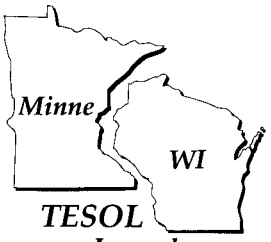
Minnesota and Wisconsin
Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages


# TESOL Journal

Volume 16 1999




*Volume 16, 1999*

*A Journal for Minnesota and Wisconsin Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages*



Grateful thanks is given to Kelly Kulzer for her technical support and to the English Department at St. Cloud State University.

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# INTRODUCTION

Welcome to volume 4 of the *MinneTESOL/WITESOL Journal* as well as volume 16 of the *MinneTESOL Journal*, where we continue the tradition of publishing articles of interest to ESL professionals in Minnesota and Wisconsin. This collaboration continues to strengthen our ability to provide both affiliate memberships opportunities for professional growth and development. As always, we welcome your contributions of articles, book reviews, student work, and discussions of on-going issues in the field. Your contributions make the journal.

We begin this volume with an article by Elaine Tarone. Based on recent population figures and projections which indicate a continued increase in numbers of English Language Learners (ELLs) throughout Minnesota, Tarone proposes four areas in which we need to plan ahead to meet the needs of these students: (1) clear statewide criteria to identify ELLs; (2) viewing programs for this population of students as permanent rather than temporary; (3) programs which combine teams of mainstream instructors and ESL/bilingual teachers to better serve the academic needs of advanced learners; and (4) better funding for adult ESL programs with a focus on workplace literacy.

In the second article George A. Youngs, Jr., and Cheryl Stanosheck Youngs focus specifically on the perceptions of mainstream teachers regarding the advantages and disadvantages of having ESL students in a mainstream classroom. The results of their study point to the need for teamwork and collaboration between the mainstream teacher and the ESL teacher, evidence which strongly supports Tarone's point (3) above.

Next Perry R. Rettig describes a program developed at Lakeland College to meet a need for more licensed language minority teachers in local ESL and bilingual classrooms. He discusses the students (of Spanish and Southeast Asian language backgrounds), the support given, both at the family and community levels, and the obstacles the students and the program have met and dealt with.

The last two articles provide practical information for classroom use. Based on the premise that lack of meaningful context in teaching is often of greater concern to the academic success of ELLs than is lack of English skills, Marina Hammond suggests ideas and techniques for teaching context rich units with interesting, complex learning activities.

For our final article, Carl Gao gives concrete advice for teaching past participles (-en) versus present participles (-ing), a diagnosed problem

area for ELLs.

We have five book reviews in this volume. The first is *Street Speak: Essential American Slang and Idioms*, 1998, by Burke and Harrington. *Street Speak* is for ESL students, particularly suitable for high beginners to advanced levels. Its purpose is to expand their use of American slang and idioms. The second, *Extensive Reading in the Second Language Classroom*, 1998, by Day and Bamford, provides practical advice and information in setting up an extensive reading program.

The last three are geared towards SLA and ESL professionals — teachers, researchers, and graduate students. *Materials Development in Language Teaching* , 1998, edited by Tomlinson, is a collection of articles meant to help professionals develop classroom materials and teaching strategies. *Beyond Training: Perspectives on Language Teacher Education*, 1998, by Richards, is a guide for developing second language teacher programs, a comprehensive coverage of what is needed to develop a good teacher training program. And finally, *Focus on Form in Classroom Second Language Acquisition*, 1998, edited by Doughty and Williams, provides a broad range of information and differing viewpoints on this current topic.

As we did in volume 15, we have included some student work. We have the work of three of Ellen Mamer's students from Century College in White Bear Lake. Look for them and enjoy them.

With this volume Don Hones of the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh joins Suellen Rundquist of St. Cloud State University as co-editor. We both hope that you find this volume interesting and enjoyable. We wish to thank all the contributors to this volume, and we encourage **your** contributions to the next volume. Our Minnesota-Wisconsin joint venture has been a success so far, and we look forward to its continuation.

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Oshkosh, WI

# *Expanding our Vision of English Language Learner Education in Minnesota: Implications of State Population Projections* [1]

**Elaine Tarone**
*University of Minnesota*

This paper considers recent population figures and population projections provided by Minnesota State Planning which suggest that the numbers of English Language Learners (ELLs) in Minnesota public schools are increasing, not just in the Metro area, but throughout the state, and that this is not a temporary problem. In responding to these figures, we need to expand our vision and plan ahead to better meet the needs of all our students. Four suggestions are made: (1) we need clear statewide criteria to identify ELLs: a single standardized test of English language proficiency with a single cut-off score to indicate who needs services, and a statewide computer system to keep accurate records of ELLs throughout the state; (2) programs for ELLs should be viewed as permanent, not temporary, and funding for in-service training and the hiring of well-trained teachers should be provided statewide in a more timely and generous way; (3) pull-out ESL classes may work well for beginning level learners, but programs for advanced proficiency level ELLs who need to pass the Basic Skills Test and achieve at the high standards should teach language through content in classrooms in which a mainstream instructor team-teaches with an ESL/bilingual teacher, with adequate planning time provided for those teachers; and (4) quality adult ESL programs with special focus on workplace literacy should be well funded at all proficiency levels, and teachers with an MA in ESL should be permitted to teach these students in adult ed programs. These suggestions can only be met by a joint effort at both the state level, in initiating and funding programs, and at the local level, in providing in-service education for both mainstream and ESL/bilingual teachers.

Current population figures for the state of Minnesota clearly indicate that the numbers of limited English proficient (LEP) speakers, or English Language Learners (ELLs) in the state are increasing, and will

continue to do so for some time (Ronningen & Tarone, 1998). Those figures, which are available on the Minnesota State Planning Center web site **http://www.mnplan.state.mn.us/ demography/index.html**, show that numbers of immigrants coming directly to Minnesota from overseas are gradually increasing. Minnesota Refugee Services estimated the refugee population in the state as of Jan. 1998 to consist of some 76,000 Southeast Asians, 6500 Eastern Europeans, 1100 Africans and 500 Near Easterners/South Asians. Increasingly, languages other than English are spoken in the homes of Minnesota public school children. Minnesota Planning figures suggest that it is not just the Twin Cities which is feeling the impact of these demographic changes; for example, 18% of the students in Watonwan County are of Hispanic origin and almost 7% of the students in Nobles County are of Asian/Pacific Islander origin. Minnesota Planning figures suggest that increases in the numbers of English language learners in Minnesota's schools will continue in the foreseeable future, due primarily to the availability of good entry-level jobs for immigrants throughout the state of Minnesota (Ronningen, 1998).

What do these population figures mean for the education of Minnesota's English language learners in the public schools? In the following pages, I will consider these figures and make four suggestions for planning for the future.

## I: Establish clearer statewide guidelines for ELL population counts and language proficiency testing.

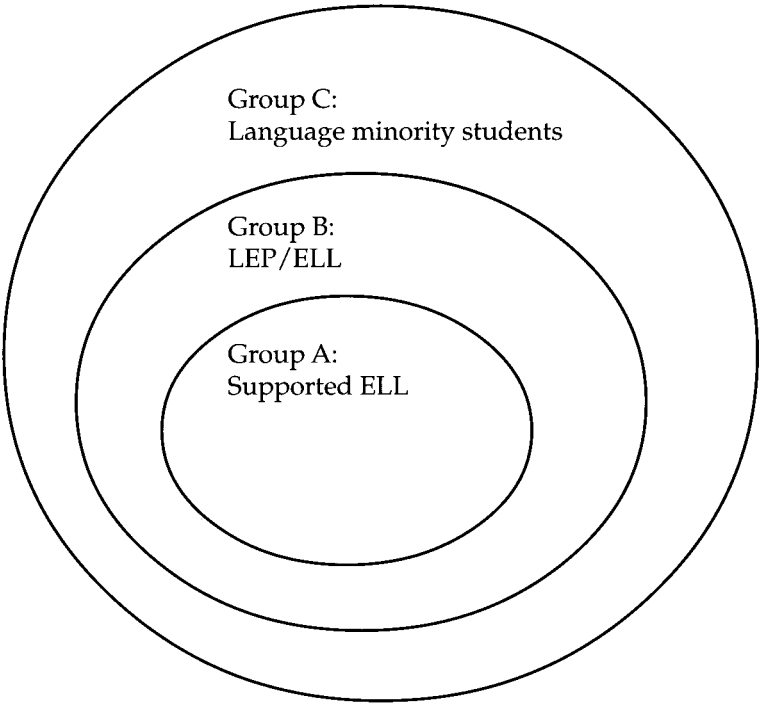
We do not have direct data on the number of Minnesota school children whose native language is not English, and who need English language support. The state demographic data are indirect and do not provide us with the information which we, as English language educators, need.

The indirectness of the demographic data is frustrating for those who need to plan for the education of English language learners. In determining the English language learning needs in the state, we need to establish clearer categories of the population. We have figures on racial minorities in the state, for example, but not all racial minorities are linguistically diverse, or are English language learners. By the same token, not all linguistically diverse students are racial minorities. We need clear statewide guidelines on how to categorize and refer to different types of **language minority** students. **Language minority** students are students whose home language is different from the language of the culture at large and the school language, which is English.[2] Some language minority students need language learning support and some do not. There is no single criterion for who is and is not an **LEP** (Limited English Proficient) student, or an **ELL** (English Language Learner). In fact, the terms

LEP and ELL seem to have been used interchangeably to refer to at least three types of language minority students. I will suggest that we refer to these three groups by different names, and that we imagine them in terms of three concentric circles as in Table One below:

Table One:

Three Types of Language Minority Students




In Table One, the outermost circle (and the largest group) refers to language minority students: students whose native language is not English. These are all students whose home language is different from the school language. Some Group C or language minority students have achieved the proficiency in English they need to do well in school, and some have not.

Those who do not yet have enough proficiency in English to master course content without support are in Group B; they are Limited English

Proficient (LEP) or English Language Learner (ELL) students (The term "Limited English Proficient", while in wide use nationally, contains with the term "limited" the implication that learning ESL is somehow remedial; the term "English Language Learner" contains no such implication, and so is to be preferred). They are eligible for language learning services because their scores on some standardized test fall below some cut-off point. Barbara Ronningen has shown us the best and most recent estimates the state can give us of the size, composition and nature of this group. But we have seen that we do not exactly know the precise figures. A serious complication is that typically each district uses a different standardized language proficiency test to identify students in Group B, and each test may place students differently. Further, whatever the test used, the cut-off points vary as well from one district to another, and from one group to another, so that Hispanic students may be eligible for services when their scores fall below the 40th percentile but other students may be eligible when their scores fall below 1/3 of a standard deviation below the norm. The current system for identifying students in Circle B, those who need services, is thus inequitable, since criteria vary from district to district, and from ethnic group to ethnic group.

Finally, of all the LEP/ELL students in the state who are eligible to receive services, some do and some don't receive assistance, and the nature of the assistance they receive varies widely. Let us put those LEP/ELL students who do receive services into Group A, and call them Supported English Language Learners. The nature of the support they receive may differ a great deal. These students may be in ESL or in bilingual classes, may be placed in classes where mainstream teachers team-teach with ESL resource teachers or bilingual aides, or may receive some other kind of support. The state does not provide guidelines on the sorts of services that might be appropriate to support ELLs at different stages of their development, so districts are left to their own imaginations on this point.

So these three types of language minority students exist, and they are different from other groups we could talk about, e.g., racial minority groups. In all our discussions about educational solutions, it is extremely important for us to keep the three groups of language minority students clearly distinct in our minds. Neither racial minority students, nor students who speak a different language at home and at school, are necessarily students who need language support services. It is very important for us to have a systematic way of identifying those who do need these language support services, and to agree on the nature of the services they need.

An added reason for doing this is the fact that immigrant students are often MOBILE. They do not necessarily stay put in one school district

in the state of Minnesota; they seem to move from one school to another, one district to another, and one state to another. ESL teachers in St. Paul say they are seeing an increasing amount of secondary immigration from other states (California is usually cited); these are often students who have been in the country for some time, have fairly good oral skills (and street smarts) in English, but do not necessarily have good school skills. And they tend to keep moving. The implications for us? We need a statewide policy and tracking system to provide these mobile students with a consistent education, at least while they are within the Minnesota state borders. This would not suggest a small educational program, confined only to Ramsey and Hennepin counties, but rather a statewide program. Once we have identified them, then, we need to keep accurate records statewide of those children. Since this is a statewide problem, it will need a statewide solution: a single computer system statewide which can track the data, even when children move from one district to another.

The first recommendation arising from these considerations is, then, this: we need clear statewide guidelines to establish who needs English language support services. That is, we need to know not just who is a language minority student, but who in that group is an English language learner or an LEP student. These guidelines should recommend a single standardized test of English language proficiency, and a single cut-off score on that test to be used consistently to indicate which among all ELLs need specialized language learning support and which do not. A team of teachers and professionals should be formed to examine existing standardized tests and present recommendations. Then, we need a statewide computer system to keep accurate records in a central location of individual children across the state, tracking their progress over time and if necessary, across districts. These data should be kept centrally and should be capable of speedy access by those who are making decisions about the children.

## II: Provide a realistic financial increase to state educational institutions to meet the needs of ELLs.

By every uncertain measure we have, it seems clear that we have an unexpectedly large and geometrically increasing number of students in Minnesota schools who are English Language Learners: students who have a less than adequate proficiency in English their second language. This is a statewide phenomenon; neighboring states such as Wisconsin are undoubtedly seeing a similar growth in ELL numbers. The numbers of ELLs we now see in every county are increasing; it is only a matter of time before, for example, Anoka, Clay, Kandiyohi, Olmsted and Washington counties have similar numbers of Asian or Hispanic students to those in Ramsey and Hennepin counties.

What do we know about how long it should take these students to go through the process of second-language acquisition? And what are the statewide implications for program support?

This is the hardest question we have to face. We'd rather not know how long it will take. The answer to this question has serious implications for state planning. We know that the process of second-language acquisition takes time, **when the goal is native-like proficiency**. And that should be our goal: native-like proficiency. In considering this goal, we need to remember that there are two kinds of second-language proficiency: basic oral skills, and cognitive academic language skills (Cummins 1984). When a child is immersed in a second language, the research shows that it takes about two years for that child to attain basic oral skills in a second language; and remember, such students are typically **more** orally proficient than most of us are able to become in two years of foreign language study in high school or college. But the goal of our English language learners is much higher than that of most other American foreign language learners: their goal (and our goal for them) is to attain native-like cognitive academic language skills in the second language. These Minnesotan students want to be able to take standardized tests in English which measure their mastery of reading, math, social studies and science, and they want to score on average at the norm on those tests. Research on second-language acquisition (Collier 1989; Tarone et al 1993) shows that it will take at least seven years of constant supported study and learning for them to reach that goal — and 8 - 10 years for students who are not already literate in their native language.

