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A Note From the Incoming Editor

Stephen J. Stoynoff

With this issue of the TESOL Journal, I begin my term as editor. I am privileged to serve as the chief steward of your publication for the next 4 years, and I have rediscovered the significance of an observation Plato made in The Republic: “The beginning is the most important part of the work.” This issue marks not the beginning but, rather, the 8th year of publication of the TESOL Journal, and much of “the most important part of the work” was carried out by my able predecessors, Christian Faltis and Elliot Judd.

The TESOL Journal's well-deserved reputation for excellence is, in large part, the result of their imagination, dedicated attention, and tireless work. I intend to continue their commitment to the highest standards of applied scholarship, while bringing you—the readership—timely, thoughtful feature articles, practical classroom suggestions, and current book reviews. Moreover, I will strive to ensure that the Journal remains a forum for the range of voices that constitute our profession.

We are a rich and diverse collection of professionals who work in a variety of contexts. We are bound together, though, by a common interest in gaining insights into the nature of teaching and learning second languages. I encourage each of us to cross the boundaries we have allowed to separate us from each other and, occasionally, from our students, and to collaboratively explore the teaching and learning that occurs in our classrooms and language programs. And then to share those insights in the TESOL Journal.

Although I have much to learn in the coming months, I am fortunate to have the experienced counsel of a very talented editorial board and a skilled Central Office staff. I look forward to working with them and you during the next 4 years.

Preparing Teachers for Work in Diverse ESOL Contexts: An International Perspective

Coeditors: Lynn Henrichsen and Lilia Savova

The Autumn 2000 special issue of TESOL Journal will focus on how ESOL teacher educators and teacher education programs prepare teachers to work successfully in diverse contexts around the globe. Of particular interest are the processes and adaptations that teacher education programs go through to accommodate the needs of teachers going to, or coming from, different parts of the world.

Contributions from the following topic areas related to this general theme are particularly encouraged:

1. what teacher education programs in English-speaking countries do to prepare participants for teaching EFL abroad, for example, the particular aspects of teaching practice, cultural adjustment, and foreign educational systems they deal with to accomplish this end

2. how teacher education courses develop future teachers’ sensitivity, flexibility, and adaptability to enable them to deal with teaching situations that are new and unfamiliar as well as to explore and learn from the diverse environments in which they may find themselves

3. the allowances and adjustments that teacher education programs in ESL settings (e.g., TESOL MA programs in North America, the United Kingdom, and Australia) make for international students who come from non-English-speaking countries and plan to return to their homelands to teach, including special concerns and difficulties these students have as they participate in teacher education programs in ESL settings

4. the special challenges faced by teacher educators as they present workshops or offer courses for ESOL teachers in diverse contexts in different parts of the world, especially those contexts that differ radically from the settings in which these teacher educators normally operate

5. how special connections between teacher education programs in English-speaking countries and “partner” EFL programs in other parts of the world have benefited from and shaped the curricula of teacher preparation programs

6. how ESOL teacher preparation programs in different parts of the world vary, depending on and reflecting local circumstances, needs, and resources

Also encouraged are case studies that:

• focus on specific instances of the diverse situations around the world in which ESOL teachers find themselves and note the implications for teacher education

• illustrate the internationalization of pre- and in-service ESOL teacher education programs

• demonstrate effective practices used in ESOL teacher education programs around the world

The topical guidelines listed above are not intended to be exclusive or restrictive. Contributions dealing with other topic areas relating to the general theme or combining more than one of the topic areas listed are also welcome. Submissions from authors who currently are, or recently have been, in international (non-U.S.) settings are especially encouraged.

Contributions are welcome in all departments: articles, tips, reviews, and perspectives. All submissions must conform to regular submission guidelines.

The deadline for submission is January 4, 2000.

Send queries and material to:
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Bilingual Storytelling: Code Switching, Discourse Control, and Learning Opportunities

Anne-Marie de Mejía

Telling stories in two languages to children is a common practice in bilingual communities and in some bilingual education programs. In some cases, stories are told purely for enjoyment, while in others there is an additional didactic purpose. Furthermore, different patterns of language use characterize different types of bilingual storytelling events. We may think, for instance, of the image of a storyteller (whether a teacher or parent) telling stories in a second or foreign language to young children who are in the process of becoming bilingual. In this case, only one language is used by the storyteller. Another pattern, however, may involve joint sessions in which one storyteller uses one of the children’s languages and another storyteller uses a second language. There is also a third pattern, in which a storyteller code switches, or uses two languages on an alternating basis, to tell stories to children who are in the process of becoming bilingual.

