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# Contents

Introduction.....5

## ARTICLES

“Back to Basics:” Literacy for Second Language Learners in the Public Schools  
Elaine Tarone .....7

Geodes Like Sky Blue Popsicles: Developing Authorship Literacy in Limited English Proficient Students  
Lisa Boehlke & Mary Kay Rummel..... 17

## THE ESL TEACHER AS RESEARCHER

Helen Jorstad..... 27

Finding a Voice: Secondary Students Write Their Stories  
Lindsey Allen..... 27

Citizenship Education: The Three S’s—Self, School, and State (Excerpts)  
Michael J. Mullins..... 38

Schemata, Strategies, and Social Construction: Some Implications for Second Language Pedagogy  
Paul Prior..... 53

Some Effects of Culture in the ESL Classroom and their Implications for Teaching  
Laura Buchanan..... 73

The Role of Error Correction in the Process-Oriented ESL Composition Classroom  
Susan Boshier..... 89



**POETRY**

To All the People Who Make the Circle  
Amy Egenberger .....103

Explaining Miracles  
Jennifer Jesseph .....104

**REVIEWS**

*Teaching and Learning Vocabulary*  
Reviewed by Adele Hansen.....105

*When They Don't All Speak English: Integrating the ESL Student  
into the Regular Classroom*  
Reviewed by Betty Leone.....108

**THE FORUM**

Comments on "Chinese students, American universities and  
cultural confrontation"  
Kristine Torkelson.....111



## **Information for contributors to the *MinneTESOL Journal***

- **Editorial policy**

The *MinneTESOL Journal* seeks to publish articles of importance to the profession of English as a second language in the state of Minnesota. Articles in the following areas are considered for publication: instructional methods, techniques, and materials; research with implications for ESL; and issues in curriculum and program design. Book reviews and review articles are also welcome.

- **Manuscripts**

Manuscripts should conform to the style book followed by TESOL (Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages), the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*.

Submit six copies of each manuscript, along with six copies of an abstract of not more than 200 words. **Submission of a computer diskette is STRONGLY encouraged.**

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## *Introduction*

The first 4 articles of Volume 8 of the *MinneTESOL Journal* look at issues surrounding Limited English Proficient (LEP) students in our public school systems. Elaine Tarone's article, "'Back to Basics:' Literacy for Second Language Learners in the Public Schools," leads off these selections by providing the theoretical background as well as the political implications of LEP instruction. She first summarizes the literature which finds that "the best way to promote literacy in a second language is for learners to first become literate in their native language, and then in the second language." Tarone then looks at the extent to which our public school systems are meeting their "obligation...to provide adequate language instruction for LEP students" and concludes by offering suggestions for improving our LEP programs.

In "Geodes Like Sky Blue Popsicles: Developing Authorship Literacy in Limited English Proficient Students," Lisa Boehlke and Mary Kay Rummel narrate how LEP students at Chelsea Heights Elementary School were instructed in "authorship literacy" and provide examples of pieces which their students created.

The next two papers are written by students in the University of Minnesota's postbaccalaureate teacher education program. Lindsey Allen's "Finding a Voice: Secondary Students Write Their Stories" describes how she worked with her LEP students through journal writing to develop a student-authored book. Michael J. Mullins' paper, "Citizenship Education: The Three S's--Self, School, and State," is his account of how he attempted to involve his LEP students more and make them more responsible for their own learning while he was their student teacher.

With Paul Prior's paper, "Schemata, Strategies, and Social Construction: Some Implications for Second Language Pedagogy," the theme for the last three articles in this volume shifts from the LEP student in particular to the English as a second language learner in general. Prior provides a theoretical argument for involving students actively in language learning through the use of authentic and live language in order to facilitate the acquisition and retention of language skills.

Susan Boshier's paper, "The Role of Error Correction in the Process-Oriented ESL Composition Classroom," and Laura Buchanan's paper, "Some

Effects of Culture in the ESL Classroom and Their Implication for Teaching,” provide two practical examples of how the theory outlined by Prior can be implemented. Buchanan discusses the all pervasive influence that culture has on any ESL classroom and offers suggestions for controlling and taking advantage of these cultural differences in order to teach language. Boshier, in her paper, presents an idea that makes the students responsible for and active in correcting their syntactic errors in writing while also providing positive feedback on the content of student papers.

Finally, along with two book reviews and a letter to the editor, we have added two pieces of poetry written by students in the University of Minnesota’s postbaccalaureate program.

Both Helen Jorstad and I are very excited about this volume of the *MinneTESOL Journal* as we feel it represents the diversity of the field of ESL in Minnesota. We have contributions from practicing teachers, postbaccalaureate students, master’s and doctoral students, Ph.D.s, M.Ed.s, M.A.s, administrators, and -- most importantly -- ESL students themselves. We hope that you find the articles, the stories, and the poetry that follow as stimulating and rewarding as we do.

Thomas A. Upton

## ***“Back to Basics:” Literacy for Second Language Learners in the Public Schools<sup>1</sup>***

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ELAINE TARONE

*University of Minnesota*

The question of what influences the acquisition of literacy skills in a second language is addressed. A selected review of the literature shows that prior literacy in the native language greatly increases the ability of elementary school aged children to become literate in a second language. The implications for LEP students as well as students in immersion programs are highlighted with a final discussion of the political realities and ramifications.

The “back to basics” movement in American education has urged us to return to the time-honored goals of public elementary and secondary schooling: the three ‘R’s of Readin’, Writin’ and Rithmetic. The President’s wife, Barbara Bush, has put her considerable energy into the goal of promoting literacy—Reading and Writing—for America’s youth. Nineteen ninety is called the International Year for Literacy.

In light of these facts, it seems to be a good time for us, as second-language teachers, to turn our attention to the literacy skills of our students. What is the best way for second-language learners to become literate in their second language? This paper will summarize research relevant to this issue and suggest some general approaches we can take.

The primary focus here will be on the limited English proficient, or LEP, student—the learner of English as a second language in the public schools. But this discussion will also have implications for language immersion programs in the public schools which are designed for majority children.

Before we begin to look at this issue, we need to make a fundamental distinction. This is the distinction between a second-language learner’s mastery of *basic communication skills* in the new language, and her proficiency in the use of *school language*.<sup>2</sup> In basic oral communication in the second language, the learner can use context to help her to understand and to encode meaningful messages: gesture, physical objects in the environment, and the ongoing and repeti-

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1 An earlier version of this paper was presented at the MinneTESOL Conference, Fall 1989.

2 Jim Cummins (1981a, 1981b) refers to BICS (Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills) and CALP (Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency). Here, I use the term “school language” to refer to Cummins’ notion of CALP.



tive patterns of social interaction can help the learner to interact meaningfully in the second language. But in school language, communication is context reduced: the contextual cues are missing. The learner must rely primarily on linguistic cues to meaning and must learn to manipulate the language logically. Think, for example, of what is involved in reading the following in a chemistry book:

*Although the Periodic System does not embrace or depend upon any particular theory of atomic structure, it certainly must agree with any such theory, and vice versa.* (Rochow, p. 13)

Here there may be few illustrations or outside context to help; the learner has to manipulate the language logically. Or think of what is involved in taking a multiple-choice test. There are no contextual cues here: no pictures, no gestures, no human interaction. In fact, the choice among A, B, C or D often balances on the choice of a single word, like 'might' vs. 'must', or a choice among options like 'A and B but not C', 'all of the above' and 'none of the above'—where the student may be deliberately misled by the test-maker, and where selection of the correct answer (again) depends on the ability to manipulate the language logically. Much of formal education aims at teaching students to process and use school language: language in which meaning is represented with minimal contextual support. When we refer to "literacy" in a second language, we must remember that we refer to more than the simple ability to decode letters or to copy letters down on paper. We use the term "literacy" at the level of meaning, as the ability to understand the *meaning* of what one is reading when extra-linguistic context is reduced, and to write making one's *meaning* clear to readers who are not physically present.

Let us turn to the issue of literacy in a second language. What is the best way to acquire literacy skills in a second language? Should students learn to read first in their native language, or in the target language? Swain (1981) cites the evidence on this point: it is very clear that children do best when they *learn to read first in their native language*. The ability to deal with decontextualized school language seems to transfer quite easily from the native language to the second language. But the initial development of that ability seems to be much easier when the learner is working with the native language. This is true not only for LEP children in ESL programs, but also for majority children in language immersion programs. Swain describes two studies, one with LEP learners and one with immersion learners. The LEP study was done with Navajo students at Rock Point, who, according to Swain (1981)

*used to be educated in English only, and their performance on standardized tests of English remained continuously below the performance expected for their grade level. In 1971 a bilingual program was set up in which literacy was first introduced in*

*Navajo, from kindergarten through grade 2. After children learned to read in Navajo, they were introduced to English reading. The program through to grade 6 continued to involve instruction in both languages. Students were administered standardized tests of English achievement and the results were compared, among other groups, to those of previous students at Rock Point who had not had bilingual education. (p. 24)*

The results? With each successive year, the children in the bilingual program scored progressively higher in *English* literacy-related tasks than did the children educated in English only. That is, the way to English literacy for these children was by means of literacy first in Navajo.

In French immersion programs, English-speaking children in Canada are taught a standard curriculum for their grade level, but the material is taught entirely in French, their second language. The children learn to read first in the second language, and are only introduced to English reading in the second grade. Swain describes the well known success of these French immersion children in oral interpersonal communication in their second language. They are

*able to argue in French, to contradict, to play games (including language games), to change topics, to exchange information, to make jokes, to laugh at them, and so on ... But it would be inaccurate to suggest that their French was flawless. It was not, and is not, even at higher grade levels. At the same grade level that the immersion children were demonstrating their ability to use and understand French in face-to-face interactions, the performance of immersion children on a standardized test of French language skills placed them at approximately the 16th percentile relative to the native French-speaking population on whom the test was standardized. (Swain 1981, pp. 23-24)*

That is, their French school language lagged far behind their oral communication skills in French. Tests also showed that these children had very low scores on measures of their (native) English school language but once they were taught to read in English, they quickly caught up with their English-educated peers on measured language skills. What is most interesting is this: once these children developed literacy skills in their native language, their literacy in the second language also improved markedly. Even here, with immersion programs, so highly regarded as successful, it seems that literacy in the native language is fundamental to successful literacy in the second language.

There are two types of immersion programs in Canada: early immersion, in

which children learn to read first in the second language, and only later in their native language; and late immersion, in which children first achieve literacy in their native language, while studying the second language a few minutes a day, and in the 7th grade are totally immersed in the second language in their study of regular school subjects (Swain 1974). How do these two types of programs compare in terms of the L2 literacy skills imparted to the students? The students in *late immersion*, already literate in their L1, become literate in the L2 *much faster* than the early immersion students: late immersion students require only 1200 hours of immersion to reach comparable levels of literacy with early immersion children who have had 4000 hours of immersion (Swain 1981, p. 25). Here again is evidence that we learn second-language literacy skills best when we have first become literate in our native language.

Let us now turn to the question of the amount of time it takes second-language learners to learn the L2. Cummins (1981a) indicates that it takes 2-3 years for immigrants in all-English programs to master the *oral*, context-supported language: the ability to converse in the language in ordinary day-to-day interactions. But how long does it typically take a second-language learner to achieve *literacy* in a second language? And how long does it take a second-language learner to catch up in academic subject areas? Collier (1989) provides an extremely thorough review of all the studies currently available in the published literature on the acquisition of literacy skills by LEP students in English-only and in bilingual programs, and by immersion students in both early and late immersion programs, and on these language learners' success in academic content areas. Collier's conclusions ought to be profoundly troubling to language educators in the Minnesota public schools. Basically, it takes LEP students a much longer time to learn to read and write in a second language than to speak in that language. Their oral skills develop relatively quickly, but their literacy-related skills are much slower to develop.

The speed with which L2 literacy may be mastered differs in *bilingual* programs as opposed to *English-only* programs. Let us take bilingual programs first. Collier concludes that LEP students in *bilingual* programs are in the best possible situation: they learn to read first in their native language, and later in the second language.<sup>1</sup> But even under these best of conditions, it takes these students as little as 2 years to master math and simple language skills, but from 4 to 7 years to catch up with their native-English-speaking classmates in literacy-related skills and in mastery of academic content.

But of course very few LEP students in Minnesota are in *bilingual* programs. How long does it take to become literate in English, in *English-only* programs? Here, the results seem to depend upon two factors, which are sometimes related: (1) whether the immigrants are already literate in their native lan-

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1 Collier argues that in all such bilingual programs, content courses should continue to be offered in the native language until the children are 12. This is because native skills in the school language continue to develop until that age.

guage, and (2) their age of arrival in the U.S. It seems that children who already are literate in their native language, and who are 8 to 12 years old when they enter English-only programs, take only a little longer than children in bilingual programs to become literate in English and to catch up in mastery of content: 5 to 7 years. These are somewhat encouraging results, since Minnesota favors English-only programs for LEP students. But what of learners who are under 8 or over the age of 12 when they arrive in the U.S.? Collier says:

*Young arrivals with no schooling in their first language in either their home country or the host country may take ... possibly as long as 7 to 10 years [to master] ... reading, social studies and science, or indeed, [they may] never. Very little longitudinal research has been conducted in this area, however. (Collier 1989, p. 527)*

Basically, then, we do not know much for sure about younger arrivals. The little evidence we have on the performance of these younger children, many of whom are not already literate in their native language when they arrive, is negative: they may take much longer to achieve literacy and to master academic content in English than eight to twelve year olds, and many of them never seem to equal their native-English-speaking classmates, no matter how long they continue. Possibly these are the children of whom it might be said, following Swain, that they are *submerged* in English, rather than immersed; some never rise to the surface. But, Collier cautions that more research is needed on children whose age of arrival is eight or under; almost no longitudinal research has been done to study their acquisition of school language and school content in the L2.

Preliminary results in a study (Dailey et al., in progress) on the writing skills of Southeast Asian learners at the Highland Secondary Complex in St. Paul may help to shed some light on the skills of these early arrivals. Preliminary analysis of the data in this study seems to show that eighth grade children who had arrived early and begun their study in English-only programs in kindergarten or first grade wrote the best of all the LEP learners in the study (including later arrivals who were college freshmen at the time of the study)—and the kindergarten/first grade arrivals seemed to write far better than children who had arrived as early as the second and third grades! That is, there seems, at this stage of the analysis, to be a big difference in writing ability between learners whose study was uninterrupted, and learners whose school years were interrupted—even by missing only the first two years. As we shall see below, uninterrupted schooling may be a key ingredient in the recipe for academic success of LEP learners. But clearly we need more research on the needs and skills of LEP learners whose age of arrival is eight or under.

What about adolescent arrivals to English-only programs? Collier says:

*Adolescent arrivals who have had no L2 exposure and who are not able to continue academic work in their first language while they are acquiring their second language do not have enough time left in high school to make up the lost years of academic instruction. Without special assistance, these students may never reach the 50th NCE or may drop out before completing high school. This is true both for adolescents with a good academic background and for those whose schooling has been limited or interrupted. (Collier 1989, p. 527)*

Assuming it is true that it takes some 7 years to acquire literacy skills in a second language, simple math will tell us that a 16-year-old does not have 7 years of public schooling left in which to gain literacy skills in English. And, while trying to learn English in English-only programs, these students are also missing out on their schooling in the content areas of science, social studies, history, health education and so on. What adolescent can avoid boredom when schooling consists only of language study and either classes in content areas which do not involve the development of higher-level thinking skills (like study hall and P.E.), or mainstream content classes where they lack both the requisite background information and the language skills to understand?

It is important to remember that many S.E. Asian adolescent arrivals have had their academic careers seriously interrupted by years spent in relocation camps. Such learners may lack many concepts which we consider basic to further academic growth; one such adolescent learner of whom I know, a very bright boy, when shown a globe, asked what all the blue was! Collier concludes:

*Consistent, uninterrupted cognitive academic development in all subjects throughout students' schooling is more important than the number of hours of L2 instruction for successful academic achievement in a second language. (p. 527)*

That is, the research which Collier has examined shows that students' ability to use school English in content classes depends more upon their knowledge of the content itself, than upon the number of hours they have spent in English-language classes.<sup>1</sup> Their understanding of the content seems to provide them with the presuppositions and assumptions they need to be able to work with the language appropriately: in some sense, it might be said to provide context for their

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1 Schema theory can, of course, provide a framework for explaining this phenomenon. A great deal of research on schema theory has supported the view that if a learner can activate a relevant content schema before reading a text, that learner's comprehension will be greatly enhanced -- and in fact, that possession of such a relevant schema is more important for comprehension than the learner's mastery of specific vocabulary terms in the reading (cf. Omaggio 1986, pp. 100-2)

language use in those classes. In this view, LEP children whose academic studies have been interrupted by years in relocation camps may be the children who are most at risk, because they may lack knowledge of basic content, and this knowledge may be more important than their mastery of specific English language skills. Researchers on English for academic purposes at the university level have reached similar conclusions: graduate students consistently report that their English grammar books, which teach them sentence-level rules out of context, do not prepare them to understand English prose in the context of their fields. A common complaint goes something like this, "I understand every sentence, but I do not understand the whole paragraph." Understanding of the whole paragraph usually involves some understanding of the academic field, and of the presuppositions and assumptions which people in the field bring to the writing.

To summarize then, this brief survey of the research literature seems to show that the best way to promote literacy in a second language is for learners to first become literate in their native language, and then in the second language. Under these conditions, it may take from 4-7 years for learners to become truly literate in their second language. Learners who are not already literate in the native language may take much longer to become literate in the second language. A matter of great concern for LEP education is—while they are becoming literate in the second language, these learners fall years behind in their knowledge of content in science, social studies, geography, health and so on.

So, what are the practical implications—for parents, language teachers and language program administrators—of this brief summary and synthesis of research on second language literacy?

Most obviously, we must adjust our expectations of second-language learners in the public schools. We cannot expect them to master either *literacy* or *content skills* in the second language until several years after they have achieved acceptable *oral fluency* in the language.

Then, we should explore ways in which we can adjust our curriculum in accordance with these changed expectations. My first two points relate to language immersion programs for majority children.

First, advocates of foreign language instruction in the public schools might want to look much more closely at the late immersion approach as a very successful option, one which promotes literacy in the native language before that in the second language. Research in Canada indicates that such programs may be more efficient and time-effective in promoting literacy in the second language. Second, in early immersion programs (which may still be preferable to late immersion, for example, in promoting better attitudes toward the target culture), perhaps more attention should be given to manipulable, hands-on materials which would allow children to study first and second grade content in creative and innovative ways even with minimal second language proficiency. (Such hands-on materials might easily be adapted for younger LEP learners.) The point here is that our children are, after all, *learners*:—not just second-language learners. Presenting interesting subject matter by means of creative hands-on materials

will surely facilitate *all* their learning.

Third, for those concerned more specifically about the fate of LEP students in our schools: the good news is that the research evidence at present indicates that English-only programs may be adequate for at least some LEP students: the age-group of students 8 to 12 who are literate in their native language. While bilingual programs might gain them a year or so, research studies indicate that this group suffers least in English-only programs.

But what of learners with no literacy skills in their native language (including younger learners) and adolescent learners? The research results here seem clear: it seems now that such learners should be in bilingual programs. In particular, in programs which promote literacy in the native language and which provide native-language instruction in content areas during the years when these learners are mastering school English. How can this instruction be provided?

Serious questions are raised here. For example, when speakers of Hmong are scattered throughout the district, how can each school provide content classes in Hmong? It would be far more economical to send all speakers of Hmong to the same school so that fewer content and NL reading teachers would have to be hired district-wide. But what would it do to the concept of integration and racial balance to have all Spanish-speaking LEP students at one school, all Cambodian-speakers at another, and so on? Or even to concentrate all non-native speakers of English at one or two centers? Recently, the intensive ESL center at Highland Secondary Complex in St. Paul was disbanded because, as administrators put it, there were too many ESL students at the school. To meet racial quotas, it seems, LEP students were dispersed to schools throughout the district—where teachers were ill-prepared to meet their language needs and adequate funds were not provided to maintain services which had been available at Highland. School districts are legally mandated *both* to provide special language instruction to LEP students *and* to avoid violating racial balance guidelines, but it is extremely expensive to do both *well*. There are clear guidelines for what constitutes racial balance, but there are no similar guidelines stipulating what constitutes adequate language instruction for LEP students. To stay within a budget, in cases such as these, a school district may cut back on the quantity and quality of the special language instruction provided to LEP students. An interesting question here is this: is the goal of integration and racial balance indirectly preventing these minority children from obtaining needed instruction in literacy and content area skills which might otherwise be provided within the tight budgets of school districts? This is no small issue.

Here is another question: for LEP children outside the Twin Cities, what options are there? Where there are very small numbers of speakers of a given language, how can a district afford to provide any bilingual support services at all?

Some partial answers to these questions have been proposed in the Twin Cities. As with language immersion programs, creative hands-on materials might be developed for the teaching of content to LEP students in the first and second grades—material relying minimally on language and maximally on ma-

nipulation and demonstration of physical objects—construction of models of (e.g.) dinosaurs, solar systems or pirate ships, making of student ‘books’, ‘chemistry’ experiments with baking soda and vinegar and red dye to create lava for volcanic eruptions.

For LEP adolescents, some teachers are proposing that (lacking bilingual programs) special sections of content courses (sometimes called “sheltered” courses) ought to be offered—sections in which possibly the instructor might use simpler English sentence structure. Or an ESL course might be presented in tandem with a content course (“adjunct” or “paired” classes) where the two teachers could cooperate in the creation of course materials. It is an open question whether content-area instructors can be found who can modify their presentation in this way.

What if, for financial reasons, the schools will not provide appropriate instruction for LEP students in reading, writing and content areas? What can be done?

One option might be to educate and help the families and ethnic communities to organize somehow to provide after-school classes or home instruction for these learners. It does not, after all, matter *where* these students become literate in their native language, as long as they become literate. It does not matter *where* they obtain their content area knowledge, as long as they obtain it. Of course, this approach seemingly excuses the public schools from an obligation to provide basic education to these children. But if these were *my* children, I would feel that time was of the essence. I would not want to stand idly by while the school system tried to get itself organized. Local communities might have the resources to offer classes after school or on weekends which might make the difference between success and failure for these children. Families might be able to offer support for individual children; where one or more family members is literate in the native language, arrangements might be worked out with a child’s teacher. For example, one family in the suburbs of the Twin Cities, which has adopted a non-literate Spanish-speaking 7-year-old, is planning to ask the child’s teacher to provide on Fridays information about goals, worksheets and readings for the following week, so that the family can provide the child with relevant content information and reading in Spanish. But perhaps not many families have the resources to provide this sort of remedy.

So, finally, let us return to a consideration of the long-term obligation of the public school system to provide adequate language instruction for LEP learners. For many LEP students, native language reading and writing courses are needed. For many, content courses in the native language, or “adjunct” and “sheltered” courses, are needed. These and other curricular changes mentioned above will necessarily involve changes, of one kind or another. Attempts to provide adequate language instruction to LEP students most economically would involve a re-examination of the guidelines for racial balance in the schools. Attempts to provide such instruction *within those guidelines* will be much more expensive.