And it must be stressed that this is the case, even without another factor which the demographics do not show: we now want all these students to pass not only a statewide Basic Skills Test but to achieve the high standards in the state's Profile of Learning as well. Our recent addition of the Basic Skills Test and the Profile of Learning to this mix simply underlines the already-existing need of our English Language Learner group for good cognitive academic language skills. If our goal is for this large and increasing number of English language learners to start scoring at the norm on our standardized measures of academic achievement, then we need to realize that each one of them will need **advanced** level language support services for at least seven years, and sometimes more, to enable them to pass the Basic Skills Test and begin achieving at the level of the high standards on the Profile of Learning.

The factors we have considered here do not suggest that we need a **temporary** program. If we only had to educate the students currently on our demographic graphs, we would have maybe a seven-to nine-year program; but the curve is exponentially increasing in size every year. More and more ELL students are entering the state and each new cohort

needs this 7-9 year support. We are looking at a need for a statewide and (for the foreseeable future) a permanent program which can provide language support for English language learners who are simultaneously learning both a second language and new content at challenging standards.

At the administrative level — probably at the highest administrative level — these numbers suggest that financial planning should be done in such a way that adequate funds are provided in a more timely way to hire trained teachers to teach English language learners at all proficiency levels in all districts. The current system in Minnesota of asking districts to hire language learning specialists at the last minute (waiting till counts have been made of ELL students in each building) and be reimbursed later (sometimes much later) for those hires, does not appear to this observer to be productive given the dimensions of the problem. The retroactive reimbursement approach for such large numbers of students would seem to encourage minimalist, band-aid, year-by-year patchwork hires rather than the coherent, substantive, long-range programmatic solutions our state deserves.[3]

In sum, my second recommendation is: we need to end our denial about the scope of this problem and plan ahead. English language learners are numerous and increasing in numbers across the state, and will not disappear from our mainstream classes for the foreseeable future. We need to alert **all** school personnel — staff, mainstream teachers and specialist teachers — to the extent and nature of this population of learners. Funding for in-service training and the hiring of well-trained teachers to work with these students should be provided statewide in a more timely and generous way to encourage the effective development and delivery of substantive programs of instruction.

## III: Establish state guidelines on the sorts of services which should best support English Language Learners and the duration of those services.

The scope of the problem as outlined above suggests that we may need different guidelines on the sort of program we should be offering English language learners. In Ramsey and Hennepin counties now, English language learners are hardly even "special" any more ... they are part of the typical profile of the typical mainstream class. It seems clear that when this is the case, mainstream curriculum and mainstream teacher training must be changed to meet the changed needs of this linguistically diverse student population. When every mainstream class has English language learners in it, then every mainstream teacher needs to change the way s/he teaches — **not** to "water down the curriculum", but to make

it possible for **all** students to achieve at the high standards we have collectively set for **all** our children. This will take more time and more resources than teachers are currently given.

What sort of program model makes sense? Clearly, where numbers warrant it, lower-proficiency-level ELLs seem to benefit from separate ESL classes and substantial support from bilingual aides. However, when we are talking about teaching advanced level second-language skills and content simultaneously, it seems to me that the educational model which makes the most sense is one in which advanced-level English language learners are placed in mainstream classes whose well-trained teachers work closely with ESL and bilingual resource teachers to teach language and content in an integrated fashion (e.g. Short, 1991; Mohan 1986). This team of teachers plans the curriculum together, maps out challenging content to be learned by everyone, and the second-language teacher provides the sort of English language instruction which needs to be provided to enable the ELLs in the class to master that content.

Please let me be clear: I am **not** talking about just mainstreaming children without language support, in the style of the Unz Initiative. Schools need to **add** teachers to the staff: ESL and bilingual specialists to work with mainstream teachers to develop a curriculum and teaching approach which can provide **real** language support to ELLs in content classes.

Part of this model suggests that we need to restructure what ESL/bilingual teachers do: they need to focus on much more advanced-level language instruction, learn more about teaching students the language, learning strategies and study skills they will need to help students master content through a second language (Adamson, 1993), and (perhaps most crucially) become a more central part of the decision-making process with regard to the assessment and teaching of English Language Learners. Too often, we are learning, ESL teachers and even parents seem to have little voice in the decisions being made about ELLs with regard to, for example, Basic Skills Testing and the design of educational programs for those who cannot pass the Basic Skills Test. Those decisions should be made by personnel who are trained to make them, and by those who know the children best. Finally, students need to receive this sort of support much longer than we currently believe; clear guidelines should be set to establish when ELLs are ready to cope with mainstream education on their own, without English language support.

This team-teaching approach seems logical in districts where there are large percentages of English Language Learners, but can it work in small districts which have tiny percentages of ELLs? I was interested to read in the latest *MinneTESOL Newsletter* (1998) an ESL teacher's recommendation for the same team-teaching approach to be used in her outstate

district where there are proportionately very small numbers of English Language Learners. In this teacher's opinion, districts whose percentages of ELLs are so small that special ESL classes don't make sense, should also use a "team-teaching in the mainstream" approach.

Two factors are important to remember about setting up this sort of team-teaching approach. (1) It doesn't work well when it is mandated from above. Rather it works when trained teachers who really want to work together are provided some incentives for doing so. And, (2) teachers should be given planning time to enable them to implement this approach effectively (state- and district-level grants might help here).

The third recommendation therefore is: we need state guidelines on the sorts of services which should best support English Language Learners and how long they should be provided. Those guidelines should state that while pull-out ESL classes may work well for beginning level learners, programs for advanced proficiency level English Language Learners who need to pass the Basic Skills Test and achieve at the high standards should involve placing more advanced learners into classrooms in which the mainstream instructor team-teaches with an ESL/bilingual teacher. Districts should encourage this sort of collaboration by providing planning time for interested teachers. When ELLs arrive in the state in their mid- to late-teens, they should be placed in programs such as the LEAP[4] program in St. Paul, which has an impressive success rate. In general, ESL/bilingual teachers need to restructure what they do: helping to plan and design an effective learning program, and providing the language and learning strategy instruction that English Language Learning students need to keep up with their challenging content learning. In all cases, ESL/bilingual teachers should be fully involved in making these assessment and educational decisions about English Language Learner students. These recommendations for restructured ESL/bilingual support may imply changes in the licensure requirements for secondary-level ESL/bilingual teachers in particular.

## IV: Provide support for adult English language learners in adult education programs throughout the state.

The numbers of ELL children in our schools are, in some ways, just the tip of the iceberg. The ELL children in Minnesota schools do not live alone; they have families. We have to realize that high ELL numbers in the schools must also reflect a corresponding high number of adults who are also English language learners — not just parents, but unattached relatives and friends as well, many of whom have moved to Minnesota for the good employment opportunities offered here. In the state of Minnesota during 1997-98, out of 48,000 students served by Adult Basic Edu-

cation programs, 15,000 (or one out of three) were English Language Learner adults. Northrop Community Center in Olmsted County provides these figures: in September 1997, 1362 LEP students enrolled in Rochester public schools. During that same academic year, 869 adults enrolled in English as a Second Language classes, of whom 42% were Asian, 26% were Black (mostly Somali), 17% were Hispanic and 15% were European (mostly former Yugoslavia and former USSR). While we plan to educate ELL children in our public schools, we should also plan for ongoing funding for adult ESL at all proficiency levels, from pre-literacy to college prep, with special focus on workplace literacy. We need better programs in adult ESL, staffed by teachers who are trained to teach ESL to adults (which in this state, are teachers with an MA in ESL). The state of Minnesota is presently re-evaluating who is most qualified to teach adult ESL. At the time of this writing, the state requires only a K-12 license and no ESL training for instructors in adult education. Individuals holding MA degrees in ESL, specifically trained to teach adult ESL, cannot teach in Minnesota adult education programs at this time because they do not hold a license to teach children. This must change. Adult Education licensure guidelines should be set up to ease the way of teachers who have an MA in ESL into adult education classrooms.

The fourth recommendation, then, is: plan for ongoing funding for quality adult ESL programs at all proficiency levels, from pre-literacy to college prep, with special focus on workplace literacy, and hire individuals for those programs who are trained to teach adult ESL. Indeed, there are positive efforts within the Department of Children, Families and Learning to develop procedures to enable holders of the MA in ESL to teach ELL adults in adult education programs while working toward state licensure; these efforts are to be heartily commended and strongly supported.[5]

## V. Implementing the recommendations.

The recommendations just provided are ambitious. But they do lay out what needs to happen in the Minnesota schools to deal with the population changes we are experiencing if we are to maintain the high quality of education of which we are so proud in this state. How can we move toward implementing these recommendations in concrete ways? I would like to offer a couple of suggestions.

First, I have proposed that state guidelines should be set specifying consistent criteria for identifying English Language Learners (LEP students), and specifying the sorts of educational programs which should be set up for those learners. These guidelines should be proposed to the relevant State agencies: to governors, legislators and commissioners in State offices. Such individuals have a clear and important agenda set be-

fore them. We can write and phone those individuals with our support, and, where things are not clear, with suggestions.

But there are also measures which all of us can also take in our own local situations to move the state in the right direction. For example, we can learn and train ourselves to deal with this new and changing situation. There are excellent sessions offered at professional conferences throughout the year on teaching content through a second language and teaching to the Minnesota standards. There are classes being offered at local universities like the University of Minnesota and Hamline University, for example, for both mainstream and ESL/bilingual teachers on the teaching of content through a second language. There are good models of good programs in our state that we can visit to learn how to deal with these students; the LEAP program in St. Paul is one such program that I would recommend that you visit. In addition, we can seek grant funding to undertake curricular change.

These recommendations lay out an ambitious road map for us; they expand our vision for what is possible in the state of Minnesota. We may not be able to implement all of these recommendations as fully as we might like. But we need consensus on where we are going. And we need to seek assistance from the state, both in setting state guidelines and in financing the programs we will need to adequately deal with the changing Minnesota population in our schools and communities.

## NOTES

1. This paper was presented at the statewide LEP Conference in Minneapolis on May 8, 1998, together with a presentation on population figures by state demographer Barbara Ronningen. The current paper summarizes and refers to figures originally presented by Ms. Ronningen. These figures are available on the Minnesota Planning State Demographic Center Internet web site:
http://www.mnplan.state.mn.us/demography/index.html

I am grateful to Mary Ann Saurino in the Minnesota State Department of Children, Families & Learning for organizing this plenary session.

2. Of course, in language immersion schools the school language is not English, but rather Spanish or French, but this is a special case. There are very few of these schools in the state and typically the students in them are native speakers of the majority language, English, not immigrants.

3. Some might even argue that our society would prefer not to educate immigrants so as to have a continuing supply of low-wage earners as fuel for the economy. The current retroactive, band-aid approach to L2

instruction for immigrant students would certainly seem to be one which reinforces the status quo and does nothing to move immigrants out of their position at the bottom of the economic ladder.

4. LEAP (the Limited English Achievement Program), located in downtown St. Paul, is a high school serving only those local students who are English Language Learners aged 16 years or older. These recently immigrated students are provided with integrated ESL and content instruction in an intensive but supportive environment. LEAP, recently selected as one of 20 schools in the country to be sponsored by an NEH New Millennium grant, has produced phenomenally high graduation rates. For information about this program, contact LEAP at (651) 228-7706 and ask for Jeff Dufresne or Sandra Hall.

5. At the time of this writing (late February 1999), there are several legislative initiatives in motion to rectify this situation. The proposed Minnesota Governor's Education Bill contains a section which would permit holders of degrees in ESL, applied linguistics, bilingual education, or any other relevant major approved by the Commissioner of Education, to teach ESL in Adult Basic Education programs without a K-12 license. An almost identical bill has been sponsored by Rep. Alice Hausman (St. Paul) as well, and a less rigorous bill offered by Sen. Kiscaden (Rochester). These initiatives, permitting professionals who are trained to teach ESL to adults to do so in ABE programs, are welcome.

## THE AUTHOR

Elaine Tarone is a Professor of English as a Second Language at the University of Minnesota, and current Director of the Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition at the University. She has published extensively on second-language acquisition, and is currently exploring ways to bring the University's resources to bear on ESL needs of immigrants in the Upper Midwest.

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# *Mainstream Teachers' Perceptions of the Advantages and Disadvantages of Teaching ESL Students*

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Most of the ESL literature has focused on ESL students working with ESL teachers. The present study is concerned, instead, with mainstream teachers' perceptions of ESL students. A survey of 143 mainstream teachers was conducted in the middle/junior high schools of a moderate-sized Great Plains community, and teachers were asked to identify any advantages and/or disadvantages they felt were associated with having ESL students in their regular, content-area classrooms. Most respondents to the survey answered this open-ended question and listed roughly the same number of advantages and disadvantages. However, the distributions of listed advantages and disadvantages across issues associated with impact of ESL students on the class, on the teacher, and the impact of the class on the ESL student were quite distinct.

An extensive body of literature exists on how to teach ESL students (Arias & Casanova, 1993; Banks & Banks, 1995; Benesch, 1991; Crawford, 1993; Freeman & Freeman, 1992; Krashen, 1988; Richards & Lockhart, 1994; Silberstein, 1993). This literature generally focuses on ESL teachers teaching ESL students in ESL classrooms. However, ESL students will spend much of their time, not with ESL teachers, but with mainstream teachers (Clair, 1993, 1995; Young, 1996). To better understand the ESL student's entire schooling experience, it is important to understand the mainstream component of students' experience, as well. The goal of the present study is to examine mainstream teachers' views on the advantages and disadvantages of working with ESL students. Hopefully, this will encourage a discussion of how the professional ESL community can best understand the views of mainstream teachers and in turn, best support ESL students in mainstream classes.

The structure, focus, and stresses of the mainstream classroom are significantly different from the ESL classroom (Markham, Green, & Ross, 1996). Presumably, ESL teachers are already positively inclined toward

working with ESL students. According to Markham et al. (1996), ESL teachers' focus is on this task, and their primary source of stress is preparing the ESL student to move into regular, content area classrooms. In contrast, mainstream teachers' task is centered more on teaching content and their primary source of stress is the management of large classes. These classes are likely to fit the traditional, teacher-centered model that is of questionable value for any student, but especially problematic for the ESL student facing a multitude of adjustment demands beyond the daunting task of learning the assigned content (Constantino, 1994: Harklau, 1994; Penfield, 1987; Platt & Troudi, 1997).