These three patterns of language use have been developed in response to the demands of different sociocultural and educational situations. In this article, I refer briefly to the first two patterns, but the main focus of my discussion centers on the third pattern, in which both the teacher and the children may use the two (or more) languages at their disposal in the telling of a tale.

Storytelling as a Preparation for Academic Literacy

Most of what we know about storytelling comes from research in monolingual contexts. For example, we know that telling bedtime stories to children under the age of 2 gradually helps socialize them into the discourse sequencing typical of classroom interaction by encouraging them to become interactively involved early in the storytelling process and then by developing their ability to react as an audience (Heath, 1982). Thus, they are helped to formulate practice questions as they wait for breaks in the narration and the expected formulaic-type questions from the adult—a practice that is developed more formally in later classroom storytelling.

Furthermore, as a result of Wells’s (1985) work, we are also now aware that storyreading in the preschool years is a very strong predictor of later school achievement, as it helps children come to grips with the symbolic potential of language. The experience of decontextualized talk, supported by meaning resources such as illustrations, allows young children to discover the power of language to create imaginary worlds through the use of words. In addition, research carried out by Dombey (1988) has gone so far as to suggest that “if the story and the telling are right, the action of narrative construction can be one that involves the deepest interests and concerns of young children and can result in a profound sense of satisfaction in the restoration of order, justice and safety to the fictional world” (p. 79).
What is clear from the above, then, is something that good preschool and primary teachers have known intuitively—that storytelling is a vital meaning resource for both parents and teachers of young children. But what about bilingual programs? Is bilingual storytelling different from monolingual practices? How is it carried out? What does it entail?

To date, there has been little research in the area of bilingual storytelling. Some authors have given advice on how to use stories in the second language classroom, basically in relation to the first pattern of bilingual storytelling mentioned earlier (Garvie, 1990; Tejani, 1988; Zeegan, 1992). Their main concern has been to adapt monolingual storytelling practices typical of preschool and primary classrooms to the demands of teaching children whose L1 is not English.

Other researchers working in the context of bilingual education for ethnic minority children in England have investigated ways of using language in joint bilingual storytelling sessions (i.e., situations in which the class teacher tells the children a story in the L2, in this case English, while a bilingual assistant interweaves explanations and elaborations in an alternating pattern in the children’s L1, which is usually Panjabi or Gujarati) (Martin-Jones, Saxena, Chana, Barton, & Ivanic, 1992). The researchers found that the patterns of language use that characterize these events are shaped both by the generic conventions of the reading-aloud genre and the asymmetrical power relations established between the monolingual class teachers and support teachers and their bilingual assistants. In all cases documented in the study, the researchers observed that the bilingual assistants did not have complete autonomy over how their storytelling was organized. They were dependent to a greater or lesser extent on the monolingual class teachers, some of whom saw the assistants basically as interpreters, whereas others allowed the assistants a greater degree of participation in the event.

In a 1994 study, I investigated bilingual storytelling in early immersion classroom contexts in Colombia in relation to a concurrent approach: class teachers using both the L1 and L2, in this case Spanish and English, as resources in their storytelling. I was particularly interested in researching ways in which teachers and learners constructed and negotiated meanings through their storytelling, responding to the communicative challenge of using a language that was not the pupils’ L1 as a teaching-learning medium. To do this, I observed and audiotaped storytelling sessions in two English-Spanish bilingual schools in Cali, Colombia, over a 9-month period. I also interviewed the teachers about key aspects of their practices, such as their aims during the sessions, their storytelling strategies, and their views on language use and code switching. Some of the results arising from this study appear below.

**Characteristics of Bilingual Classroom Storytelling**

In Colombia, there are an increasing number of private bilingual schools of the immer-

sion type that cater mainly to the middle- and upper-middle-class populations who are anxious to send their children abroad to the United States or Europe to complete their tertiary education. These schools characteristically separate the two languages used as media of instruction in the curriculum (usually English and Spanish) across the different subject areas. For example, math, biology, chemistry, and economics are typically taught in English (the L2), while social studies, religious education, and physical education are conducted in Spanish (the L1).

The two preschool entry-year groups in my study consisted of 20-25 children between the ages of 4 and 5. The majority of these children came from monolingual (Spanish-speaking) homes in which they had privileged access to hearing English through films, videos, and English-speaking friends and relatives. Both preschool programs were of the early immersion type, in which 80% of the pupils’ schooling was initially conducted in Spanish and 20% in English, increasing to nearly 70% in English and 30% in Spanish the following year. The class teachers were bilingual, though each had a very different language background. One was a young Colombian woman who had studied English in high school in Colombia and later had taken EFL courses in Cali. The other had been brought up in New York by Latin American parents before settling in Colombia.

