are stigmatized.

Bao concluded by saying that the ESL teaching community is blameworthy for not making its intent or the value of ESL clearer to the Hmong community. Each woman interviewed articulated that a lack of English proficiency remains a major obstacle in achieving a post-secondary education in the U.S. and contributes to the ongoing isolation felt by many of their elders, who speak very little English.

Breaking Barriers

Following what American peers did may be the single most important strategy that these Hmong women developed around the college admissions process. Bao said that there were no teachers, role models, or cousins to explain to her how or when to apply to college, largely because as the eldest daughter, Bao was "breaking barriers" in her family. Phoua agreed that there was "no tradition to help us through" the process of obtaining a higher and formal education. Less like Bao and Phoua, who mainly took their cues from American friends vis-a-vis the college admissions application timing, Judy credits a high school counselor who was very encouraging and arranged for her to be part of a "Work A Day" program in which she shadowed a district attorney. Although these women point to the lack of written tradition and formal education among the Hmong as an obstacle to knowing how to crack the system in the United States, they all agree that their families' informal educational and occupational status in Laos had a positive influence on their educational aspirations. Phoua spoke of how her mother's brothers were sent away to school in Laos and that her father—who died when she was three years old—was both a military leader and shaman in their village. About her educational aspirations, Phoua said, "my family background gave me energy."

One gets the sense that Judy's parents have inspired her aspirations. She talked proudly of how her mother acquired English and pursued an education in the United States, allowing her to work as a dental assistant. On the side, her parents run a non-profit organization in the Midwest which coordinates social activities for Hmong elders. Judy's father maintains a leadership role within the Hmong community in that area. Judy said that she feels that she was influenced to become a lawyer because she was an argumentative child, but also because she takes after her father, who mediated and resolved community members' familial disputes at their home. Judy concluded by saying that she and her parents' viewpoints and value of education have been pretty much the same.

In contrast, Phoua said that post-secondary education was a vague wish of her mother and brothers:

> I wasn't expected to achieve much but marriage as a good daughter. Like I said, high school and a good husband were expected by the Hmong community and my family. [Pause.] Pretty rigid notions of what a girl can be. In my own family I have a sister and her husband who arrived two years before we did and who helped sponsor us and,

> therefore, there was more support from them than other girls would have. Despite these notions, my family was fairly encouraging about education.

Phoua attributed the lack of encouragement to obtain a post-secondary education within the Hmong community to the fact that it has not made sense for the daughter's own family to actively support it, as any acquired skills would only benefit the husband's family. After marriage Hmong women move in with the husband's family. She believes that this is starting to change because more Hmong people are beginning to see the connection between education and greater job possibilities in the U.S. system.

Bao went to a private high school for "bright" students. She described her high school and college both as permissive environments. "My parents knew nothing of the importance of education and of higher education in general and of how to apply. They let me decide even before high school; they let me decide my courses," she explained. She credits her parents continued support in part for her academic motivation. "I rebelled a lot. I learned from books and learned to challenge. I got my way. I always know how to get around arguments." Although her parents knew little about the admissions process, they have really come to understand the importance of post-secondary education to an "improved life" in the United States. She said that this is because she had numerous talks with them before she left for college about the need for such an education. Bao said that she explained to her mother that marriage and post-secondary education for a "decent life of integrity" are parallels in importance for survival for women in Laos and the U.S. respectively.

Each of the three Hmong women said that they had no conception of education past high school in elementary or junior high school. Phoua said that all she remembers is that she wanted to become a nurse, because she liked the nurses at the Thai refugee camp and wanted to one day return to help refugees there. Even in college, Phoua said that she did not have a clear sense of the direction of her studies. She said that a major impetus for going to college was to "get away from home" instead of any "meaningful connection to employment" at that time. "I did declare nursing as a major and received a nursing scholarship from the Veterans' Association. I took bio. classes and switched at the end of my sophomore year when I was more honest with myself." Phoua later switched her major to religion and women's studies. Judy said that all she knew was that if she worked hard enough that she "would get somewhere." Before high school, Bao remembered thinking about future jobs which would not require a higher education.