It is in this context of a misfit between the focus of the mainstream teacher and the needs of the ESL student, that it becomes critical to understand how the mainstream teacher perceives the ESL student. However, there is surprisingly little empirical research on the mainstream teacher (Clair, 1993, 1995; Constantino, 1994; Edstam, 1998; Harklau, 1994; Lucas, Henze, & Donato, 1990; Markham et al. 1996; Penfield, 1987; Platt & Troudi, 1997). The studies that do exist suggest that few mainstream teachers have training in ESL pedagogy (Clair, 1993, 1995; Constantino, 1994; Harklau, 1994; Penfield, 1987; Platt & Troudi, 1997; Stratham, 1995; Wong Fillmore, & Meyer, 1992; Young, 1996); that mainstream teachers are not positively disposed to obtaining ESL training, at least through the traditional, in-service training workshop format (Clair, 1993, 1995); that mainstream and ESL teachers differ in the stresses they experience (Markham et al., 1996); and that mainstream classrooms present ESL students with both new opportunities and new obstacles (Harklau, 1994; Penfield, 1987; Platt & Troudi, 1997).

In addition, very few studies have focused specifically on mainstream teachers' perceptions of ESL students (Byrnes, Kiger, & Manning, 1997; Clair, 1993; Penfield, 1987). Clair (1993) conducted intensive interviews of three mainstream teachers, two grade school and one high school teacher, and examined their beliefs about ESL students. Although short on participants, Clair's study is rich in qualitative detail. These teachers appeared to know relatively little about their ESL students' backgrounds; they appreciated the role of macro-level factors in the success of ESL students but focused mostly on individual issues; they tended to expect less of their ESL students; their knowledge of students' cultural background often was based on hearsay; and they were not fully familiar with the ESL programs in their schools. These teachers expressed frustration over time constraints and curricular constraints in responding to ESL students and generally engaged in little modification of their instructional practices.

Byrnes et al. (1997) surveyed 191 regular classroom teachers across three states and administered a scale measuring their attitudes toward

ESL students. The overall scale response appeared to be neutral, but scores were significantly more positive for teachers who had worked with language-minority children, completed a graduate degree, had formal training in working with non-English speaking students, and lived in Arizona versus either Utah or Virginia. This study is rich in the number of participants, and provides important insight into those factors that affect mainstream teachers' perceptions, but it provides little information on the detail and structure of participants' perceptions.

Finally, Penfield (1987) administered a short questionnaire with roughly twenty open-ended questions to 162 New Jersey mainstream teachers attending various in-service workshops. Penfield's study is rich in both the number of participants and in the qualitative detail provided about mainstream teachers' perceptions of ESL students. The results suggest that mainstream teachers were frustrated over their inability to communicate with ESL students and parents. They viewed ESL students as easier to teach in some subject areas than others (e.g., math vs. language arts), as easier to discipline, and as cooperative but too passive. Penfield's teachers also expressed concern that ESL students take time away from the class, but that ESL students bring a multicultural perspective to the class and model highly motivated and cooperative behavior. Finally, these mainstream teachers appeared to have little knowledge of how to integrate content and second language learning, but they did indicate some interest in training.

These three studies suggest that mainstream teachers see some benefits to teaching ESL students in regular, content area classrooms, but these teachers also have a number of serious reservations, have little knowledge of ESL students, and have little training in ESL pedagogy. The net result, according to Constantino (1994), is for mainstream teachers to engage in a pattern of disabling interaction with ESL students that includes low expectations for their ESL students, a willingness to blame the student for poor performance, and a failure to take into account the role that culture plays in the performance of ESL students.

Thus, it is critical to better understand the mainstream teacher's views of the ESL student. Rather than focusing on what mainstream teachers should or should not feel about teaching ESL students, the present study wishes to follow in the footsteps of Penfield (1987) and Clair (1993) and ask mainstream teachers to express their feelings. Similar to Penfield, we provided a substantial number of mainstream teachers with the opportunity to make comments in response to an open-ended question on a self-administered questionnaire. We specifically asked teachers to identify separately any advantages or disadvantages they saw in teaching ESL students in regular, content-area classrooms, and then we classified the responses to assess the relative focus of teachers' comments on the

classroom, the mainstream teacher, and the ESL student. This effort provided more insight than offered by past research into the internal structure of mainstream teachers' perceptions of working with ESL students in regular, content area classrooms.

# METHODS

We distributed our survey to all teachers (N = 224) in the three middle/junior high schools that make up a Great Plains community of approximately 80,000. Each school has close to 1,000 students. The survey was reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board of the second author's university, by the school district's assistant superintendent, and by the principals of each of the three schools. The second author introduced the survey to teachers during the fall orientation sessions for the 1996-97 academic year.

The questionnaires were distributed to teachers' mailboxes, followed two weeks later by a reminder letter, and two weeks later, again, by another copy of the survey to teachers who had not yet responded. This generated a response rate of 78 percent (N = 174). The survey asked teachers to indicate the nature of their teaching assignment, and 143 teachers reported teaching regular, content-area classrooms (e.g., classes in the humanities, social sciences, natural and physical sciences, and applied disciplines). These are the teachers whose responses were analyzed for the present study.

The survey included questions assessing teachers' general teaching experience, the amount and nature of their experience with ESL students, and teachers' demographic characteristics. The central question for the present study was an open-ended query about their perceptions of the advantages and disadvantages of teaching ESL students. Specifically, the question asked, "Please provide any general comments you would like to make about the advantages and/or disadvantages you perceive in teaching ESL students." Following the question were two, underlined headings, Advantages and Disadvantages, with space underneath each heading for teachers to respond. Providing separate prompts for advantages and disadvantages was designed to maximize the likelihood that teachers would report both aspects of their teaching experiences with ESL students.

# RESULTS

Respondents' backgrounds and teaching experiences were diverse. There were relatively balanced distributions of teachers by gender (53%,

female, and 47%, male), by age (21 - 30, 21%; 31 - 40, 27%; 41 - 50, 30%; 51 - 60, 20%; and 61 and older, 2%), and by grade level (6th grade, 21%; 7th grade, 39%; 8th grade, 34%; and 9th grade, 43%—some taught more than one grade level). Teachers represented a variety of subject areas as well (humanities, 35%; social sciences, 13%; natural and physical sciences, 24%, and applied disciplines, 28%). The typical teacher in the survey had taught 15.5 years, currently had 2.3 ESL students across all of their classes combined, and had taught a total of 8.8 ESL students during the preceding 5 years. Only 6 percent had not taught any ESL students during this time period (i.e., the current year plus the 5 prior years). When teachers were asked to identify the regions of the world represented by the ESL students they had taught, they typically marked 3.2 regions from a list of 12 including 10 regions we supplied and two additional regions we generated from responses to our "Other" category (Central America including Mexico; South America; Southeast Asia; Asia including China, Japan, and Korea, Indian subcontinent including India and Nepal; Africa; Western Europe; Eastern Europe; countries formerly part of USSR; Middle East; the Caribbean including Haiti, Cuba, and Jamaica; and Native Americans). Thus, the mainstream teachers in our Great Plains community had taught a modest number of ESL students from a variety of different parts of the world.

The number of survey respondents who answer open-ended questions is often discouraging, but our question about advantages and disadvantages apparently generated considerable interest. A total of 93 teachers (65%) listed at least one advantage and the same number listed at least one disadvantage. Some listed more than one advantage or disadvantage, and each listing was counted separately. The two totals were very similar (109 advantages vs. 118 disadvantages) suggesting some degree of balance in teachers' perceptions of the pros and cons of teaching ESL students as part of a mainstream class.

We classified the itemized advantages and disadvantages into four categories primarily based on the key players in the mainstream classroom, the class, the teacher, the ESL student, and miscellaneous comments. While the total advantages and disadvantages were similar, their distribution across these four categories differed substantially (Table 1). Teachers were twice as likely to mention the class when discussing advantages (57% of all listed advantages) as they were when discussing disadvantages (25% of all listed disadvantages). In contrast, teachers were roughly four times more likely to focus on the ESL student when discussing disadvantages (45%) as they were when discussing advantages (12%). Teachers were equally likely to focus on themselves when discussing either advantages (29%) or disadvantages (29%). Finally, very few comments fell into the miscellaneous category for either advantages (3%) or disad-

vantages (2%). In sum, the class is most salient to teachers when spontaneously discussing advantages, and concern for the ESL student is most salient when teachers discuss disadvantages.

To get a better sense of the comments associated with each of the three major categories (class, teacher, and ESL student), we coded comments into topical subgroups. The identified subgroups, examples of comments falling into each, and the frequency of comments in each subgroup are shown in Tables 2, 3, and 4 for the class, the teacher, and the ESL student, respectively. Using these topical subgroups as a guide, the analysis to follow will examine both the nature and the variety of teachers' comments within and across categories.

Table 1

Perceived Advantages and Disadvantages by Category

| | Advantages | | Disadvantages | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Category | % | (n) | % | (n) |
| Class | 57 | (62) | 25 | (29) |
| Teacher | 29 | (32) | 29 | (34) |
| ESL Students | 11 | (12) | 45 | (53) |
| Miscellaneous | 3 | (3) | 2 | (2) |
| Total | 100% | (109) | 101% | (118) |

We will begin by looking at the nature of the most frequently mentioned advantages and disadvantages. Within the class category (Table 2), teachers were most likely to mention as an advantage, the role of ESL students in triggering cultural awareness, and to mention as a disadvantage, their concern that ESL students bring emotional difficulties that are hard for other students to appreciate. Within the teacher category (Table 3), the most often mentioned advantage was the observation that ESL students are easy to teach, and the most often mentioned disadvantage was the negative impact that the extra work associated with teaching ESL students has on the teacher's time for self. Within the ESL student category (Table 4), the most frequently noted advantage was the observation that ESL students can learn from mainstream students, and the most frequently noted disadvantage was the perceived inadequate preparation of ESL students in English. Thus, as teachers consider the presence of ESL students in the mainstream classroom, they see a variety of distinct advantages and disadvantages for each party—class, teacher, and ESL student. Finally, the advantage most often mentioned, overall, focused on the class (Table 2), "ESL students trigger cultural awareness," and the concern most often mentioned, overall, focused on the ESL student (Table 4), "ESL students are not well enough prepared in English."

However, the variety of advantages and disadvantages identified by teachers differs substantially. Overall, teachers mentioned far fewer distinct advantages than disadvantages. Seven topical subgroups emerged among the listed advantages, and 15 subgroups emerged among the listed disadvantages. While the absolute value of each of these numbers (i.e., 7 and 15) is certainly a product of our particular coding scheme, the relative difference in these numbers suggests that teachers, as a group, have a much more differentiated schema of disadvantages than they do of advantages.

Table 2

Perceived Advantages and Disadvantages for Class

| Issue | Example | n |
|---|---|---|
| | Advantages | |
| a.) ESL students trigger cultural awareness. | "They bring great new perspectives...might help ease some prejudices." | 32 |
| b.) ESL students serve as class resource. | "ESL students have much to offer....Also, first-hand accounts are...interesting." | 27 |
| c.) ESL students create new student partnership opportunities. | "This is a wonderful opportunity for students to be helpful..." | 3 |
| Total | | 62 |
| | Disadvantages | |
| a.) ESL students bring emotional difficulties that are hard for other students to appreciate. | "Because of [past] bad experiences...they have a chip on their shoulder..." "When I slow my class presentations down a bit... [ESL] students feel...they are causing this..." | 14 |
| b.) ESL students require special attention that diverts attention from other students. | "It's hard to spend enough time with them [ESL]...especially when you have twenty some other students..." | 12 |
| c.) ESL students bring sometimes terrifying experiences to class that other students find hard to absorb. | "Sometimes, their past experiences have had horrifying effects on them [ESL] and our kids...just can not understand." | 3 |
| Total | | 29 |

Teachers also differed considerably in the number of distinct advantages and disadvantages that they mentioned from category-to-category. For example, we coded one more distinct subgroup of advantages within the class category (3) than within either the teacher (2) or the ESL student (2) categories (Tables 2, 3, 4). Thus, both the greatest quantity (Table 1) and the greatest variety of spontaneously mentioned advantages fell in the class category.

Table 3

Perceived Advantages and Disadvantages for the Teacher

| Issue | Example | n |
|---|---|---|
| | Advantages | |
| a.) ESL students are good students to teach. | "They are highly motivated..." | 27 |
| b.) Presence of ESL students improves teaching. | "My teaching is better... I should avoid slang..." | 5 |
| Total | | 32 |
| | Disadvantages | |
| a.) The extra work reduces teachers' time for self. | "ESL students take a lot of extra time....They add to the 'special needs' population..." | 9 |
| b.) Must modify materials for ESL students. | "Modifications have to be made...very difficult when 130 students..." | 6 |
| c.) It's difficult to teach ESL students because appropriate standards are unclear. | "When I realized that my primary goal was to help with teaching the language and socialization, the pressure of content learning diminished." | 5 |
| d.) Appropriate placement of ESL students into mainstream is often a problem. | "Many ESL students are placed...where they have little chance of success..." | 3 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| e.) Demands of teaching ESL students creates frustration. | "I feel at a loss as to whether they get much out of my class." | 3 |
| f.) There is not a lot of collaboration with ESL teachers. | "[There is not enough] communication with the ESL teacher so that we are working together to make the student successful." | 3 |
| g.) There is not enough collaboration with other sources of support. | "Sometimes parent contact is difficult..." "We have no teacher aide help." | 3 |
| h.) Mainstream teachers do not have training in ESL. | "I have not had any training for ESL students." | 2 |
| Total | | 34 |

In contrast, teachers identified many more distinct subgroups of disadvantages in the teacher category (8) than they did in either the ESL student (4) or the class (3) categories (Tables 2, 3, 4). While the greatest quantity of concern focused on the ESL student (Table 1), the greatest variety of concern emerged in the teacher category. In sum, when teachers considered the advantages of having ESL students in the mainstream classroom, they talked about the benefits to the class; when teachers considered the disadvantages, they talked with considerable frequency about the ESL student and with considerable detail about the teachers, themselves.