In the two storytelling sessions that I observed, the children sat on a large rug in the middle of the classroom facing the teacher. Both teachers told rather than read the stories, making reference to visual backup material from the storybooks they were using. They also enacted parts of the tale for the children. This is in line with research carried out by Wolfson (1982), who noted that classroom storytelling, whether monolingual or bilingual, is a hybrid activity, having roots in both narrative, on the one hand, and performance or drama, on the other. When we tell stories, we not only answer the question “What happened next?,” we also create a fictional world by means of gesture, mime, changes in voice pitch and volume, exclamations, and dramatization. As one of the teachers explained, “You never really follow a story the way it says in the book .... You sort of go all round it” (de Mejia, 1994). These dramatic effects can be further heightened by the skillful combining of narrative monologue, character dialogue and interactive teacher-pupil sequences, and change of language, or code switching, in the case of bilingual contexts. This combination can be seen in the extract on page 6 (Lines 1-26), taken from a telling of the story “Hansel and Gretel” to one of the two groups of children.

In this short extract, which encapsulates the narrative climax of the tale, the teacher begins in English in narrative mode. Then, in Line 3, she code switches into Spanish in a piece of character dialogue. In the rest of the extract (Lines 9-26) there are various instances of joint bilingual construction of the narrative (e.g., the children using Spanish
Sample Extracts of Bilingual Storytelling

(T = Teacher; P = Pupil)

**Hansel and Gretel**

1. T She told the little girl put wood on the fire pero put
2. 3 la leña en el fuego put it on the fire but
3. 4 como ella tenía que prender el fuego y ya estaba
4. 5 as she had to light the fire and it was already
5. 6 se agachó she bent down like that and the
6. 7 alight she bent down
7. 8 little girl pushed
8. 9 P La bruja
9. 10 The witch
10. 11 T The witch into into the oven
11. 12 P Ella se iba a comer el niño
12. 13 She was going to eat the boy
13. 14 T And she shut the door
14. 15 P Ella se va a quemar ella
15. 16 She is going to get burnt she
16. 17 T And the witch died
17. 18 P Y entonces se encontraron ellos
18. 19 And then they found
19. 20 T Then they found
20. 21 P Oro
21. 22 Gold
22. 23 T Gold (children clap hands) look at that they found
23. 24 the gold

**The Three Bears**

27. T A big house very good but here I have an
28. P especial family it’s an animal family
29. 30 Ay qué le van hacer allí
30. Oh what is going to happen there
31. T Do you know what animal family I have here
32. P Qué le van hacer allí
32. What is going to happen there
33. (pause; teacher takes out figures; children giggle)
34. T It’s a me da pena
34. I’m embarrassed
35. (teacher assumes a high-pitched tone; children laugh)
36. T It’s a what
36. 37 Ps Baby
37. 38 T This is Father bear and she is
38. 39 Ps Father
39. 40 T It’s a bear family una familia de qué
40. what type of family
41. Ps De osos
41. Of bears
42. 43 T De osos O.K. le the bear ah ah
43. Of bears
44. 45 P Una familia de osos
44. A family of bears
45. 46 T O.K. do you know who is this
46. Ps Father
47. 48 Ps Father
47. 49 T This is Father bear and she is
48. 49 T This is Father bear and she is
49. Ps Mother
50. 50 Ps Mother
50. 51 T Mother bear and (teacher speaks in a sing-song voice)
51. Mother bear and (teacher speaks in a sing-song voice)
52. P Cómo se pega
52. How do you stick it
53. 54 T Es que es un cuento mágico and
54. 55 Es que es un cuento mágico and
55. It’s that a magic story
56. Ps Baby
56. 57 T Baby bear where do they live
57. 58 P Se pega cómo se pega
58. how do you stick it
59. T It’s magic where do they live
59. 60 P Cómo se cómo se pega
60. how do you stick it
61. T Es que es mágico
61. It’s magic
62. 63 T Es que es mágico
62. It’s magic
63. 64 T Es que es mágico
64. It’s magic
65. P Ah es como un imán
65. Oh it’s like a magnet
66. T They live in a
66. 67 T Es mágico donde viven ellos
67. It’s magic where do they live
68. 69 en una
68. donde viven ellos where do they live
69. 70 P Cueva
70. in a
71. Ps Cueva
71. 72 Cueva
72. 73 T Bueno hay unos bears que viven en una cueva pero
73. Well there are some who live in a cave but
74. 75 T Bueno hay unos bears que viven en una cueva pero
74. Well there are some who live in a cave but
75. 76 en una
donde viven ellos where do they live
76. 77 Ps Casa
77. in a
78. 79 Cuerpo
78. House
79. Ps Casa
79. 80 House
80. 81 T They live in a house this is the house where they live
81. They live in a house this is the house where they live
and the teacher reformulating their contributions in English). The children add their own celebration of the story climax, which they clearly identify as the finding of the gold (Line 23), by clapping (a culturally appropriate way of indicating a successful outcome).