Expensive programs are of course unwelcome to educational administrators. But here we must hold firm: the expenditure of funds to foster the English language literacy of these students will have long-range benefits which will far outweigh short-term financial gains. Surely now, when so many are focusing upon the importance of education (we have an 'Education President') and of literacy, we should seek financial support from both public and private sectors to promote the cause of literacy for second-language learners. This is a serious challenge to our school system. ESL teachers will need to work creatively with content teachers to create new options for LEP learners and all of us will need to bring considerable pressure to bear upon both an educational system which seems resistant to this kind of change as well as course content with superficial and short-range goals. But the long-range welfare of a great many LEP students is at stake here. Our schools have an obligation to meet the long-range educational needs of these students, to make it possible for them to become truly literate in their L2 and to master school content in the L2. We know *how* to promote literacy in a second language. The big question now is—will we be *able to do it* in today's public schools?

## THE AUTHOR

Elaine Tarone is a Professor Linguistics and director of the M.A. program in ESL at the University of Minnesota.

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## ***Geodes Like Sky Blue Popsicles: Developing Authorship Literacy in Limited English Proficient Students***

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**LISA BOEHLKE**

*St. Paul Public Schools*

**MARY KAY RUMMEL**

*COMPAS*

Recent research in second language reading has focused on developing metacognitive awareness and use of reading strategies. Strategy research in reading argues that less proficient learners may improve their skills through training in those strategies demonstrated by more successful learners. This suggests that writing strategies demonstrated by more successful learners could also be taught. The following article describes an approach to developing the language of Limited English Proficient students using process writing with content drawn from across the curriculum. A narrative of in-class experiences with LEP students ages eight to twelve years over eighteen months traces the development of learners and their teacher in a collaborative decision-making process.

Elementary school children acquiring English proficiency as young second language learners have been given a range of options in their oral language production. It has been expected that these children will move from receptive listening to physical responses before oral language production. Their speech often begins with one or two word statements with increasing command of longer meaning units such as phrases, sentences, questions, and narrative prose (Krashen, 1981a, 1981b; Tarone, 1988; Wells & Robinson, 1982). All speech attempts by the limited English proficient learners are rewarded with encouragement and continued modeling by the English as a second language teacher.

However, if you look at the writing opportunities presented in elementary school curriculum, it is clear that the process of learning to write is not seen as a natural one. In elementary schools, frequent opportunities to write rarely extend beyond the sentence level of mechanistic linguistic skills, such as grammar drills and spelling tests, yet schools claim to teach communication skills (Heath & Branscombe, 1985). Indeed, writing activities in many language arts textbooks focus on identification of parts of speech, figurative images or verb tenses

(Graves, 1983). Once identified these words are numbered in a notebook. Academic discourse forms which lie at the heart of success in the higher levels of schooling—oral and written extended prose, sequenced explanations, and logical arguments—rarely receive explicit identification and discussion at the elementary level (Heath & Branscombe, 1985).

As the LEP students become more proficient in English, it becomes more obvious that they strongly believe that economy of expression in *written* English is adequate. Terse sentences using simple subject-verb sentence structure handle the basic needs of food, clothing, shelter and many children's games:

Give candy  
I like apple.  
I want juice.  
I no want milk.

I find jacket red.  
I wear mittens.  
I run in my sneakers.  
I carry backpack.

I go in now.  
Rain come.  
I no like wet.  
I want warm.

You run.  
I pla, okay?  
You like? I like, okay.  
Go, go, go . . . We WIN!

These notions become reinforced through traditional language arts activities which generate phrasal answers on worksheets (Graves, 1983). Yet, these same children often run out of time in their *oral* conversations about families, gardening, monsters and practical jokes. Two recent conversations illustrate oral communicative skills of elementary LEP children:

- A. 1: I have three sisters and six brothers.  
2: You have that many. You have a BIG family.  
3: I have ten kids in my family. I can't count how many brothers and sisters. I have too many. They tell me what to do every day.  
4: I have a little brother. I tell him what to do.  
3: He listen? I don't listen to my sister Pang and she hit me. She mean.  
4: He listens. If he doesn't, I don't play with him when my grandmother babysit us.  
2: My mom yells at me when I make a mess in the kitchen.  
1: My big sister slaps me and pulls my hair when I read and make mistakes.  
2: My baby (brother) pulls my hair, but he's nice.
- B. 1: We have a garden. It big.  
2: Me, too.  
3: My grandma has garden. I help her sometimes. I cut (week) plants.

- 4: My mom grow cucumber, tomato, corn, pumpkin, onion, and lettuce.
- 3: I like cucumber and pumpkin.
- 1: I eat cucumber and cut pumpkin Halloween make scare face.
- 2: We have many pumpkin and cut big scare face.
- 4: You like cut pumpkin scare face?

It is difficult to believe that these same children stop writing after a few sentences because they have nothing more to express in their writing. Perhaps we as teachers have communicated that we care more about what we have to say to our students than we care about providing opportunities to help them discover and refine who they are. After all, young children try to write or draw on walls, tables, books, and even newspapers long before they enter elementary school. They continually find ways to assert "I am."

LEP students need to discover connections between their own knowledge and experiences and writing. Good questions reflecting on and responding to the children's writing helps them express information they did not know they possessed. The LEP students need to have rich imaginative prose from literature with syntactical forms they recognize. They need opportunities to take risks with writing that emphasizes ideas and vocabulary before spelling and punctuation so that students' ideas may develop to the writers' satisfaction. Then the final revision may be polished with spelling, capitalization, and punctuation changes. LEP students need to create their own meaning and voice through personalized language combinations, or metaphor-making such as was encouraged by the COMPAS Dialogue program.

## COMPAS DIALOGUE

During 1988-1990 Mary Kay Rummel and Lisa Boehlke collaborated in *Dialogue*, a writing program co-sponsored by Community Programs for the Arts and Sciences (COMPAS) and the St. Paul Public Schools. COMPAS is Minnesota's largest community arts agency. Since 1974, it has provided experiences in the arts to people who would otherwise not have had them. Each year, in Writers-and-Artists-in-the-Schools, community mural projects, dance groups, theater productions, and musical performances, COMPAS has reached more than 160,000 people through its belief that we create for ourselves a richer community by participating in the arts (*Dialogue Newsletter*, 1988).

The COMPAS Dialogue program was a three-year initiative (1986-1989) to improve the teaching of writing in the St. Paul Public Schools. The program was designed to help teachers develop new skills and ideas for using writing as a teaching tool, and encouraged teachers to become familiar with the writing process through their own writing. By its third year, COMPAS Dialogue had worked with over two-hundred teachers in twenty-eight St. Paul Public Schools.

Funding for the program came from the Rockefeller Foundation, the St. Paul Foundation, the Knight Foundation, the *St. Paul Pioneer Press/Dispatch*, the Matsushita Foundation, the Minnesota State Arts Board, the Minnesota Academic Excellence Foundation, and the St. Paul Public Schools.

The COMPAS Dialogue program was founded on three beliefs:

1. Professional writers provide powerful models for authorship.
2. By engaging in the writing process, teachers can gain insight into authorship literacy.
3. It takes time and close collaboration if teachers and their students are to understand this new kind of literacy in which the students take charge of writing and give a personal shape to materials of memory or history.

Rummel and Boehlke met at the fall 1988 COMPAS Dialogue Institute which provided teachers an overview of concepts and approaches to writing. Later, Rummel wrote with teachers to demonstrate how professional writers alter their own compositions. Central was the belief that ideas are redefined as written pieces and are examined for reflection of the author's intention. Additional details are added to the written pieces as the author clarifies his/her own voice. It is this process of reflection which creates the writing strategies of authorship literacy (Wolf, 1987).

Rummel guided both teachers and students in the writing process at Chelsea Heights Elementary School in an extended six-week residency during the 1988-1989 academic year. During her residency, she demonstrated authorship literacy with participating COMPAS Dialogue classes. Both students and teachers practiced authorship literacy with their own writing during the three-week intervals before Rummel returned to Chelsea Heights. Although Rummel was physically absent from Chelsea Heights during these intervals, she made herself available to discuss difficulties that teachers and students may have had with the writing process. Her availability and cheerful encouragement for the teachers and students engaged in authorship literacy continued at more infrequent intervals for part of the 1989-1990 academic year with COMPAS Dialogue funding.

## AUTHORSHIP LITERACY: THE PLAN

Many details that are used in writing are generated before a first draft (Graves, 1983), so we used semantic mapping, a term which "embraces a variety of strategies designed to display graphically information within categories related to a central concept" (Johnson, in the foreword to Heimlich & Pitelman, 1986, p. v). Categories or associations were indicated visually in a diagram or map.

The procedure generally began with a brainstorming session in which Rummel or Boehlke facilitated student associations on a topic or key concepts into categories in the form of a map. As the students contributed to the brainstorming procedure and built on each other's associations, they became better able to focus on what they knew. It is in the process of naming and contrasting that children become more explicit in stating what they know as earlier examples of children's conversations about simple need indicated. We helped them collect details related to personal history as well as to science content material (Ellis, et al., 1989). We also led them to help each other become more detailed in their language use. In this article, we will describe three of these writing projects and discuss examples of the student writing that resulted. We began with autobiography and personal description in order to help students tap the rich resources of personal history.

## PERSONAL HISTORY: HOUSES

1. Students created a semantic map of details about their homes in response to the questions:

*Where do you live?*

*How long have you lived there?*

*What does your house look like?*

*What colors and materials (wood, brick, or concrete) does your house have?*

*Which smells make you think of your home?*

*Which room do you like the best?*

*Why do you like that room the best?*

They started by writing their addresses in the center of the paper, then drew lines off from the central information and filled the lines with physical details as well as memories in order to respond to the above questions.

2. After all students finished drawing their semantic maps about their homes, they shared them orally. Students responded to the presenter by telling which part they liked.

3. Students then wrote short descriptions and personal experiences about their homes. As each one shared what had just been written, the other students told the author what information he/she would need in order to better understand the meaning of the written piece. Each student author chose which questions from the group to answer by adding more details to the written piece. At first Souad (Grade 4) wrote:

*In my kitchen there is a microwave, stove, walls, sink, tables and a floor with pictures with squares. I have white cupboards. The cupboards are down low. Some are up high.*

After questions and discussion she changed the above writing to;

*In my kitchen there is a old dusty microwave and an old white stove. The walls are a clean white. There is a gray sink and little tables and a floor with pictures and dirty with squares...*

## PERSONAL HISTORY: SELF

The need to add detail causes students to write longer, more varied sentences. Since their control of English syntactical patterns was limited and verb tenses often inappropriate, we added models from children's literature to further develop skills in autobiographical writing (Ellis, et al, 1989).

1. First, students listened to sections from the memoir, *When I Was Young in the Mountains*, by Cynthia Rylant (1982).

2. Then they wrote about personal experiences based on a model from Rylant such as the following:

*When I was young in the mountains, Grandfather came home in the evening covered with the black dust of a coal mine. Only his lips were clean and he used them to kiss the top of my head.*

Two students quickly wrote:

*When I was young in Sudan Winkel came home in the evening covered with dust. Only his kilt was clean and he used it to wear for the day. (Filmon-Grade 5)*

*When I was young in the city my friend Nick and I would go to Como Pool and we both were carrying towels, shorts and goggles. It was cold but we jumped in anyways. Afterwards, when we came home, we would play nintendo. (Fanglay-Grade 4)*

By grabbing their ideas and writing quickly, Filmon and Fanglay inspired the other students in their LEP pullout group to comment about their ideas and demonstrated far better than a teacher could have that ideas may flow from thought to written expression.

3. Students wrote pieces based on Rylant's childhood activities for several days, then chose a favorite to share with the group. "Picture" words and phrases were identified by the students in each other's writing. Individuals then used a student thesaurus to find synonyms that might be even more specific. Alauddin (Grade 4) made the following language changes in his story:

*Before: When I was young in the city I went to the pool across from my house with my towel. The swimming pool was cold and deep and I would sometimes see girls. I would whistle. (Alauddin)*

*After: When I was young in the city I walked to the pool across from my house carrying my towel. The swimming pool was cold and deep and I would sometimes see girls. I would whistle. (Alauddin)*

Both Alauddin and Tou read possibilities aloud to a friend and argued about word choice. They stated they had chosen the words they had for their second pieces because the "first words were too big and made too many pictures when somebody read it."

## SCIENCE: CRYSTALS

Early in the collaboration we introduced the LEP students to the strategy of sensory listing based on observation of concrete objects and then practiced metaphor making with those same objects. The science curriculum has ample opportunities for observation, identification, description, recorded information, and classification. During January 1990, the intermediate LEP students (Grades 3-4) grew crystals on charcoal briquettes or sponges using salt, laundry bluing, water, household ammonia and food coloring. Another group of fifth and sixth graders even dissolved copper sulfate in water over a hot plate to make walnut



shell geodes.

1. After watching the crystals grow over a period of a week, the students brainstormed sensory descriptions especially those of sight, smell and touch and put them on a chart under sensory headings.

2. They next listened to the poem "Icicles" by Barbara Juster Espensen (1984) to examine the surprising turns ordinary objects take with similes and metaphors.

3. Teacher questions asked for answers from the sensory description chart:

*Have you ever smelled . . . ?*

*Have you ever looked at . . . ?*

*Have you ever wondered . . . ?*

The group effort "Snowflakes in Heaven" responded to the above questions with the structure of "Icicles."

#### SNOWFLAKES IN HEAVEN

*Have you ever looked at  
colorful*

*from food coloring?*

*Have you ever smelled*

*jelly beans*

*in charcoal*

*like mushroom flowers?*

*Have you ever wondered*

*if charcoal mushroom flowers*

*could march through the streets?*

*The crystal light travels*

*on heaven.*

by Alauddin, Yang Shia, Fanglay and Souad

4. Improbable juxtapositions were set up by Rummel or Boehlke to create surprising images:

*How would you introduce yourself to crystals?*

*How would you tell others about yourself if you were a crystal?*

*What do crystals eat?*

*Where do crystals go for fun?*

*What do crystals wear?*

As the students responded to the improbably juxtapositions, all could participate at their comfort level of language fluency. More important than this, however, is the phenomenal delight the LEP students shared as they amazed themselves with their creations.

**I AM A CRYSTAL**

*growing like Paul Bunyan.  
I smell terrible  
so I have to go swimming.  
Everybody likes flower me  
because I am a great artist.  
Different colors -  
blue, yellow, red, pink, purple.*

by Josh, Mang, Alex, and Wa Men

**GEODES LIKE SKY BLUE POPSICLES**

*cups with baby blue water  
swimming in a life vest  
swimming with a bikini bathing suit  
swimming with a blood red popsicle  
Chatter, whisper, robot talk  
Let's go to the 1990's  
old fashioned video arcade  
forever  
Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles  
Willow  
Healthy Junk Food  
chocolate spinach pudding  
pizza  
vanilla with chocolate sauce and  
chunky nuts  
cold fish fin potato chips  
cinnamon french fries  
vinegar chocolate ice cream  
We eat our friends!*

by Filmon, Tou and Thai

Literature has played a vital role in all these writing process activities. Reading and responding to or reflecting upon literature is vital to being able to write it. When encouraged to write using a process approach the LEP students we taught came to see themselves as real authors who create literary pieces similar to the manner in which authors familiar to the children do (Hudelson, 1988). It established for us that the LEP children we guided had acquired new eyes and ears for imaginative imagery. They had successfully played with language and learned to respond to each other's work with interest and specific assistance.

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## THE AUTHORS

Lisa Boehlke teaches ESL at Chelsea Heights Elementary School in the St. Paul Public Schools.

Mary Kay Rummel is a private consultant and works with Community Programs for the Arts and Sciences (COMPAS).

## ***THE ESL TEACHER AS RESEARCHER***

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To bridge the sometimes very large gap between research and classroom practice, ESL teachers of the future themselves must begin to do research. However, teachers rarely have the time to build knowledge of research techniques and goals once they are committed to teaching in a classroom. The faculty in the Postbaccalaureate teacher education program at the University of Minnesota, in an attempt to prepare teachers who are both aware of research methods and capable of carrying out simple studies, have built a strong research component into the program that every pre-service ESL teacher completes. The Postbac program, which includes 15 months of coursework and nine months in elementary and secondary schools, yields a license to teach ESL. Upon completion of a followup one-year videotape project a Master of Education degree is granted.

We present here two examples of purely classroom-based, personal research models completed by prospective teachers in the 1989-90 "Postbac" program.

H.L.J.

### ***Finding a Voice: Secondary Students Write Their Stories***

LINDSEY ALLEN

*Cleveland Jr. High, St. Paul Public Schools*

#### **INTRODUCTION**

The following curriculum project consists of a unit I developed for a writing class in a secondary ESL classroom. Although this unit is intended to give the reader an idea of what can be accomplished in the ESL classroom with developing writers, it will not provide any specific "recipes" for writing development. Individual teachers and students, which vary from class to class in their needs, should set their own direction and determine their own process to be followed. What will be included as part of the unit, however, is a description of the setting in which I taught, the rationale which guided me, the objectives, and the process that was followed. I will also include a few samples of the end result of the students' writing efforts, a "published" book of their stories.

## SETTING

The unit was created for an ESL beginning/intermediate reading and writing class at an urban senior high school. There were 17 students in the class ranging in age from 15-21 and in grades from 9-11. All of the students were Hmong with the exception of one Cambodian who dropped out of school and did not complete the class. There were three women and fourteen men. Students were at varying levels of English proficiency. The majority of the students had arrived in this country within the last two years with the longest resident having been here almost six years. With the exception of English classes taught in Thailand or Laos, all the students began their formal education upon arrival to the U.S. Before teaching this class, I observed the students four times a week for two weeks. My cooperating teacher advised me to work on a writing unit with the students since writing is such an important skill for academic survival in the mainstream. Prior to my taking over the class, students had written daily in journals on topics given to them by their teacher. In order to gain information on their current level of writing proficiency I read over their journals and have included some samples of their writing below, reproduced exactly as they were written by the students:

*"When I first meet some one I want he or her to know about my self. I want to meet everybody and to be friend with they and to be nice to they. I want to finish high school and go to college to become a doctor and to help people. I really want to go to college..."*

*"In 1975 I has 6 years old. I am and my family live in Laos. 1976 I am a boy take care a horse and lawn my father work in the farm my sister and brother go to school they are study Laos language I am no go to school because my city don't have school young children 6 years old. I am go to take care my father horse and lawn one day my father teach me study ride horse. but first time I don't ride. The horse run and jumping I am fell down in the floor. When I study ride horse I have 7 years old."*

*"Something that I have done is pround of my product rice. When I was pround in Laos. Something that I was pround in Laos it was Rice, Cucumbers, and corn. When I was product rice of field far away so long times. So that one day my friends and I went to the field we seem many cucumbers in the field. So that my friend and I were very happyed of the cucumbers it*

*was proud of the field four years ago. Thank you."*

*"In this class they are all my class mates. In this class they are good friends of my I like this class. Because some people are girl but the most people are boys I think in class I have one guy is my good friend but they are all also my friends too. they are my friend too but not sure. In this class mates we never get angry eather we are good eather. Some people we had the same class some thing we don't know we to slow eather. Because we are good friends."*

It was evident that the students were at vastly different levels of writing. Some were capable of clearly expressing their thoughts and ideas on paper while others had difficulty conveying a coherent message to the reader. I felt intimidated by this. I wasn't sure where to start with the very beginning writers and was uncertain how to manage all the different levels of writers. The second observation that I made, however, was encouraging: the students had a *lot* to say. They had written so many different things about themselves in their journals that I was beginning to get a glimpse into their world as students, refugees, parents, and young adults. The entries in their journals were not well developed, however; all their thoughts had been written in bits and pieces. The idea that I could somehow get them to develop these bits and pieces was exciting!

## RATIONALE

When I began to plan what I'd be doing with this class for the next four weeks, I decided that I should start by writing about my "philosophy" on writing. It struck me that despite the writing classes I had taken, the writing texts I had studied, and all the rules of writing that had been bestowed on me, writing is not a linear process that can easily be taught--if it can be *taught* at all. The process varies with each writer and is very personal. It's a process that has to be *learned*. I reflected on how many different types of writing I had done and how I had, sometime in college, really begun to understand my particular writing process. This was a skill I had developed. It had not been taught to me. I knew that in this class I was working with beginning writers in their second language, writers who had not developed writing skills in their first language. I decided to stick to some basic premises to guide me through this process. The following thoughts are not all original but are ideas which I've either come across in readings or have developed in my own journey in writing. Much of what I have put down here comes from what people have called a holistic or whole language approach. Whatever the label, my approach included the following basic assumptions:

1. The process of acquiring language will come naturally when students are engaged in activities that are stimulating, interesting, and meaningful to them.
2. Students learn to write; they are not taught.
3. Students learn to write best when given a lot of opportunity to write in class.
4. Writing should be meaningful, purposeful, and communicative; it should be real.
5. Writing for meaning first rather than form should be emphasized. This is not to say that form should be ignored but rather it should be secondary to meaning in the early stages of the writing process.
6. Writing is a process. Students' writings should not be viewed as final, end products. There should be many opportunities for revision and rewriting.
7. Students' own culture(s) should be affirmed and explored in the writing process.
8. To learn to write, one has to want to write. A student has to have something that she wants to say to others or herself in order to be able to write. Therefore, topics and ideas for writing should be student generated.
9. A supportive, non-punitive environment should be created in the classroom so that students will be encouraged to write and take risks.
10. Language is not a mass of independent and separate skills. Therefore, writing does not have to be "the last skill mastered" but can be developed at the same time other skills are being developed.
11. Technical, mechanistic approaches found in many writing texts should be avoided. Too many rules may end up blocking the creative process and prevent students from taking risks.
12. It is easier for students to write about things that they have experienced.

## PROCEDURE/ACTIVITIES

There were two main “activities” used in this unit: dialogue journal writing and narrative writing. The first “activity” I focused on was the dialogue journals. Students wrote every day for 15 minutes (at least) in their journals. I, in return, responded to their journals never making any error corrections or any evaluative statements but always responding to the message conveyed. Occasionally this was difficult but there was always something in the student’s entry that I could respond to. We did this at the beginning of each hour. I quickly discovered how much they appreciated my reading and responding to their entries. Many thanked me in their journals and expressed gratitude every time I asked about them, their families, their history, or their culture. The allotted 15 minutes of journal writing each day quickly and often became 20 minutes. Students were truly experiencing real writing and enjoying it. Because I gave them no topics to write on, but rather an opportunity to write on anything they would like, I had expected some confusion and some resistance from the students. Out of 17 students, only one ever seemed to have difficulty coming up with a topic to write on. Interestingly enough, he was the student who had spent a decidedly longer period of time in this country in our school system (six years versus the average two years). He always asked me what I wanted him to write about and didn’t seem satisfied when I told him that this journal was for him and that he had the power to choose his own topics. Other students simply continued the “dialogue” which we had started, or would write about any of a number of topics including family, friends, school, Hmong culture, and favorite movies. I usually had to ask the class two or three times to finish up in their journals and turn them in to me.

As the weeks passed, I know that they had accomplished the following through dialogue journal writing:

- a learned enjoyment of writing,
- an understanding that writing can have a meaning and purpose,
- an environment that was non-punitive and supportive,
- an opportunity for them to generate their own ideas and direction in writing, and
- a consistent opportunity to write.

The journal also served an added purpose for me. Through the use of these daily, personal exchanges I got to know these students in ways I never could have had we not used journals. It also allowed me to learn of areas of interest shared by the students which could provide a good context in which to continue



our writing. This leads me to the next major project.