Table 4

Perceived Advantages and Disadvantages for the ESL Student

| Issue | Example | n |
|---|---|---|
| | Advantages | |
| a.) ESL students can learn from mainstream students. | "The ESL student has a chance to learn the English language and to relate to other students." | 8 |
| b.) Success of ESL student is unique to class content. | "Because my area is a hands-on learning environment, it is easier for these [ESL] students." | 4 |
| Total | | 12 |
| | Disadvantages | |
| a.) ESL students are not well enough prepared in English. | "Without sufficient English...students have a difficult time participating... completing work, and communicating with others." | 32 |
| b.) Teachers do not have enough time to help ESL students adequately. | "They [ESL students] are usually in low ability math classes because of the language and the [native] English speaking students in here are very low achievers and have many discipline problems—there is not enough time to spend with the ESL students that generally want to do well." | 10 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| c.) ESL students do not have enough preparation in content areas. | "I also find that most ESL students have low skills. I never know if the language is the main reason or just that they have very little background knowledge." | 8 |
| d.) ESL students are too quiet to get the help they need. | "They do not ask questions—(I just learned that it is disrespectful to ask questions)." | 3 |
| Total | | 53 |

# DISCUSSION

The results suggest that mainstream teachers in a moderate-sized Great Plains community who have two or three ESL students per year feel that they have had enough experience to formulate a written reaction. Nearly two-thirds of the surveyed teachers took time to complete an open-ended question and to identify what they perceived to be the advantages and disadvantages associated with the presence of ESL students in their regular, content area classrooms. These results, combined with the high response rate to the survey itself, indicate that mainstream teachers have considerable interest in this issue.

In addition, virtually every respondent to the question listed at least one advantage and at least one disadvantage. We did specifically ask for both, but it is nevertheless conceivable that teachers might have been either so positive or so negative about the presence of ESL students in mainstream classrooms that the distribution of comments could have been significantly skewed. Thus, teachers' perceptions of ESL students are mixed with an overall balance of perceived advantages and disadvantages.

These findings provide an important framework within which the mainstream teacher and the ESL teacher can collaborate. Both ESL and mainstream teachers desire collaboration (Edstam, 1998), but this is unlikely to happen without some effort. These two roles have different foci (Markham et al., 1996); teachers come to these roles with different types of training (Clair, 1993, 1995; Constantino, 1994; Harklau, 1994; Penfield, 1987; Platt & Troudi, 1997; Stratham, 1995; Wong Fillmore, & Meyer, 1992; Young, 1996); and system support for these roles often differs substantially (Cummins, 1997; Harklau, 1994).

In this context, the ESL teacher—the teacher who is on the outside looking in (Markham et al., 1996)—may find it reassuring to know that

mainstream teachers can readily identify a fairly balanced list of advantages and disadvantages. The list of perceived advantages may be of particular value to the ESL teacher trying to establish cooperative relationships with mainstream teachers. Of special note is the preponderance of listed advantages that focus on ESL students' positive impact on the class. Course content is the central concern of mainstream teachers (Markham et al., 1996), so emphasizing and enhancing ESL students' potential role in enriching the mainstream course and in expanding the cultural awareness of mainstream students should serve as a solid basis for ESL/mainstream teacher collaboration.

However, ESL teachers also need to know that the overall balance of listed pros and cons contrasts with the unbalanced pattern of pros and cons from category to category. The list of advantages focuses on the class while the list of disadvantages emphasizes the ESL student and the teacher. Addressing the perceived disadvantages is where the hard work of collaboration is likely to occur.

For example, the greatest number of listed disadvantages focused on the ESL student. Most of these comments suggest that mainstream teachers believe ESL students lack sufficient preparation for effective learning in a mainstream classroom. Many ESL teachers are likely to share this concern (Markham et al., 1996), although many also might argue that mainstream teachers need to better appreciate just how important a mainstream class is to ESL students' language development (Constantino, 1994: Penfield, 187). Clearly, the issue of ESL student preparation is very salient to mainstream teachers, and it is an issue that must be directly addressed as part of any program of ESL/mainstream teacher collaboration.

In addition, the greatest variety of listed disadvantages emerged in the teacher category. The list reflects general frustration (e.g., reduced time for self, uncertainty about what ESL students are learning) and specific pedagogical concerns (e.g., test modification, unclear goals and standards). These concerns might be alleviated, in part, by more training in ESL pedagogy. ESL teachers could be a source of such training (Edstam, 1998), at least informally, by taking advantage of "teachable moments" during ESL/mainstream teacher collaboration. Indeed, mainstream teachers' frequent expressions of concern about inadequate collaboration suggests that mainstream teachers might appreciate such focused guidance.

Overall, these results provide a road map for the ESL teacher working with mainstream teachers. Mainstream teachers believe that ESL students trigger cultural awareness, are good students to teach, and can learn from mainstream students. In contrast, mainstream teachers also believe that ESL students bring unique emotional and personal experiences to class that are difficult for mainstream students to appreciate, that they

create extra work for frustrated teachers, and that ESL students are not well enough prepared to learn effectively in the mainstream classroom. ESL teachers wishing to establish close, collaborative relationships with mainstream teachers may wish to build on these perceived advantages and to explicitly address these perceived disadvantages.

## NOTE

This study reports one aspect of a multi-part, research design conducted by the second author as part of her current work on her doctoral dissertation. The results were presented by the second author at the Midwest TESOL Conference, Milwaukee, WI, October, 1997.

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# NOSTALGIA

My people's roots lie deep in the rich
Fertile soil of Laotian hills
Where I spent my teenage life
Happiness stood still.
Unfortunately, the war counteracted our hopes
We scattered all over the world
We bore a new code
And learned new words.
Life was tough and horrible
In the new strange country
We haven't had the industrial work skills and
experiences
My mind rests with my country.
Someday I may return
To build and make it a safer and better place to
live
Everything will be safe from war burned
Hopes and dreams would be achieved.

*Jer*
*Century College*

# *Recruiting Minority Teachers from within Local School Districts: The Lakeland College Urban Teachers Outreach Program*

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In a cooperative endeavor with the Sheboygan Area School District and Lakeland College, a small group of Southeast Asian and Hispanic para professionals are earning college diplomas and teacher certification in Wisconsin. This article shares how the program was developed and initiated. It then discusses the students' backgrounds, their sources of support for continuing in the program, and problems they have en countered in the program. This article concludes with a discussion of implications for the development of similar programs.

Sheboygan, Wisconsin is a community of approximately 50,000 residents and lies midway between Milwaukee and Green Bay on the Lake Michigan shoreline. This community is served by the Sheboygan Area School District which enrolls approximately 10,000 students EC-12. Approximately 12 percent of the student enrollment is minority (predominately Southeast Asian and Hispanic), yet less than one percent of the teaching staff is representative of these communities. In order to increase the number of certified minority teachers in the local schools, the Sheboygan Area School District and Lakeland College entered a joint endeavor called the Urban Teachers Outreach Program (UTOP).

## THE BACKGROUND

As an elementary school principal in Sheboygan, I was bothered by this discrepancy and by the lack of minority teacher role models in our community. Even our ESL and Bilingual classes were taught primarily by language-majority teachers. I was interested in developing the talents of those individuals within our own community. The literature showed that school districts could do this by training the paraprofessionals who already were working within the schools (Education Commission of the States, 1990; McKay & Gezi, 1990; Ramirez & Tippeconnic III, 1979). So, I

informally talked to numerous minority paraprofessionals in the Sheboygan Area School District and asked them if they would be interested in earning a college degree and becoming regular education teachers and ESL teachers. Their desire was overwhelming. With their support I approached the President of Lakeland College. We then met with Dr. Mehraban Khodavandi, Dean of the Graduate School at Lakeland College, and together we outlined a course of action that included, among other items: a timeline, key personnel, financial issues, and curriculum issues. (Dr. Khodavandi became critical to the success of this program as he became the primary individual responsible for the program development and initial implementation.)

We decided that we would survey minority paraprofessionals in the Sheboygan Area School District in order to determine actually how many would be interested in such a program. The program would be designed as a cohort. In other words, the students would all take their courses together, without students from outside the program, and would then move through the program together. We knew the Pre-Professional Skills Test (PPST) could well be a difficulty for many of the students, as the literature strongly states that many minorities score poorly on standardized competency tests (Daughtry, 1989; Foster, 1989; Garibaldi, 1989; and Zapata, 1988). This problem could only be more difficult for those students who are language-minority. Thus we agreed to offer Reading, Writing, and Math courses for those students who would need extra assistance in these areas. This would be identified through the fall entrance tests that Lakeland requires of all its freshmen students. If all went well, the students would take two night courses each semester and two or three courses each semester. This would allow them to graduate and be certified in seven years. While it might seem very long, the time frame was necessary because these students worked full-time day jobs.

With the support of the local school districts, it was agreed that Lakeland College would be responsible for teaching all the courses and would commit to handle all financing issues. Financial assistance is also crucial to low-income students (Carnegie Task Force, 1986; Haberman, 1989; and the Holmes Group cited in Jones, 1987). Therefore, Lakeland College would use Pell Grants and their own financial resources to pay 100% of the students' tuition. The students would need to pay for books and supplies. The school districts agreed to host all the student teachers and to guarantee interviews for each UTOP graduate.

The UTOP program then began with classes in the summer of 1994. The first three courses offered were college-level Reading, Writing, and Math for the students who required more assistance in those areas (as identified in the entrance tests) and for those students who felt they wanted more help in order to be best prepared for college.

## THE STUDENTS

Twenty-eight students were originally enrolled. Four of the students were American-born Hispanic with the remainder born in Southeast Asia (Laos and Cambodia). About two-thirds of the students were teacher aides or secretaries in the local school district, while the other students worked as laborers or in lower management positions in the private sector. Several couples enrolled in the program together. All of the students had completed high school and some had college or technical school credits or degrees. Most of the students spoke English quite well, but many of the Southeast Asian students were not as fluent as they would like in terms of their reading and writing. Many of these same students predominately spoke Hmong at home.

## THE FIRST YEARS

There was a great deal of enthusiasm from all parties when the program got under way. At least twenty-five students enrolled in the introductory Reading, Writing, and Math courses. They worked extremely hard and took a great deal of pride in their work. However, a couple of concerns soon began to arise. About half of the students had more difficulty with writing than we expected. It became apparent that they would need additional writing support as the program continued if they were to be successful.

The other concern related to the other half of the students. They were very fluent with the English language and were very successful. They could progress through the program more quickly than their peers and were thus being slowed down. The idea of the cohort seemed to be a problem. Related to this issue was the fact that administrative repositioning at the college meant that a new administrator would be in charge of the UTOP. In fact, over the next couple of years four different administrators led the program as their responsibilities were being reformed. This took the sense of security away from the students as they had not developed a trusting relationship with any particular administrator, other than Dr. Khodavandi. But the biggest change was the fact that the cohort group was dismantled. In order for the more fluent students to be able to proceed through the program quickly, they would have to take more classes and with other students in the Lifelong Learning Program. Besides graduating sooner, this would also allow the students to be able to choose more than one academic minor. This would in turn allow the other UTOP students the opportunity to take fewer courses and focus on

improving their English literacy. However, it also meant more isolation for all the UTOP students.

Over the first three years a few students became frustrated and dropped out. One exceptionally gifted student got married and moved to Western Wisconsin where she enrolled in a teacher preparation program. A few other students liked college and the program, but felt that they would never be able to pass the PPST. As a result, they changed majors and enrolled in other programs on campus. This left the UTOP with about 12 of the original students continuing to progress through the program. The first one has already graduated and has been hired as an ESL teacher in the Sheboygan Area School District. Another student will be graduating this spring and looking for her first teaching position. The other students are expected to graduate in the next two years.

## A CASE STUDY OF THE UTOP STUDENTS

In order to help make the program as successful as possible, I decided to initiate a series of case studies of the UTOP students to determine what sources of support they utilized and what obstacles created problems for them. The sample of fifteen people included four Hispanics (all women), and eleven Southeast Asians (four men and seven women). Ten of the Southeast Asians were of Hmong heritage, and one was born in Cambodia. Thus, the total sample included four men and eleven women. All four of the Hispanics were born in Texas, and all ten Hmong were born in Laos. Therefore, the focus of this investigation was on experiences of the students in the sample, not the program itself.

This research used a case study database. This database included the following: research notes, archival records, tabular materials from an informational questionnaire, and taped narratives from comprehensive interviews (see appendix A). The archival records included memoranda, student journals, newspaper articles, and academic transcripts. The use of multiple modes, or overlap methods, of inquiry served as the process of triangulation, and thus increased internal and construct validity by building supportive links between information and between sources.

Each individual in the sample was sent an informational questionnaire (see appendix B). The informational questionnaires were used in order to define various demographic attributes of the students, and to assist in the development of interview themes. Interviews were then conducted based on themes defined from these questionnaires. When possible, student journals and college and local school district memoranda and transcripts were analyzed in order to validate the findings.

# FINDINGS

*Cross Case Analysis*

All four of the Hispanics moved directly to the Midwest with their families. Two of the women moved to be with other family members, while the other two moved for employment opportunities. All eleven of the Southeast Asian individuals fled communist regimes during the time of the Vietnam War to refugee camps in Thailand. They had journeyed by many different routes to the Midwest region of the United States.

Cross-case pattern-matching also revealed that all four of the Hispanics learned English and Spanish concurrently. Two learned English immediately, and two began to learn English once they entered grade school. Hmong was the native language of all ten of the Hmong. Four also learned Lao either in the refugee camps or in schools in Laos. One Hmong also learned Thai in a camp, and two learned French while in Laotian public schools. The Cambodian only knew Laotian (as she lived in refugee camps) until she attended school in the United States. The mean age of when the students began to learn English was 10.7 years old (3 years old for the Hispanics, and 13.5 years old for the Southeast Asians). On the other hand, the mean age when these people moved to the United States was somewhat different. The mean age for the sample was 10.4 years old (0 years old for the Hispanics—all born in the United States, and 14.2 years old for the Southeast Asians).

*Sources of Support*

By and large, the students in this sample have always had support from their parents to excel in school. From the total sample, eleven UTOP students said their parents were supportive or very supportive of them while they were in elementary and secondary school. All of the Hispanic students said their parents were very supportive of their daughters' academic achievements.

The Southeast Asian students indicated somewhat dissimilar experiences. Seven of the students received a great deal of support from their parents, while four did not. More specifically, the males, with one exception, were expected and encouraged to excel in school. In Southeast Asia, parents must pay for their children to go to elementary and secondary schools. These schools are generally located only in the cities, thus parents quite often must also pay for their children to room and board away from home. The reason the one male gave for his parents not to show support of his education was because they were poor. School was simply not available for him; thus, it was never expected. On the other hand, four of the women received absolutely no support from their par-

ents to go to school. In the Hmong culture, the girl's education would not benefit the natural parents as it would be carried over to her parents-in-law upon her marriage. Thus, many parents did not see any reason to support their daughter's education, especially with the costs associated with schools. Still, three of the girls in the sample did receive support from their families. Typically, these parents were the most educated, and often lived in or near a city in Laos.

In terms of current support for their children's pursuit of higher education, the support given by parents of the Hispanic UTOP students has remained strong. Such remarks from parents as, "You have to go to college. I never had anything like that," and "You have to try to learn so you don't end up like me working in the kitchen and doing hard work," exemplify this strong support. One student also indicated, "I never felt how proud they are of me until now."