**Code Switching**

We may now consider the importance of code switching in terms of the children’s ability to learn a foreign language, in this case, English. One important observation to be made is that the children were already familiar with the story in Spanish before hearing the teacher tell it in English. Thus, they were reconstructing something familiar, enjoyable, and meaningful to them. Furthermore, by means of this bilingual mode, they were able to participate successfully in the ongoing interaction by actively contributing to the construction of the storytelling event. The teacher ensured comprehensible input in the foreign language (Krashen & Terrell, 1983) a little beyond the current level of competence of the students by reformulating their contributions in English, while implicitly recognizing and valuing their collaborative role in the construction of the story. Thus, although the teacher kept control of the unfolding sequence of events, the children’s joint participation was acknowledged.

**Discourse Control**

This process of harmonious modulation is, however, not always the case. At times, teacher and pupils may have conflicting agendas, which can lead to a struggle for control of the discourse. Take, for example, the following exchange. A similar group of young children are listening to a telling of “The Three Bears” story. The teacher is using a magnetic board for the first time with this group to illustrate the events she is narrating. The children are fascinated by the mechanics of the magnetic board and the way the character figures actually stick on it, as can be seen from the extract (Lines 27–81) on page 6.

It seems clear from this exchange that the teacher’s aim involves the presentation of the forthcoming narrative—the introduction of the main characters of the story, the three bears. One of the children interrupts repeatedly to ask how the figures stick on the magnetic board. The teacher responds to this indirectly, within the parameters of the fairy-tale, by evoking the idea of magic to explain...
how the magnetic board works. The child, however, remains unconvinced by this reply and produces a counterexplanation, “It’s like a magnet” (Line 65), while the teacher sticks to her original version, “It’s magic” (Line 67).

These conflicting views are mirrored in the code switching patterns observed in the extract. The teacher uses English (the L2) to introduce the three bear characters, but code switches into Spanish (the L1), following the child’s lead, in the discussion about how the figures stick on the board. This, I suggest, signals to the class that what follows is an aside to the main pedagogical focus of the lesson—the telling of the story—which has been established in English. The teacher repeatedly code switches back into English in an attempt to regain control of the interaction, finally resorting to Spanish to encourage the children to provide the answer she is seeking (Line 67).

The code switching patterns observed in this extract add a further dimension of meaning to the interaction. On the one hand, by switching briefly from English to Spanish, the teacher acknowledges the pupil’s right to participate in the event. However, she also signals that the student’s private concern with the magnetic board is not going to replace the main focus of the lesson. It is a fleeting interruption in her preplanned agenda of telling the story of the three bears, to the extent she can, in English. This interpretation is in line with the teacher’s expressed aims in telling this particular story. She commented in an interview after her lesson that what she wanted to do was to tell the story in English in such a way that the children could understand the main ideas.

What happens, though, if a teacher suspends her dominant role for a while and positions herself as a coparticipant with the children, they respond appropriately by treating her as one of them, at least in discourse terms. In this case, it is the teacher’s contribution to their suggestions: Her objection to using a plane (Line 91) is not accorded any special status by them; she is interrupted (Line 93), her suggestion is ignored (Line 95), and her tentative positive evaluation of another child’s idea is rejected (Line 114).

These reactions from the children seem to suggest that if the teacher suspends her dominant role for a while and positions herself as a coparticipant with the children, they respond appropriately by treating her as one of them, at least in discourse terms. In this case, it is the children who initiate the exchanges, while the teacher negotiates turn-taking with them on a more equal footing and follows, to a large extent, their language choices.

**Implications for Classroom Practice**

**General Considerations**

As we have seen from the three extracts discussed in this article, bilingual storytelling allows children in the initial stages of becoming bilingual to understand what is happening. This comprehension is critical if they are to be able to contribute to the construction of the storytelling event. Teachers have the power to facilitate this process or make it more difficult. I suggest that they need to think carefully about how they position themselves in relation to their pupils in the construction of classroom events. They need to reflect on the benefits of allowing children to interfere with their preplanned lesson agendas by introducing their own concerns and contributions into the classroom arena.