Perhaps Bao casts her educational and occupational aspirations the most in terms of the Hmong community. "My American friends perceive me as conservative and for Hmong, I am way different, radical." She explained that at her private high school she acted in ways untypical of Hmong girls, citing staying up until midnight most nights and breaking into a closed swimming pool with classmates as examples. Of the Hmong community rules and norms she said, "I don't like the way they expect me to dress. Hmong girls have long hair [Bao has short hair], not loose clothing, they wear button-up blouses with lace, not my taste. I like to move freely in clothing. This is seen as unusual, as a slob." She described her responsibility to her brothers and sisters as one in which she needed to inspire a love of learning and of the "intellectual" as well as to get them to see that "most Hmong do blue collar jobs , low paying jobs and hard labor 'cause of a lack of skill and educational background."

When asked how they currently view education, each interviewee had very definite ideas. Education to develop critical thinking skills and as a means to gain skills to give back to the Hmong community were central themes. Although her family questioned her extensively on the utilitarian aspect of majoring in religion and women's studies, Phoua came to regard education as a "spiritual learning everyone can do." She elaborated:

> Education is not a privilege, but a right. It should not only be a means to a job. To take information and to think about it, not a set way of doing things, when I think of the world I think of education. Right now I see my [seminary] training as necessary, I will do [um] how they are going to live their lives and to bring the gospel to that. I can help identify barriers from succeeding. I spoke of the Hmong husband resenting Hmong women [advancements] and holding the whole family back.

Judy aspired to use her advocacy skills in future work with refugees, and Bao talked of writing a recent history of the Hmong and of her desire to document their oral traditions and folk tales in book form.

Strategies for Higher Education

Each interviewee said that during high school she had no idea how she was going to finance a post-secondary education. Phoua stated that it was clear to her at age 14 that she would have to finance her own higher education, because her family did not have the resources. Bao said that most Hmong students get discouraged at this point and do not take out loans or apply to community colleges, which are less costly, because—all three women agree—

Hmong high school students are less aware of their options and lack information on how to access a higher education. Bao, Judy, and Phoua all stated that the availability of scholarships for study allowed them to choose the post-secondary institutions they attended over others that did not make such monies available.

Judy said that in terms of careers the same is true; that is, that Hmong students often are not aware of the importance of internships, cultivating a strong advisee/advisor relationship in terms of recommendations, gaining greater access to resources, and making connections to gaining employment after graduation from colleges, universities, and law school in her case. She referred to the assumption among Hmong that employment necessarily follows schooling as a tragedy.

*RESULTS AND CONCLUSION*

The clear benefit of a research project based on interviews is that it allows the action teacher/researcher to come in contact with insider perspectives. The flip side, so to speak, of this research project is that this small-scale pool of interviewees has raised more questions around the question of post-secondary access than it has answered. It should be clear that Bao, Phoua, and Judy's academic experiences are not reflective of those of the vast majority of Hmong women who do not attend universities and colleges. Due to the paucity of literature that focuses specifically on this 1.5 generation of Southeast Asian refugees, we are left to draw our own conclusions on what may set this group apart from those Hmong students who do not attain a post-secondary education.

Each interviewee articulated an association between higher education and greater job opportunities and related that as a motivator to attain a post-secondary education. In her own way each said that the acquired skills associated with a higher education were linked to expanded occupational options in the U.S. and to escaping the hard labor that their parents have experienced in their lives. To varying degrees their families also made this association and offered moral support for their continued studies, although it appears that the ongoing feedback loop around gender expectations, which Goldstein (1988) spoke of, may have brought the family along with these women. As many of the authors cited suggest, previous parental and familial formal and informal education and occupational prestige in Laos did influence these three women, allowing them a place from which to draw energy.