The current support shown by the Southeast Asian parents increased even more noticeably. Eight of the students in this sample reported that their parents show a great deal of support for their children's academic pursuits. The parents of the Southeast Asian students believe that education is extremely important for anyone to be successful in the United States. One student reported that his parents came to the United States so that their children would have a chance for a good education. The father also has always dreamed that one of his boys would become a doctor or a professor. A female student explained that her parents espoused education as "the door that opens you to a better life."

When asked to report their primary sources of support for the UTOP program, the students from the entire sample reported the following: seven said their spouses were very significant, four indicated support from their children, three cited support from their parents, three said they get support from their siblings, three said they get support from their fellow UTOP classmates, one said she gained support from a teacher for whom she works, one explained she receives support from her brother-in-law, and four individuals reported they gather a great deal of support from their own motivation. (Respondents were allowed to cite multiple sources of support.) From the Hispanic group, three said they receive support from their siblings, and two from their children. One each indicated that they get support from self, spouse, parents, and classmates. From the Southeast Asian group, six cited support from their spouses, three from themselves, two from their children, parents, and classmates, one from a teacher, and one from an in-law.

Their churches were very positive in showing support for the students' progress in the UTOP, as eight students from the total sample indicated. All four of the Hispanic women indicated that their Christian churches were very encouraging. One student exclaimed, "This new priest

that we have now is really happy. He's always asking me how classes are going. The church encourages me a lot." Seven of the Southeast Asian students said that their church played no role in supporting their pursuits for higher education. In general, this is because many of the students have no formally recognized church—religion is simply a part of their culture. Still, four students (three Christian and one Buddhist) claimed that their churches were very supportive of their academic pursuits.

Only one student from the entire sample indicated that she had a formally assigned mentor. Nine more students indicated that they were using informal mentors—somebody from whom they routinely asked for help. Five students reported having neither a formally recognized mentor nor an informal mentor. When asked whether they had a choice for a formal or an informal mentor, five of the students from the entire sample indicated the desire for help from a formally recognized mentor. Another four students would choose help from informal mentors, and six had no preference. One Hmong simply stated, "I just want help." Conversely, another student explained that she would prefer to keep her informal mentors because she had established a comfortable relationship with them.

While not mentioned directly as a source of support, all of the students were emphatic that the financial assistance offered was of paramount support to them. The local college offers 100% free tuition to the UTOP students. A great deal of these monies are reimbursed through federal grants for minority student enrollment, while the college pays the remainder of the tuition costs.

*Obstacles*

A number of obstacles were mentioned. Twelve students from the entire sample indicated that their limited English vocabulary was a barrier for them in this program. Several students indicated that timed standardized tests were a significant problem for them. Likewise, many students stated financial concerns, and one student showed concern regarding child care.

Most of the Hispanics in the sample were not too concerned with their English proficiency; they had spent their entire lives learning English in American schools. On the other hand, English was a foreign language for each of the Southeast Asian sample members. While they acknowledged the fact that they must become well-versed in writing and speaking in English in order to become teachers, they felt that their present skills created a very difficult challenge for them. One student felt fluent in neither Hmong nor English; she felt "caught in the middle." Another student stated, "English class is very hard; if I pass English, everything

else will fall into place."

One student expressed concern that many of the Hmong students do not have the English background of other college students. "Their knowledge may be very high in their own culture and language, but it is not shown in English." One student explained, "Sometimes you think you know what you want to write, but you can't find the right words for it." Another student stated, "I never went to school in this country and have no background in English." Yet another student exclaimed, "English is our second language, and we have to read slower or twice to understand it completely."

Many of the Southeast Asian students are limited in their English vocabulary and grammar because they did not learn English until they were older. One student spoke for many of her classmates when she indicated that they speak "Hmonglish," or a combination of both Hmong and English. In fact, all of the Southeast Asian students said that they spoke a combination of English and one or more of their native tongues when at home. Even two of the Hispanic students speak "Spanglish."

In terms of the standardized entrance tests, one older Hmong student believed that his limited English grammar and vocabulary harmed his scores. He said, "I just guessed." Some students claimed that they knew anywhere from one-tenth to one-third of the vocabulary words on these tests. Another student indicated, "[The placement test] was very, very hard because of the vocabulary. We did not grow up in this country, and we don't know all the root words." A female student explained that the standardized tests measure her language skills, not her knowledge of the content.

Timed tests pose an additional barrier for ESL students in the UTOP. One student said, "It was a timed test... that is very difficult for bilingual students." Another student said, "The timing made me nervous." He did not finish any of the placement tests on time. Still another student explained that timed tests are unfair because of the time it takes to translate from English to Hmong and then back again.

## IMPLICATIONS

This study found that the UTOP students gather their support from several areas, and family plays the greatest role. This implies the need for the college administration and faculty to meet on occasion with those who are the support network for the UTOP students. The supporters should be made aware of their importance, as well as ways they can continue to show support. Family is important to these students, and the families should be made a part of this learning community.

In addition, the students in the sample indicated a need to have mentors provide academic support. Therefore, a true mentoring program should be established. Students should be given the choice of formal or informal mentors, and these mentors should be given training as to the unique needs of these students and the challenges faced by them, as well as the role of the mentors.

The financial support given by the college was also paramount to the students' entrance and continuation in the program. In order for the students to continue in the UTOP, Lakeland College will need to continue to seek federal and other sources of funding.

The only obstacles that were repeatedly identified by the UTOP students focused on their own limited English vocabularies and skills, and on the placement tests given by the local college. Most of the students did not learn English as their native language. In fact, the majority of the individuals in the sample continue to speak a combination of English and their native tongues. Because of these problems, the students claimed frustration with the fast paced lectures and with their inability to clearly indicate to their professors their understanding of the content presented in each class. In other words, the students feel they are more intelligent than they show through their speaking and writing.

There are two implications of this finding. Students who have been identified as having limited English skills should be given additional classes in basic English. In fact, Lakeland College has provided several basic courses to these students. Similarly, another implication that the college has addressed is the need for professors to be made aware of these concerns about language proficiency and then allow the students sufficient time and opportunities to learn the material and then share what they have learned.

The students also expressed concern with the standardized placement tests given by the college. A large portion of the test measured the test-takers' vocabulary. As just previously mentioned, English vocabulary is a weakness for many of these students. Additionally, many of the students had limited or no formal American education; they were not familiar in standardized test-taking strategies. The tests being timed was another concern for these students. None of the students completed the test in the allotted time. Still, all students who enrolled in the UTOP were admitted to the program; these tests simply identified students who needed extra assistance in English, reading, and math. Therefore, the standardized placement tests should not cause any undue concern to the students. The legitimate concern will be taking and passing the Pre-Professional Skills Test (PPST) that Lakeland College and the state of Wisconsin require for students to officially enroll in the School of Education. Either the students will need ample preparation for the PPST, or the re-

quirement of completing the exam within a required time period will need to be reconsidered.

Finally, coupled with a review of the literature, this research has implications for educational administrators. Both college and public school administrators must take the onus to make such programs successful. This will require a sincere belief that there is a need for more minority teachers to become certified. Such a vision will require that local institutions of higher learning work in tandem with public school districts, local businesses, state legislators and education officials, and, of course, minority representatives. These people need to develop a broad yet detailed plan that provides support for the students entering such programs and eliminates or avoids obstacles to successful program entrance and completion for the students. Standardized entrance tests should be eliminated entirely, or be used as only one of several admission requirements. Frequent and continual program evaluation is essential.

## NOTE

For a more complete discussion of the UTOP program development and for a more complete review of the literature, the reader is encouraged to read the author's article in *Phi Delta Kappan Fastback* as cited in the references.

## THE AUTHOR

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# APPENDIX A

CASE STUDY PROTOCOL

Plan for conducting a case study on the Urban Teachers Outreach Program (UTOP) at Lakeland College for the 1993-94 Academic Year

I. PROCEDURES
   A. Informational Questionnaire
   B. Subjects
   C. Case Study Database
   D. Pilot Study
II. CASE STUDY QUESTIONS (INTERVIEW GUIDE)
   A. Questions regarding themes related to support systems identified by the students
   B. Questions regarding themes related to obstacles to program entrance and retention as identified by the students
   C. Questions regarding themes related to student concerns regarding linguistic and other forms of cultural bias in this program

D. Student suggestions for program improvement

III. DATA ANALYSIS

A. Informational questionnaire
   Descriptive information
   Pattern matching
   Anecdotal information

B. Individual case studies
   Descriptive information
   Pattern matching
   Anecdotal information

C. Cross-case analysis
   Descriptive information
   Cross-case patterns
   Anecdotal information

(Adapted from Yin, R.K. 1989. *Case study research: Design and methods.* Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.)

# APPENDIX B

QUESTIONNAIRE

Information will be kept confidential. ID number
Please fill in the blanks or circle the one (1) response most appropriate. Also, if you need more room to respond than the space provided, please feel free to continue your responses on the back of the page.

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION
CURRENT

1. Your age:_____
2. Race:
   African-American
   Asian (other than Hmong)
   Hispanic
   Hmong
   Native American
   White
   Other (please specify)
3. Gender:
   Female
   Male

4. Marital status:
   - Single (never married)
   - Married
   - Separated
   - Divorced
   - Widowed
5. Number of children _____
   Please list their age and their gender _____
6. Primary language spoken at home:_____
   Other languages spoken at home, and by whom_____
7. Education and Degrees earned: (Please list the year and institution for each degree):
   - Grade school
   - High school
   - Bachelors
   - Masters
   - Other
   - Special certifications or licenses earned
8. Family religion _____

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION
PAST

9. Birthplace: (please be specific)_____
10. Family:
    - Single parent family (with mother)
    - Single parent family (with father)
    - Two parent family
    - Extended family (please explain)
    - Other
11. Number and ages of brothers:_____
12. Number and ages of sisters:_____
13. Your position in the family:
    - Only child
    - Oldest child
    - Youngest child
    - Middle child (please state order)_____
14. Occupation of:
    - Father_____
    - Mother_____
    - Other (head of household)_____
15. Primary language spoken at home:_____
16. Family religion:_____

CAREER INFORMATION

17. Your current job status:
    Full-time student
    Part-time student
    Part-time student/part-time employment
    Full-time employment
    Unemployed
    Other
18. (If employed currently) Job title, employer, and length of employment:_____
19. Past employment: Job title, employer, and length of employment:
    _____
20. Annual income from your employment:_____
21. Total family annual income:_____

UTOP INFORMATION

22. Where did you first learn about this program?_____
23. Name the two most important reasons you chose to enter this program:_____
24. Who do you feel, in your family, is your greatest supporter for this program? (please explain)_____
25. Is there anyone in your family that does not support your work in this program? (please explain)_____
26. Have you experienced any cultural or linguistic bias in standardized tests in the UTOP? (please explain)_____
27. Have you experienced cultural or linguistic bias that has hurt your progress in your program coursework? In other words, do you know of any cultural or language barriers that have made this college program difficult for you or others?
    (please explain)_____
28. Does your own culture or religion dissuade you from pursuing a college degree, or to become a teacher? (please explain)_____
29. Do you feel there are other factors that have, or may, keep you from continuing in this program? (please explain)_____
30. What positive factors have helped or will help you to successfully enter and continue with this program? (please explain)_____
31. Are you confident in your abilities to: (please explain)
    successfully complete this program_____
    successfully attain a teaching position_____
    become a successful teacher_____

32. Do you currently have a formally recognized mentor for this program? (please explain)_____
33. Do you have someone who is informally serving as a mentor to you? (please explain)_____
34. Do you belong to any community organizations or committees? (please explain)_____
35. Is there any additional information that you would like to add to this questionnaire? (please explain)_____

Please return this survey in the enclosed self-addressed, stamped envelope by January 15, 1994.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION AND PARTICIPATION

# My way

I walk plodding my way
I walk and hang my head
I walk slowly my way

I could hear twittering of birds
I could hear murmuring of leaves
I could hear passing through the window

But I can not stay there

I think about you
I think about the destination
the stream of the water
with the white vapor trail

I could see the burble of the stream
I could see your face in my heart

But I can not stay there

My one step is small
I make my way

*Midori Sato*
*Century College*

# *The Importance of Context in the Academic Achievement of English Language Learners*

**Marina Hammond**
*St. Paul Public Schools*

This paper asserts that the **lack of meaningful context** in traditional teaching is often a greater barrier to the academic success of English Language learners than their lack of familiarity with the language of instruction. The three crucial points at which instructional designers consider context, the **orienting, instructional,** and **transfer**, are explored. Teaching strategies and philosophies that promote deeply contextualized language are outlined.

Consider this 1995 statement from the United States Department of Education:

> Children who come from cultural and linguistic minority backgrounds often founder in American schools. Many do not gain a solid grounding in English reading and writing or in mathematics and science by the time they enter high school. As young adults they are therefore inadequately prepared for higher education or for all but the most menial employment. The costs of their wasted potential are unacceptable-both to the young people themselves and to the U.S. society as a whole. (Berman, Minicucci, McLaughlin, Nelson, and Woodworth, 1995)

It is generally assumed that the reason many English Language Learners (ELLs) do not achieve high academic success is that their lack of English prevents them from accessing the information presented in the classroom. The students' failure to understand the teacher is usually viewed as being due to *language specific deficits* (Carrell, 1984).

Second language acquisition research, however, has shown that a foreign language of instruction is only one, and often not the most important, barrier to learning (Saville-Troike, 1991). Rather, the lack of understandable context in the learning environment is a highly important factor to consider when ELLs do not perform well in the classroom. Context reduced teaching practices such as phonics drills, fill in the blank worksheets, spelling lists, and other activities that concentrate on the form

and structure of English without reference to the meaning of the words, do little to promote effective language development in ELLs.

The purpose of this paper is to assert that teachers, and ESL teachers in particular, can best help their ELLs succeed academically by focusing on, and improving, the **contextualization** of learning, and by using strategies outlined here to create deeply meaningful contexts in their classes.

Language minority children, like all children, come to school having already accomplished an incredible amount of learning. They speak their own languages fluently; they know about their families and their own cultures. They possess a wide variety of cognitive, physical, artistic, and musical skills.