Furthermore, as Auerbach (1995) suggests in the area of English language teaching, and even more so in the case of bilingual education programs, teachers need to reexamine their attitudes toward the role and status of their students’ L1 in the process of learning a second or foreign language. They need to ask themselves whether they consider the use of the L1 to be a problem, a resource, or a right (Ruiz, 1984). In other words, do teachers see the L1 as a source of interference in the foreign language learning process, or as a means of positive transfer of what the students already know (their L1) to their new knowledge (the L2)? Especially in the case of ethnic minority groups, there is the question of the participants’ right to maintain and use their L1 (TESOL Bilingual Education Task Force, 1992/1993).

As a corollary of their views on the role of the L1 in second or foreign language learning, teachers need to examine their attitudes toward classroom code switching. For many years, especially in immersion programs, code switching has been strongly discouraged. A separation rather than a concurrent approach has been typically advocated, with an emphasis on the principle of bilingualism through monolingualism (Swain, 1983). This predicts that children will become bilingual as a result of separate instruction in their two languages, either taught on different days or across different subjects in the curriculum.

The reasons given for adopting this principle can be summarized as follows:

1. Students exposed concurrently to both languages in the classroom learn to ignore the language they do not understand.
2. All participants have to work harder to communicate in a separation approach.
3. Teachers require fewer linguistic resources in a separation approach.
4. Teachers cannot ensure an equal language balance in a concurrent approach.

Although students in bilingual programs need to have access to some separate language input if they are to be able to adopt a monolingual speech mode in either of their two languages when circumstances demand, they also need to be helped to see the relationships between their two languages and the possibilities for communicating appropriately...
in a bilingual speech mode with other bilinguals (Grosjean, 1985). I suggest, therefore, that teachers should consider natural code switching as a valuable tool for making meaning in the classroom, especially in the early stages of second or foreign language learning.

Code switching may be seen as a vital communicative resource available to children and teachers who share proficiency in the children’s L1 and not as a practice relegated to a strategy of last resort. Together with their ability to dramatize, explain, and draw out points of relevance to their pupils’ lives in their storytelling, bilingual teachers should consider code switching to be another means of encouraging greater pupil participation in the construction of storytelling events, and not feel guilty about using their pupils’ L1 in the classroom (Arthur, 1996; Martin-Jones, 1995).

Furthermore, the valuing of the children’s contributions to the learning process is a vital tenet in constructivist approaches to education, which view learning and knowledge as something that is actively constructed by the learner through interaction with their environment, rather than as something that is passively transmitted or received. Such approaches are, at present, having an enormous influence on the process of teaching and learning in all aspects of the curriculum, especially at the preschool and primary levels. Children who are in the process of becoming bilingual bring their experience of their L1 to the learning of another language. Through the skillful and flexible use of code switching, these students have appropriate access to their L1 in the process of learning another language—this helps maximize learning opportunities in the bilingual classroom.

**Suggestions for Using Code Switching to Enhance Learning Opportunities**

If teachers adopt the perspective that children’s L1s are valuable resources in their journey toward bilingualism, they might employ some of the following practices. These practices are based on my observations of teachers of young children in Colombia and their use of natural code switching in bilingual storytelling. Teachers in different bilingual classroom contexts may find that some of these ideas resonate with their own insights and experiences.

1. Allow children to participate in the construction of the story by accepting their suggestions formulated in their L1. The teacher can subsequently reformulate these contributions in the target language to provide greater exposure.
2. Use stories that the children are already familiar with in their L1. If the story is completely new to them, give a short pre-view in their L1, so that they will be familiar with the main events in the story before the teacher begins telling the tale.
3. Use code contrast to distinguish between different speech acts inherent in storytelling. For example, use the foreign language (or L2) to convey the voices of the characters in the story in the dialogue and use the children’s L1 for the narration of events. In this way, the children may be helped to distinguish between the interaction among the characters represented in direct speech mode, which is usually easier for them to understand, and the narrative frame.
4. Finally, use the children’s L1 to check that they have understood the concepts introduced in the story and to discuss matters that arise in the course of the storytelling.

**Conclusion**

In this article, I have argued that bilingual teachers need to examine carefully the ways in which they and their students actually use their two languages in the construction of storytelling events before deciding whether to include or exclude the use of code switching as a teaching resource in their classroom practice. I have also suggested that immersion teachers need to be made more aware of the beliefs and values they associate with particular instances of language choice in the classroom so that they can make more conscious decisions about their storytelling practices in bilingual contexts.

In a perceptive comment, Cazden (1988) noted that although narratives are a universal meaning-making strategy, there is no one way of transforming experience into a story. In bilingual storytelling, teachers not only have access to the resources available to their monolingual counterparts, they also are able to draw upon their two languages in subtle and creative ways to provide their young learners with experiences of narrative construction that are meaningful, significant, and pleasurable.