## NARRATIVE WRITING

In our first few meetings as a class I had the students complete short writing assignments. These assignments usually consisted of interviewing a classmate to find out certain things about him or her and then writing three or four paragraphs. To help them get started, we would simulate an “interview” and write a few paragraphs together on the board as a model. Generally these types of writing activities went well but they were always clouded by the fact that the students needed to write three or four paragraphs or that they had to find out certain information. In other words I felt like there was a lot of blockage to the students’ creative writing process. They were concerned about writing what I wanted them to write and worried that they somehow weren’t meeting my expectations.

I decided to use one of the topics consistently brought up in their journal writing: the story of their history and culture. I brought in a book that had been written in 1982 by ESL students in St. Paul and edited by Sandra Hall, *Voices Over the Water*. I had been reading entries in dialogue journals that reminded me of the stories that I had read in this book. I wanted to figure out a way that I could use *Voices Over the Water* to help these students to write.

## READING STORIES

I began one day by reading a story from the book on schools in Laos. It generated a lot of laughter from the students as well as some of their own recollections of their own school experiences in Laos and Thailand. They begged me to read more. I randomly chose another story written by a Hmong student some of them knew. It touched on some pretty horrible events in his life and I all of a sudden wasn’t sure whether I should continue with the reading. I looked up from the text at my students and every eye in the room was on me. I asked them if they wanted me to continue. Unanimously they said yes. That day they wouldn’t let me stop reading the stories. Many began telling of their own similar experiences. When the bell rang a couple of students came up to me and asked if they could borrow the book to show to their families at home. Instead I made copies of several stories for them and eventually ordered some copies of *Voices Over the Water* from the district office so that they could read the stories themselves.

## DISCOVERING A CONTEXT

The next day I gave them the copies I had made of many of the stories. I thought that based on the response I had witnessed to *Voices Over the Water*, it

would be a good idea for them to write their own book. I brought up the idea to the class. They were almost skeptical when I talked to them about making their own book. We spent some time talking about audience and who might read this book that they were beginning to create. The students came up with all sorts of ideas about the audience: American students (with whom many wanted to become friends), other teachers at their school, their families, and their friends. They also knew that it would be something that they could keep for a long time for themselves so that they would never forget all their experiences and memories. I then asked the students to start thinking of what story they would like to tell to others. A few students started writing right away and others read. By the end of the hour everyone was writing. The only instruction that I gave them was to try to write as much as they could--the longer the better. I wanted to make sure that the students had a lot to work with. I thought that this could be the perfect context in which to work on the skills of writing. It turned out to be just that!

Thus began our journey. What a difference it made that these students were writing about something that was important to them. I got the feeling after seeing the outpouring of stories that they had never had the opportunity to write about their past or what they had always collectively referred to as "Hmong culture." I was thrilled to see their commitment to this project.

## RESPONDING TO STUDENTS

After students had written their story and it was considered by them to be complete, I would take it home and read it. I never corrected errors in these early stages but I asked (or wrote) a lot of questions on their drafts. The most important thing at this stage was to make sure that the reader understood what was going on. I also tried to have their peers edit for meaning. Without exception, however, the student whose job it was to edit, pronounced every story read as being "perfect." I knew that this was another area that needed development! I brought in writing samples from another class I was teaching, put them on the overhead projector, and as a class exercise tried to teach the students what to look for when editing. Whether the reason was cultural in nature, or not, peer editing did not work with this particular group of Hmong students. If I had had more time perhaps they would have become more comfortable in critiquing their classmates' papers. As it was, I ended up being the main source of editing, occasionally with the help of the student-author. The process was a long one but the students always were eager and ready to continue with their stories. After a couple of drafts that focused on getting their story across to the reader, we began to focus more on technical issues. Many of the mistakes made were made by all the students. Each day we would go over these in class to help students know what to look for in their own paper. Many of the more advanced students began to recognize their own common errors and correct themselves. With each new draft

the errors became fewer. At the end of our process, the students' stories ranged from several handwritten pages long to only a paragraph or two.

## THE BOOK

The last step was to put the stories together in the form of a book. As a class, we brainstormed on the chalkboard all the things that needed to be done to make this a complete book. The suggestions included illustrations, a title, a table of contents, and a cover. That day we formed groups to deal with each of these issues. Each group was responsible for coming up with something to present to the class the following day. We would then as a class make decisions on our book. The title group came up with four suggestions which were put to a vote. The table of contents group had recorded everyone's story title along with the author's name and had put them into an order which they thought was acceptable. The group which was in charge of illustrations decided, along with me, that everyone's picture should be included. We needed only to vote on the cover illustration. After this was done, we essentially had completed their book. All that remained was to have it typed and bound. The last two tasks were my responsibilities. If there had been more time, I would have made at least the actual compiling of the books a class activity. In some settings perhaps students could have helped with the typing.

On my last day of teaching, I came to class with the bound books. Although the students knew that the end product was to be a "published" book, they really were surprised to see it in its final form. Many couldn't believe that this was theirs to keep. They thanked me over and over again. I tried to tell them that this was their doing and that I had only acted as the facilitator. My cooperating teacher had the class that day write a letter to me telling me what they thought of the books. I guess this was for me the most important feedback I could get. I've included several of their comments below.

*"I think the book that we wrote was interested and It was a great story of our Hmong culture, customs, and lives. And I thought that some story in this book was very fun and some was very sad. However, I love to read this book and I'll keep it forever."*

*"I think the book is very good and the stories that we wrote are very good, too. I feel good to write the story. I feel good that I can make a story by myself. I think all of them will feel good about themselves that they made the story by themselves, too"*

*"I think this book is very important for me, because I studied long time ago no teacher whom want me to make my own*

*story like you. I very happy that you really want to help me how to write about my story."*

*"I think this book is very good because it's telling about our Hmong culture in the past. It's good for us to keep and remember what are we writing about."*

*"March 16, 1990 I had receive the story that had been written by my classmates and me. I was very happy, because I think it will be memory of my country. I will keep the book as good as possible."*

## THREE STORIES

### *A Sad Story About My Parents*

*I remember when we were in Laos. I was the oldest in my family. My mom and my dad were married in 1973. My dad was a soldier, his name was Xai. When he got married to my mom he was 17 years old. My mom was 15 years old. After he got married to my mom, in 1975, there was a war in Laos. My dad went to fight. My dad told my mom that he would come back to my mom but he was killed in the war.*

*When my mom heard about that she was so mad because my mom and dad were only married for a year. My mom missed him so much but our cousin told my mom that there were a lot of men that wanted to marry her.*

*When my cousin buried my father, my mom didn't even know that she was pregnant. She felt tired and she didn't want to eat. Then my mom's mom thought that maybe my mom was pregnant. Pretty soon she delivered her first baby. That baby was me.*

*When I grew up I never knew who my father was. During that time my mom still lived with my grandmother. My mom got married when I was eight months old. When I got older I asked my grandmother if I had a father or not. My grandmom told me that my father was killed in May, 1975.*

*In 1976, our cousin asked my mom to marry my father's brother. She told them that if his brother wanted to marry her then she would marry him. Not long ago they were divorced because they didn't love each other. Then my mom married another man when we were in Thailand.*

*I am so mad about it because my mom and my dad were just married. Sometime I think about my dad. I want to see him and I don't want to live in this world with out a father.*

10th Grader

### ***My Life in the Past***

*I am writing about my life in the past. When I was in Laos I was five years old. We had eleven people in my family. We had a lot of animals but we didn't have a lot of money to buy clothes and shoes so we sold some animals to some people for money. After we sold the animals we had some money to buy clothes and shoes.*

*In 1975, my brother got married and we didn't have enough money to pay for the wedding so my father gave the animals to my brother's wife's mother and father to eat for the wedding. He gave them about six cows, two pigs, and twenty five chickens. After they got the animals, my brother's wife came to live with us.*

*After my brother got married, the communists came to shoot all the men in my country, so we ran away. We had no place to live so we lived in the mountains and in the forest. We didn't have enough food for my family and not enough water to drink. It was summer time and there was little water. We were so thirsty and hungry. When my father went back to our home, the two hundred animals were very hungry and thirsty and they all cried to my father. After that my father came back from our home. My father brought some water and rice to us. After a couple of weeks we didn't have any more rice or water. My father couldn't go back to our home because the communists were shooting everybody in my neighborhood.*

*On February 2, 1976, we went to Vientiane. When we got to the river of Vientiane my father got killed by the communists and we were very sad. My mother cried all the time because my mother missed my father so much. After we were in Vientiane for one month my mother died so we went back home. At that time the communists were back in their country.*

*When we got to our home, it looked very old. Some animals were still around our home. We didn't have money then because when my mother died we spent a lot of money for her funeral. So we sold all the animals to our neighbors. After we sold the animals we went to Thailand.*

*When we escaped to Thailand we didn't have any food to eat so we almost died. When the Thai people saw us they gave food to us to eat. We lived there for*

*two weeks and then we went to live in Ban Vinai. We lived in Ban Vinai for nine years and then we came to the United States. When we got to the United States we were very happy because we didn't get killed by the communists. I think I will never forget the communists!*

9th Grader

### **Laos and Thailand**

*We lived in Vientiane in Laos for twelve years. After twelve years we fled to Thailand. We were starving in Thailand and we didn't have enough money to buy food. We wrote a letter to my mother-in-law and to other people in the United States. They sent us some money to buy clothes and food. We had nine people in our family in Thailand. We had a lot of cousins in California. They also sent us some money. We lived in Thailand for three years. Each year we got one shirt and one pair of pants. Our parents just wore the same clothes every year because we were very poor.*

*I was little kid, about eight years old, but I remember all the things we did in Laos. My parents lived on a farm. When my parents came home, my uncles and my dad went hunting in the forest for two and a half days. Then they came back and brought some baby animals and the mothers home. We took care of them. After the baby animals grew up we let them go to find their home. We didn't want to hurt them because they were very nice animals but I was scared of them. One day I and my brother went to the farm. I saw a nest of leaves on the ground. It had a crow in it. I saw the mother fly to get things for her baby birds. Then I told my brother about where I saw the birds and how they were. My brother said not to tell anybody. "If you tell someone the crow might hear what you have said." The next day I went to see if the eggs were all gone in the nest.*

*In Laos I had four brothers and one sister. I always took them with me. We went to the forest and took walks for a few minutes to see the animals. The animals walked around us and played near us. Then we went to the mountain. We saw animals, trees, bamboo, and a lot of things--a waterfall, too. We played there for thirty minutes, then we came home. My parents said to go get water for them because they were tired. The lake was so far from our house but we had to get the water from the lake. If we didn't get it, we wouldn't have water at home.*

*At that place where we lived, my grandparents died at midnight. The ghost came to get them. After that we left this place and moved to another place. We went to live at the farm. We never will come back to this place again because if we come again maybe I would die, too. I'll never see this country again.*

9th Grader

## THE AUTHOR

Linsey Allen is working on her M.Ed. at the University of Minnesota and teaches ESL at Cleveland Junior High School.

## *Citizenship Education: The Three S's—Self, School, and State (Excerpts)*

**MICHAEL J. MULLINS**

*Forest Lake Public Schools*

*Powerlessness and confusion in daily life can only be understood through critical thinking. Critical thinking is a fundamental pre-condition for an autonomous and self-motivated public or citizenry. Its decline would threaten the future of democratic, social, cultural, and political forms.*

Aronowitz

## BACKGROUND

When I applied to the College of Education to pursue an M.Ed. in Second Languages and Cultures in the summer of 1989 I had many reasons for doing so, the most important one being that I felt a desire to help younger people with something that I did not personally take seriously until I was almost 27 years old: education. I had gone through my public elementary and secondary education occasionally reading a text but mostly being concerned with all those facets of adolescence extraneous to the academic curriculum. My early school years were filled with experiencing my adolescence while minimally coming to grips with academic necessities.

As I entered the University I began my pursuit of the next “required hurdle in life” with the same enthusiasm I had had in high school. I really was in school only because I had been blessed from birth with the intellectual aptitude that “the system” required. I did become somewhat more interested in my coursework, but as I now reflect back on why this was so I can only recall that I felt that I was doing things in college that I could “use” later in some profession. The things I looked forward to the most during my first two years at college were the Saturday afternoon Big Eight Conference football games and the social life on my coed dorm floor.

My lack of involvement in my education suddenly changed when I travelled to Europe in the summer between my Junior and Senior years at college and I found myself in the midst of something very foreign. Almost everything I saw I did not understand. I was suddenly not able to “just be myself” and continue functioning based on what I knew. I began thinking about why things in Europe were the way they were. It is, I believe, the first time in my life that I began thinking about my thinking. In a Piagetian sense I was finally a formal operational thinker at twenty.

After completing my Bachelor of Science I moved to West Germany where I lived and worked for three and one-half years. During the next few years I was involved in many discussions with people and began fundamentally questioning why I grew up in America the way that I did. I returned to America in 1983 attempting to further my career in agriculture, but my desires were elsewhere. Finally, in 1987 I enrolled in the College of Liberal Arts at the University of Minnesota in a German Studies program, something I would have excoriated anyone else for doing had it been four years earlier.

I greatly enjoyed my studies and I pursued them with a passion that I could not really explain. I came to the conclusion at some point during that liberal arts study that I finally had come to enjoy learning for its own sake. I was deeply involved in my studies and I found myself relating most of the things I was studying to personal my life. I was reading a lot of eighteenth and nineteenth-century German writings and I had been especially impressed with one individual and his feelings on education. The eighteenth-century German Wilhelm von Humboldt was the founder of what is today’s German “gymnasium” or advanced placement secondary school system. Von Humboldt wrote about education as an aesthetic experience, one in which each person must consciously embark on a voyage to learn about him- or herself and how that person fits into the scheme of the world. His concept of educating mankind is referred to as “bildung,” which I can only vaguely translate into English as “a complete molding of one into a whole person.” The process does not imply training, but rather “educating” each person so that s/he appreciates the values of a liberal, humanistic education. The core argument of von Humboldt’s theory is, “the real purpose of the human being is to develop his or her potential for wholeness in the fullest and most balanced way, and freedom is the first absolute prerequisite for this development” (von Humboldt, 1954). He felt that the key to this ‘freedom’ is that each person re-



ceive an education in which s/he is always learning and, most importantly, is learning about learning. Each person receives that education with the ultimate goal being to get to the "business of improving the nation" (von Humboldt, 1981).

These things I was learning had meaning to me and I was *consciously experiencing* them. The learning was so much fun that I decided that I wanted to teach. I kept thinking that it would have been so much better if I had just begun learning earlier and I hoped someday to be able to convince high school students that they should begin learning at an earlier age.

Meanwhile, I would tell my peers about my desire to teach in high school and they would mostly laugh at me, deriding me as being foolish for attempting to think that I could really take high schools and high school students seriously. This bothered me, since I knew well that much of what I was hearing seemed to be true. I had not taken high school seriously, so why should other people do so? As a matter of fact, even American society itself did not seem to take high schools seriously! I was just about to enter an advanced teacher certification program and I seemed to be the only person who really believed that it was the best thing for me to do. Many of my peers jeered me and said I was entering an intellectual wasteland that should more appropriately be referred to as some sort of full-time babysitting service. People would tell me that they really admired my decision to enter education. But, they did not see how I could relinquish one profitable profession to enter another in which the term "professional" would be used only ironically to describe teachers.

I was troubled at the time for many reasons. Would I like teaching? Would people respect me? Would I learn from this experience? Would I feel satisfied with my peers? Why had my school experience been the way it was? Was it because of me or was it because of them? Had I now somehow become destined to the fringes of society by believing that learning was fun? Would the M.Ed. program be a traditional teacher training program where mainly pedagogical theories and lesson planning ruled the day? Most importantly, I questioned whether I could continue to find the intellectual stimulation that I had come to enjoy in the past few years. In spite of all these questions I began the M.Ed. program hoping at best not to be terribly disappointed with what I would be asked to do.

### *The Recent Past: The M.Ed. Program*

At the time I entered the Postbaccalaureate program, I had read a few documents addressing the state of education in America today. These mostly were the pronouncements of well known and widely "respected" individuals or the blue-ribbon reports that various presidents of the United States had commissioned. I had listened to the past three presidents bemoan the state of American education. I had listened to the William Bennett debate about the changing of the Stanford University freshman reading list. Most recently I have listened to the "Education President" and his goal that America's schools be number one in the world in the

physical and social sciences by the year 2000.

I was not exactly sure how I should interpret all of these messages but I was sure that the American public was having similar problems. One thing I had come to believe was that education is a very political issue. However, everyone seemed to be just concerned enough with it to talk a lot about it. But that seemed to be where the great debate always ended. I wanted to go beyond the periphery of the five-thirty national news coverage but I did not know how or where to begin. At this point the M.Ed. program provided me with the necessary assistance.

From the very beginning the staff of the program seemed to be wanting to approach education from a different perspective. When the students assisted the staff in formulating the syllabus for fall term I knew we were dealing with a very novel approach. The staff actually asked us for our input into the course content and then followed up by inviting us to the “rap sessions” the staff held to discuss the progress we were making. This was all very new and exciting, needless to say unexpected, and I found myself beginning to think about education and learning in a much different context. I saw the staff and students actually working and learning together. We were discussing what we were doing and learning together about what that was. The emphasis was not at all on a product but on something the staff was calling a *process*. This process has the key feature of truly learning about learning.

With the syllabus in place and the atmosphere in the “classroom” having been established as quite egalitarian I was quite enthused to see what materials we would be using to learn how we were to become teachers. The first essay I remember reading was an excerpt from a text written by one who was for me at that time some obscure Brazilian philosopher—Paulo Freire. The title of the text was *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. It has since become the cornerstone of my philosophy of education and Freirian texts fill a large portion of space in my private library. The essay we read discussed what Freire calls the “banking” concept of education whereby “the scope of action allowed the students extends only as far as them receiving, filing, and storing the deposits” (Freire, 1970). These deposits are the unrelated bits and pieces of information that they receive in school instruction. Freire refutes the Lockian Blank Slate belief of the mind and maintains that students are by nature inquiring individuals. The important point here is that they must be given the chance to inquire, the result being the establishment of what Freire terms student *conscientização* (consciousness heightening) (Freire, 1973). This *conscientização* requires that the students and the teachers enter into critical analysis of and dialogue with each other on their own life situations. This is also referred to as experienced-based education; the instructors draw from the immediate lives of students to begin the learning process.

This was all fine in the abstracted safety of the University; however, I was not sure then and I am not sure now exactly how one goes about creating an environment in the classroom that would accommodate Freire’s beliefs. Much of Freire’s discussion and many of his concerns developed out of his work with the

poor and illiterate in Recife, Brazil. I was not sure how one might be able to apply his theories to American classrooms. . . .

. . . As I continued reading other Freirian texts such as his most recent one *Learning to Question* I began expanding my circle of authors. Freire has a large following in a segment of American pedagogy commonly called Critical Pedagogy. Some of the authors I have been most influenced by are Henry Giroux, Ira Shor, Michael Hartoonian, Stanley Aronowitz, and Michael Apple. These people are all believers in Freirian theory but the added focus they offered me was their applicability to the American classroom setting. Some of the common features that link their theories and writings include the following five characteristics:

1. Teachers and students strive to learn together in hopes that each of them can link school to the imperatives of a critical democracy (Giroux, 1988). This is possible only by giving students a role in determining their curriculum.
2. Educators should strive to evoke critical thinking about self and school in their students. Only after one has consciously thought about one's situation will one be able to act.
3. Students are humans and as such they are subjects that must act upon objects. This dichotomy between subject and object goes back in time to the moment when Aristotle wrote the first words and man was thereafter confronted with a separation of "I" from "Me." Kant describes education as the process of man becoming Man (Kant, 1926). Of importance for this paper is that students must not passively sit and absorb information. They learn by doing and creating their own lives.
4. Schools must act as transformers and not just transmitters of cultural values. Students must learn to enter into dialogues questioning what it is they see around them.
5. A definite link between schools and politics exists. In fact, they demand that the schools and the students recognize the political nature of education and incorporate discussions into the curriculum of the schools, the result being that schools will begin to explicitly address the political nature of education. . . .

. . . What I hope to do in the second section of this paper is to describe a

few of the things I did in an ESL classroom in which I was teaching. The process I am going through only allows itself to be seen as a product only when I write it down. But as the next thought enters my mind that product is again transformed into a process. This is indeed the ideal learning situation in which one consistently molds, shapes, reshapes, and redefines what one is doing. This process is a prerequisite for defining a new, improved approach to education that does not have as its goal the mere transmission of what we perceive to be "knowledge." Instead, the goal is to create new forms of knowledge through doing. As Dewey said, "The society that not only changes, but which has the ideal that such change will improve it, will have different standards and methods of educating from one which aims simply at perpetuation of its own customs" (Boggs, 1984). . . .

. . . I entered the classroom the first day as a preservice teacher with my goal being to write as many observations as I could. We had been discussing in our postbaccalaureate program an ethnographic approach to classroom observation, and this seemed like a very reasonable way to record what I saw. The idea is that one should be as unobtrusive as possible in attempting to record the classroom environment. Such things as interactions among students, interactions among students and staff, and the make-up of the school itself would be of possible interest to the observer who wishes to define the culture of the classroom.

After about one week of observing and writing I began collecting my thoughts and reviewing my notes. (1) The arrangement of the room was such that most of the interactions in the classroom were between teacher and student. Very seldom did I record students interacting with one another—except of course when student interaction was the focus of the activity. Spontaneous student interaction with another student was rarely seen. (2) The teacher was providing the majority of the information. S/he would be standing in front of the class writing information on the chalkboard, many times asking the students for choral responses. When the activities were not teacher directed the structure of the lesson seemed to be coming out of a workbook. The students were required to supply the missing pieces of information. i.e., fill-in the blanks, true/false, or matching. (3) The content of the class seemed to be grammatically-based. The course was a language course. However, we had been discussing at the University and I had been reading how instruction could be organized around thematic content units instead of around grammatical units. The students did not seem to be actively involved in the course material and there seemed to be no link between school and anything else in the outside world. (4) I did not see how the students' higher order thinking skills were being challenged. The majority of the material that was being covered required perfunctory rote memorization of a block of material. The activities all seemed to have as their goal the completion of rigidly-defined prescriptive notions of the "knowledge" one should learn. Nowhere did I see "knowledge" being subordinated to thinking. There existed proper responses that the teacher expected the students to be able to give. (5) Finally, and this is

the most troubling, I did not record a single time that they protested. They appeared simply to resign themselves to performing according to the teacher's best judgment!!

I spent the next two weeks trying to determine what it was I wanted to do in this classroom. The students were the most advanced level of ESL at the school where I was working but they came from different grade levels and exhibited varying levels of English proficiency. The most interesting characteristic of the class was that there were students from five different countries. Most of the students were Southeast Asian, but I did have some Russian and Korean students. I visited with my cooperating teacher about some of my interests and asked her what she would like me to do with the students. She said that it was totally up to me and that I had no restrictions—within reason, that is. I thought that it might be a good idea to ask the students a bit about themselves, so I began by designing a questionnaire.