Positive transfer of this wealth of knowledge is much more likely to occur when the **context** of the new learning environment is understood. Context can be defined as "...a multilevel body of factors in which learning and performance are embedded" (Tessmer and Richey, 1997). Understanding a new environment involves activating background knowledge which can be linked to additional information. Contextualization "..better enables students to use what they know to learn and remember by establishing connections with familiar concepts in memory" (Chamot and O'Malley, 1994). The role of prior knowledge in language development has been formalized as *schema theory* (Carrell, 1984). The framework of previously acquired knowledge is called schemata. "Once acquired, schemata... are available for interpretation of meaning in similar events even if the language spoken by the other participants is not fully understood." (Saville-Troike, 1991). "There is no reason to believe that memory schemata in one language cannot be used to assist solving problems or understanding similar information in a second language..." (Chamot and O'Malley, 1994).

Communication acts are performed in nonverbal language and visual forms; therefore, they are not necessarily language specific (Tang, 1994). Thus, a child who comes to an American school with no English, but with some schooling, will usually begin performing at a higher academic level than a child with no English and no educational experience. The first child has a framework of expectations and experience for "school" (although many details may be different in the American school), and so can transfer "school skills" immediately; while the second child must spend considerable time acquiring the "school" knowledge framework. The child with school experience, for example, has an idea of how to sit in a circle and listen to a story: that a story has a beginning, middle, and an end, that there will be characters and, most likely, a problem and a solution, and that the teacher's intonation and body language will give clues to the meaning of the words in the story. In this way, that child is ready to begin to acquire some English proficiency from listening to that

story the first time. The child with no school experience may spend the first time in story circle adjusting to the novelty of sitting in a circle with a group of new classmates, and not attend to the story itself at all.

How can ESL teachers contextualize their teaching in order to build and activate prior knowledge to maximize positive transfer of their students' skills and provide a solid framework in which new knowledge will become embedded? The context of the ESL lesson, for K-12 students, should be in the content areas, not in the forms or structures of the English language. "Rather than teaching a grammatical sequence, the teacher would derive language activities from the content topics included in integrated thematic units (Chamot and O'Malley, 1994). Chamot and O'Malley remind us that "students develop academic language skills in English through cognitively demanding activities in which comprehension is assisted by contextual supports..."(1994).

There are three crucial points at which instructional designers consider context: the **orienting** context, the **instructional** context, and the **transfer** context (Tessmer and Richey, 1997). The orienting context precedes the learning event and contains factors that influence the students' motivation and readiness to learn (Tessmer and Richey, 1997) . What does this mean for a new ELL coming to class? Jo Gusman (Gusman, 1997) reminds us that at the beginning of the "newcomer" and teacher relationship, it is the extra-linguistic "language" that the student is reading. Facial expressions, tone of voice, proximity, eye contact, body stance -- these are what the child is attending to. Will these encourage the child to feel comfortable with the teacher, or will these cause the child's "affective filter", the psychological barrier present when a person is anxious or intimidated, (Krashen, 1981, in Gusman, 1997) to come between the student and what the teacher has to offer? Does the classroom contain pictures and objects that lead a child to think that their ethnicity and culture will be respected? Is the students' need to process new experiences in their native language with their peers understood by the teacher or are the students immediately told to be quiet? Tessmer and Richey (1997) speak of the perceived utility of impending instruction as an important element of the orienting context. Is the ESL learning environment presented to them as a place where the students will learn things of benefit to them, or a place where their deficiencies have landed them? Will the students continue to expand their knowledge of the content subjects being taught in the mainstream classroom? Does the mainstream teacher support ESL by her (usually non-verbal) reaction to the appearance of the ESL teacher at the classroom door? All these factors are included in the orienting context that the student brings to class.

The **instructional** context is the process of the lessons themselves. It includes instructional strategies, learner characteristics, objectives, prac-

tice, and feedback (Tessmer and Richey). It is here that the possibility for creating meaningful contexts of learning is the greatest. Yet, traditionally, language teaching has a history of context-reduced exercises: mechanical substitution drills, choral repetition, rote memorization, and the like. The idea was that "...before students can use the language in a communicative way, they must learn the forms that make up its various parts" (Walz, 1989). Over time, this idea has been, in effect, reversed. Now, "...recent studies have pointed to the possible benefits of a 'top-down' or 'whole language' approach to language instruction, through which the students manipulate language to communicate thoughts by using higher level skills before attending to discrete language structures..." (Shrum and Glisan, 1994).

What strategies and techniques have been used successfully to create deeply meaningful contexts in the ESL classroom? Answers come from several overlapping forefronts of educational theory and practice: content-ESL, Howard Gardner's eight intelligences, schema theory, engaged learner paradigms, thematic interdisciplinary teaching, and whole language/whole child ideas. For example, instead of having students study and try to memorize the various forms of the past tense, have them speak and write about an important experience they had in the past, and use these discussions and writings as the basis for the past tense lesson. Another example would be, instead of the typical lesson on comparative adjectives in an ESL textbook, where disparate and unrelated items are compared (" An elephant is *bigger* than a mouse. A skyscraper is *taller* than a bus."), read two good stories and have the students make comparative statements about the characters and events in the stories. "L2 classes should offer a language-nurturing environment, paying attention to doing things with language, rather than the language itself" (Krashen and Terrell, 1983).

The first step to creating context is to activate and/or create background knowledge. This knowledge is the framework into which the new knowledge will be embedded, so the more extensive it is, the better. Because we know that students learn in a variety of ways and that we all remember more when we are actively engaged, it is important to build in as many active experiences as possible. It is also important to incorporate the cultural background and life experiences of the students into the curriculum. Carrell (1984) suggests various kinds of activities; "viewing movies, slides, pictures; field trips; demonstrations; real-life experiences; class discussions and debates; plays, skits, and role-playing activities; teacher-, text-, or student- generated predictions...." Gusman (1997) calls these the "being there" experiences and adds, "Where can you take your students so they have a meaningful context for this lesson?" For example, while doing a unit on trains: rearrange the chairs and take your students

on a "train ride" before reading a book about a train ride, discuss and write about any real train rides the students have been on, surround the students with pictures of trains and train workers in different countries, play songs and videos about trains and train rides, have stacks of books having anything to do with trains ready for free reading time, and, of course, if possible, take your students to a train station or train crossing and look, smell, and listen to real trains.

It is important to always allow students to discuss these experiences with their peers in their native language. Saville-Troike found that "most of the students who achieved best in content areas, as measured by tests in English, were those who had the most opportunity to discuss the concepts they were learning in their native language with peers or with adults..."(1984).

When structuring lessons to create context, the focus should be deeper and narrower than is traditional. Using a thematic approach by organizing lessons into cohesive units is an excellent method. However, we should not look at a topic for two or three days in ESL class and call it a "unit". Nor should we think that just having a theme for a certain number of weeks means that we have created meaningful context for our students; there must be a wide variety of challenging learning activities connected to the theme. Units should take several weeks; the topic needs to be covered in depth and from many different angles, using many different modalities in order for meaningful context to be established. A national 1995 study of exemplary schools for language minority students found that "the innovative curriculum and instruction for LEP students blended opportunities for active discovery, cooperative learning, a curriculum related to the students' experience and thematic instruction into a coherent whole" and " the curriculum emphasized the depth of understanding over breadth of coverage..." ( Berman, Minicucci, McLaughlin, Nelson, and Woodworth, 1995). A unit on the human body, for example, could begin with a student generated list of what they already know about their bodies and how the different parts function in order to activate and create prior knowledge, then proceed to groups of students researching how various areas of the body function, reporting back to the class for oral language development work, writing up their findings and compiling a book as the culminating product. Along the way, the teacher could provide experiences and opportunities to expand the topic and keep it interesting for the students -- showing videos of athletes and others doing extraordinary things, having the students write or establish a "keypal" relationship on the Internet with an expert (doctor, nurse, or medical student) to get their questions answered and practice authentic writing for meaning, or encouraging students to reflect on how people with physical impairments adjust to a new set of rules in the functioning of their body.

These activities deepen the students' cognitive processing, yet, because they are focused on a central theme, the vocabulary and other linguistic structures get naturally recycled, establishing long term retention.

What should teachers consider when selecting themes? Experts suggest "identifying an overarching theme or organizational principle consistent with the students' language objectives and **relevant to the academic subject matters**. ESL teachers should be sure to connect their themes with the content areas the students are studying in their mainstream classes. This can be accomplished by collaboration with classroom teachers and curriculum coordinators, and examination of the different texts and materials used by the classroom teachers. Often, students can help suggest these themes and tease out the underlying relationships for themselves in brainstorming session. While they are doing that, they are assuming responsibility for the curriculum and empowering themselves as learners. Therefore, they are likely to have a deeper commitment to the learning process and achieve more" (Burkhart and Sheppard, no date). It is vital that the materials used in the lessons be rich in context. Children's literature (storybooks), rather than phonics-based "stories" or basal readers, are used because "they are an excellent source of both vocabulary and context development since the words tend to be supported by pictures and other extra-linguistic clues...and storybooks provide the context for verbal interaction, particularly the important sequence of elicitation-response-evaluation" (Coonrod and Hughes, 1994). Children's literature also teaches the basics of plot development: the setting, characters, problems and solutions. The students' own writings serve as excellent reading materials because of their relevance and personal connection. Web sites and CD-ROMs can be great resources, as they are usually visually stimulating, with lots of extra-linguistic cues and clues.

**Transfer** is the successful application of a learned skill to new situation. The material the student is given to learn should provide more knowledge in the future. Jerome Bruner (in Sizer, 1992) argues that "grasping the structure of a subject is understanding it in a way that permits many other things to be related to it meaningfully. To learn structure, in short, is to learn how things are related." Furthermore, it has been shown (Tang, 1994) that processes such as classification, description, or sequence are the same regardless of content area, and that graphic representations of these processes are similar. Teachers can take advantage of this fact when structuring lessons to enhance transfer of learning. A complex unit with one topic as its center will naturally create more opportunities for relationships between ideas than, for example, a series of lectures on events in history that are only connected in a linear fashion. A context rich unit will provide more opportunities for transfer of skills within the unit, which will lead to increased ease of transfer to other situations. The human body

unit described above, for example, requires the students to generate questions, collect, analyze, and synthesize information in order to answer their questions, organize that information into cohesive oral and written formats, present their findings, and listen to and evaluate others' findings. These are some of the most important academic skills and, once the students have acquired them in the context of the human body unit, these skills can be employed in other contexts.

## CONCLUSION

Traditionally, knowledge in school is often presented in decontextualized settings; students are expected to memorize the spelling of lists of unrelated words, "stories" are based on phonics rather than meaning, historical events are presented as simply following each other rather than as being related, journal and other writing topics widely differ from day to day, and the list goes on. Context reduced language is much more difficult, in fact often impossible, for second language learners to understand. Context reduced lessons and activities do not provide the transferable higher level thinking skills that ELLs need in order to succeed academically.

By contrast, a context rich unit that delves into a relevant topic and includes challenging complex learning activities that result in meaningful student-created products will raise ELLs academic proficiency and provide positive transferable skills.

We must put contextualization at the top of our list as teachers when we look for answers on the issue of increasing academic success for English Language Learners.

## THE AUTHOR

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# *Form, Function, and Meaning: Understanding/ Teaching English Participles*

**Carl Zhonggang Gao**
*University of Wisconsin, River Falls*

Although the distinction between the present and past participles seems to be very straightforward to native speakers of English, it sometimes can be very problematic to non-native speakers. Addressing the recurring misuse problem, the paper discusses the different facets of English participles intended to aid ESL/EFL teachers in both understanding and teaching their use. It begins with establishing a convention of using "-en" as the past participle form to distinguish it from the past tense form "-ed." Once the forms are clear to students, the functions of participles as both verbs and adjectives are examined. The meanings of the two signals "-ing" and "-en" are explained with emphasis on the semantic relationship between them. The degree of vividness interpretation can be applied to reinforce the understanding of present and past participles as an opposing pair with contrasting meanings. Based on the discussion, suggestions for teaching English participles are offered. Forms, functions and meanings are to be introduced and explained as one unit since all linguistic signs involve signals paired with meanings used in certain contexts.

## INTRODUCTION

English participles are defined as "non-finite verb forms that function as adjectives" (Richards, 1985). They are labeled as the -ing form for present participles and the -en form for past participles. Although the distinction between the present and past participles seems to be very straightforward to native speakers of English, it sometimes can be very problematic to speakers of other languages learning English. There is a recurring tendency among ESL/EFL students to misuse English participles. More often than not, we would encounter such examples in students' writings as:

1. *I am very *interesting* in learning English grammar.

2. *My son is *boring* in his math class because the math problems are very easy.
3. *I have just seen an *excited* movie with my friends.
4. *The directions to the party are very *confused* to us.

Similar problems exist in students' oral communication as well. To help ESL/EFL students avoid the participle usage problem, I suggest that we teach them the forms, functions, and meanings of participles. By understanding the forms paired with meanings, we can develop a practical, holistic approach to teaching English participles so that ESL/EFL students can master the key concepts of participles and use them effectively in their oral and written communication.

# FORMS OF ENGLISH PARTICIPLES

Participles are identical in form whether they are used as verbs or as adjectives. The present participle form is always *-ing*, while the past participle form varies depending on the inflection or the ending of the verb. The primary task in understanding the forms of English participles is to adopt a convention that will distinguish the past participle forms from the past tense forms. A verb paradigm can be created to illustrate such a distinction.

Table 1. The English Verb Forms

| Verbs | Infin (to) | 3rd Per. Sg. Present (-s) | Past Tense (-ed) | Past Part (-en) | Present Part (-ing) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| talk | to talk | talks | talked | (have/has) talked | talking |
| make | to make | makes | made | (have/has) made | making |
| be | to be | is | was/were | (have/has) been | being |
| take | to take | takes | took | (have/has) taken | taking |
| cut | to cut | cuts | cut | (have/has) cut | cutting |

The paradigm in Table 1 has covered all the possible verb forms in

English. The distinction between the past tense form and the past participle form is clearly demonstrated in the table. Once the convention of using *-en* form to indicate past participle is comprehended, ESL/EFL students will not easily confuse the past tense form with the past participle form.

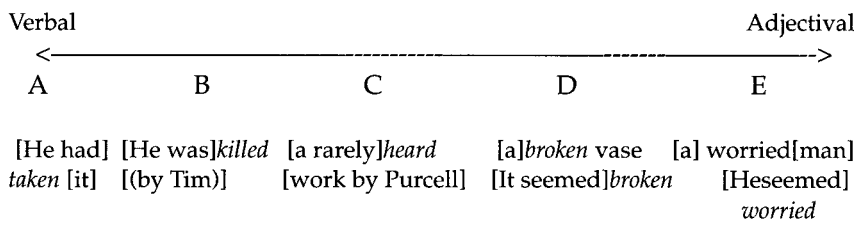
## FUNCTIONS OF ENGLISH PARTICIPLES

Participles are commonly known as "verbal adjectives," and they can function as both verbs and adjectives. Examine the following sentences:

5. He had *taken* it.
6. He was *killed* by Tim.
7. It is a rarely *heard* work by Purcell.
8. It is a *broken* vase. It seemed *broken*.
9. He is a *worried* man. He seemed *worried*.