Factors that set their experiences truly apart from those of other Hmong women who arrived in the United States in later refugee waves are: the considerably longer length of stay; remaining single through their undergradu-

ate education; having been members of some of the first Hmong families residing in smaller Midwest communities; Christian sponsorship; an immersive experience in acquiring English in schools before the advent of ESL classes to service Hmong linguistic needs; and experience in small, undergraduate institutions. In addition to educational precedent in the family, the research does support length of stay as a positive factor in achieving an advanced-enough proficiency level in English, which would allow these students to compete with classmates in accessing a higher education. That these women also participated in extra-curricular activities, becoming more appealing candidates to college admissions officers, is also congruent with Hsia's (1988) research findings. Comparatively little is known on the effects of religious sponsorship and English immersion vis-a-vis this 1.5 generation group.

Perhaps the clearest frustration that these women articulated in these interviews was the lack of role models for them throughout their educations. Lack of role models meant that they had to often break barriers and traditions alone to obtain a higher education. Only one of the interviewees spoke of highly encouraging counselors and advisors in her academic experience, and all spoke of the issue of not knowing how to access information on higher education and other related opportunities. Since we know that Hmong tend not to make the transition between high school and post-secondary education, this might be the place where we as educators begin to ask ourselves some hard questions about our roles as advocates. We need to look—long before high school—at the messages and expectations that the total school environment implicitly or explicitly projects about these students' futures. As ESL teachers, we can work with mainstream teachers to develop vocationally appropriate curricula and provide many role models from these students' communities. We may also need to work with guidance counselors to sensitize them to our students' needs and processes related to careers and to post-secondary education options.

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# Students' Work

## STORIES OF THE HOMELAND...

## Fatherland

Fatherland is a bunch of sweet grapes
for the child to climb and catch everyday

Fatherland is the street to go to school
Finishing school, the child flies to the crop

Fatherland is a green crop for the child
who flies to it on stalks of corn

Fatherland is a tiny ferry
The night is coming back little by little
The water is stirred by the ferry

Fatherland is a small bamboo bridge
Mothers come back with a hat made of
sloping leaves to protect the child

Fatherland is the night with the shining moon
The field is white with the leaves of the
palm tree in the fall

Fatherland—everyone has only one
Like only one mother, no more.

Fatherland. Whoever does not remember
won't grow up to become a person.

Tuan Nguyen, Vietnamese, Grade 10
Como Park Senior High, St. Paul, ESL teacher, Sandra Hall

Illustration by
Huy Hoang, Vietnamese, Grade 11
Como Park Senior High, St. Paul, ESL teachers, Catriona Moore and Sandra Hall

# Childhood Memories

When I was a small child, I was never lonely. My family was always around. My family and I were together a lot. We were happy. Life was never boring. There was always a lot to do. I was happy to have such good friends. But my father left the house and went to reeducation camp in 1975 because he was a soldier, and in 1982, he came back. During those six years, my mother, my sister, and I lived with my grandmother. At that time, I couldn't do anything. I only ate. But I loved my mother and missed my father. One time I remember my mother told me to go to the market to buy tomatoes for her. She gave me 500 nam tram, and told me to bring back three tomatoes and the change (300), but the store keeper only gave me two tomatoes, and he took all of my 500 nam tram. So I held two tomatoes in my hands, and they fell to the ground when I got home. And my mother hit me. She got more angry when she looked at two boiled tomatoes worth 500 nam tram. At that time I was six years old.