### *Deciding on a Curriculum*

I handed out the student information sheet two days before I was to begin teaching and I asked the students to return it to me the next day. Several of the questions asked for general information: age, native country, languages spoken, and hobbies. However, I was quite interested in some personal opinions, as well, so I asked such questions as:

- 1) What do you like (and dislike) about living in the U.S.?
- 2) If you remain in the U.S. will you become a citizen?
- 3) Are you satisfied with the news you read in the American press pertaining to your native country?
- 4) If you were able to write the school textbooks and help determine what students learn in school, how would you do it?

The responses to the first two questions varied from no answer to "I like everything." However, two people did write that the thing they most disliked was that they had "no nation here" and that "they are discriminated against." I found this very interesting and thought the chance existed to dwell on this topic in classroom discussions. The response to the last two questions (#3 and #4) was about as mixed as with the first two. Again, I did record two interesting responses, both to the fourth question: a) "You must respect the teacher and behave to friend and the old man, God." b) "I learn from the teacher."

Out of the eighteen forms I received back—I handed out twenty-one—twelve students indicated that they wished to go to college after graduating from high school. I found this quite interesting given that the majority of the students either did not feel like filling out the forms completely or they had no opinions.

On the questions where the students were to provide personal opinions, only eight wrote more than two sentences. One response that was written more than any other to the question “What do you like (dislike) in America?” was the word FREEDOM. I found this on ten forms. I decided that the curriculum could include three topics from these forms: (1) I would develop the concept of freedom; (2) racism—which appeared in response to three “What do you like (dislike) in America?” questions; and (3) the topic of curriculum content and who decides it.

The dilemma now was how to develop these ideas so that I could reach the students and get them involved. The ages in the class ranged from fourteen to nineteen (and possibly older) and the grade levels from seventh to eleventh grade. I had to consider that I had not only different language abilities but also that people were processing information at many different levels. I decided that it would be best to speak with the class about some of my ideas before proceeding. Anyway, I was interested in the student-teacher generated curriculum ideas that I had read about in Freire’s and Ira Shor’s texts, and so an open discussion with the students was ideal.

The first day was spent with introductions and I explained to the students why I was going to be working with them for the next six weeks. They seemed to accept this information unceremoniously; I hadn’t expected much else. We finished the class by beginning to discuss the class rules. I told them that they should think about the existing rules and decide if they liked them or not. Emotions remained rather subdued.

My mind was reeling after that first day as I tried to come to grips with the realities of the first day in class. All I could think of were the many blank stares and the few responses I experienced. How was I to try to begin with my ideals of “citizenship education” when the majority of the class couldn’t even spell those two words?? I thought to myself that the students were just waiting for me to tell them to open their texts to page so-and-so; at which time an immense sigh of relief would go out from all parties in the room—including myself. This was, of course, the commonly accepted way of doing things. I couldn’t let myself down, however, and I would go in the next day full of enthusiasm. I immediately reached for Henry Giroux’s text *Schooling and the Struggle for Public Life* (1988), hoping to find the needed tips. I decided that night that I was going to focus on three main areas of instruction:

(1) I would try to fundamentally change the physical arrangement of the classroom. I wanted to achieve something other than the hierarchical relationship that existed currently between students and teacher. (2) I would try to include a unit that would have as its focus experienced-based learning. My coop teacher had told me that the students would have to pass a competency writing exam in four weeks. Why not have them begin by writing a personal essay about why they came to America. (3) I wanted to ask the students for their feedback on what they would like to learn and then we could develop and research the unit together.

### *Physical Arrangement*

We had been reading a lot about the way classrooms are arranged and how those arrangements can play a very significant role in either enhancing or discouraging discussions. I observed, in almost all classrooms that I saw, the traditional straight-rowed seating structure, and I decided that I would rearrange the chairs. I left the chairs in the rows they had been in for the first week and then the next Monday as we were beginning class, I asked the students if they had ever sat in anything but rows. No one had, and so I asked them if they thought it might be advantageous to change the make-up of the room. No one had an opinion, so I asked them to push the rows into a circle and see how they liked that. Fifteen seconds hadn't expired before a student announced to the entire class that he could now see people whom he previously hadn't known were in the class! There was a lot of visiting among students and suddenly a male asked if they might introduce themselves. I agreed, and from that moment a number of aspects of the class began to change.

First of all, the amount of interaction between students increased immensely. Certainly a lot of what was being discussed was not related to the lesson; however, I felt that communication was the key to this class and, furthermore, that communication among students, and not just between myself and the students, was needed. The first thing I noticed was that the students were grouping themselves into ethnic groups and speaking their native languages. So, I asked them if they might like to choose their own seating arrangement and that they should keep in mind that we were in this class to speak English. No one moved. I told them that I would assign them seats if they didn't try to mix with people from other countries. About one-half of the class then moved voluntarily and the volume level decreased accordingly.

This was just fine, since now we could spend time introducing ourselves and coercing each other into talking with the newly found "friends." I did the majority of the coercing, but what emerged was that slowly some people did start speaking. I mingled with the class listening to the students and observing that many of them were watching me and looking at their friends with whom they previously had been sitting. I asked what the major difference was for them now that they were sitting elsewhere, and the resounding response was that they couldn't speak because they couldn't understand one another. I announced that that was fantastic and I asked the students why I might feel this way. After about a thirty-second pause, a Russian woman said, "Because we must speak English." (One big thing I learned this year is to just simply wait for a student to say something after having asked a question. The ringing silence tends to bother students more than it does the instructor!)

The next positive aspect of this new seating arrangement was that the students could not only see one another, but I felt that I could see them better too. The classroom appeared to be more open and, although the dialogue was still quite limited in the first few weeks, I did have students telling me continually

that they enjoyed being able to see everyone. Eventually, one side effect was much more dialogue among students.

### *Class Rules*

One specific topic of discussion that I will now address, and which I think the new seating arrangement greatly benefited, was deciding to ask the students to discuss the classroom rules. I was always thinking of how I might bring “citizenship education” into the classroom, and I stumbled onto the idea of asking the students to vote on the discipline rules. There had been three simple rules before I took the class over, and I decided to just ask the students if they felt comfortable with those three rules. Amazingly, about five students raised their hands and began telling me what they felt the rules meant to them. Shortly thereafter, some students began discussing the rules among *themselves*. I am convinced that changing the chairs around allowing the students to speak among themselves, and continually encouraging student interaction brought these first remarks about classroom discipline. Of course, not all students were participating. The most shy were the Hmong women and the younger students. However, I felt that a portion of this was due to cultural socialization. I was able to learn a great deal from the more reticent students, but only via the journal writing, when they supplied me with information about their feelings.

One final thing I noticed after having altered the seating arrangement was that space was more flexible and open for student movement. Both the students and I could move quickly from the rear to the front of the room. My interaction patterns were not just left to right in front of the class as they had been, but now I moved left to right and in between among the students. I felt much “closer” to them, since I could easily move from one group to the next. Furthermore, when we wanted to work in small groups—something else that was totally foreign to this class—the students quickly rearranged the desks to get into partner or small group setting.

In sum, I feel that something as minor as seating arrangement can dramatically alter the communicative nature of the classroom. Most importantly, I found that after initial reluctance on the students’ part, they began to talk with each other and not just with me. I envisioned Freire’s idea of “horizontal relationship between persons” (Freire, 1973). The idea was to establish loving, humble, hopeful, frustrating, critical dialogue among all people in the classroom, resulting in communication.

## THE FIRST WRITING ASSIGNMENT

My cooperating teacher had told me that the students would be writing a short essay four weeks after I took over instruction of the class. This was part of a school district graduation policy. She told me that the majority of the students had not written much, so I decided that it would be good for them to begin. I



chose the topic for the first essay, thinking that it would be easier to coordinate all the students, and classroom discussions about writing might be easier if we were all talking about one type of essay. I decided on the personal essay because I had been doing a lot of reading about ESL student writing; most of the scholars I had read suggested beginning with personal experiences. I announced the essay topic to the students—Why I Came to America?—and their reactions were mixed. A few of the students (all Russian) complained that they had been asked many times since coming to America why they had come. I told them that they should maybe think about whether or not their opinions had changed, and if so, how. Rather than just writing about why they had come they could write about how their perceptions had changed. The Russian students all had come into the ESL class with previous knowledge of the concept of writing. They were in the course mainly to increase their fluency in English and acquire new vocabulary words.

I introduced the concept of writing drafts of the essay, something which again appeared extremely foreign to most students. I even had a number of students, after they had handed in the second draft of their paper, ask me why they had to continually write about the same topic. So much for my being able to explain the writing process to them! The students who had had previous exposure to writing were the ones who were most receptive to a process approach.

A second writing assignment was to have the students work in pairs, go to the library and research a topic of their choice. Additionally, I made the assignment an introduction to the library by asking the librarian to talk to the class about using the card catalog, the Reader's Guide, and the reference section of the library. Before beginning I told the students that they would have to work with a student from another country, the goals being meeting a new friend and speaking English. They objected vehemently, so we had to spend the next two days before going to the library talking about the importance of intercultural communication. This led to some very interesting discussions as the students really opened up about the problems they had working with each other. Not being able to understand one another due to the accents and different interests and backgrounds were the usual reasons given for not wanting to work with new partners.

I persisted and the students ended up learning much about each other's diverse backgrounds. We had discussions about the Vietnam War, the Khmer Rouge, discrimination against Jews in the Soviet Union, and discrimination in America. The students were quite surprised to discover that their home countries were so different. Most Asians had come from the jungle, and most Russians had come from large urban areas; yet they had almost all come to America for the same reason—to escape some sort of persecution. The discussions became quite animated at times and I just took a place at the side of the room and listened to the students discuss.

The third writing assignment was to research a topic of interest and then to give an oral report about it to the class. Most of the reports provided the students with new information about the interests of their fellow classmates. I asked them

to take notes so that we could discuss the reports. The discussions were usually *quite* brief, the exception being a discussion about plagiarism. One woman had copied out of an encyclopedia that monkeys eat other animals. She was challenged by a classmate, and she could only respond that she had read something in the book; unable to understand it fully, she just wrote it down. The challenging student asked her if she would always just believe and write down something she didn't understand. We expanded the discussion in two ways: (1) the importance of understanding what you read, and (2) not just accepting what someone says without questioning it.

The students all said that giving reports to classes, having to stand in front of the class, and following up with a discussion was something totally new. I found such an activity to have immense value for many reasons: (1) the students learned to work together on a common project—we discussed the need to work with people whom they wouldn't know after leaving school and entering the workplace, (2) they acquired academic skills in using the library, writing the report or drawing accompanying sketches, and note-taking during the report presentations; and (3) they were forced to communicate with one another during all stages of the researching, presenting, and the follow-up discussing. I found the exercise to include all language modalities, and it offered many chances to digress from the immediate topic at hand and treat other important issues in "real-life," i.e., backgrounds of students, racism, speech problems, etc. Such an exercise gives the school a much broader, more effective context in which to treat issues that are frequently buried in a textbook.

## DIALOGUE JOURNALS

The idea of writing in journals came about for two reasons: (1) I had read about it in my research at the university and I found the journal writing I was doing at the university to have a lot of value, and (2) I was having trouble bringing a certain segment of the class into the classroom discussions, namely, the younger Asian students and the Hmong women. The entries were very personal, ranging in breadth from a personal account of a male having to watch as his father was executed by the Khmer Rouge, to a woman telling me that the biggest problem with America is that her people have no nation and no king here. She went on to explain how she and her family had been persecuted in Thailand, and that they had hoped America would be different. Unfortunately, she was in a land where her people were dependent on welfare, and most of the Americans didn't care about them. And worse yet, the Blacks would fight with the Hmong, hitting Hmong people and stealing money from them. She went into quite a bit of detail telling me about her uncle being beaten by a group of adolescent Blacks. She just wanted to go back home. All of this came from a woman who did not say ten sentences openly in class in the six weeks I worked with them.

What I discovered from the journals was that the students could write about

personal matters and they were actually quite willing to, once they felt that they could trust me, and that the information would be kept anonymous.

I feel that the features of the classroom I experimented with and have just described represent a productive start at changing the classroom. The students were required to enter into a process of finding out on their own the information they needed to complete an assignment. Change in the classroom is not easy—the first major hurdle is to convince the students themselves that there are other ways to learn.

## REFLECTIONS ON MY CLASSROOM EXPERIENCE

These reflections combine my experiences in the public schools and at the University. The question-answer format in our post-bac seminars has been instrumental in my establishing a more open classroom in the schools. The emphasis on the *process* instead of simply a finished *product* has allowed me to better define what I feel education to be. This *process* is the single most important element I have tried bringing into the secondary school classroom with me this year. It has taken the form of dialogue journals where students have, for example, given me feedback on what they thought we should do differently in class. I have held weekly “Rap Sessions” where we have discussed classroom management, curriculum content, or any other potential problem areas where students have wished to voice their opinions.

I feel that these are some of the more progressive features of my citizenship curriculum. A dialogue has been established, trust has been discovered, and hopefully learning has been enhanced. The most positive feedback I received was from my own students. The majority of them felt that what we did in class was somewhat important. While the classroom management and my different approach to classroom discussions was much different than what the students were accustomed to, they did not renounce what we did. I must bear in mind that many students will not be receptive to a lot of my ideas simply because of the way school has already formed them. For example, I had students constantly telling me that I gave them too much freedom in classes. Many told me that I must be a stricter disciplinarian. Of course, I was trying to do the exact opposite by giving them the opportunity to create their own agenda! . . .

. . . Only by listening to students and their many concerns and interests will we as educators be able to begin tapping into their energies and abilities. In the past year we learned much at the university seminars about involving students in the learning process. This is not a new idea; what is new is that we as educators actually tried to move these ideas from our university classrooms into our elementary and secondary settings. This involved risks. Students will most likely not be initially receptive to drastic changes in the traditional classroom. Students must be given a “voice” in what happens in the schools but they must also be

willing to take on more responsibility. Elements such as classroom management should become negotiable, with students creating some of the conditions and then having to bear the consequences. Responsible, involved student-directed action in schools will translate into responsible, citizen-directed action in society. However, **everyone** must enter into this social contract as partners. . . .

. . . Just how teachers act remains to be decided. It is necessary that we sincerely invite and actively involve everyone. In the schools this requires students, educators, administrators and parents working together to understand what the role of education in our society should be. In order to understand where we are today, we must take the time to learn how we have come here. For schools this means rewriting curricula, making them student-educator generated and experience-based. The experiences of everyone must be included in this process. This is the process of writing **our** history and it will require a unique approach to learning; it is not beyond our abilities, but it involves risks.

Many people are adverse to risk and shun such a challenge, waiting for someone else to act or the next day to arrive. Amazingly, every day that we wait for something to happen we must remember we are taking just as large of a risk. We must act and begin writing the next chapter in our history. In order to do this, however, we must reread the previous chapters in hopes of gaining insight. It disturbs me when I think that we might have only become future oriented. Are we so disturbed by the past?

## THE AUTHOR

Michael Mullins is working on his M.Ed. at the University of Minnesota and teachers German at Forest Lake Public Schools.

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## ***Schemata, Strategies, and Social Construction: Some Implications for Second Language Pedagogy***

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**PAUL PRIOR**

*University of Minnesota*

The desirability of teaching usable knowledge vis-a-vis inert knowledge is presented. A review of the literature discussing knowledge structures, knowledge processes, and the link between knowledge and social interaction concludes with an outline of a tentative model of the knowledge system. Implications for second language instruction are also offered.

This paper raises the issue of inert knowledge in second language education. A Review of recent theory and research on schemata, strategies, and social construction, which discuss how knowledge is represented and processed both cognitively and in social interactions, suggests how second language classes can avoid inert knowledge and facilitate the acquisition of usable knowledge.

I remember well how, when I began teaching, I was surprised at the gap between my students' performance on my fill-in-the-blank tests, which was generally very good, and their performance in conversation and composition, which was generally quite poor. For a while, I rationalized these differences as a natural part of the learning process, as control in a limited domain preceding control in a more complex domain. However, when I began to see students who had 600+ TOEFL scores and who could hardly write a grammatical sentence in an essay, my doubts began to grow. At first I thought of this phenomena as ritual learning or pseudo-language, but recently I have found an existing term in the literature which describes it fairly well, inert knowledge (Whitehead, 1929).

McNeil (1986) tells a story which illustrates inert knowledge quite well. During her ethnographic study of social studies curricula in high schools, she observed a class where knowledge had been reduced to a simple exchange in which minimal cooperation from the students was rewarded by acceptable grades from the teacher. The school was not bad by conventional standards: students scored high on tests. However, after observing a six-week unit on the Great Depression, McNeil interviewed all of the students. One of her questions was: Have you ever studied poverty in this class? Not one student said yes. Whether for McNeil's high school students or the international students with the 600+ TOEFL scores, inert knowledge is knowledge that is isolated, fragmented, and demonstrable only in specific, limited situations. And again in both cases, there

appears to be a relationship between the inert knowledge of the students and the educational practices of their teachers and schools.

If we want to avoid inert knowledge and encourage the acquisition of knowledge that can be used for communication, we should first consider the general question of knowledge. By knowledge, I mean to include any kind of mental representation. Knowledge is used here more broadly than is usual to refer to current perceptions and thoughts; memories of people, events, and places; expectations; recalled or constructed imagery; your beliefs and emotional evaluations; procedural knowledge of all kinds; whatever is represented in your mind.

How knowledge is represented in the mind has received a great deal of attention in the last two decades. A number of terms have been proposed to describe knowledge representations: frame (Minsky, 1975); script, plan, theme, and goal (Schank & Abelson, 1977), schemata (Rumelhart, 1975); prototype (Rosch, 1978); mental model (Johnson-Laird, 1983); knowledge structures (Abelson & Black, 1986); person, role, event, self-, and non-content procedural schematas (Fiske and Taylor, 1984); and, propositional and image schematas and idealized cognitive models (Lakoff, 1987). This long list is not exhaustive, but the profusion of terms suggests both the amount of work being done in this area and the lack of consensus. The purpose of this paper is to examine some broad trends in the research and theory addressing issues of the representation and use of knowledge and then to reflect on some of the implications of the research for second language education, particularly focusing on what the research may suggest about how to develop usable rather than inert knowledge.

## **SCHEMATA: THE STRUCTURE OF STORED KNOWLEDGE**

The basic idea of a schema and of many other forms of knowledge representations is that memory is structured, organized, not random. A schema, therefore, is a memory structure. The implication of this idea in communication is that schemata (the memories or prior knowledge a person has stored) shape our perception, interpretation and production of texts (whether they be written, spoken, visual, tactile or whatever). Recognizing that we use schemata has led to a radical reappraisal of comprehension as an active process of constructing representations and meanings rather than as a passive process of decoding signals. I will begin with two trends in the study of schemata.

The first trend in the research relates to a theory of memory storage (Tulving, 1972), which posited two memory systems, semantic memory and episodic memory. Semantic memory is for storage of decontextualized information (e.g. Washington is the capital of the U.S.;  $E=mc^2$ ; The Great Depression followed the collapse of the stock market). Episodic memory is for the storage of personally-experienced, contextualized events (e.g., your memory of a meeting you attended this week). In the 1970s research on knowledge representations tended to focus primarily on the kind of abstract, general knowledge (scripts, text

schemata, concepts) that would be located in semantic memory. For example, Schank and Abelson's (1977) idea of scripts as abstract decontextualized schemata of typical events in certain settings would probably fit the notion of semantic memory. Their most famous illustration is the restaurant script. For example, read the following sentences:

*Last night we went to a restaurant that our friends told us was the best in town. However, we were really surprised when the food arrived: it was not what we ordered and, when we complained, the waiter was quite rude.*

When you read this short narrative, you must draw on your prior knowledge of what a visit to a restaurant is like in order to construct a meaningful interpretation. You have almost certainly inferred several things. For example, you have probably inferred that the people sat down to eat (good restaurants usually aren't carry out), that a waiter took the order and then brought it to the table, that the people were surprised because the service was less than they expected. While none of these points is explicitly stated in the text, our knowledge (or schemata) for restaurants leads us to infer these points. In technical terms, the text instantiates a restaurant schema (or script), and the schema then leads to certain inferences being made. A script is an abstract, decontextualized event schema. The restaurant script includes generalized information about typical participants, settings, and events, but not any information about particular restaurants or particular visits to a restaurant. Similarly, text structure knowledge (Mandler, 1978; Meyers, 1975), conceived as abstract, structural outlines of texts resembling tree-diagrams for sentences, would seem to fit into semantic memory.

In the 1980s research began turning more and more to episodic rather than semantic memory structures. This shift can be seen clearly in the changes within researchers. For example, in 1982 Schank revised his and Abelson's 1977 version of scripts as abstract, semantic memory structures to a view of scripts as episodic memory structures, reflecting his perception of the priority of episodic, particular knowledge. Discussing why he changed his views of scripts, Schank (1982) observes:

*Part of the justification for this modification of our old view of scripts is that it really is not possible to say exactly what is and what is not part of any script. Particular experiences invade our attempts to make generalizations. To put this another way, we do not believe in the script as a kind of semantic memory data structure, apart from living breathing episodic memories. What we know of restaurants is compiled from a multitude of experiences with them and these experiences are stored with what we have compiled. (p. 23)*



Van Dijk and Kintsch (1983) make much the same point, noting that the notion of fixed, semantic memory structures (like scripts) simply cannot explain the flexible nature of cognitive functioning.

The second noticeable trend in research relates to the range of phenomena studied as schemata rather than to the memory system involved. Research in the 1970s tended to focus on a few abstract concepts (like scripts for restaurants, categorical prototypes for birds, and text structures for stories). In the 1980s, schemata became the focus of other areas of psychology, particularly of social cognition. For example, two social psychologists, Fiske and Taylor (1984), identify five types of social schemata: 1) person schemata, information about the goals, traits, and behaviors of typical and particular people; 2) self-schemata, information about your own goals, emotions, behaviors, etc.; 3) role schemata, information about characteristics, norms, behaviors and so on of groups defined by categories (e.g., age, sex, occupation, class, religion); 4) event schemata, knowledge of what happens in typical or particular social occasions; and 5) procedural social schemata, rules for linking or processing information from the above four (e.g. attribution processes to determine causes of people's behavior). The content of this list also reflects the first trend toward more episodic memory; person schemata, for example, include not just your general models of personality traits, such as shyness, but also your memories of your Uncle Buck and your models (generated from those memories and from other knowledge) of what kinds of behavior you can expect from him.

The two trends together illustrate first that the idea of schemata has changed. Whereas originally a schema seemed to be conceptualized as an abstract, generalized knowledge structure, today it is generally synonymous with memories of any kind. In fact, attitudes, goals, images, beliefs, and affective evaluations are included among the types of knowledge discussed as schemata. Second, these trends illustrate a shift in the relative importance given to abstract knowledge. Today episodic memory is widely viewed as more central to knowledge processing: structures like scripts are now seen not as preexisting structures that direct cognition, but rather as temporary products constructed out of episodic memories.

## STRATEGIES: THE PROCESSES WHICH CONSTRUCT KNOWLEDGE

The knowledge structures discussed above are representations of prior knowledge: they are stored information. To be of use, stored knowledge needs to be called up and integrated with current thoughts, perceptions and goals. Thus, several researchers have recognized the need for current, "on-line" representations of knowledge. Johnson-Laird (1983) suggests that such mental models (constructed, analogical representations of the world and/or discourse) are needed

to explain reasoning. Mental models are constructed to represent the worlds of our experience or of our hypothetical worlds. For example, your current mental model may include information about your present bodily state and position, perceptions of your physical and social environment, your current understanding of and reaction to this article, some (perhaps conflicting) representations of your needs and desires, and various other thoughts and images. Elements of these mental models will be stored in your memory as new schemata or be used to modify existing schemata. Van Dijk and Kintsch (1983) introduce two types of mental models, situation models and communicative context models, as components in their theory of discourse comprehension. In any case, these cognitive models in the brain arise out of the interaction of prior knowledge, sensory input, and current goals.