**Acknowledgment**

I would like to thank Sarah Hudelson, JoEllen Simpson, and two anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments on earlier drafts of this article.

**Notes**

1 By the term code switching, I am referring to the general definition given by Milroy and Muysken (1995): “the alternative use by bilinguals of two or more languages in the same conversation” (p. 7).

2 Errors made by the participants in the original audiotaped recordings have not been corrected in any of the extracts in this article.

3 By the term natural code switching, I am distinguishing between language alternation carried out by bilingual speakers for different functional purposes, such as to emphasize a point, to facilitate learner understanding, or to distinguish between academic
content and extracurricular concerns, and planned language alternation, such as Jacobson’s New Concurrent Approach, discussed by Faltis (1989). In this second pattern, teacher code switching behavior is regulated according to 16 preestablished cues, to ensure an equal balance in the use of both languages during pedagogical instruction and to avoid excessive alternation.

References


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Creating International Contexts for Cultural Communication: Video Exchange Projects in the EFL/ESL Classroom

Bridget Fitzgerald Gersten and Norbert Tlustý

I really enjoyed participating in the video project because I learned something new about my hometown. I even went to some places I had never been to before in my life. I also got to practice my English, and I learned how hard it is to make a film. When I found out we would be exchanging the video with other students in another city, I really wanted to do my best and to help our new friends see Prague, our city, in its best light. And then I really saw what it meant to take control of myself, in words and in actions, on film. I definitely learned a lot by making the video. And I think I improved my English, too. It was all a very new life experience for me. And now I know my city even better than before. That’s important to me. It was an experience worth having, and I’d even do it again if I had the opportunity (Stella, age 14, personal interview).

Before Stella and her Czech classmates created a video about Prague with their 8th-grade EFL teacher, English was just another subject in school, studied to gain general knowledge about places and people in the United Kingdom, Australia, and the United States. However, when these students made a video in English about Czech life and history, things changed. In the interview excerpt above, Stella touches on how English became the medium through which she and her peers embarked on a discovery of language, culture, and technology. Stella’s peers further commented on the personal and shared significance of this 8-week class project, which involved producing a video in English about Czech life and history.
Czech culture for exchange with EFL students in Regensburg, Germany. This project is an example of how culture and video can be combined to facilitate cross-cultural communication. It also demonstrates how video can be used to motivate language learners by encouraging them to incorporate their knowledge, interests, ideas, talents, and imagination into the EFL/ESL curriculum.

Though many EFL/ESL teachers will concur on the benefits of cultural exchanges between native and nonnative speakers of English, EFL students often will use English to communicate with other nonnative speakers throughout their personal and professional lives. For native and nonnative speakers of English alike, video exchange projects allow students to take charge of their learning and develop their creative and technical abilities. At the same time, students also learn to make decisions and solve problems collectively. EFL/ESL teachers can use student-produced video as a tool of authentic communication to complement, support, and personalize the EFL/ESL curriculum for learners of all ages. By using English as an international language to communicate with real audiences about their own cultural heritage, EFL/ESL students can develop a range of abilities in meaningful social contexts.

**Purpose of the Research**

The purpose of this project was to engage in action research examining how adolescent EFL learners might benefit from engaging in video production and cultural exchange. The underlying premise was that using video to communicate with peers in another country would positively affect student performance and participation in various ways. The intent of the project was to explore how combining content-based cultural knowledge (e.g., Czech culture) with video production and cultural exchange would motivate learners and promote English use among adolescents. This report resulted from a video exchange project between students from Prague, in the Czech Republic, and students from Regensburg, in neighboring Germany.

In addition to including hands-on, site-based film production, the video project involved an exchange of letters, posters, and photographs. After both videos were completed, the Czech and German students met face-to-face to exchange their videos, using English as the medium of communication. The video exchange project activities involved more than cooperative decision making and teamwork: Students were active participants in all phases of the project, including researching, script writing, revising, editing, rehearsing, acting, producing, and critiquing. Through the act of helping one another and engaging the assistance of their teachers and researchers, the learning process offered an occasion for both individual and collaborative success.

**Rationale for Using Video Exchange Projects in the EFL/ESL Classroom**

It is difficult to deny the powerful lure and impact of film. The magic of video and its multiple uses have been acclaimed in EFL/ESL and foreign-language classrooms alike (Cooper, Lavery, & Rinvoluci, 1990; Lonergan, 1984; Stempleski & Arcario, 1992). In EFL settings, videos are an especially important component of many communicative language series because they create pseudo or virtual contact with the English-speaking world (e.g., the popular textbook and videotape series, Project English [Hutchinson, 1985, 1986, 1987], in which Czech students encounter children from around the English-speaking world). In ESL settings, teachers often use movies to inspire comprehension and/or discussion of culturally-relevant issues and events (Gareis, 1997; Riojas Clark, & Linden, 1997).