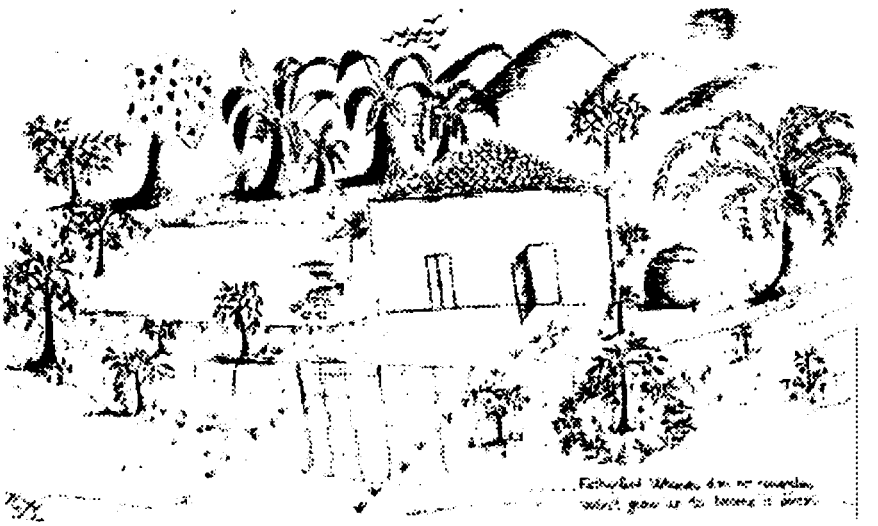


**Illustration by Ha Hoang, Vietnamese, Grade 11**
**Como Park Senior High, St. Paul, ESL teachers, Catriona Moore and Sandra Hall**

In 1982, my father came home, but unfortunately, my grandmother died, the same day. My mother's mother was 72 years old. In the morning she went to church and fell down as everyone was praying. We took her to the hospital, but at 6:00 o'clock in the evening, she died. My family was in two conditions.

Illustration by Ngan Hoang, Vietnamese, Grade 11
Como Park Senior High, St. Paul, ESL teachers, Catriona Moore and Sandra Hall

We were half laughing, half crying. We were happy because my father had come back home, but we were sad because my grandmother had died.

At that time, I remember that I was stupid. I looked at somebody who was crying, and I copied people's tears. I liked putting the mourning clothes on my head. I didn't know that day was a sad day. I thought that my grandmother was sleeping. The white mourning clothes just looked pretty to me.

In 1983, we worked in the rice fields. Sometimes we grew coconuts, onions, and tomatoes in our garden. We had to work hard, but we were happy because we worked together, and I could help my mother in the kitchen. I also helped my father with easy jobs.

Ngoc Ha Nguyen, Vietnamese, Grade 11
Como Park Senior High, St. Paul, ESL teacher, Sandra Hall

# STORIES OF IMMIGRATION...

## The Story of Immigration and My Family

Let me introduce you to a suburb where my family used to live called Mark Mor. It was supposed to be in Laos, but it was very far away from town. It was a suburb with lots of beautiful trees surrounding it, and we could hear lots of birds singing in the morning. The land was pretty clear and good for agriculture too. But the bad thing about it was that the communist soldiers would come to fight us sometimes. So what we did when the communists came was go to another place or hide in the jungle and wait until the soldiers left, then went back.

So, we thought it was too difficult to live like that forever, and then we had to move on to Laos followed by my Uncle Tang Thao, who was married. That's because my father, Ku Lor Thao, was killed as a soldier fighting against the communists during the time General Vang Pao was still living in Laos.

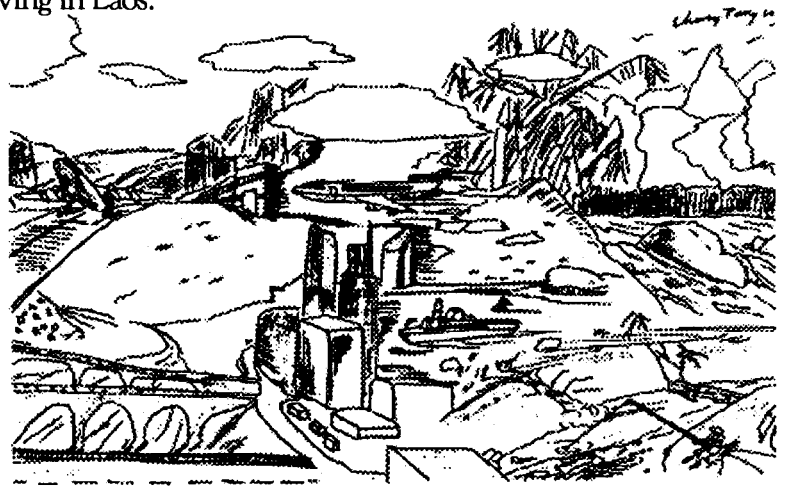


**Illustration by Chong Tong Ly, Hmong, Grade 11**
**Como Park Senior High, St. Paul, ESL teachers Catriona Moore and Sandra Hall**