Of course, if you are generating models in your mind (of this text for instance), you need to have some rules or strategies internalized to do so. Van Dijk and Kintsch argue that discourse comprehension is a strategic process, highlighting the role of knowledge *processes* (strategies) as well as knowledge *structures*. By strategies, they mean to include all cognitive processes, from the kind of conscious strategies we might employ to get jobs (e.g., dress well) to nonconscious processes you are using to search for schemata relevant to this text as you read it. Van Dijk (1987) explains the strategic view of processing as follows:

*. . . understanding is gradual, on-line, often makes use of incomplete information, requires data from several discourse levels and from the communicative context, and is controlled by individually variable goals and beliefs. (p.165)*

Schank (1982) made a similar move in his theory. When he reconceptualized scripts as essentially episodic memory structures, he introduced two new terms, memory organization packets (MOPS) and thematic organizations points (TOPS), as more general than scripts. However, he argues that these abstract "structures" are used to access and interrelate episodes. In other words, his high-level knowledge structures (MOPS and TOPS) are actually knowledge processes. In this sense, the distinction between schemata and strategies may be functional. Stored procedural knowledge (schemata) when in use may function as strategies.

Strategy, used in the sense of van Dijk and Kintsch (1983), is a term to describe cognitive processes. While many descriptions of discourse assume, following Chomsky, that language comprehension and production are *rule-governed* phenomena, van Dijk and Kintsch argue that cognitive processes are more open-ended and have more variable results than rules would allow. Thus, they chose the term strategy to contrast with the notion of rule. Their use of strategy, which I follow in this paper, is very different from and much broader than the common usage in the second language literature of the term "strategies", defined as specific behaviors that a person employs to learn a language or to maintain and repair communication.

What is important to understand here and what we will come back to as we talk about instructional implications is that the strategies or processes contemplated in these current models of comprehension are active, not passive, and are not just global cognitive processes that we inherit as members of our species. The strategies represent operations occurring at many different levels of processing with varying degrees of generality. Some might be domain specific, such as how to evaluate a statistical procedure. Others might be quite general, such as assuming that remarks are relevant to the topic (Grice, 1975). To say that strategies are active means that they are involved not just in comprehension processes, but also in production, that they guide not only how we reach a goal, but also what goals we pursue.

## SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION: ANOTHER PERSPECTIVE ON KNOWLEDGE

Prior knowledge structures, mental models and strategic processes remain in the cognitive domain, located within the individual. Studies of the social nature of learning and discourse are beginning to suggest another picture of knowledge. Vygotsky (1962) argues that language and knowledge result from a process whereby social interactions are internalized and that learning occurs through the *zone of proximal development* (the performance that an individual can reach with the help of others). Cazden (1983) discusses how vertical structuring of interaction (e.g., scaffolds) leads to learning. The vertical structures she discusses are ones in which adults provide cues, clues or even some answers to help children communicate a message or solve a problem. Similarly, Daiute and Dalton (1988) in their study of collaborative student writing suggest that cognitive conflict and play during peer interactions may be central to cognitive development. For example, consider the following interaction between two fourth or fifth graders collaborating on writing a story:

A: And he flew off into the Atlantic Ocean

B: The Atlantic?

A: Yeah, the Atlantic.

B: No, into the Pacific . . . he swam for a couple of hundred miles  
(Daiute & Dalton, 1988, p. 265).

What happens in this interaction is clearly not the kind of tutoring usually found when the zone of proximal development or scaffolding are discussed. But these kinds of interactions may be the basis for strategies like word play or, more centrally, elaboration. Studies of interactions like scaffolds and of the role of cogni-

tive conflict suggest that knowledge may be formed interpsychologically, that knowledge may be viewed as something accomplished within social interaction. This contrasts with our normal picture of communication in which I have a message that travels through a medium to you who receive it and respond to it. The picture here is one in which significant elements of the message are emerging through the medium of our interaction, more between us than within us.

The notion of the zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1962) says that learning occurs when you are asked to perform beyond your current level of ability. At first this might sound a lot like Krashen's (1981) *i + 1* formulation of input for second language acquisition. However, the essence of the zone of proximal development is not input, it is interaction. While input is conceived as data to stimulate the emergence of a particular *grammar* out of our genetically-inherited universal grammar, the zone of proximal development conceives of learning as the constructive internalization of social structures and processes. If we return to our discussion of strategies, a Vygotskian interpretation of much of what van Dijk and Kintsch (1983) label as strategies would be that the strategies are products of internalized sociohistorical interactions.

Current research in composition suggests that you may even internalize the learning-through-interaction process itself. Recent composition theories which view writing as a process of discovery and learning (Knoblauch and Brannon, 1984) imply the notion that externalizing and attempting to communicate thoughts in writing can provide a kind of self-generated scaffolding which leads to the refinement of thought and to the creation of new meaning. McGinley (1989) suggests that the self-directed, recursive reading and writing his subjects employed in a writing task amounted to the individual creating a "vicarious community." In other words, he argued that his subjects, who sat alone in a room reading and writing and then rereading and revising, were creating over time a dialogue within themselves, and between themselves and their texts, as they composed their essays.

Another perspective on the social nature of knowledge can be seen in the notion of intertextuality (Derrida, 1974). Porter (1986) gives as an example of intertextuality the Pepsi commercial which evokes images of rural, Depression-era America and of Spielberg's movie *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*. The commercial is constructed out of prior texts. Intertextuality theory argues that all texts are necessarily constructed and interpreted out of bits and pieces taken from previous texts. The pieces may range from the use of individual words to strings of words, from patterns of style and structure to world views. For example, consider the word "text". When I read this, I do not understand it by consulting an internal dictionary definition. The word carries traces of how I have read or heard it used. For example, it first evokes a sense of authorized knowledge, an object of study, through its use in textbooks. It also evokes connections with specific disciplines, English and Linguistics. For a long time, when I saw "text", I thought only of written text. As I began to read more discourse studies, I saw text being used for oral as well as written discourse. More recently, reading

Freire (Freire and Macedo, 1987), I have come into contact with the ideas of the world as text and reading the world. Words do not stand alone; they carry traces of the environments they have been used in. Texts do not stand alone either: they are written and read through relations to previous texts.

What connects intertextuality and the zone of proximal development with the earlier discussion of trends in schema research is that these concepts suggest that knowledge structures and strategies are acquired through cumulative processes of internalizing experience in social environments, which are in turn the products of history. Native speakers of a language have few, if any, scripts without episodes. The meaning and use of words arise out of multiple texts and contexts, not formal dictionary definitions. In this view, the particular and the episodic emerge as the continuing ground of the abstract and the general. And the particular and the episodic are firmly anchored in sociohistoric circumstance.

## A TENTATIVE MODEL OF THE KNOWLEDGE SYSTEM

What should be clear from the discussion above is that discourse (comprehension and production, written and spoken) is based on a complex knowledge system. I would like to offer one view of that system, based in large part on my interpretation and extension of van Dijk and Kintsch's (1983) model of discourse comprehension. This adapted system has five components. First is stored, prior knowledge (schemata). Prior knowledge may be viewed from two perspectives, as knowledge structures (the cognitive perspective) or as intertext (the social perspective). Second is what I will call emergent knowledge (mental models). Emergent knowledge refers to the on-line creation of meaning and to the discovery/construction of new meaning. It too may be seen as arising from internal cognitive processes or social interactions. Third is strategies, processes which construct knowledge. Again, strategies may be viewed as cognitive (e.g., patterns for generating scripts out of episodic memories) or social (e.g., scaffolding). Fourth is a control system. The idea of a control system or executive processes is one of the least developed areas. However, a control system seems to be needed to coordinate the selection of goals and strategies. The control system is generally not seen as a "ghost in the machine," but rather as a reflection or product of current cognitive processes. An important part of the control system would be goals, many of which may be schemata or strategies. Fifth is overall arousal and emotion, which have not been mentioned. Arousal and emotion are global states like hunger, tiredness, anxiety, drunkenness, and so on. If I write "Ronald Reagan", you will probably experience some affective reaction. That affective reaction can be seen as a stored memory, as part of a schemata. However, if you have an automobile accident, the resulting adrenaline rush and other physical effects will have global effects on your mental processes.

## INERT KNOWLEDGE AND KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER

Most accounts of schema theories in reading comprehension, emphasize prior knowledge. Discussion of the role of strategies (as used here) is not central. The danger of schema theory as it is often presented is that it could be construed as arguing for a passive, banking model of education (Freire, 1970), where our role as teachers is to deposit lots of knowledge in our students' brains. This kind of rationale underlies Hirsch's (1987) concept of cultural literacy, a concept which reduces education to a kind of preparation for trivial pursuits.

One of the problems with theories of knowledge deposit is that they take retrieval and transfer for granted. Schacter (1990) notes that one of the major findings of memory research in the past decade has been that the value of particular activities for encoding depends on the conditions under which information is retrieved: "Encoding operations that lead to high levels of memory performance under one set of conditions may lead to low levels of performance under different retrieval conditions" (p. 690).

The difference between ESL students' performance on discrete-item grammar tests and that in actual conversations provides striking evidence of this. The students I discussed at the beginning of this paper had encoded language knowledge (through exercises) in conditions that replicated the retrieval conditions (the test). However, they could not access and use their language knowledge in other conditions. In other words, it was inert knowledge, knowledge that had been deposited but could not be withdrawn for use outside the bank.

Spiro et al. (1987) make a similar point in their study of transfer (the ability to apply knowledge learned in one context to other situations or tasks). They found that when social studies information was presented within clearly organized frames (i.e., under conceptual titles) it was recalled better than the same information presented in an ill-structured fashion (i.e., without conceptual titles). However, when a given second task requiring the transference of information to new settings, the group that had received the ill-structured presentation did better than the group receiving the well-structured presentation. Spiro, et al. (1987) suggest that if you want knowledge to transfer in natural settings, then the knowledge representations should have the following features: "multiple interconnectedness between different aspects of domain knowledge, multidimensional or multiperspectival representation of examples/cases, and allowance for various forms of naturally occurring complexity and irregularity" (p.178). Thus, they argue, what is needed is "cognitive flexibility." Concluding a discussion of the misconceptions caused by single analogies in learning complex concepts, Spiro et al. (1989) argue:

*... the maladaptive force of single analogies is paralleled by misconception-inducing reductive forces of a single schema, single mode of organization, single line of argument, single precedent example, single prefigurative "world view," and so on. The antidote for these maladaptive forces of simplification is in each case the systematic assembly of multiple knowledge sources—integrated multiple analogies, compiled fragments from diverse schemata, re-presentations of the same information under different organizational schemes, multilinear lines of argument, and multiple precedent examples. (pp. 529-30)*

In other words, if you want to prepare your students for job interviews, do not just give them a set of rules, a sample of an application form, and a single dialogue or simulation. Give them multiple examples of interviews or simulations of interviews with different emphases, different tasks and different affective tones. Give them multiple samples of application forms. Have them read or better yet do research on issues like discrimination, drug-testing, the use of lie-detector tests, and the use of psychological tests. Give them different, possibly conflicting, sets of rules. It is important to recognize how far this prescription is from an educational mainstream in which standardized tests are central to research and practice. Good performance on standardized tests basically demonstrates inert knowledge; thus, research on teacher effectiveness, which has generally used standardized tests as criteria, tend to result in models for how to develop inert knowledge. To develop inert knowledge, you reverse all of Spiro et al.'s recommendations and limit instruction to single sources of and contexts for knowledge.

## GENERAL IMPLICATIONS FOR SECOND LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION

I will take it as a given that the primary goal of language education is to produce *usable* knowledge rather than inert knowledge. For most teachers, the goal is probably framed as communicative competence or proficiency. However, Pierce (1989) suggests a critical pedagogy of possibility which challenges the given rather than accepting it. One of the central implications of the research discussed above is something we have supposedly already learned in second language education. If you want students to learn how to do something, they need to do it. The centerpiece of communicative language methodology has been that, if you want students to be able to communicate in a second language, then they must use the language for communication. However, the discussion of knowledge above has several implications for how we understand communication which has been unevenly recognized in second language theory and practice.

There were five terms in the tentative model of the knowledge system given above: prior knowledge, emergent knowledge, strategies, control processes, and arousal. I will focus here primarily on the implications relating to three of those terms: prior knowledge, strategies and control. First, students need prior knowledge. We can no longer conceive of ourselves as just language teachers. Language is only a code; communication requires meaning and meaning arises from our knowledge of the world in the broadest sense. Language is not, as we have learned, a rule-governed phenomena: it is a knowledge-guided one, with all types of knowledge involved. Carrell (1988) has suggested that every second language program needs to have a parallel program for content knowledge acquisition. Prior knowledge includes almost every category of knowledge you can think of. For example, consider a classroom interaction in a university where the professor is talking. Prior knowledge here might include not just knowledge related to the content and structure of the lecture, but social knowledge. For example, what do the professor's dress, jokes, choice of words indicate about her political and social affiliations. Not understanding the political and social affiliations and values of the source of a message is often a serious impediment to understanding the content of the message. Recalling Freire (1970) and Spiro et al. (1989), we need to be careful not to model the content component of our curriculum after the inadequate, but common models found in many subject classrooms. We should encourage students to be active users and pursuers of knowledge, to integrate knowledge both across domains and with their own lived experience. I do not believe that the kind of content knowledge acquisition Carrell (1988) calls for requires every student to study the same material in the same manner.

Second, students need strategies. As discussed above, when we think of strategies in ESL today, we probably think of learning strategies or of repair strategies for communication breakdowns. However, strategies in the sense they are being used here are much broader. They may be conscious or nonconscious (tacit). Many of them may be domain-specific. For example, consider the strategies involved in evaluating a statistical argument. You will have certain visual strategies for scanning tabular information, a variety of linguistic and discourse strategies for reading and making sense of the text. You will have some domain-specific strategies for evaluating statistics, depending on your prior knowledge. For example, you may have a map of the statistical landscape, of special topics to consider, such as randomization, size of sample, category of data in relation to statistic used, and so on. You may recall images of a particular class you attended or of pages from a statistics book or from class notes. You will also have strategies (goals) that identify your purposes for doing the evaluation. If you have a tendency for math anxiety or you have not gotten much sleep, you might also have self-regulatory strategies to control your arousal. All of the strategies mentioned here probably barely scratch the surface of the strategies actually used in evaluating the argument. Furthermore, research in social construction suggests that these cognitive strategies are acquired through constructively internalizing elements of social interactions. This view of strategies argues for authen-



ticity in materials and activities, for close simulation of target activities (or the actual activities themselves), so that the specific strategies involved (most of which we will not be aware of) may be acquired.

Third, students need to possess an appropriate control system for the tasks they undertake; they need the appropriate goal strategies/schemata. Communication normally involves self-initiation (our own goal-seeking acts). In addition to strategies of text comprehension, van Dijk and Kintsch (1983) discuss strategies for controlling the discourse comprehension process itself. For example, in discussing the strategies employed in reading a *Newsweek* article, they point out that they assume a general sociocultural strategy (goal) of getting political information. This raises an important point. If students' actions are always initiated by the teacher (are externally motivated), and the activity being taught presumes internal motivation, then the students may end up without this first central component of usable knowledge: a set of goals, the desire to do something. Perhaps an example of this is the statistics courses required of many students in education. They take statistics and leave the program with inert knowledge. Statistics comes out when a test initiates it, but students have not developed goals for using statistics. Schank (1982) talks about the central script being the personal script, a kind of self-schema which tells you what kind of things you do during your day. If statistics is not incorporated into your personal script, then have you learned statistics? Smith (1982) talks about all learning occurring through a process of apprenticeship in what he likens to "clubs". For example, he argues that kids decide that they are members of the "literacy club". You could say here that reading and writing get incorporated into the child's personal script. Smith also notes how "slow" learners, confronted with more and more decontextualized, nonsense worksheets which are supposed to "remedy" their deficits, come to the logical conclusion that reading is not meaningful. In a common social process, rejected by the literacy club, they reject the club and form a social identity in resistance to it. In Schank's terms, we could say they exclude reading from their personal script.

## REFLECTIONS ON CLASSROOM PRACTICE

Considering the role of particular episodic knowledge structures of all kinds and the need for strategies of many types and levels, we are faced with a dilemma. How can we know what to teach? Specification of what to teach is still commonly assumed to be the first step in planning language instruction. I would argue that in principle we cannot specify what students need to know because the number of items is practically infinite and because we are not now even close to specifying, for example, all of the strategic processes involved in reading a simple sentence like this one. However, there is another route. We do not know what we know, but we know how we acquire it: experience. A basic principle that should guide our instructional activities is consideration of what

experiential base a native would bring to a situation and then inclusion of activities that simulate or actually replicate those experiences as much as possible. Concern with experience requires consideration of how experience is internally perceived and processed, as well as the external circumstances that surround it. If three people go to a movie and one sleeps while the second watches for entertainment and the third carefully studies it for its reflections of popular culture, their experiences of the movie will be very different, as will what they have learned from it.

Let's consider two examples of what simulating target activities might mean, one academic and one non-academic. First, say that you want your secondary ESL students to be prepared for academic work and that you conclude that part of being ready for academic work means knowing how to take short-answer examinations. Since the supposition is that successful students have gone through experiences that have prepared them for taking such exams, your task is to provide contexts for the ESL students to learn similar lessons. The most obvious preparation is prior tests of this type. The most accurate way to simulate such tests is to give content instruction over, at least, several days on some topic and then to give a short-answer test on the material covered. Why should the content lesson last several days and not just 30 minutes? The reasoning behind this is, if you want to simulate actual academic classes, the amount of material and the time factor may well be important, may call on different cognitive resources (more synthesis needed for example) and may call on different study modes. Taking a test immediately after a 30-minute lecture might not contribute to the development of needed strategies and control processes.

What will happen from this kind of exercise? From my experience with university-level ESL, I suggest several kinds of problems that frequently emerge. First, students will often not understand the stated questions, so their answers will not cover the material called for. This may be because they do not understand vocabulary or some element of grammar in the questions or for more complex reasons relating to the content. In any case, students are often unaware that they do not understand the stated questions; this alone is important. Strategies (used now in the ESL sense of the term) for requesting information about the meaning of the question during a test may be useful here. Second, students may not understand the unstated expectations of a question. For instance, faced with half a page of blank space and the question "Do you think theory x is better than theory y?", a student may respond with a mere "Yes." Or more subtly, when asked a question that calls for personal opinion, a student may give an opinion without making any reference to the material covered in the course. Third, students may have problems due to their way of studying the material. For example, a student may simply read an article over and over again, memorizing the information, and then be confused by a question which assumes the information and asks for its synthesis or application.

The point is that by going through actual or closely simulated experiences, the ESL student will have opportunities to develop the kinds of knowledge and

strategies (in van Dijk and Kintsch's sense) that they need to be successful in their academic work. I should add that I would make this activity an actual test in the ESL class and not consider it just as practice. In this case, part of the actual exam context is that it is externally motivated and that feedback comes in the form of a system of rewards or penalties. Actual grading of the test also makes it more likely that the common "arguing-with-the-question" scene will take place after the tests are returned.

A non-academic example might be baseball. If you decide or your students decide that they should learn about baseball, then the simulation of experience principle would suggest that students first should actually play baseball, go to baseball games, and watch baseball on TV. In addition, students could read the sports pages and find out how to interpret the various tables of information given on games or summarizing individual and team statistics. They may also collect baseball cards and watch movies that deal with baseball (e.g., the recent *Field of Dreams*).

Several points need to be brought up here. First, you need to base the instructional experiences roughly on the kind of experiences that native speakers might have in acquiring the knowledge in question. Second, time is an important factor. Obviously you cannot spend as much time on baseball under the auspices of an ESL class as a native speaker interested in baseball would spend. On the other hand, this is clearly not a one-day lesson. Experience takes time. An experiential approach to ESL suggests a thematic organization in which students spend significant amounts of time focused on some topic or task. Third, unlike essay exams, baseball is normally not graded and is followed according to the interest of the individual. As the discussion of the importance of the control system section suggests, this may be a central point. It may suggest that students work on individual or small group projects they have selected with whole class structures related to sharing their findings. This kind of structure is already found in whole language approaches such as Sustained Silent Reading (SSR) programs, where students individually select books to read during a "shared" reading period.

The above examples suggest how classes could be structured once we decide what to teach, but the question of what to teach, as I mentioned above, is more difficult. Imagine a social studies essay exam that looks like the following:

*Considering the various positions we have discussed, respond to the following argument: Baseball teams should be run democratically.*

The point is that discussions of or tests on specialized academic knowledge often make use of some aspect of general cultural knowledge that the educator assumes is shared. Baseball may no longer be one of those contexts since its male-oriented nature is clear, but some aspects of general culture will carry over into specialized studies. What aspects carry over is not predictable, except that they rep-

resent something that someone assumes is a relatively common experience. How can we select content? I would suggest that this phenomenon argues for the broadest possible contact with the culture, for deliberate diversity. This diversity can be achieved both through teacher planning and through students choosing their own content to explore and then sharing some part of it. Since knowledge is multimodal, such experiences should not be limited to the verbal. Images underlie much language. I suspect that if I write "polar bear," your thought is more likely to be an image of a polar bear that you have seen on TV or in a zoo than a verbal definition of polar bear or some discussion of polar bears.

If we acquire knowledge and strategies through experience, what characteristics of experience are important to consider in our classes? First, experience is complex and open. ("Ill-structured" is a term commonly used in the literature, but its negative connotations and even its denotative sense of lack of structure does not seem appropriate. Throughout the remainder of this article, I will use "complex and open" in place of "ill-structured.") The level of complexity is perhaps one of the most serious disjunctions between classroom language teaching and actual communicative situations. Students who have always functioned where there are clear answers and clear directions, where ambiguity and confusion are avoided, are unlikely to develop the strategies (cognitive and social) needed to function in complex, open environments. The need to prepare students to communicate outside of the classroom is obviously not a new point. The importance of negotiation and its connection to repair has been recognized for some time now (Schwartz, 1980; Tarone, 1980). However, highly structured information-gap activities, often seen as the way to facilitate negotiation and repair, while better than drills, still may lack a number of elements of actual communicative situations. They are not self-initiated and they are usually not particularly complex and open.

Complexity and openness either in the classroom or in course-related activities in the wider community should facilitate the development of usable knowledge. Complexity and openness may be achieved intentionally through ambiguous directions that require students to ask for clarification. It could also be achieved to some extent through deliberate variations in class routines. Most simply, it can be achieved by opening the classroom to the students' own experiences and interests. Replacing the univocal teacher-directed and teacher-controlled class with the multicultural polyvocality of ESL students quickly leads to complexities, which challenge teacher and students alike. Students may also encounter complexity and openness outside of the class. A number of current approaches to language teaching are congruent with this point. For example, using the community as a site for student tasks and as a resource for in-class activities is very valuable. Having students attend a public meeting, tour a building, go to a park, can lead to the kind of unanticipated interactions that distinguish complex, open systems from closed ones.