Sentences 5 to 9 containing past participles can be placed on the continuum set up by Huddleston (1993:324) with "verbal" on one end and "adjectival" on the other as shown in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1: Huddleston's Verbal and Adjectival Continuum




Along this verbal-adjectival continuum, the past participles used in these instances gradually shift from verbs to adjectives. In A and B, *taken* and *killed* are part of the verb phrases indicating past perfect tense and past passive respectively. *Broken* and *worried* in D and E are part of the noun phrases as they occur in between determiners and nouns and function as predicatives grammatically in both cases. In C, however, *heard* shares the features of both a verb and an adjective. In the surface structure, *heard* is placed in between a determiner and a noun. Without changing the meaning, sentence 7 can also be rewritten as, "It is a work by Purcell that *is* rarely *heard*," in which *heard* is a verb, not an adjective.

Huddleston's verbal and adjectival continuum as represented in Figure 1 is also valid for present participles. Let us examine some examples

of present participles:

10. He was *telling* the truth.
11. No one saw him *leaving* the building.
12. *Being* a single parent, she has to do all the house chores on her own.
13. Those *making* more than $50,000 a year will pay tax at a different bracket.
14. The beating incident *being* debated was somewhat controversial.
15. The boy pointed towards the *moving* van.
16. Residents are concerned about the rapidly *growing* crime rate in the area.
17. He was a *charming* politician.
18. It seemed very *interesting*.

The present participle in 10 is part of the verb indicating the past progressive tense while the participles in sentences 11 to 14 can be recast to show their deep structures. Examine the recast sentences:

11a. No one saw him (when he *was*) *leaving* the building.
12a. (As she *is*) *being* a single parent, she has to do all the house chores on her own.
13a. Those (who *are*) *making* over $50,000 a year will pay tax at a different bracket.
14a. The beating incident (which *is*) *being* debated was somewhat controversial.

Words in the parentheses are added to show the function of present participles in each particular sentence. It is quite obvious that the present participles in 11a-14a ought to be accounted for as verbs. Sentences 15 and 16 may appear to have a different structure from sentences 11 to 14 as present participles in these sentences are involved in noun phrases, but upon closer examination, they share the same feature of being part of a verb. For instance:

15a. The boy pointed toward the *moving* van (= the van that *is moving*).
16a. Residents are concerned about the rapidly *growing* crime rate (= the crime rate that *is growing* rapidly) in the area.

15 and 16 can be placed somewhere in the middle of the verbal and adjectival continuum. They appear to be adjectives in the surface structures, but they are actually verbs in their deep structures. In contrast, 17 and 18 are at the very end on the adjectival side of the continuum since they are more adjectival than verbal.

# A SIGN-BASED SEMANTIC EXPLANATION TO ENGLISH PARTICIPLES

Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman (1983:451), in their The Grammar Book: An ESL/EFL Teacher's Course, discussed the relationship of *-ing* and *-en* adjective participles to emotive verbs. They argue that

> it must be made clear that if the adjective refers to the experiencer, i.e., the animate being or beings that are feeling the emotion, then the -En participle should be used. If, on the other hand, the adjective refers to the actor, i.e., the thing or person that is causing the emotion, then the -Ing participle should be used.

Their idea can be illustrated briefly in the following table:

Table 2. Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman's Explanation of English Participles

| Emotive verbs | *-En* = the experiencer | -Ing = the actor |
|---|---|---|
| interest | an *interested* basketball fan | an *interesting* game |
| amuse | an *amused* audience | *amusing* jokes |
| annoy | several *annoyed* neighbors | the *annoying* stereo |
| surprise | the *surprised* media | a *surprising* victory |
| irritate | some *irritated* customers | the *irritating* salesclerk |

The contrast between "the one/thing causing the emotion" and "the one feeling the emotion" is intelligibly demonstrated in the table. However, the designation of the verbs used in participles seems to be limited to "emotive verbs" only, while there are other verb categories which may perform the same duties as participles.

The inflectional morphemes *-ing* and *-en* represent two opposing signals with two different meanings. These two signals should not be treated as isolated and unrelated lexical morphemes. The meaning of *-ing* for present participles is defined in terms of the meaning *-en* for past participles. When using *-ing*, one expresses the meaning of "an on-going event itself" or "the actual activity" (Huffman, 1989:152); when using *-en*, one signals the meaning of "a state resulting from the activity." Table 3 illustrates this pair of morphemes with their attached meanings.

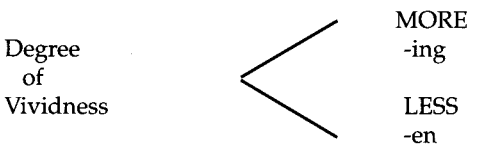
Table 3. Signals and Meanings of English Participles

| Verbs | Signal: *-ing*<br>Meaning: "on-going event itself" | Signal: *-en*<br>Meaning: "resultant state" |
|---|---|---|
| marry | a *marrying* man | a *married* man |
| fall | a *falling* rock | a *fallen* rock |
| bite | a *biting* dog | a *bitten* dog |
| bore | a *boring* comedian | a *bored* audience |
| break | CNN *Breaking* News | a *broken* vase |

The sign-based explanation expands on Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman's explanation to include the various verb categories. The participles with the signal *-ing* denote the meaning of an on-going event itself. *Marrying, falling, biting, boring,* and *breaking* all indicate a process the head noun (i.e. man, rock, dog, or comedian) is currently going through or formulating (i.e. news). The meaning of present participles focuses on an on-going process or activity itself. The past participles with signal *-en*, on the other hand, denote quite a different meaning. They indicate a resultant state after an event or activity, not an on-going process.

On the interpretation side, the dichotomy of present and past participles can be explained in terms of "degree of vividness" suggested by Huffman (1989:152).

Figure 2. Interpretation of English Participles




As the signal *-ing* indicates the on-going event itself, for example, *CNN breaking news*, it can be interpreted in a more vivid manner because the event is taking place or in the process of developing. The signal *-en*, in contrast, denotes that the event has already happened as in *the broken vase*; it, therefore, has a less vivid interpretation. Students can form mental pictures by examining a given participle in its degree of vividness.

# TEACHING ENGLISH PARTICIPLES

The analysis of signals (*-ing* and *-en* morphemes) paired with meanings along with Huffman's interpretation of these signals (more vivid vs. less vivid) has provided a set of essential elements for ESL/EFL students to understand English participles. These key features of English participles can be summarized (see Table 4) and utilized as references for teaching those who have difficulty distinguishing the meaning of present participles from that of its counterpart, past participles.

Table 4 Key Features of English Participles with Examples

| Signal: *-ing*<br>Meaning: on-going event/activity<br>Interpretation: more vivid | Signal: *-en*<br>Meaning: resultant state<br>Interpretation: less vivid |
|---|---|
| an *embarrassing* experience | an *embarrassed* stranger |
| an *exciting* trip | *excited* vacationers |
| a *depressing* experience | a *depressed* person |
| a *satisfying* meal | *satisfied* customers |
| an *encouraging* coach | an *encouraged* player |
| a *charming* politician | the *charmed* followers |
| a *fascinating* story | a *fascinated* group of friends |
| an *amusing* monkey | an *amused* audience |
| a *surprising* decision | the *surprised* parents |
| a *frustrating* test | a *frustrated* student |
| *falling* prices | a *fallen* hero |
| a *moving* scene | a deeply *moved* youngster |
| a *shrinking* number | a *shrunken* shirt |

The examination of the forms, functions, and meanings of English participles has given me new insights for teaching them to ESL/EFL students. Instead of telling students that they have to remember all the different uses, I can teach this particular grammar point in a holistic manner. In my teaching, especially in programs where grammar is taught explicitly, I start by establishing a convention of using the signal *-en* as the past participle form to distinguish it from the past tense form *-ed*. Once students have understood the forms, I proceed to explain the meanings of the two signals (*-ing* vs. *-en*). I emphasize the semantic relationship between *-ing* vs. *-en* and consider them as a related pair with contrasting meanings. To reinforce the understanding of present and past

participles as an opposing pair, I use Huffman's degree of vividness interpretation to show the contrast between the two forms of participles. I introduce the forms, functions, and meanings and explain them as a whole unit because all linguistic signs are made up of signals paired with meanings.

For class activities, I suggest using a short story passage taken from any ESL workbook (such as the one in Appendix One) as the focused group practice. The one listed in Appendix One describes an experience of visiting a ghost town. In the passage, two forms of participles are given. As students work their way through, they will discuss and decide which the appropriate choice is for each item. For example, the first two contrasting pairs "frightened vs. frightening" and "interested vs. interesting" are used to describe an experience. The next three pairs of participles (abandoned vs. abandoning; run-down vs. running-down; broken vs. breaking) are used to describe buildings and windows in a deserted town. Students are able to use the key features presented in Table 4 to discuss the validity of their choice in context and argue with one another. This kind of exercise helps students internalize the concepts I have argued and introduced.

Another way to practice distinguishing and using participles is to design a filling-in- the-blank exercise. Instead of giving out both participle forms for each particular word, I suggest using the verb forms (interest, frighten, abandon, etc.) and place them on top of the passage in random order (See Appendix Two). Students will have to use the context as the clue in order to choose the appropriate word and change the word form accordingly. This exercise can be done either individually or in small groups. For the writing assignment, I suggest that teachers provide a list of words in both *-ing* forms and *-en* forms (See Appendix Three) and ask students to write a personal narrative, be it an embarrassing, fascinating, or frightening experience of their own. They are asked to use as many words from the list as possible.

# CONCLUSION

The discussion of the various facets of English participles has yielded certain guidelines and strategies that may be useful in presenting them to ESL/EFL students. Obviously, the study of form and function is not quite enough if the meaning is ignored. Knowing the distinction between verbs and adjectives alone does not solve the problem of comprehending English participles and using them effectively in communication. By examining the signals (or the morphemes attached to the participles) paired with meanings, we lead students to the core of understanding English

participles. In addition, interpreting English participles in terms of degree of vividness has provided further distinction between present and past participles. With focused practice, ESL/EFL students should be able to understand the different forms paired with meanings and make their own interpretations mentally whenever they use English participles in their communication.

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# APPENDIX ONE

Direction: Choose between the two given participle forms by circling the appropriate choice.

I visited a ghost town once. It was an (interested, interesting) experience, though I must admit it was a little (frightened, frightening), too.

The town was full of (abandoned, abandoning) and (run-down, running-down) buildings. Most of them had (broken, breaking) windows. Inside, the (decayed, decaying) rooms held nothing but dust and a few (disgusted, disgusting) smells. But I was (surprised, surprising) to see how much of the past was (preserved, preserving). For example, some of the kitchens were quite (fascinated, fascinating). They still had (run, running) water and (worked, working) stoves. There were also some old books in some of the houses, and we could tell that the inhabitants were (educated, educating) people.

I was (amazed, amazing) by the whole experience. It certainly was (enlightened, enlightening).

# APPENDIX TWO

Direction: Choose one of the following words to fill in the blanks in their appropriate forms in context.

enlighten, interest, abandon, break, run-down, disgust, surprise, work, educate, amaze, run decay, fascinate,

I visited a ghost town once. It was an _____ experience, though I must admit it was a little _____, too.

The town was full of _____ and _____ buildings. Most of them had _____ windows. Inside, the _____ rooms held nothing but dust and a few _____ smells. But I was _____ to see how much of the past was _____. For example, some of the kitchens were quite _____. They still had _____ water and _____ stoves. There were also some old books in some of the houses, and we could tell that the inhabitants were _____ people.

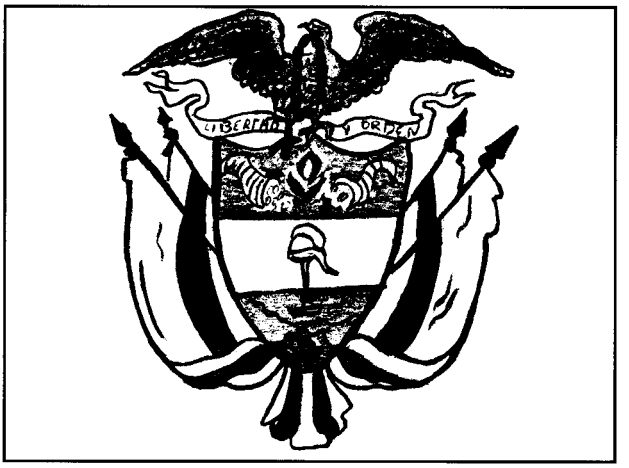
I was _____ by the whole experience. It certainly was _____.

# APPENDIX THREE

Commonly Used Participles as Adjectives

-Ing Forms
alarming, amazing, amusing, astonishing, boring, breaking, confusing, damaging, depressing, disappointing, distinguishing, disturbing, embarrassing, encouraging, exciting, falling, fascinating, finishing, frightening, interesting, intriguing, pleasing, satisfying, shocking, tiring, worrying

-En Forms
alarmed, amazed, amused, astonished, bored, broken, confused, damaged, depressed, disappointed, distinguished, disturbed, embarrassed, encouraged, excited, fallen, fascinated, finished, frightened, interested, intrigued, pleased, satisfied, shocked, surprised, tired, worried



# The Shield of the Republic of Colombia

The shield of Colombia looks old fashioned and a little rococo. It looks like a coat of arms of an important family with an eagle, banners, ribbon, cornucopias, boats, maps, and words. The symbolism is clear. The eagle means the power crossing our air in a manifestation of freedom. The crown of olive leaves that the eagle is holding with its beak means peace. The eagle is standing on a ribbon. It has an inscription that says freedom and order. Beneath the eagle talons we can see three fields ranging from top to bottom. In the first field there are two cornucopias. One is filled with gold and food. The flower in the middle of the two cornucopias symbolizes the same meaning. The hat in the middle field represents justice. The bottom field shows how rich Colombia is in possessing the Panama Canal and its strategic location within the world. The pictured boats on both sides of the canal symbolize the power in both oceans. Surrounding the coat of arms there are banners. The first is yellow and means our wealth. The blue banner represents the skies, the oceans and the rivers. The red banner represents the blood of our heroes for the price of our freedom.