We were living in Laos, I don't remember how long, but I remember I was going to a Laotian school in the fifth grade. Then, my mother died of headache. After that, my Uncle Tang Thao thought we had to move on to this country. That was because most of our cousins had already come to this country.

The reasons why my family kept moving from one place to another until we got to this place were, of course, no peace, no freedom, no better living, and not enough education. As far as I know, the immigration among all the Hmong people began when General Vang Pao got out of Laos to this country. That was because the King of Laos and a few government officials along with General Vang Pao had agreed to sign the communists to stay in Laos as protection. That's why you see Hmong people all over the place.

**Sa Thao, Hmong, Grade 12**
**Como Park Senior High, St. Paul, ESL teachers, Catriona Moore and Sandra Hall**

## I am a Wave

I'm a little wave in the ocean.

Sometimes, I'm a reminder of the Asian people who left their country by boat.
I have seen them every year, every week, every day.
They look so weak as they are sailing, they can't get by any enemy.
Thunderstorms, pirates, drowning, hunger, thirst...enemies of all kinds.

I feel hurt when their boats sink, then they become food for sharks.
I feel happy when someone rescues them and I hope it's not a pirate.
I want them to get by.

Some of my friends do not think so, they try to get the boat to sink.
But there is bad news for them, some of the boats are really strong.
Then my friends can't do anything about it, so they have to let them go.

The people feel happy when they land on another country's shore.
I can see them from far away in the ocean.

I am a wave.
I am one of them who carries these people to the freedom country.
I feel release when I see their joy, happiness, and tears because of freedom..

**Kien Bui, Vietnamese, Grade 11**
**Como Park Senior High, St. Paul, ESL teachers, Catriona Moore and Sandra Hall**

# STORIES OF LIFE IN THE U.S.A....

## What is it Like?

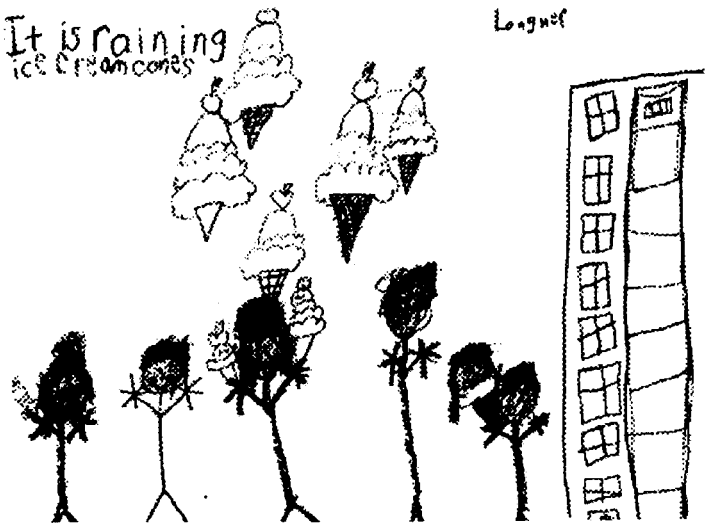
What is it like to be stupid?
What is it like when you don't talk with anybody in the class?
When you don't have something to wear, everybody thinks you are stupid?

What it is like when the teacher asks you a question and you don't know the answer?
What is it like when you answer and everyone is laughing, because you cannot speak very well?

What is it like when nobody likes you?
What is it like when nobody wants to talk to you?

You don't feel very good about it.