A second characteristic of experience is that it is particular, multimodal, and rich. Our knowledge of restaurants was not acquired through scripts, through ab-

stract discussion of restaurant events. It was acquired through experiences in restaurants, experiences that involved all of our senses, that involved our own physical interactions with the environment. As Lakoff (1987) and Johnson (1987) point out, our bodily experience of the world and our images derived from it play a central role in our thought and language, even in domains like science previously thought to be "logical and rational." Through this multimodal experience, we learn much that rapidly becomes tacit. How many of you get confused, as I do, when someone asks for a verbal explanation of how to react to sliding on the ice when driving? The tacit and physical dimensions of our knowledge struck me in an incident that occurred during a library session with an ESL student at the University of Wisconsin several years ago. After an hour long presentation on how to find books and journals, one of the students set out on an exercise. Staring at his paper, he walked out of the classroom, into the stacks. Staring at a call number on his page, he stopped and looked confused. I asked him what the problem was, and he asked how to find the number. I pointed up at the call numbers on the side of the stacks and he brightened up, "A-ha". Looking up was not one of the points we had discussed in talking about how to find books. Our cognitive map of the activity tacitly assumed much, as I would argue our cognitive maps of many things do. Carefully constructed and controlled activities in less rich environments risk missing many such particulars.

At this point an obvious question arises. If experience is so great, why should students have classes in ESL? Why not just send students directly into the environments that they need to function in? ESL classes can perform a number of valuable functions. First, these classes can encourage students to contact a broader range of experiences, including ones that successful students/competent members of the culture have already had. Part of this encouragement may come from helping students develop the language and background knowledge needed for basic access to an experience. For example, if you spend time with students on newspapers, helping them learn how papers are organized, what kinds of information are found in them, how headlines are written, and so on, it may provide students with enough knowledge (including interest) to get them over the initial barrier, where an activity seems overwhelming. Second, classes can provide an environment where ESL students can process their experiences and have permission to ask questions about both the experience and the language (something that is often not as true in the general environment, for example, in mainstream academic classes). Third, ESL classes can provide an important social and psychological support to facilitate intercultural adaptation. ESL students confronting the English-speaking culture of the school are obviously subject to culture shock. As Weaver (1986) notes, it is important to distinguish between coping mechanisms and defense mechanisms in response to culture shock. ESL classes can be a forum where awareness of culture and intercultural conflict is acknowledged and discussed, points that Weaver argues are central to coping.

Some teachers might feel uncomfortable with this list of functions, wondering how the central function of ESL, language teaching, fits in. But that is pre-

cisely the point: we cannot teach language. Language is not an isolated box in your head as many cognitive psychology texts picture it. It is not an independent set of syntactic rules and lexical items that can be developed so that later they can be plugged into another set of boxes called world knowledge, beliefs, emotions, motor programs, and finally personality. Acquiring usable knowledge for functioning in this culture, the kind of competence or proficiency we envision our students having and using in pursuit of their own goals, is something the whole person does, something that changes the whole person, and, finally, something that arises out of experiences and the processing of experience. Competent, compassionate teachers can facilitate and accelerate the learning process, can welcome students into the English-speaking club, by dealing with the concerns of the whole student in her social milieu, by opening up the classroom to the complexity of life as it is experienced.

## ABSENCE, INACCESSIBILITY, AND APATHY

Based on the above discussion, inert knowledge in second language instruction can be linked to at least three sources. First is absence. Classes that do not present students with or direct them to a wide range of authentic experiences with the target language and culture may result in students with gaping holes in their competence. Second is inaccessibility. If the conditions under which the encoding of knowledge occur are too different from the conditions of retrieval, the knowledge may be inert, unavailable knowledge. One of the central factors is complexity. Since most actual communicative situations are complex and open, well-structured (i.e., oversimplified) classes, even when they are “communicative”, may leave the students with inaccessible knowledge. Clearly, having students fill in the blanks with the correct forms of the following verbs will rarely result in usable knowledge. Finally, there is what I will call apathy (apathy in the sense of a lack of self-initiated goals and controls arising from instructional practices that do not facilitate self-initiation). If students do not experience self-initiated and self-directed searches for knowledge and attempts at communication, the knowledge acquired might not find its way into their personal scripts. They might not develop the strategies needed for self-initiated and self-controlled use of the knowledge and, therefore, not use it outside of the classroom. Or returning to Smith’s formulation, they might develop self/social identities which exclude them from participation in some “clubs” of the culture (e.g., literacy, schooling, political affairs).

To help students develop usable knowledge, we need to have classes that are complex and open, and that direct students to other complex, open experiences. We need classes that emphasize the broadest, most varied contact with language, content, and culture that is possible. We need classes that encourage learners to be active and empowered rather than passive, by permitting them to assume active, empowered roles in the ESL classroom itself. Most fundamentally, we need

to heed Spiro et al.'s (1989) warning of the dangers of oversimplification, an oversimplification that arises in our field from overemphasizing the role of syntax in language, the role of language in communication and the role of rules in both. The knowledge we use to produce and understand discourse is all of the knowledge we acquire through experience, not just a few reified products of that experience. Our task as teachers is not to teach students the rules of our language, but rather to facilitate their learning through experience of our cultures and to create the conditions in which together we will most fully realize our human potential.

## THE AUTHOR

Paul Prior, a doctoral student in Second Languages and Cultures Education at the University of Minnesota, has taught EAP in the U.S. and EFL in Saudi Arabia.

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## *Some Effects of Culture in the ESL Classroom and their Implications for Teaching*

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LAURA BUCHANAN

*Minnesota English Center*

The influence of culture on the ESL teacher, student, and curriculum is examined. The assumption is that if we acknowledge the influence that culture has on us and make the effort to understand how the cultural assumptions of teachers and students differ, we can make adjustments that permit a more rewarding and enjoyable classroom atmosphere. American cultural values and their classroom implications are addressed. A brief discussion on how to facilitate the cultural adjustment of ESL students is also presented.

Teachers of English as a Second Language (ESL) agree that one can not teach English without teaching culture. Since language is part of culture, teaching the language itself teaches something of the culture. And since the teacher as a native speaker is a product of the culture, she is teaching about her culture unconsciously through her language, her demeanor, and her non-verbal behavior as well as through the methods she may choose for teaching.\* In these ways the students are being exposed to the culture covertly. The teacher may not be aware of the cultural teaching that is going on in the classroom.

On the other hand, it is also possible to discuss culture overtly and to consciously teach students about the culture in which they are now immersed. Wilga Rivers recommends, in fact, that the language teacher choose to do this. She feels that in order for a student to have a complete understanding of the meaning of language a strong bond between culture and language must be maintained. She also considers that the differences in values and attitudes between cultures may be one of the main sources of problems in language learning (Rivers, 1968).

The purpose of this paper is to discuss the effects of culture in the ESL classroom. The teacher, as a cultural being in the classroom, has an effect on her students and if she is unaware of this effect, she will have no control over what influence this has on the class. Understanding the cultural values and assump-

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\* In order to avoid confusion in the use of pronouns, throughout this paper the pronoun *she* will be used to refer to the teacher and the pronoun *he* will be used to refer to the student.

tions teachers have as products of their culture will enable the teacher to make conscious decisions as to how, to a certain extent, culture is affecting the classroom.

Students in an ESL class are also cultural beings, and as such, exhibit behaviors and express values that the teacher might not understand. This also could cause difficulties for the teacher and the students. Knowing some of the ways students' behavior may differ from teachers' expectations will also be beneficial to the teacher and may enable her teaching to be more effective.

As these students experience the new culture in which they must now function they go through different phases of adjustment. One phase, a period of frustration caused by having to deal with all the unfamiliar cues of the new culture, has been termed culture shock. During the time students are experiencing culture shock they may not be open to learning about the new culture and may for various reasons resist acquiring the target language. Culture shock is usually followed by a period of cultural adjustment. Helping students to make the transition from culture shock to cultural adjustment may be facilitated through discussions about cross-cultural differences and specific discussions about different aspects of American culture.

Teachers have noticed that some second language learners seem to acquire the language more easily than others. When good language learners have been studied to discover the characteristics responsible for the ease with which they acquire the language, the results have suggested that these learners have a positive attitude toward the new culture and want to participate in it in order to use the second language as soon as possible. By facilitating a student's understanding of the target culture, the teacher may be decreasing the student's feeling of frustration with the new culture and increasing his confidence in dealing with it. This new confidence then encourages participation in the new culture and, therefore, helps him improve his English more quickly.

Although there are many ways to define culture, the definition of culture that best conveys the meaning of the concept as discussed in this paper is from L. Robert Kohls (1979):

*Culture = an integrated system of learned behavior patterns that are characteristic of the members of any given society. Culture refers to the total way of life of particular groups of people. It includes everything that a group of people thinks, says, does, and makes - its customs, language, material artifacts and shared systems of attitudes and feelings. Culture is learned and transmitted from generation to generation.*

One particularly good thing about this definition of culture is that culture is conceptualized as a system, a total way of life. This concept is important because in order to understand the significance of culture in the classroom, it is necessary to understand that culture is extremely complex and underlies every-

thing we do or say, even in a setting that some would normally think of as devoid of culture: a classroom.

## THE TEACHER AS A CULTURAL BEING

The definition of culture used in this paper indicates that everything a person says, does, or thinks is dependent upon that person's culture. Culture can be seen, then, as a giant bubble surrounding an individual who sees and evaluates and acts according to how reality is perceived through this bubble. Every social being has been raised in a culture that filters reality and helps guide the individual through life.

When an ESL teacher enters the classroom, this cultural filter enters with her and affects not only how she perceives the actions of the students in the class but also how she herself behaves in the class: her language, her actions, and even the subtleties of non-verbal behavior of which she is most likely unaware.

For a person who has never had experiences outside of her own culture, it would be particularly difficult to be aware of the cultural filter which is such an integral part of her life. It would just appear to the person that this is the way the world works. A saying that expresses this idea quite well is: "The fish is the last to discover the water." You do not know you are in water if it totally surrounds you and it is all you have ever known. In particular, the ESL teacher who has never had a cross-cultural experience, who has never travelled and lived in another country, may be unaware of herself as a cultural being and be unaware of how her demeanor and actions are culture-bound. Even an ESL teacher who has had some experience in dealing with other cultures may not be aware of the values and assumptions she holds as a product of American culture. It is valuable for a teacher to learn about her own culture and to discover as much as possible about how her cultural filter affects her teaching.

It has been said that the best way to learn about your culture is by being immersed in another, but unfortunately not all people who are teaching ESL have had the opportunity to live in another country before they begin teaching here in the U.S. So what can a teacher do to become more aware of her cultural "baggage" without leaving the country? L. Robert Kohls, in his book *Survival Kit for Overseas Living* (1979) gives exercises that help people become more aware of the values held by most Americans.

Kohls has developed an interesting way for an American to discover the common values that are held by most Americans. Rather than sitting down and trying to list them, which might be a difficult and not very fruitful task, Kohls suggests making a list of common American proverbs and then writing down in one or two words which value each one conveys. Some examples he gives are "Time is money," which teaches time thriftiness; "A penny saved is a penny earned," which teaches thriftiness, and "Waste not, want not," which teaches frugality (Kohls, 1979).

When trying to discover American values, two proverbs may be found that seem to be contradictory, such as "Might makes right" and "It's not whether you win or lose, but how you play the game." The first values power over morality and the other emphasizes sportsmanship over victory. Apparent paradoxes like these should not cause the teacher too much concern because culture is such a complex system that often times some values will contradict each other. In his book *American Cultural Patterns* (1972), Edward C. Stewart examines the cultural values and assumptions that we, as Americans, hold. Stewart gives the examples of "equality" seeming to be in conflict with "achievement" and also with "freedom." He claims it is the overall integration of all values that form a culture that is particularly American.

It is also interesting to compare American proverbs with those of other countries. In the United States there is a proverb "The squeaky wheel gets the grease." It could be said that the value underlying this proverb is assertiveness. But in Japan there is a proverb that says, "The nail that sticks up gets hit." This shows the value of conformity and the security found in not standing out. An ESL teacher interested in discovering more about her own cultural values as well as those of others could collect proverbs from students and then compare them with American sayings to reveal the similarities and differences between her values and those of her students.

Another way to begin thinking about American values is to read what others have to say about them and see if one agrees. Stewart, in his examination of many American values and assumptions, discusses some that might be particularly important for an ESL teacher (Stewart, 1972). A teacher who is not conscious of differences in cultural values may assume that such things as cooperation, sources of motivation, and even the sense of competition are similar across cultures, and therefore she would design classes based on these assumptions. Furthermore, cultural values vary in degree of importance across cultures. In order to understand the implications of value-laden classroom settings and instructional lessons, one must examine the particular dimensions of the culture in order to identify areas of potential culture conflict. Certain values will have strong influence on the nature of the classroom experience and must be examined carefully.

## AMERICAN CULTURAL VALUES—CLASSROOM IMPLICATIONS

Below is a discussion of some major American cultural values that may have an effect on the ESL classroom. Each value will be related to the general context of American culture and then specifically to the ESL instructional setting. While cultural values vary from individual to individual within a culture, the values presented below are discussed as culture-wide traits in contrast to traits exhibited by any given individual.

### *Competition.*

Competition is seen in the U.S. as a very powerful method of motivating people. Some even see competition as the basic emphasis of American society. Americans, who are quite achievement-oriented and independent, seem to respond well to it (Stewart, 1972). Students who have been raised in the American educational system have learned how to compete academically and have been raised playing competitive sports and competitive games, both at home and in school.

In some cultures, though, the desire to allow someone to save face is stronger than the desire to compete. For example, in Laotian and Vietnamese culture, the strong sense of affiliation with family and community can outweigh the desire to win at another's expense (Stewart, 1972).

With this understanding, the ESL teacher would be wise to consider her students before she develops a competitive game to test some part of the material presented in the class, a strategy which works well with Americans. Latin American students, for example, are not used to being singled out for praise, so a competitive task where there was one winner may make the Latin American student feel uncomfortable and may cause the student to be unwilling to participate in the exercise (Jaramillo, 1973). In some classes I have taught, the students in an otherwise relatively well-behaved class, have had a difficult time obeying the rules of a competitive game. It may have been that some of them were not familiar with the use of competition in the classroom and did not know how to behave in this new learning situation. Although it would not be beneficial for the students if the teacher avoided exercises that used competition, since the students would lose an opportunity to experience a part of the American educational system, the teacher should be aware that the idea of competition in class may be new for some, and she should prepare her lessons accordingly. One suggestion might be to begin with some mildly competitive tasks, such as information sorting exercises done against the clock, and build to more competitive ones, such as modified game shows like Jeopardy, as students become more familiar with the concept.

### *Confrontation.*

When Americans are faced with a problem, they often like to confront it directly. If the problem is with another person, the American will often choose to confront that person directly. For example, in American classrooms, it is not uncommon for students to approach a teacher to express dissatisfaction with the class. In some other cultures an individual who has a problem with someone might prefer to have a third party intervene and act as a go-between. Direct confrontation is avoided as much as possible. (Stewart, 1972).

In the ESL classroom a student who is having trouble in a class may elect to have a relative or close friend speak to the teacher instead of doing it himself. This may be the explanation of why a student who thought she was placed too low in an ESL class brought a spokesperson with her when she went to see the

director to request a class change. The director was curious about the value of the spokesperson because her English was not as good as the student who wanted to be moved up. Perhaps she brought her not as an interpreter but rather as the go-between who could prevent the need to confront the administrator directly. If a student brings a family member or friend to the teacher's office to discuss problems the student may be having in class, it may be because the student is trying to behave in a socially appropriate way. The teacher should not judge the student as being cowardly or timid.

### *Cooperation.*

It may appear at first that due to an emphasis on competition, cooperation would not be highly valued in our culture. But in fact the strong sense of competition also tends to encourage the American to be a highly cooperative individual. The reason is that if an individual has a goal he wants to achieve and if he sees that cooperating with a group will help him achieve his goal, he can become very cooperative. Deadlines and the importance of getting things done reinforce the will to cooperate with others (Stewart, 1972).

As with the other cultural values, it can not be assumed that other cultures feel the same way about the benefits of cooperation. For instance, Latin Americans would not compromise their principles in order to cooperate on a task and achieve some group goal (Stewart, 1972). It has been noticed that Saudi students react similarly and will not cooperate on a group problem-solving project if they see the task as one which involves things that are considered negative in their society (using a deck of cards, for example). Many times in the ESL classroom, students are put into groups and are expected to cooperate on a project. Not everyone in the group may dive into the work, define the problem and begin working toward the solution—not because they are unable to or are unwilling to learn, but because the teacher may unknowingly ask them to compromise an important value, be it political, moral, or religious.

All this may make the teacher quite frustrated. It seems that no matter how we structure the lessons, someone will be uncomfortable and unhappy. Our students need to adjust to the types of learning situations they will face when they begin studying at the university. Avoiding certain tasks, whether they be cooperative, competitive, group or individual, will not be helping the students prepare for academic life in our universities in the long run. The best solution is care in choosing a variety of different types of tasks so that at times students will be challenged with unfamiliar and maybe unnerving teaching methods, and at other times students will be dealing with circumstances that are more familiar and reassuring.

In the classroom the teacher may expect to see certain behaviors from her students because of her own cultural values and assumptions, including values instilled in her during her training as a teacher within the American educational system. She may feel that some behaviors will facilitate language learning and other behaviors will not and, therefore, the undesirable behaviors should not be

encouraged in class. Due to the fact that the international students in an ESL classroom have studied in educational systems different from the one in which the ESL teacher was trained, culture conflict might be likely to occur.

## VALUED BEHAVIOR IN THE ESL CLASSROOM

Certain behaviors are valued by American teachers for pedagogical reasons. The sections that follow include an explanation of why this might be so and an explanation of why that behavior may not be exhibited by some members of the class.

### *Independence and individual work.*

American teachers value individual work in order to be able to assess each student's progress. If students always work together on assignments and tests, the teacher can not evaluate the skills of individual members of the class. Collaborating during quizzes and tests is considered cheating and is generally forbidden by teachers in classes in the U.S. It is not necessarily unacceptable because it is morally wrong but because it limits the teacher in collecting information about the progress being made by individual class members.

On the other hand, students from some other cultures may have a stronger sense of affiliation to friends than a sense of competition, which is the value that encourages American students to refrain from cheating. Discussions with Moroccan students studying in the U.S. have revealed that students from Morocco feel that duty to friends must come before the desire for individual success, and they consider it socially unacceptable *not* to share information, even on exams. The same value is held by students from Saudi Arabia (Levine, 1982). For this reason, the ESL teacher must be very explicit about the behavior she expects from students during tests and quizzes. Students should be told they are expected to keep their eyes on their own papers and they are not supposed to share information with each other.

### *Turn-Taking.*

The American teacher feels that if she is talking to the class, the students should be quiet and listen to her. In ESL practicum classes, often one concern of a new teacher is how to keep students from talking when the instructor has the floor. The pedagogical basis for this is that when the teacher is talking she is giving important information or explanations; the students will learn best if they are paying attention to her. If they are talking to someone else while she is talking, they obviously are not paying attention and are not absorbing the information.

On the other hand, some of the students in an ESL class may not be accustomed to this practice. Students in Germany are encouraged to talk among themselves even in classes that might be considered best taught through lecture, such



as math and natural science. During a teacher-training session that a group of experienced American teachers were required to take before being allowed to teach in the German schools, one teacher was told not to expect her students to be quiet and listen to her during class (Pines, 1981). A student from Germany and an American ESL teacher could have very different expectations of appropriate behavior during presentations of material by the teacher.

Turn-taking between students and participation in the class is also an important consideration for teachers. In ESL classes the teacher often wants to get information orally from individual class members. In speaking classes, for instance, a teacher needs to hear from all the members of the class in order to evaluate each student's language production. In other cases, during class discussions for example, the teacher wants to give each student a chance to speak so she does not want all the students speaking at once.

In the classroom the teacher can encounter two different types of problems with participation. One problem is that certain students will not participate unless called on directly. These students will not necessarily raise their hands when they have an answer they want to contribute. They may sit still and wait to be called on. It has often been noticed that people from Japan and Korea do not volunteer answers. The other problem with participation is when several students talk at once. In some educational systems in other countries, students are encouraged to be more assertive than students in the U.S. For instance, students from the Middle East sometimes behave in ways which Americans interpret as aggressive (Silverson, 1979). In class it is not uncommon for these students to try to answer every question, seemingly unaware of the value of giving other students a chance to speak.

The teacher would do well to consider how she would manage a class that contains students who may have very different expectations about appropriate ways to participate in class. Some activities that would give quieter students an opportunity to speak should be incorporated into the class. On the other hand, the teacher will need to develop ways to allow the more assertive students to contribute to the class without dominating it or preventing quieter students from participating. One example of how this could be done would be to design a task in which one student needs to speak and one student needs to write. Put students in pairs matching a quiet student with an assertive one and have the quiet student do the speaking and the assertive student do the writing.

### *Group Work.*

In many ESL classes students are asked to work in groups. Teachers value group work for many reasons. Some of the reasons are that it allows students to share information, it decreases students' reliance on the teacher and increases the amount of time each student gets to talk. To encourage communication, group work often involves problem-solving activities.

Some educational systems overseas present material in a lecture format and students are expected to take notes and memorize the information. In some

Eastern and Middle Eastern cultures there is a strong emphasis on memorization and students have difficulty dealing with the creative activities that group work often involves (Silverson, 1979). Making the directions and the goals of group work tasks very explicit may increase the success of these activities by students who are unfamiliar with them.

### *Deadlines.*

Deadlines are very commonly assigned for homework or longer projects in classrooms in the U.S. The value of a due date might be that it gives students motivation to get the project done. In many courses students are asked to write papers which are done independently and require time outside of class. The due date ensures that the teacher receives the paper in time to evaluate it before the course ends.

In countries in which the content of the course is mostly from teacher's lectures, students study their lecture notes, memorize the material, and give it back in relatively the same form on exams. In Morocco students are not usually given homework. If they are, it is not considered very important to complete it and return it. If students have a long-term project to work on, there is a due date but it is considered extendable. Even exam dates are flexible and the students determine by vote when the exams will be held.

The ESL teacher, when assigning homework or long term projects, must be very definite about the day by which she wants the work completed. She should tell students the consequences of not handing in work when it is due, consequences such as a lower grade or possibly no credit for work handed in after the deadline is past.

### *Asking questions.*

Our educational system emphasizes operational thinking based on inductive reasoning which starts with facts and proceeds by means of inferences to test hypotheses. Students are encouraged to learn by doing and it is acceptable for more than the teacher's point of view to be expressed (Grove, 1978). As a result of this perspective students are expected to ask questions during discussions or during lectures that demonstrate that they are trying to follow the material. Those who ask provocative questions are considered good students.

In many other countries, however, the teacher is seen as the keeper of wisdom which is imparted to the students through lectures. Students are not expected to question the teacher. In Portugal, for example, students are treated as if they were ignorant. The teacher has the knowledge students need and students are not expected to be able to contribute anything to the lesson, but rather are expected to sit quietly taking down in their notes the wisdom of the teacher (Grove, 1978). In Saudi Arabia personal opinions are not sought and students are not expected to question what is being taught (Levine, 1982). The ESL teacher who is aware of this difference should never assume everyone understands or agrees just because no one is asking questions. She should build into the lesson a way for

soliciting feed-back from the students to check their comprehension, such as asking questions frequently during a task or giving the students opportunities to participate during the class period.