Given the availability of commercial videos, what purpose does student-produced video production serve in the curriculum, either when it takes place during school hours or outside the classroom as an extracurricular project? As students create their own videos for exchange with partner classes, they become active learners who use English to communicate important and meaningful information about their personal lives and cultural heritage. They listen, read, write, and speak English in cooperative learning settings. Furthermore, they take what they have learned from textbooks and contextualize it according to their own experience, for authentic purposes. Students are motivated to share their lives with an audience and to learn about the world and people beyond their personal experience. The premise for using English as an international language is a realistic one, especially in EFL settings. This is because EFL learners are often likely to use English to communicate with people who are not necessarily native speakers. This is also often the case with ESL students who communicate in heterogeneous classroom settings.

One central motivating factor in video exchange projects is the students’ desire to communicate with real people or a genuine audience in real places. Additionally, students are eager to explore and share knowledge or feelings with video exchange partners. Above all, the material is culturally embedded in the students’ social identity and daily lives. The integral role of culture in language learning has been stressed in ESL,
The project included three core phases, which lasted 8 weeks. Additional activities were developed in a fourth phase, following completion of the video. The topics, phases, and steps involved in producing the video project appear in the list below.

### Sample Phases and Steps for Preparing Video Exchange Projects

1. **Choosing a Partner School, Deciding Video Content, and Establishing Time Lines**
   - Present project to students, explaining goals and activities. Emphasize communication and cultural exchange.
   - Choose a partner school. Teachers will correspond via letters, e-mail, and/or personal visits with colleagues.
   - View commercially produced videos to brainstorm video content (e.g., video accompanying textbook).
   - Establish time commitment expected during class and after school.
   - Solicit volunteers and get parental consent.
   - Discuss video content options and deadline for video completion with students.
   - Have students exchange letters, posters, or both with partner school.
   - Have students choose video content and on-site video filming locations in city.
   - Locate equipment: video camera/camcorder (zoom preferred), batteries, microphone, VCR, and TV.
   - Test equipment and familiarize self and students with camera use.
   - Obtain any necessary permission to film on site (e.g., inside or outside of national monuments, buildings).
   - Identify individuals in community for on-site interviews (e.g., city officials, nonprofit organizations).

2. **Researching, Scripting, and Rehearsing**
   - Organize students into small groups or pairs to research topics with content-area teachers.
   - Have students write, edit, and rehearse scripts and interview questions with partner(s).
   - Review verbal and nonverbal presentation skills: eye contact, voice, delivery, pronunciation.
   - Write cue cards for use with filming.
   - Brainstorm any special effects and other additions to video: music, visual backdrops, credits.

3. **Filming, Editing, Evaluating, and Presenting the Video**
   - Determine which students will film the action.
   - Determine the sequence in which scenes will be shot (i.e., depending on the setting of each scene).
   - Practice filming scenes at school: interior and exterior shots.
   - Locate props and costumes when necessary.
   - Rehearse and shoot scenes on location.
   - Critique, choose, and revise scenes; arrange for retakes on location. Foresee trial and error.
   - Edit film: sequence shots; add music, performances, visual backdrops, and credits.
   - Conduct feedback sessions: students evaluate self- and peer performance.
   - Exchange video with partner class by mail or in person.
   - View partner school’s video.

4. **Follow-Up Activities**
   - Organize an open house for parents, teachers, community members, and local VIPs (e.g., ambassador).
   - Copy the video for individual participants and future EFL/ESL classes.
   - Develop communicative activities based on video (e.g., listening, writing, role plays, video activities) for use with other EFL/ESL classes.
   - Arrange for student exchange visits between partner schools.
   - Involve other members of the school community in the video (e.g., dancing, singing).
We analyzed the students’ participation in terms of these multiple, overlapping areas. Interview excerpts revealed student perceptions about the value of the project in terms of these categories (see interview excerpts below).

The seven areas of growth were as follows:

1. **Content-Area Knowledge**: Students brainstormed topics to include in their video. These topics centered on the history and architecture of their city and country as well as on social customs, folklore, and other popular traditions (e.g., music, song). Group members then researched these topics. To gather additional information on these topics, students also consulted with content-area teachers at school and conducted interviews in English of experts in the community (see the outline of topics, locations, interviews, and student-generated video sketches below). In informal class discussions, written evaluations, and personal interviews following completion of the video exchange project, students expressed in English how participating in the project had allowed them to expand their content-area knowledge, often by visiting key historical places in the city, sometimes for the first time in their lives.