**Santi Lyfoung, French/Hmong, Grade 11**
**Como Park Senior High, St. Paul, ESL teachers, Sandra Hall and Catriona Moore**




**Long Her, Hmong, Grade 1**
**Hayden Heights Elementary, St. Paul, ESL teacher, Catriona Moore**

## Friends

My friends
Forget
That I am not married and
I don't want to marry

My friends
Always want me to obey them
When we say something
That I don't like very much

My friends forget
The way that we are playing
And the things
That we have been saying
In our heart
Promise all the things
That we have been planning

They tell me always,
Marry
My friends change a lot
And I have not changed yet

All of my friends forget me
And all the things
We have been promised

**Bao Vang, Hmong, Grade 11**
**Como Park Senior High, St. Paul, ESL teacher, Sandra Hall**

Rabbit stands outside
Innocent of its red eyes
Beautiful white hair

**Nu Chu, Vietnamese, Grade 11**
**Como Park Senior High, St. Paul, ESL teacher, Sandra Hall**

# Opinion: using native language in class

Opinions are divided on ESL students using their native language in class. Those who are in favor of it believe, first of all, that ESL students should be allowed to speak their native languages when necessary because if the teacher won't let them speak their language, when someone doesn't understand the questions or the words the teacher says, they won't know what to do. They have to know what the teacher is talking about and what they are doing.

Second, they think the students who have enough English can help the other ones sometimes in class. They can help the teacher speak sometimes in class. They believe students who speak the same languages should be allowed to sit together, so they can tell the person who is sitting next to them very quietly what the teacher is talking about. They think students have to do more work in groups so they will know what to do on their own at home. If they don't know what to do every day, they will not be able to get a good grade at the end. They believe the native languages are very important for the students coming from another country. They need someone who knows their language to translate for them to understand.

When they don't understand and they can't question the teacher, they need to be relaxed, so they will feel more comfortable. If they are able to be relaxed, they will do a better job. If they do a good job for the teacher, the teacher will do a good job too.

Finally, they think they can't use their native languages all the time, but some of the time the teacher has to tell someone who doesn't understand him or her that it's okay to talk.

On the other hand, some people think the students should not be allowed to speak their native languages in class because if the teacher lets them speak, they will always want to talk in their languages. Many people want to talk in their native language, and that will make the class too noisy.

Second, they will think that the students should not be allowed to sit together because they have to do their own work. Sometimes other students don't want people to talk to them because they need to do their own work, too. They need to develop independence. They think students need to try hard. They should not need other students to help them. If they always have help from other people, they can't use their mind and will never learn anything.

Finally, they need to improve in their English. They should not speak their languages in class. They have to practice English in class, and this will help them in one way. If they speak their native languages, it will hurt other students, and teachers will feel offended.

In my opinion, there is no easy answer to this question. Both of these opinions make sense. Therefore, it is difficult to choose the better one.

**Xiong Lao, Hmong, Grade 12**
**Como Park Senior High, St. Paul, ESL teacher, Sandra Hall**

# Reviews

The *MinneTESOL Journal* welcomes evaluative reviews of publications relevant to TESOL professionals. In addition to textbooks and reference materials, these include computer and video software, testing instruments, and other forms of non-print materials.

## *The Multicultural Classroom: Readings for Content Area Teachers.* Patricia A. Richard-Amato and Marguerite A. Snow, Eds. White Plains, NY: Longman Publishing Group, 1992. 413 pp.

Richard-Amato and Snow have compiled a text for preservice and in-service teachers whose classrooms reflect our society's plurality. They state their belief that effective teaching of language minority students must include skills developed across the content areas to meet their cognitive, sociocultural, and language needs. The editors indicate that many language minority students enter our schools with hope but become disappointed to discover their needs not recognized or addressed, since many of their teachers are unfamiliar with issues in second language learning. These same teachers must carry the responsibility for promoting such learning through content instruction.

The chapters in *The Multicultural Classroom* are organized into four sections: Theoretical Foundations; Cultural Considerations; The Classroom: Instructional Practices and Materials; and Readings in Specific Content Areas. The text organizaton reminds us that effective teaching occurs through a polyfaceted prism of ideas.