## CULTURAL ADJUSTMENT OF STUDENTS

The ESL teacher teaching several hours a day in a classroom filled with people from many different cultural backgrounds may quickly become aware of the differences in cultural values between herself and her students and begin to understand the special difficulties she will face in teaching students who have different values from her own. The student, on the other hand, immersed in a new culture, is having to deal with difficulties brought on by the differences between his culture and the new one 24 hours a day. In the classroom there are limited opportunities for interaction, the rules and sets of behavior are more circumscribed than in the culture at large. The student has an overwhelming number of possibilities for discovering that his set of value and rules for behavior do not necessarily work in this new environment. The experience the student is going through has been termed "culture shock."

Some researchers see culture shock as a disease in that it has symptoms and an eventual cure, something you "get over" (Oberg, 1979). Another view, one held by Peter Adler, is that culture is a cross-cultural learning experience, it is not something to be avoided like a disease, and it is not something to be gotten over or recovered from as quickly as possible. He claims that two types of learning occur. One is cultural awareness, an understanding that

*each culture has its own internal coherence and logic. Each culture and its accompanying structures of norms, values, attitudes and beliefs are intertwined fabric and design that has an internal cohesion. No culture, therefore, is inherently better or worse than another, since every culture is its own understandable system. Every culture is acceptable to itself on its own terms, since it works.*

(Adler, 1975)

The second type of learning is an increased self awareness, the realization that "all persons are, to some extent, products of the cultural frame of reference in which they have lived." Every culture provides a sense of identity with regulations on the individual's behavior. And every culture is a frame of reference and orientation for the individual (Adler, 1975). He feels that once an individual realizes that he himself is a cultural being, influenced by his own culture, he will be more accepting of the culturally influenced behaviors, attitudes, and customs of others (Adler, 1975).

There seems to be definite symptoms to culture shock, including negative

feelings toward the hosts, a decline in flexibility and spontaneity, and a refusal to learn the local language, yet there are also benefits to the culture shock experience. The anxiety created by "the accumulated stresses and strains which stem from being forced to meet one's everyday needs . . . in unfamiliar ways" can motivate a person to learn about not only the new culture but, through comparison, his own (Brislin, 1981).

H. Douglas Brown in his article, "The Optimal Distance Model of Second Language Acquisition" (1980), makes finer distinctions in the process of acculturation and feels that there are four stages one passes through when adjusting to a new culture, and culture shock is only one of these stages. The initial stage is one of excitement when everything is new and interesting. The second is culture shock, in which the sojourner feels frustration, anxiety, loss of self-confidence, and alienation due to the fact that familiar cues and supports have been removed. In the third stage, gradual recovery, some of the problems encountered during culture shock are solved but there are still some problems that continue. The final stage is near or full recovery. The sojourner now feels accepting of the new culture, has regained his self-confidence and has made the adaptation necessary to function in his new environment (Brown, 1980).

According to Brown, the third stage of acculturation, gradual recovery, is the stage where most language learning takes place. The anxiety felt by the language learner is no longer so great as to prevent him from acquiring the target language, but since he still encounters problems in dealing with the new culture, the motivation is there to improve the language already acquired (Brown, 1980).

Teachers and administrators in the ESL program at the University of Minnesota have reported that the students who make the least progress in the program tend to be the ones experiencing severe problems in cultural adjustment. For example, one student, after making minimal progress during nine months of full-time English, was enrolled in a seven-week intensive English course during the summer. The last week of the course the student gave a speech comparing family life in Saudi Arabia, his native country, with family life in the United States. He claimed that the divorce rate was high in the U.S. because everyone spent all their time drinking in bars. At the end of his speech he stated that "life in America is next to animal life." His total rejection of American culture indicated that he was in the throes of culture shock and his Michigan test score, as an indication of language acquisition, was the same at the end of the seven weeks as it was at the beginning. This example appears to support Brown's hypothesis that culture shock, or lack of cultural adjustment, can prevent students from acquiring the target language. This illustrates the need for teachers to be concerned about how students are adjusting to the local culture. This implies developing activities that help students to understand and adjust to major cultural differences. This will be discussed further in the next section.

## WHAT MAKES A GOOD LANGUAGE LEARNER

In order to know how to help students succeed at acquiring a second language, it is important to know what factors are associated with the *good* language learner. Once the teacher knows what makes a good learner, she can encourage the development of skills that would increase the student's chance of success. Some factors that have been recognized as increasing a student's success in second language acquisition may be outside the influence of a teacher: intelligence, prior bilingualism, and skill in mimicry. One motivating factor the teacher can encourage is the student's curiosity about the new culture (Nida, 1956). Many of the characteristics that are associated with the good learner are ones that indicate that the learner is accepting of and adjusting to the second culture, therefore helping a student adjust culturally should help his language acquisition.

According to John B. Carroll, the most successful language learners are usually ones who look forward to communicating with native speakers of the target language and who expect to find the ideas, experiences, attitudes, and customs of the target language interesting. He further states that people who are outgoing and friendly are more likely to have this enthusiasm than people who tend to be closed-minded and believe that their own way of doing things is the best (Carroll, 1977).

A student's genuine interest in the new culture should increase his motivation in finding out about the new culture, making the student interested in listening, not just speaking. A person with a talkative personality is not necessarily a good learner, since listening to the new language is as important as speaking it. A student who is sensitive to the people of the new culture will not only be interested in what they have to say, but he will also be sensitive to how language is perceived by them, and he will be motivated to correct his grammar and pronunciation because of this sensitivity (Nida, 1956).

For these reasons, ESL classes which are designed to help students become more aware of their new cultural environment and which encourage the students to learn more about the new culture will also facilitate the students' acquisition of the new language. Students who are developing this cultural sensitivity should be less closed-minded since they will have an increased ability to decipher the unfamiliar behavior around them and therefore a better understanding and acceptance of it. The teacher who specifically addresses the issue of culture in the classroom and provides the students an opportunity to discuss these issues is going a long way to increase her students' ease of adjusting.

One important way of improving competence in a second language is through practicing the language at every possible opportunity. Stern states that there are two aspects to learning a language, the formal and the functional (1975). He feels that attention must be paid to each, one at a time. The good learner attends to the formal, but he also searches out every opportunity to put

the language to use. Stern further states that the good learner is willing to use the language in real communication. This information suggests that in order to increase the number of students wanting or willing to use the language functionally, the teacher should raise the students' awareness of the culture around them. The more they understand about the culture, the less mysterious and less threatening it will be. Curiosity may be aroused and certainly confidence in dealing with social situations will increase as understanding of intercultural situations increases.

Another characteristic important to second language learning is risk-taking: not being afraid to make errors. Successful learners make more mistakes than the less successful because they are more willing to try, even when they know they are wrong. One student, considered by many ESL teachers as a very successful learner of English and who also had successfully learned three other foreign languages, claims that he likes to begin speaking his new language as soon as possible, even when in order to express himself he has to use sentences he knows are ungrammatical.

An ESL teacher aware of this fact will try to create an atmosphere in which the student will feel comfortable enough to be willing to make errors. There are many ways this can be accomplished. One way is to avoid correcting every error a student makes. If the student thinks each error will be pointed out, he may avoid speaking unless he knows that his utterance will be error-free. Another way to encourage people to speak more readily is to develop activities in which the student's attention is focused more on the content of what is being said than on the form of how it is being said. Some ways to accomplish this are to use discussion topics that the students find engrossing, or by allowing them to share information that only they have. Talking about their own life experiences and their own cultures could accomplish this, as could designing problem-solving activities in which each student has different information but all the information is necessary to complete the task.

Of course, sometimes the teacher will want to correct the student, but how can this be done in a non-threatening way so as to avoid stifling the willingness of the student to speak? One way that seems to have quite a few benefits is paraphrasing the student's incorrect utterance. In this way the student can hear a correct way of expressing his idea, and other students who may have been aware of the mistake hear the correction and are reassured that they did indeed hear the error and knew the correct form. Another benefit to this type of correction is that the student gets credit for giving the correct response; the content of the answer or statement is not changed in the teacher's paraphrasing of it, only the form.

A good second language learner "cultivates positive attitudes towards the self as a language learner, towards the language and language learning in general, and towards the target language and its society and culture" (Stern, 1983). Helping the student to understand and begin to enjoy his second culture is one way to help him achieve his goal of acquiring a second language.

## CONCLUSIONS

One major difference noted in first and second language acquisition is the variation in the degree of proficiency that is attained by learners. It seems that, although normal human beings can learn their first language satisfactorily, there is a great degree of variation in the levels of proficiency that students of second languages attain (Spolsky, 1969). In order to account for this difference many factors must be examined; one of the contributing factors, though, appears to be the attitude of the student toward the speakers of the target language. In fact, a study of international students studying English in the U.S. indicates that this factor has a significant effect on how well the student will learn the new language (Spolsky, 1969). Therefore, helping students deal with the problems that cause culture shock and negative attitudes should improve the students' attitudes and increase the likelihood of their being successful at learning the target language. The ESL teacher aware of this will want to facilitate the rapid cultural adjustment of her international students.

One way to help students learn about the new culture would be to teach about American culture explicitly in the language classroom. But, according to Wilga Rivers (1983), since cultural values were not learned in this way, but rather were learned unconsciously, merely presenting interesting cultural facts will not be enough to enable the student to adjust to or accept the new culture. Rather, she suggests that the teacher and the students investigate and analyze each other's cultures together. In this way students are learning about the values of both cultures and the viewpoints of others as well as their own (Rivers, 1983).

One of the things a student needs to know in order to make a smooth adjustment is *how* things are different. And since the international student spends a great deal of time in classrooms, it would be very beneficial to help the student discover the expectations and values commonly held by American teachers and students.

## THE AUTHOR

Laura Buchanan is a teaching specialist in ESL at the Minnesota English Center.

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# *The Role of Error Correction in the Process-Oriented ESL Composition Classroom*

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SUSAN BOSHER  
*University of Minnesota*

How can editing for errors be made a part of the writing process without interfering with the larger, more important issues of writing to discover and communicate meaning? How should feedback on errors be given and what should students do with that feedback? Although no one procedure has been shown conclusively to be the most effective, research does point to the need for selectivity, systematicity, and consistency in error analysis and correction. A list of guidelines for error correction is presented, as well as a specific classroom application of a correction code and error analysis chart. Although developed for Southeast Asian students, the code could be modified and applied to any target population. The procedure for using the code provides students with practice gaining control over the language, within the context of their own writing, as the final stage in the writing process.

## BRIEF REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Composition theory in recent years has focused on writing as a process of discovering and making meaning (Berthoff, 1981). Through the act of writing, ideas are discovered and explored. As the writer writes, ideas clarify and reformulate themselves as new ideas suggest themselves and are assimilated into the developing pattern of thought.

Research on the composing processes of unskilled writers has shown that the discovery of meaning is cut short by preoccupation with error (Shaughnessey, 1977; Perl, 1979). Basic writers begin editing their writing as soon as they begin to compose and consequently lose track of their ideas. They also have difficulty breaking away from whatever they have written on the page. They lack flexibility towards their writing and are unable to revise in chunks at the level of content. "The students are prematurely concerned with the 'look' of their writing . . . as soon as a few words are written on the paper, detection and correction of errors replaces writing and revising" (Perl, 1979). A composition class that focuses on correctness only reinforces habits that prevent students from developing meaning in their writing. Students will continue to perceive writing as "a 'cosmetic' process where concern for correct form supersedes development of ideas" (Perl, 1979).

The process orientation of most composition classes today has appropriately relegated surface-level error to the back burner. Techniques for freeing the basic writer from a debilitating preoccupation with error include freewriting; keeping a journal which is not graded or corrected; conferencing with peers; and writing multiple drafts of papers. With a heavy emphasis on the quantity of writing, it is assumed that accuracy-based problems will work themselves out as the writer develops confidence and fluency. "The obvious sophistication of so many of these students as speakers and the general understanding we have from linguists about language acquisition suggest that many of their syntactic problems will disappear simply with more writing" (Shaughnessey, 1977).

Can it be assumed, however, that writing in a second-language is the same as writing in a first language? Do second language factors affect the composing process? If so, how should we address those factors in the classroom? Zamel's study of the composing process of six advanced ESL students found that, in fact, advanced ESL writers do understand and experience writing as a process of discovering and creating meaning. Their writing, like that of experienced L1 writers, was consistently recursive and generative, and the changes they made were most often global. While all the writers attended to surface-level features and changes, "the skilled writers seemed to be much less concerned with these features at the outset and addressed them primarily at the end of the process. The least skilled writer, however, was distracted by local problems from the very beginning, changing words or phrases but rarely making changes that affected meaning" (Zamel, 1983).

In general, linguistic problems of composing in a second language did not seem to interfere with the students' writing process. The more skilled writers pursued the development of their ideas first, returning later to lexical and syntactic problems. There were particular language and editing skills that some individuals handled better than others, suggesting that "perhaps too much attention to meaning alone kept these students from carefully examining certain surface features of writing" (Zamel, 1983). With respect to error, Zamel states that it is important to find out why students are making certain errors before prescribing corrective measures. Instructors can then determine which errors are the result of carelessness and can be dealt with by closer proofreading and editing, and which are the result of incorrectly formed rules about the target language. In any case, "issues of content and meaning must be addressed first . . . language is of concern only when the ideas to be communicated have been delineated" (Zamel, 1983).

In contrast to Zamel's study, which found similarities between the composing processes of experienced L1 and L2 writers, Raimes (1985) points to interesting and important differences between unskilled ESL writers and basic L1 writers and cautions that these differences must be taken into consideration in the classroom. Unlike basic L1 writers, the ESL students in her study showed a commitment to getting their ideas down on paper, although they revised mostly at the sentence level; did not seem preoccupied with error and editing; and, in

fact, edited much less than expected. They frequently reread, but to clarify an idea as it emerged, not to correct for grammar. When they did edit, however, it was at the stage of working out an idea, not as a clean-up operation.

Raimes suggests that unskilled ESL writers are so used to error and to the teacher's correcting errors that they concentrate instead on finding the right words and sentences to express their meaning. "They know that they are language learners, that they use the language imperfectly . . . . Since they expect errors and do not see them as stigmatizing in the way that L1 errors are, they are not preoccupied with them" (Raimes, 1985).

Although it is significant that ESL students at any level of proficiency can be engaged in the discovery of meaning, it is also important that attention may need to be given to surface features of writing. Some kind of middle ground is needed, where issues of both meaning and accuracy are addressed. "If in fact our students are focusing on meaning anyway, we should consider the need to attend to product as well as process. Our students should be taught not only heuristic devices to focus on meaning, but also heuristic devices to focus on rhetorical and linguistic features after the ideas have found some form. . . . Attention to process is . . . necessary but not sufficient" (Raimes, 1985).

The question for ESL composition instructors, then, is how to incorporate editing strategies into the process of writing without interfering with the larger, more important issues of writing to discover and communicate meaning. The assumption, of course, is that ESL instructors *are* focusing on the process of writing, which unfortunately is not always the case. Cumming (1983) found that error identification and correction remains the most frequently employed technique of responding to ESL student writing. Despite the impact of process-centered studies on first-language composition, "ESL writing continues to be taught as if form preceded content, as if composing were a matter of adopting preconceived rhetorical frameworks, as if correct language usage took priority over the purposes for which language is used" (Zamel, 1983).

Students, too, before they are initiated into process-oriented writing, are very much concerned with the correctness of their writing and perceive good writing as correct writing, whether or not they actually edit for error. In a survey of attitudes toward writing, Samuels (1986) reported that 84% of ESL students consider getting the grammar correct to be the most important aspect of their writing in English, 52% getting the punctuation correct, and a meager 20% communicating their ideas. (Students could check more than one item in a question, so the percentages do not add up to 100%.)

Because the paradigm shift in ESL composition instruction from the product to the process of writing is still very recent and incomplete, it is especially important that editing skills be understood within the overall context of writing, as the final, clean-up stage in that process. We must be careful that students not become overly concerned with correctness. Samuels' survey (1986) also found that 85% of ESL writers in their first year of college thought about grammar, spelling, and punctuation as they were writing the words of a paper, and only

15% after they had finished writing the whole paper. This supports Raimes' finding that inexperienced L2 writers edit as they are working out an idea, not afterwards as a clean-up operation. Such a preoccupation with error can only interfere with, if not prevent, the writer's ability to discover and make meaning.

We must also consider that if students become overly concerned with error, they may stop experimenting and taking risks in the target language. First- and second-language acquisition and error analysis studies have convincingly shown the importance of making errors in language learning as a necessary stage in the trial-and-error process through which proficiency and syntactic complexity are achieved (Corder, 1967; Corder, 1973; Allwright, 1975). Errors are evidence that the learner is testing hypotheses about the target language. They are a sign of growth.

A distinction needs to be made, however, between errors which are performance-based—that is, errors which are due to the physical or conceptual demands of writing as opposed to speaking, or errors which are accidental slips of the pen—and errors which are due to L1 transfer, or which represent the writer's "interlanguage" (Bartholomae, 1980). Performance-based errors are easily detected by having students read their papers aloud. While reading the text, the writer will frequently miscue and complete or correct the text that he or she has written. In such cases the student's errors are not a problem of linguistic competence, but one of performance, for which the writer simply needs more practice in using written conventions of the language and perceiving mistakes in his or her writing.

Errors which reflect incorrect hypotheses about the target language are usually systematic. By analyzing those errors and talking with students about them, it is possible to identify the cognitive strategies that learners are using to process information. Error analysis allows us to see errors as "windows into the mind" (Kroll and Schafer, 1978) and to plan instruction according to the needs of the individual language learner. "When students can make sense of their errors, coming to terms with them as the result of consistent and understandable strategies, they are more likely to try and change" (Kroll and Schafer, 1978).

Not all errors, however, are necessarily a sign of transition or growth; some may represent stagnation or fossilization. "A writer will stick with some intermediate system if he is convinced that the language he uses 'works', or if he is unable to see errors as errors and form alternate hypotheses in response" (Bartholomae, 1980). When students are not able to recognize their own errors, they need the assistance of someone more proficient in the language than they are, so they can modify their hypotheses about the target language.

Rather than assume that mastery of the forms will somehow take care of itself, we need to find ways of teaching form and use together. Eskey (1983) argues that the recent emphasis in second-language learning on communicative competence may actually encourage the fossilization of errors by providing students with "positive affective and cognitive feedback for language which is not correctly formed but still communicates enough of the message to make sense.

In other words, rewarding a learner's fluency may, in some cases, actually impede his or her achievement of accuracy" (Eskey, 1983).

Assuming there is agreement that learner errors should be corrected, many questions still remain. It would obviously be counter-productive to correct all errors all the time. Henderson (1978), for example, suggests that in a speaking class, when the focus is on communicating meaning, attention to errors is inappropriate. Likewise, in a composition class, it would be inappropriate to attend to errors until *after* the process of discovering meaning is complete, after students have written several drafts of a paper, have conferenced in groups or with the instructor, and are satisfied with the content and organization of their papers. In addition, for practical reasons there is no point in having students edit for errors at the local level if revision at the global level is still needed; ". . . if the content of a student text is lacking in substance and meaning, if the order of the parts must be rearranged significantly in the next draft, if paragraphs must be restructured for logic and clarity, then many sentences are likely to be changed or deleted anyway" (Sommers, 1986).

With respect to which errors should be corrected, Henderson (1978) cites several competing theories: errors that interfere with the intelligibility of a message (Burt, 1975; Hanzeli, 1975); errors that stigmatize the learner from the perspective of native speakers (Richards, 1973; Corder, 1975; Hanzeli, 1975); errors that have become fossilized, which are no longer transitional (Richards, 1973; Valdner, 1975); and errors that occur at the greatest levels of frequency (Holly and King, 1971; George, 1972; Allwright, 1975). In addition, it is important to consider the proficiency level of the individual student, as intermediate and advanced students are more likely to benefit from and be more tolerant of error correction than students at the beginning level.

Although many teachers simply provide students with the correct form for written errors and require students to rewrite their papers incorporating the corrections, a discovery approach to error correction that requires students to make inferences and formulate concepts about the target language, simulates the language acquisition process and would thus help students fix this information in their long-term memories (Corder, 1967; Valdman, 1975). An error correction code, for example, provides students with the means to correct themselves (the code can be more or less detailed depending on the level of the students), but requires that the students take responsibility for making the actual corrections.

In addition, there should be ways of keeping track of what students are doing and of providing follow-up. Teachers need to concern themselves with progress over the long term, since significant improvement over the short term is not always a realistic expectation. Error charts which classify and chart students' errors from one paper to the next are one way of doing this. (Hendrickson, 1978)

## PEDAGOGICAL APPLICATION OF ERROR CORRECTION IN A PROCESS-ORIENTED ESL CLASSROOM

Although the literature on second language teaching contains suggestions for correcting written errors, there has only been a limited number of studies on the effect of error correction on second-language proficiency, and they either provide mixed results, or are of limited application to a process-oriented composition class for college-bound students (Robb, Ross, and Shortreed, 1986; Cardelle and Corno, 1981; Stiff, 1967; and Lalande, 1982). Nevertheless, the following implications can be drawn from the existing literature for dealing with error and form the basis of the pedagogical application which the rest of this paper will describe:

- students need to attend to error in order to facilitate accuracy as well as fluency in their writing;
- students need to attend *first* and most importantly to the making of meaning and the communication of that meaning to an audience;
- editing should be viewed as the clean-up stage at the *end* of the writing process;
- error correction must be accomplished in an atmosphere of support, where students do not feel stigmatized by or punished for making errors;
- students should be made aware of the complexity, yet systematicity of errors. Error analysis techniques, such as reading papers aloud and talking with students about their errors, are possible ways to accomplish this;
- students should be encouraged to experiment with language and be rewarded for taking risks; yet at the same time they should begin practicing *control* over the structure of the language;
- error correction should be systematic and consistent;
- teachers should select types of errors to be targeted for each individual student, depending on the student's level of proficiency and tolerance for correction;
- students should make their own corrections, but be give enough feedback from the teacher to locate errors and know how to proceed; the degree of saliency necessary to accomplish this will depend on the students' level of proficiency;

- students should keep track of their errors and monitor their own progress.

The Correction Code and Error Analysis Chart (see Appendix) were designed in response to the language errors of college-bound Southeast Asian students with MELAB (Michigan English Language Proficiency Test) scores between 65 and 75. The examples of errors have been taken from students' own papers, and are intended as models to help current students in the correction of their errors. The Code focuses on errors which appear most regularly in the writing of Southeast Asians and which are more easily teachable than others in the sense that they adhere to consistent rules of grammar (verb tenses, word forms, and sentence structure, as opposed to prepositions, articles, and punctuation).