In my opinion, all these meanings aren't true in the life of this country. This is an ironic symbol. The eagle is almost extinct. Peace? The crown is misinterpreted because peace there is only a dream. The inscription of order and freedom is a utopia because they have not even human rights. One of the cornucopia and the yellow banner that represents the gold are now empty, because there is no more gold anymore. Due to exportation, the country enjoys the worst harvest, leaving the food cornucopia also empty. The hat of justice is now like the hat of a clown. The Panama Canal in the bottom field no longer belongs to Colombia. It was sold to U.S.A. on November 3, 1903. The blue banner that shows the skies and the oceans and rivers is true. The red banner is blood not from heroes from the past, but is from heroes of the present. It is the blood of the good people who try to do right where things are wrong.

*Gladys Helena Beltran*
*Century College*

# BOOK REVIEWS

## *Street Speak: Essential American Slang and Idioms 2nd edition*, Davis Burke, David Harrington.

Los Angeles: Caslon Books. December, 1998. 135 pages.

*Street Speak*, a new classroom edition of *Street Talk* , is a colorful text with cartoon-like, eye-catching funny illustrations on almost every page of the book. It is written to expand students' use of American slang and idioms. It may be suitable for use by a wide range of English learners: from high beginner to advanced, studying in different programs of English as a Second Language or English as a Foreign Language. The student's book is accompanied by a cassette tape and a workbook. Teachers may acquire a teacher's guide, though the book may just as easily serve as a self-teaching material. Teachers may find the text of great help in listening, speaking, and pronunciation classes, for vocabulary expansion, or as a component of an American culture class, where the pragmatic aspect of English is included.

As the back cover of the book announces, "it explores some of the most popular slang and idioms that are actively used and understood by virtually every native-born American." In fact, the selection is so essential that one might wonder how anyone could function without it, at least passively. In this respect, the book appears superior to many of its counterparts which often include less authentic and less frequently used or simply dated expressions.

*Street Speak* consists of ten chapters, each based on one aspect of life: At the Party, At the Market, At the Movies, On Vacation, At the Airport, At a Restaurant, On the Road, At School, To Your Health, and On a Date. Each chapter introduces between 10 and 15 new slang words and idioms, all listed in each chapter's contents. The idiom that best represents the chapter appears as its subheading. For example, the chapter, At the Airport, is represented by "I'm taking the red-eye" or the chapter, On a Date, has as its subtitle the phrase, "He stood me up." Each chapter follows virtually the same clear format of material presentation, which contributes to the learning activities being more predictable and more user-friendly. For example, students go through a series of context exercises, listening activities, paraphrasing activities, cloze exercises, role plays, matching exercises, or true-false exercises. Idioms and slang expressions are contextualized in mini-dialogs which students can either memorize or use as a springboard for the creation of their own mini-dialogs in pair

work activities.

As mentioned above, the book renders itself quite nicely as a pronunciation teaching tool as well. A welcome feature of the book is a section called "Real Speak." Each chapter introduces the same dialog three times: the first time the dialog introduces the chapter's new slang and idioms, the second time it uses standard English, and, finally, the same dialog appears in its "Real Speak" version, with the reduced forms used in informal situations, as in this example:

| | |
|---|---|
| example: | Since you did such a big favor for me yesterday, dinner **is on me**. |
| translation: | Since you did such a big favor for me yesterday, **I'm pay ing for** dinner. |
| as spoken: | Since ya did such a big faver fer me yesderday, dinner**'s on me**. |

Brief explanations provided as to why sometimes pronunciation changes from full form to contracted form simplify the learning of pronunciation. Likewise, the new vocabulary is practised in informal sentences which are juxtaposed to their formal counterparts in a variety of exercises.

No text can ever satisfy every professional or every teacher, and this text is, I am sure, no exception. Its main drawback, if we were to speak of any, is its brevity. It could not be used as a sole text for practically any full-fledged course, although it could quite easily be used for a one-hour a week specialized training in a 10-week course. Personally, I appreciate its brevity.

## REVIEWER

Marya Teutsch-Dwyer has a Ph.D. in Second Language Acquisition and Language, Culture and Literacy from Stanford University. She is Director of Intensive English Center and teaches in the MA TESL Program at St. Cloud State University, Minnesota.

## *Extensive Reading in the Second Language Classroom,*

Richard R. Day and Julian Bamford. Part of the Cambridge Language Education series. Jack C. Richards, series editor. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.

*Extensive Reading in the Second Language Classroom,* by authors Richard R. Day and Julian Bamford, is an excellent starting place for any second language program considering implementing or improving an extensive reading program. The authors are strong advocates for this type of program, stating in the preface that their goal with the book

is to "provide a theoretical and pedagogical foundation for the premise that extensive reading should be an integral part of reading instruction in the second language classroom." Their goal is accomplished with a straightforward, clear writing style, and a book packed with helpful information and ideas.

The text is divided into three sections. The first section provides a general introduction to the concept of extensive reading, and presents the theory and research to support its usefulness in learning any second language. The second section looks at extensive reading materials, debating the complex issues of authenticity, simplification and language learner literature. Finally, section three deals with the myriad practical issues involved with setting up and carrying out an extensive reading program. These three sections refer often to learners of English, but would be useful for any second language learner context. In addition, there is an appendix, which focuses fully on English, providing a bibliography of suitable reading materials for those setting up an extensive reading program in an ESL or EFL setting.

Throughout the book, the authors stress that extensive reading should be reading for pleasure, so students should have freedom to choose what they want to read from a wide range of materials. Students should read materials that are slightly below their linguistic competence (i minus 1) and should read as much as they can, and rather quickly. Benefits have been shown in such areas as second language reading ability, vocabulary, linguistic competence and writing. While the first section cites some research from these and other benefits, this section is not as substantial as might be hoped. In addition, it is not always clear in the other two, more detailed sections, how much of what is written stems from the research, and how much are claims of the authors and those they interviewed based on experience.

In either case, the book is a rich source for the nuts and bolts of establishing and running an extensive reading program, from a solid survey of goals and procedures, to a wise assessment of what constitutes appropriate reading materials, to help forming lists of what needs to be done to set up the physical space for books. The appendix, a wonderfully comprehensive bibliography of language learner literature in English, is a real plus, with the outstanding books in bold and publisher information included.

Teachers and administrators who are interested in starting an extensive reading program, or those with many years of experience with this type of program, are all assured of finding new useful, creative and captivating ideas along with an endless font of encouragement for reading and reading programs in this practical guidebook.

## REVIEWER

Andrea Poulos received her MA in TESOL from the University of Minnesota in 1997. She now teaches ESL in the Minnesota English Center at the University of Minnesota, where she also coordinates the Reading Lab for extensive reading.

***Materials Development in Language Teaching***. Brian Tomlinson, ed. Cambridge Language Teaching Library. Cambridge University Press, 1998. 368 pages.

*Materials Development in Language Teaching,* edited by Brian Tomlinson, is a book written for a variety of professionals in ESL instruction: those who already develop and assess the usefulness of their own materials, those interested in possibly publishing a textbook of materials, and advanced graduate students in ESL programs who are seeking ways to establish themselves within this field. Tomlinson includes a variety of essays and effective summaries at the end of each section which take the reader through the publishing process. He begins by encouraging professionals to move from preparing individual lessons to writing course books.

In the first section, Gwyneth Fox, Jane Willis, and team writers Ronald Carter, Rebecca Hughes, and Michael McCarthy discuss spoken language and its oddities. They stress that although L2 learners need to be aware of the various meanings a single English word may have, "native speaker" English may not be the most appropriate goal. While it is undoubtedly important for language learners to understand that there are different ways to use language, it may not be essential for L2 learners to actually speak colloquial English themselves. However, to assist L2 learners in their understanding of various contexts in which to use specific words, the authors suggest that concordances are quite helpful. Fox indicates that computer generated concordances produce a wealth of information; similarly, Willis explains the usefulness of manually generated concordances. Regardless if a corpus is developed manually or by computer, the authors agree on their usefulness and offer suggestions for using them in the language classroom.

The remaining essays in the book focus on current theories of language learning and on the value of publishing teaching materials. Overall, the authors discuss the need for materials course books and share their experiences in having works published. One of the main points the authors make is for team writers to be aware of the necessity to evaluate,

revise, and edit each other's work and to be prepared to indulge each other's idiosyncrasies as writers. Two essays in particular, one by Philip Prowse and the other by Jan Bell and Roger Gower, stress that when working on a project of this magnitude it is important to attempt to meet the needs of all concerned: each contributing writer, other teachers, students, publishers, and illustrators. They warn that there will be many meetings, some exceptionally productive, others quite dry, and they stress the need for all parties to be prepared to compromise. Two extensive chapters, one by Andrew Littlejohn and the other by Rod Ellis, suggest ways to evaluate materials which will help professionals enhance the quality of their materials development. Essays by Alan Maley, Julian Edge and Sue Wharton, Grethe Hooper Hansen, and Brian Tomlinson further discuss current trends in language learning and the value in creating theoretically sound activities.

At the beginning of the book, Tomlinson includes a glossary of terms, which is helpful to aspiring professionals in this field such as graduate students. Tomlinson's comments as editor neatly tie together the individual readings by numerous authors. He concludes the book by noting that we can be pleased with the progress made so far in materials development, but he also stresses that there is much work yet to be done. To continue progress in this field, Tomlinson urges that it is essential for professionals to recognize the needs among their peers who teach ESL and the needs among the students. By assessing these needs, he says, we can more effectively develop materials which will aid in our own development as professionals and also in the development of L2 learners.

While this book does not include a practical set of classroom activities to use or to modify for use, it does include a wealth of theoretical information for a writer's use in creating just such a book. In this capacity, *Materials Development in Language Teaching* is helpful for professionals who are entertaining the idea of furthering the advancement of ESL classroom materials and teaching strategies by developing their own materials and assessing them for publication.

## REVIEWER

Elizabeth J. Kirchoff has an MA in English and in TESL and is an instructor at St. Cloud State U niversity, where she teaches composition to both native and non-native speakers of English.

***Beyond Training: Perspectives on Language Teacher Education,*** Jack C. Richards. Cambridge University Press, 1998. 190 pages.

*Beyond Training* is a collection of papers and talks that Richards has developed over several years, which investigates how the beliefs, theories, and practices of second language teachers can be integrated into teacher education. This text can be used as a guide for developing well-integrated, functional teacher training programs for second language teachers.

The book is divided into four major sections: theories of second language teaching, perspectives on teacher thinking, examining teacher education practices, and entering the field of language teaching. Each section presents valuable information and offers suggestions on how individual teachers can apply this information at different stages of their teacher development.

The first section focuses on theories of second language teaching and teachers' maxims. This section is divided into three main categories: science-research conceptions, theory-philosophy conceptions, and art-craft conceptions. I found it interesting that Richards does not choose one theory over another, but instead sees the value in integrating various theories over time throughout a teacher's ongoing development. The author also recognizes the importance of identifying different teaching maxims and how this can be useful in facilitating student teachers' future professional development.

The second section is concerned with perspectives on teacher thinking. The author provides examples of teacher case studies and investigates the processes used in solving problems presented in the teaching process. Richards understands the importance of analyzing the cognitive processes involved in second language teaching for both teaching well and aiding the novice teacher in developing teaching expertise. This section also focuses on how teachers use and develop lesson plans and the decision making involved in actual implementation of the lesson. Richards examines the differences between experienced and novice teachers in this area.

The last section in the book deals with examining teacher education practices. This section explores how teaching environment as well as the individual teacher needs to be reflected upon. Second language teachers need to have significant lessons. It is also important for second language teachers to reflect on their teaching through critical reflective journal writing. The author suggests that some training might be necessary to develop good critical journal writing.

Richard's book provides a comprehensive analysis of what is needed to develop a good teacher training program. This book should be a welcome addition to any program that focuses on the development of good second language teachers.

## REVIEWER

Andria Christenson is currently an ESL teacher in Melrose, Minnesota. Her previous experience includes training teachers in Costa Rica for the Peace Corps.

***Focus on Form in Classroom Second Language Acquisition,*** Catherine Doughty and Jessica Williams, eds. Cambridge Applied Linguistics Series, Cambridge University Press, 1998. 301 pages.

This text is one of twenty-three volumes currently included in the Cambridge Applied Linguistics Series and contains two prefaces: one by the Series editors, Michael H. Long and Jack C. Richards, and another by Doughty and Williams, the book's editors.

The applied linguistics literature of the 1980's was characterized by the debate over whether or not L2 learners should be made to attend to "grammar" or form. Literature during the 1990's has retreated from this debate and has supported the more moderate view that some kind of focus on form (F on F) is useful, at least to some extent, and is more or less situational, depending on the form in question and the age and level of the L2 students involved. This volume examines a variety of F on F theories and issues and includes reports on several studies designed to show when and how focus on form is most effective in the classroom situation.

The research and discussions presented in the chapters of this volume are compiled from symposia/colloquia held at three different conferences in 1994 and 1995. Focus on form in second language instruction was the subject of all of these sessions, and, although these selections represent diverse and sometimes conflicting points of view, they are certainly indicative of the most recent theoretical trends in second language acquisition (SLA) research and teaching.

In the first chapter, entitled "Issues and Terminology," editors Doughty and Williams give a brief history of the controversial issues surrounding "grammar", or what has more recently come to be known as F on F in SLA research and teaching, and then go on to give operational definitions for linguistic terms as they are used in this particular volume. They also present an explanation of how the rest of the text is organized

and why it is organized in this manner. The remaining chapters are divided into three sections with self-explanatory titles: Part I: Theoretical Foundations of Focus on Form (Chapters 2 through 4); Part II: Focus on Form in the Classroom (Chapters 5 through 8); Part III: Pedagogical Implications of Focus on Form (Chapters 9 and 10). The text concludes with an extensive 22 page reference section and is indexed according to both subject and author.

In Chapter 10, authored by the editors, the stated aim is to interpret the research on F on F in classroom SLA for the language teaching professional. The authors attempt to accomplish this aim by examining the issues and studies explored in Chapters 2 through 9, with a view to making six major decisions in implementing F on F in the classroom situation. These decisions, in order, are: (1) whether or not to focus on form; (2) reactive versus proactive focus on form; (3) the choice of linguistic form; (4) explicitness of focus on form; (5) sequential versus integrated focus on form; and (6) the role of focus on form in the curriculum. They also present a taxonomy of tasks designed to help teachers relate various learner and learning considerations to the selection of F on F tasks.

Considering the content of the selections they have chosen to include in this volume, it comes as no surprise to the reader to learn that the editors' stated belief is that "the ideal delivery of focus on form is yet to be determined," and that it is up to the L2 teacher to decide -- based on F on F pedagogical principles -- what degree of explicitness of attention to form is most appropriate for his or her individual classroom.

This is not a classroom text for L2 learners. Highly technical in content, this book is intended for SLA researchers and language teaching practitioners as well as for graduate students in the field of applied linguistics.

## REVIEWER

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