The excellent selections in "Theoretical Foundations" offer insights into the second language acquisition process of language minority students. Brinton, Sasser, and Winningham present a concise summary of the second language acquisition process paired with program models currently used to teach English to language minority students. Cummins examines and interprets research findings on the length of time required to acquire English proficiency. According to Cummins, it takes two years for surface-level conversational fluency and from five to seven years for age-appropriate academic skills because of greater contextual support for communicating and

receiving meaning in conversational settings, as opposed to academic settings where the meaning is embedded in the topic, purpose, and discourse. Snow, Met, and Genesee propose a theoretical framework for the integration of language and content teaching that would make the demands of academic language proficiency more explicit. Their framework considers two distinctions: (a) content-obligatory language, or language that is essential for an understanding of the content material and (b) content-compatible language, or language that can be taught or reinforced naturally within the context of a particular subject. Chamot and O'Malley's Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach (CALLA) chooses high-utility content-area topics, language development activities, and learning strategy instruction to demystify the transition from conversational ESL classes to academic (content) classes for upper elementary and secondary school students. Finally, McCroaty argues that cooperative learning arrangements in second language education provide benefits to empower language minority students through frequent negotiation of meaning by conversational use of academic language.

The second section, "Cultural Considerations," provides an opportunity to understand something of the cultural context of teaching language minority students as well as our own attitudes and systems of cultural belief. H. Douglas Brown offers a very readable overview of the relationship between learning a second language and learning the cultural context of a second language. In his chapter, "The Stages of Ethnicity," Banks proposes a typology of ethnic identity that reflects its fluid nature. S. Brice Heath describes how student familiarity with knowledge demonstrated at home parallels how students show comprehension of school lessons; ways of knowing are rooted in a context of cultural values. Scarcella focuses on strategies for presenting culturally sensitive feedback to language minority students. She suggests asking individual students what kind of feedback they prefer. In addition, she explains the cultural assumptions behind various forms of feedback that may produce student discomfort.

The third section, "The Classroom: Instructional Practices and Materials," places this part of the anthology firmly in the educational belief that all students will learn specific outcomes if the task is framed so that student success is possible. Many of the pedagogical strategies and classroom management issues included will be recognized by experienced classroom teachers. The strength of this section lies in the chapters that provide various means for meeting differing proficiency and cognitive levels by considering cultural factors that may affect the learning process. Academic skill development is accelerated by explicit integration of content and language learning. Richard-

Amato and Snow suggest ways to tailor classroom instruction to the developing proficiency levels of students. Short provides additional perspectives for material adaptation and lesson planning. McCreedy and Schleppegrell broaden verbal reviews to increase student participation and knowledge beyond correct or incorrect answers, so that indication of the students' rationale become evident.

The fourth section, "Readings in Specific Content Areas," provides ways in which experienced teachers implement specific suggestions at a variety of levels across the curriculum and would be most helpful to in-service teachers. There are individual chapters for teaching content-obligatory language and concepts for the subjects of social studies, literature, science, mathematics, art, physical education, and business education. Some descriptions stress cultural considerations, and others suggest ways to make cultural awareness part of the content itself. King, Fagan, et al. offer multilevel strategies by which the concepts of social studies may become more accessible to language minority students. Techniques for language-sensitive mathematical education is found in the Dale and Cuevas chapter.

In summary, *The Multicultural Classroom: Readings for Content Area Teachers* is a collection of 26 chapters that include conceptual and practical ideas to assist teachers in meeting their classroom responsibilities. After each chapter, there are follow-up questions and activities that would make the anthology especially appropriate as a course text for student teachers. In-service teachers can select topics that would extend their teaching experiences with additional strategies for effective teaching in multicultural classrooms. *The Multicultural Classroom* deserves a place in the professional library of elementary and secondary teachers, since it provides a valuable reference for meeting their daily challenges.

*THE REVIEWER*

Lisa Boehlke teaches ESL for the St. Paul Public Schools and is also a Ph.D. student in Second Languages and Cultures Education at the University of Minnesota.

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