Directions for the use of the Correction Code and Error Analysis Chart are as follows:

- 1) Once students are satisfied with the content and organization of their paper, the final draft is written. *Three* copies of the final draft are handed in, along with everything else students have written in connection with the paper (freewriting, rough drafts, peer reaction sheets, etc.)
- 2) The instructor responds to the content and organization of the paper on *one* copy of the final draft and grades accordingly.
- 3) The instructor targets certain types of errors for correction (based on level and needs of individual students) and, using the Correction Code, marks for those errors on the *second* copy of the final draft. The instructor indicates where the error is by circling it, and in the margin provides the appropriate reference from the Code.
- 4) When the students' papers are returned, they also receive the copy marked for corrections. They use the Correction Code to correct their errors, and then return the second copy of their paper to the instructor.
- 5) The instructor checks the corrections and returns that copy to the students. The students are asked to study their errors and corrections for the next class.
- 6) At the beginning of the next class, students are handed the *third* copy of their final draft and are asked to correct a second time for their errors, only this time their errors have not been marked or the references of the Correction Code provided for assistance.
- 7) Students keep a record of their errors by filling in an Error Analysis Chart for each paper and at the end, tallying their errors and choosing 3-

5 errors to focus on when editing the final draft of their next paper.

- 8) When students hand in the first set of corrections of their next paper, they are asked to hand in the Error Analysis Chart for the previous paper, so the instructor can make relevant comments about progress.

When students first receive their copy of the Code, they are asked to correct the errors in all of the examples. This process of correction engages them in a problem-solving approach to error and familiarizes them with the content and organization of the Code. The Code has not been designed to replace a grammar book, but rather to be used as a reference manual to aid in the quick identification and correction of specific, localized errors in a sentence. It does presuppose, however, that students have had some formal instruction in English grammar, or at least can work from the examples provided, accompanied by their corrections.

Formal instruction of grammar in the class is limited to error types which appear frequently in the students' writing. These errors are gathered from current students' papers and are grouped in like-categories such as verb forms, word forms, and parallelism, and provide the basis for classwork on language errors. As in the correction cycle, students practice editing for errors within the context of their own writing, while concentrating on a limited number of error types.

The most important aspect of the correction procedure is the second time students correct their errors, without any assistance from the teacher or the Correction Code. This reinforces what they have already done once, as well as responds to any perceptual problems students may have with regard to their errors. Laurence (1975) wrote of the necessity to combine perceptual and cognitive approaches to error:

[Remedial] students have problems with words: they do not focus on words in a structural way so there is little generalization about form and function; they have basic sound confusions because of second language/dialect interference or poor early training in phonics; they do not have strategies for approaching unfamiliar words which they must spell or read; they have limited visual word storage—some of the reasons why they have difficulty finding errors in their own essays . . . A student's word perception, his ability to see, hear and structurally analyze words as they are, determines his ability to grasp a grammatical rule or to apply grammatical knowledge to his own writing.

The challenge of correcting errors a second time is to be able to find the errors, to see them as errors, and to know how to correct them. Whether students actually stop making certain errors altogether, they will at least have become consciously aware of them and be able to edit for them at the end of the writing process.

Furthermore, having students hand in three copies of their final draft facilitates a separation, both in the student's mind and in the instructor's, between writing-based issues and language-based issues. Students are graded on the basis of the content and organization of their papers—on the development and com-



munication of their ideas—and comments on the first copy of their final draft are limited to those concerns. Students are not graded for their corrections, but 10% of their final grade is based on satisfactory completion of the correction cycle on all papers—except the first paper (which is diagnostic) and the final paper (which is handed in the last day of class).

Finally, the Error Analysis Chart requires students to keep track of their errors and offers a strategy for focusing on a limited amount of material. Students are more likely to feel that progress can be made if expectations are reasonable and will, therefore, be more motivated and consistent in the effort they do make.

This procedure of having students correct their own errors, once in response to the instructor's direction and a second time on their own, engages students in a problem-solving approach to error, and makes them responsible for their own learning; this procedure deals with error systematically and consistently, providing students with practice at gaining conscious control over the language, but without forgetting the complexity of the language and the need for taking risks to develop syntactically. Most importantly, by focusing on errors from the students' own writing, a meaningful context for grammar instruction is provided without losing sight of the most important aspect of writing—to communicate meaning. And, by placing editing for error at the *final* stage in the writing process, students will not become preoccupied with error or inhibited in their discovery of meaning.

## THE AUTHOR

Susan Boshier is curriculum coordinator of the Commanding English program in the General College of the University of Minnesota. She is also a Ph.D. student in Second Languages and Cultures Education at the University.

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APPENDIX  
SAMPLE PAGE OF THE CORRECTION CODE

1. SUBJECT/VERB AGREEMENT Ex:
  - The food *are* excellent.
  - My father always *speak* Lao to us.
  
2. NOUNS/PRONOUNS
  - a. Singular/Plural of nouns and pronouns Ex:
    - She glanced at me with *a* curious eyes.
    - They told me to go to different places to get *informations*.  
(*Note*: count nouns can be pluralized, but not non-count nouns.)
    - I put *a, an,* and the in sentences where *it doesn't* belong.
  
  - b. Possessive form of nouns and pronouns Ex:
    - We spend a lot of time studying each *other* language.
    - I think a writing class is good to improve *me* reading and writing.
  
  - c. Other forms of pronouns Ex:
    - *Him and me* are good friends.
  
  - d. Double pronoun—do not substitute noun twice with a pronoun. Ex:
    - From that day on I always buy only things *that* I can afford *them*.
  
  - e. Ambiguous reference—not clear what the pronoun refers to. Ex:
    - I did not know where to go and was afraid to ask.
    - *They* are so tall.

**SAMPLE PAGE OF THE  
ERROR ANALYSIS CHART**

Directions: For each paper, add up the number of times you made each error. At the end, you will be asked to choose 3-5 errors to focus on when editing your next paper.

Theme # \_\_\_\_\_

Error Types	Number of Occurrences	Total
1. Subject/Verb Agreement		
2. Nouns/Pronouns		
a. Singular/Plural		
b. Possessive forms		
c. Other forms of pronouns		
d. Double pronoun		
e. Ambiguous reference		
3. Articles		
a. Need definite article		
b. Need indefinite article		
c. No article needed		
4. Adjectives		
a. Ing/ed		
b. Not pluralized/No possessive		
c. Comparative/ Superlative		
1. Comparative		
2. Superlative		

## POETRY

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### TO ALL THE PEOPLE WHO MAKE THE CIRCLE

AMY EGENBERGER  
*University of Minnesota*

“A circle?! Again? O teacher, but why?!”  
From a student or two each day came the cry.  
“We’d rather just sit here, facing blackboard and chalk  
Than sit face to face ’round a circle and talk.”

“But students,” I’d say, “Don’t you agree?  
That much, much better than looking at me,  
Is seeing your neighbor across the way  
Looking at you when you’ve something to say?”

Many, many shapes our desks could make  
Moving lines and rows into forms that take  
Three sides, four sides, five sides or more  
To create any ol’ polygon you might adore.

But the circle, my friends, is special indeed  
For no other shape quite meets our need  
To find a center, some common ground  
Equidistant from all as we gather ’round.

Our viewpoints are different, most opinions worth saying  
As we’re talking and working and laughing and playing  
We learn through the center that centers us ’round  
The space shared by people where learning is found.

## **EXPLAINING MIRACLES**

JENNIFER JESSEPH

*University of Minnesota*

When my Hmong students approach me for help, they open their biology books to the chapter on Reproduction. I would rather tell them creation myths about a giant egg that breaks into two parts, silver and gold. Silver becomes earth, and gold becomes sky.

I tell them the mating call of a cricket is like a Hmong harp men use for courting. At night the man sings his song for the woman, and the harp buzzes like an insect to disguise his voice.

My students laugh and I laugh too. Nothing more needs saying

until we come to words like sperm, egg, and menstrual cycle. Then I explain how the uterus grows thick like an orange rind, and the egg waits for the sperm to catch it. If the sperm misses the egg, blood begins leaving the woman's body. Sometimes the blood flows and spurts like rain beads gather on a window. They swell then break, and water

trickles down the pane.

After explaining this mystery of blood and the slow thickening of woman's body as a baby ripens inside it, I wonder how Hmong people teach reproduction. My descriptions and charts in a book cannot replace stories their elders tell.

I know that these men sitting before me, speaking English and understanding a text they have lived far beyond, is no less a miracle than the sperm piercing the egg.

The creating of new life is everyone's story. Perhaps that is all we need.

## REVIEWS

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

### *Teaching and Learning Vocabulary*

I.S.P. Nation. Newbury House, 1990.

How many vocabulary words are necessary to know to be successful in academic life? What does it mean to "know" a word? These are two of many questions which I.S.P. Nation poses in the text, *Teaching and Learning Vocabulary*. Designed for ESL teachers, the text answers those questions by presenting a vast amount of information concerning research in the teaching of vocabulary, while also including a wealth of suggestions for ways to teach and practice vocabulary in the classroom. It is well-organized and clearly written. Each chapter begins with a summary of chapter contents and ends with a series of "application" questions for the reader. The prose is very direct and uncomplicated, making it a useful reference for non-native English speaking teachers. It is a most comprehensive text and an important addition to a teacher's reference shelf.

As early as the mid-seventies, ESL educators were realizing that teaching vocabulary as an adjunct to a reading or listening course was doing a disservice to the language learner (Judd, 1978, Richards, 1984). Yet with the emphasis on communicative competence, vocabulary teaching continues to be relegated to a secondary role. Common complaints of former ESL students often focus on the frustration they feel once being set free of the controlled language ESL classroom. They complain of difficulties understanding and using English in their daily non-academic activities and complain about the time it takes to complete long academic reading assignments. Many of their complaints center on their perception that they have inadequate vocabulary for their daily life. Nation begins with the premise that "a systematic, principled approach to vocabulary development results in better learning" (ix). Citing research to show that there is considerable knowledge about what to do about vocabulary and how to identify the vocabulary to work on, Nation then presents a variety of teaching approaches aimed at encouraging vocabulary enrichment.

In the text introduction, Nation mentions that while there is a place for both direct and indirect vocabulary teaching in language curricula, as an adherent of Krashen's input theory of language learning, he would want to emphasize the latter type of vocabulary teaching. "Contact with the language in use should be



given more time than decontextualized activities” (p. 3). Nation goes on to identify three points to consider before implementing any vocabulary teaching: What vocabulary do students need to know? How will they learn the vocabulary? and How can a teacher test to find out what they need to know and how much they know?.

The first point focuses on needs assessment. Summarizing research in vocabulary learning, Nation states that first language learners add from 1,000 - 2,000 words per year to their vocabulary while EFL learners have a 1,000-2,000 range of vocabulary after five years of four or five English classes a week. Research in ESL has shown that ESL children’s vocabulary levels tend to lag two years behind that of their native speaking peers. Such statistics make it clear that vocabulary learning should be a major emphasis of any language class. But the question remains: what to teach?

To answer that question, Nation looks at information gained from frequency counts of academic texts. Synthesizing the information from many different frequency counts, Nation identifies four types of vocabulary: high-frequency words, academic vocabulary, technical vocabulary and low frequency words. He then analyzes each type. He concludes that EFL students need a productive vocabulary of around 2,000 high frequency words plus strategies for dealing with low-frequency words. Learners with more specialized goals such as academic study at a university need at least 1,000 more high-frequency words. Readers are encouraged to use this information to work out vocabulary goals for their own students. Nation thoughtfully includes two word lists in the appendix of the text: the first, based on EFL research, lists some of the lesser-known words from West’s General Service List of English Words (1953), the most famous list of high-frequency words; the second, the University Word List (Xue and Nation, 1984), provides 1,000 additional items shown to appear in academic texts.

The second point centers on the task of vocabulary learning. Here Nation includes information about learning strategies as well as useful tips for teachers. The second language learner benefits from first language learning and cognitive development. Words with similar sounds and arrangement of sounds as the native language present an easier learning burden than words with more unfamiliar sounds. Nation advises teachers of beginning students to introduce difficult sounds and consonant clusters gradually. In the same way, learning is easier for students whose native language uses a Roman script. Nation suggests that teachers choose words with regular spellings wherever possible, to point out spelling patterns, and to show learners how the spelling of new words is similar to the spelling of known words.

Nation also emphasizes teaching collocation of words and advises giving students this helpful hint: “Words which begin with a Latin prefix are sometimes followed by a preposition which has a meaning similar to the meaning of the prefix” (p. 38). While this is not a rigid rule, it does provide some help to students faced with learning innumerable verb plus preposition lists. Nation also consults teachers to recognize that the relationships between words can some-

times make learning difficult. For example, opposites are usually presented at the same time, yet research has shown that such words tend to be confused in the learners' minds. The author advises, "It is best not to teach the second item of a pair until the first item has been learned thoroughly" and then to teach it using different contexts (p. 46). Nation advocates teaching the underlying concepts of words rather than precise definitions. He advises using several examples, both positive and negative, and to allow time for testing.

The bulk of the text focuses on ways to teach and assess vocabulary learning in relation to each language skill. The text presents numerous vocabulary-related teaching activities which may be completed by an individual working alone, in pairs, or in small groups. All of the activities require students to use their new vocabulary and make an effort to find the underlying meanings of words. For example, pairs of students may be given different worksheets containing sentences such as

A	B
A door is made of wood.	A door _____
_____ live in houses.	Tigers live in houses.

Students are instructed to read the sentences to each other and together decide if the sentence is sensible. If they concur, the student with the incomplete sentence fills in the missing words on his worksheet.

Not all of the techniques require reading. In a technique Nation calls *What is it?*, learners are given information from a context and are asked to find the meaning. They may see an object, hear or touch something and then be directed to make a guess as to the meaning. Nation feels that the strength of this technique is that the learners must give their attention to the new material and make an effort to learn it (p. 69).

Other activities require students to organize their existing vocabulary around meaning. Grids, clines and clusters can be used as vocabulary expansion and establishment activities. Ideas for these activities are culled from many sources and presented with clear explanations and accompanying examples.

Nation also presents information on vocabulary learning strategies which can be used to deal with the large number of low-frequency words which cannot be presented in the classroom. Descriptions of guessing from context, using prefixes, roots and stems, and various mnemonic techniques are given. A teacher can describe each technique, practice it, and let the students decide which techniques they prefer.

Nation concludes with a chapter on directions for further vocabulary studies. The text has an extensive bibliography which will be of interest to any researcher.

*Teaching and Learning Vocabulary* is indeed a remarkable resource. Nation has gathered an abundance of material and presented it in a very readable style. Teachers can find a variety of teaching suggestions and activities and select those

which fit their teaching situation and suit their teaching style. In addition to the word lists, the text appendix contains samples of tests which will measure vocabulary knowledge, examples of some of the vocabulary exercises noted in the text, and a sample of a vocabulary achievement test. This text is a valuable asset to language teachers.

## THE AUTHOR

Adele Hansen teaches ESL at the Minnesota English Center at the University of Minnesota.

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## *When They Don't All Speak English: Integrating the ESL Student into the Regular Classroom*

Edited by P. Rigg and V. G. Allen. National Council of Teachers of English, 1989.

After skimming through the introduction and table of contents of Rigg and Allen's new book at the Publisher's Exhibit in San Francisco last spring, I realized that I had to have this up-to-date, down-to-earth, and very useful anthology. It would be helpful for teachers at all levels, though it is especially aimed at K-12 teachers, both ESL and "regular." I still feel this way six months later, and as I reread portions of it I continue to discover other aspects of the book that attract me to it now as much as before.

The introduction begins with some general principles that quickly remind the teacher of REAL students (Readers/writers of English as Another Language) of five important facts:

- 1) *People who are learning another language are, first of all, people.*

- 2) *Learning a language means learning to do the things you want to do with people who speak that language.*
- 3) *A person's second language, like the first, develops globally, not linearly.*
- 4) *Language develops best in a variety of rich contexts.*
- 5) *Literacy is part of language, so writing and reading develop alongside speaking and listening.*

These principles are echoed throughout the volume, a treasure chest of well-written articles covering a wide range of topics. Included are articles about teaching language through literature (Allen), using the language experience approach (Rigg), using visual works of children (Franklin), teaching through content area activities (Hudelson), making the classroom environment an authentic place for using/learning a new language (Lindfors), having students study and appreciate their peers' home and community native language varieties (Edelsky), incorporating learning strategies with language development and content in high school—the CALLA approach (Chamot & O'Malley), and planning a quality ESL program (Handscombe).

Virtually all of the ten articles give concrete examples of students and teachers using whole language in the classroom and show how this contextualized language supports ESL students' growth in English. The chapters all address key issues and practical techniques in the education of students learning English as a second language. A few examples follow.

One chapter, "A Road to Success for Language-minority High School Students" by David and Yvonne Freeman, reports on successful summer school classes in U.S. history and biology for students who had been "at risk" for dropping out (pp. 126-138). The success was not only in academics but also in improved self-concept and feelings toward learning and school gained by students. Through four learning principles, teachers of these students helped them "reach their potential and discover that learning can be worthwhile." These principles are "a) Learning occurs most easily when language is kept whole; b) Classes should be learner-centered and include activities that are meaningful and functional; c) Learning takes place in social interaction that employs all four modes of language; and d) Learning requires that teachers have faith in learners" (p. 129). The authors then present applications of these principles with examples from history and biology for regular classroom teachers teaching ESL students.

Sarah Hudelson, in "Teaching English Through Content-area Activities," presents five principles of first and second language development and then devotes the majority of her paper to illustrating several applications of them. Although not exactly the same as the principles in the Freeman & Freeman arti-

cle, the issues are similar and include active student participation, interaction with others, whole authentic texts, integration of oral and written language, and activation and development of background knowledge for reading comprehension. Applications include a) what to use instead of and in addition to a textbook, b) how to make a text readable, and c) examples from the areas of math, science/health, and social studies. In each area, she begins with objectives and works her way through concepts, specific activities, and variations of the examples. This chapter is very useful for both ESL and regular classroom teachers.

In "The Classroom: A Good Environment for Language Learning," Judith Lindfors discusses the diversity in children's environments for language learning and yet the one common ingredient: an authentic environment (pp. 39-54). That is, language is learned ("creatively constructed") when real, purposeful communication takes place, each child in her/his own way. With this in mind, Lindfors gives examples of creative language learning and of authentic everyday communication, oral and written. Finally, she gives concrete, detailed, and practical tips on how to make the classroom an authentic place for children to learn language, through "show and tell," "story time," and dialogue journals. All of her examples have in common the students' ownership of the language the use in the classroom: it is purposeful, creative language for them and the audiences to whom they choose to communicate.

A fourth chapter, Rigg's "Language Experience Approach: Reading Naturally," echoes the theme of children using language holistically, purposefully, and creatively, and is one of the best articles on LEA available. After presenting her rationale for LEA—it is appropriate because it is interesting and readable (i.e., predictable)—Rigg goes on to discuss the five steps of LEA: discussing, dictating, accepting without correction, revising, and following-up. Finally, she deals with potential problems and their solutions. These include being sure students write enough, keeping groups small enough, and integrating commercially produced materials into an LEA classroom. Reading this article, like others in the volume, I feel that I am in the classroom, hearing children and teachers interacting, discussing, and having fun with English.

These are only a few of the papers in the volume by Rigg and Allen, but all hold equally stimulating and useful information for both ESL and regular classroom teachers of students who listen, speak, read, and write English as another language.

## THE AUTHOR

Betty Leone has a Ph.D. in Applied Linguistics, pursues research in child and adult bilingualism and literacy, and teaches as Inver Hills Community College and Metropolitan State University.

## THE FORUM

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The *MinneTESOL Journal* invites commentary on current trends or practices in the TESOL profession. It also welcomes responses or rebuttals to any articles or remarks published here in The Forum or elsewhere in the *Journal*.

### COMMENTS ON "CHINESE STUDENTS, AMERICAN UNIVERSITIES AND CULTURAL CONFRONTATION"

KRISTINE TORKELSON

*University of Minnesota*

This is in response to the journal article (Vol. 7) entitled "Chinese students, American universities and cultural confrontation" by Thomas Upton. Because China and its culture has captured my interest and curiosity, I pursued a similar study of the Chinese students' cultural adjustment in the U.S.

In my own research on learning styles of Chinese students in the American university setting, eight students were interviewed for eight different fields of study. The outcome from these interviews was to describe predominant perceptions and opinions about their adjustments to the U.S. educational system. This cross-section representing diverse disciplines of study was from computer science, English literature, biochemistry, philosophy, theater arts, law school, mechanical engineering, and cell biology.

Most of my observations and conclusions corresponded with Upton's article. In particular, I would like to highlight the following points. First, two out of the eight students that I interviewed bemoaned the fact that American teachers appear not to care for their students. Upton's quote of "Nothing is better than establishing rapport with the teacher; nothing keeps progress better than intimacy with one's teacher . . ." (Shi, 1984) shows that Chinese students come with the expectation that a close bonding relationship with the teacher will happen. However, they are discouraged when the teachers in the U.S. seem to "teach and go," leaving them with the feeling that their studies are being hindered due to a lack of commitment on the American teacher's part. Several Chinese students explained that their teachers in China help with student study groups after class. Also, the teachers drop everything for their students if they stop by their apartments with questions day or night.

Second, since respect for the teacher runs so high for the Chinese student, the ideal teacher is considered all-knowledgeable. The result is that the students passively sit back to take it all in. Several of my interviewees reported this as analogous to the "duck-feeding method." This refers to the preparation of the

Peking Duck and how it is fed so that it will become a tasty dish in a month or two. The duck is fattened up by putting it in a cage and feeding it through a pipe every day. The Chinese students are fed by their teacher in a similar manner: they are given morsels through strictly controlled means in order to make them more knowledgeable. When the Chinese students arrive in the U.S. the teaching methods is entirely different; they are expected to actively participate in the classroom and *not* passively sit back.

Third, my investigation of the differences in teaching and learning styles partly agrees with Upton's statement that "most Chinese students are completely handicapped in classes where discussion is the main mode of instruction, and few feel comfortable participating . . ." (p. 25). However, the eight students that I interviewed did *not* have a "negative reaction toward student behavior at American universities" (p. 24). Most thought that the active mode of learning in the U.S. was beneficial to the student and wished they had the ability to express themselves as the Americans were able to do. The Chinese students believe their greatest weakness is not being able to actively participate in the student-centered classroom out of tradition, fear, modesty, slower reaction time, and a lack of background knowledge.

Perhaps it depends at what point in the cultural adjustment period the Chinese student is asked to assess his perceptions of the differences of his learning environment of China as compared to that of the U.S. Most of my subjects had been in the American university setting for an average of three years. The majority of them favored the American system of education over their own traditional system in China. Though they admitted it was difficult to participate in the student-centered classroom, they far preferred it over the teacher-centered environment.

Based on my study of learning styles and teaching styles, Chinese students are convinced they are acquiring a great deal of knowledge here in the U.S. compared to what they would in China. Upton's article casts too dark a shadow on the positive aspects of this cultural interchange for the Chinese student studying in the U.S. After at least one year of initial adjustment to the different American culture, I believe that the majority of Chinese students want to continue their study because of the better system of education that they perceive exists in the U.S.

I would also like to briefly comment on the second article by Lynne Ackerman, "Why aren't Third-World scholars going home? Focus on adjustments in China's overseas policies." I believe calling China "Third-World" is a misnomer. I find it difficult to classify Chinese students as coming from a Third-World country. The reason I make this claim is that if one studies China's rich culture and its heritage of thousands of years of history it does not have the typical qualities that other Third-World nations have. Trying to identify China with Western cultural concepts may run the risk of offending the Chinese in this journal's reading audience. I admit that I cannot suggest a better term that might replace *Third-World*, but I believe it would be advisable that it be left unsaid.

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