2. **Oral and Written Connections**: Students used English and Czech to learn more about a variety of content areas (e.g., history, geography, and the arts). They recognized the challenges involved in composing English text from content-area knowledge that they had obtained in their native language (e.g., translating and paraphrasing). Throughout this process of composing, revising, and editing, the students sought further expert, content-area knowledge by interviewing their teachers. Additionally, they sought input and feedback from a native speaker of English about how to produce correct English orally and in writing. This concern for accuracy in grammar and pronunciation can be attributed to broader sociocultural norms of schooling in the Czech Republic.

The students’ writing was a source of further reading material, as partners enthusiastically read and critiqued peer texts. Through this, students demonstrated further interest in learning new vocabulary and perfecting pronunciation. Forever mindful of the video

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**Sample Outline of Proposed Video Topics, Locations, Interviews, and Sketches**

**Topics**
- location of city (Praha/Prague)
- history of city
- historical monuments
- facts about famous artists, politicians, composers (Dvořák, Smetana, Čapek, Václav Havel)
- international music and literature composed in Prague (Mozart, Kafka)
- architecture
- Czech food
- excerpts from a famous Czech play

**Filming Locations and Interviews**
- school grounds (interior and exterior), students, and personnel
- school neighborhood
- Vyšehrad Castle
- Saint Vitus Cathedral
- The Charles Bridge
- The National Theatre (opera and playhouse)
- Orloj (famous astronomical clock)
- Old Town Square
- The Lookout Tower, Petřín
- The Funicular
- castle gardens
- Prague Castle and president Václav Havel’s quarters
- Vltava River
- Vyšehrad Cemetery (burial place of famous Czech poets, composers, and writers)
- local restaurants
- interview with English-speaking tourists on the historic Charles Bridge
- interview with director of the National Theatre and tour of museum
- interview with priest at the historic Vyšehrad Cemetery
- interview with the Prague Castle’s architect on the castle grounds

**Historical Reenactments and Storytelling**
- the legendary Princess Libuše and her auspicious predictions about Prague
- the legend of Horymír and his escape from the castle of Vyšehrad
- the legend of Mister Hanuš, an astronomical clock builder
- interview with Charles IV, Holy Roman Emperor in Prague
- reenactment of famous defenestrations from the castle tower
- the story of Protestant reformer, Jan Hus, and the Hussites
- history of the Slavs, Bohemians, Czechoslovakia, and the Czech Republic
Although the Czech students used their L1 as a medium for interpersonal communication with their peers and teachers (including monolingual, content-area teachers of social studies, art, and music), these voices went “backstage” in the video.

### Interview Excerpts of Students Evaluating the Video Exchange Project

#### Why did you decide to take part in the project?

*Because I was interested in learning something about Prague. It sounded interesting, and it was something completely new, interesting, and unexpected. I was curious to learn about filming, and this was an interesting change. I wanted to try it out, to improve my English; I liked the idea itself.*

#### What did you expect to learn from the project?

*I thought it would be fun. Something new. But I was afraid of the filming part, with all of those people [in the city] around. It was interesting to work with friends, and it was a new experience. I wanted to get to know those people [students] from Regensburg.*

*I didn’t expect much of anything. I just wanted to try it. I liked working together as a group. It’s something I’ve never done before. I wanted to practice my English. I wanted a change. But I didn’t expect a lot in the beginning. I did want to see myself on TV, too.*

#### Were you afraid of anything? Why? Was there anything you didn’t enjoy?

*I was afraid I’d mess up the [filmed] scenes and of being nervous and looking horrible on film. I was afraid of other people watching the film. I thought it would take up too much of my free time. I thought people would laugh at me or that I’d break the camera. I was afraid to play Libuše. [the legendary Czech princess]. I was afraid I wouldn’t be able to handle it, that I would have stage fright. And that I’d make mistakes. I didn’t like all the walking, though. And the weather, especially when it was raining and the wind was blowing. I didn’t like it when somebody didn’t know their lines or when we had to wait for someone to get it right.*

#### What did you enjoy about the project?

*I liked watching Ludek as Charles IV, and watching Marketa as Libuše. I liked seeing Gaby in the interview at the castle in the president’s office. I liked watching myself on TV, and even seeing the bloopers [funny scenes that were then refilmed]. I liked watching Anton in those horrible boots of his. It was funny when someone made a mistake. I thought it was great when Ludek had to learn how to walk like a king in that scene on the hill. And the filming itself. The whole project was good: I enjoyed my role in it. I enjoyed the funny scenes, and when Anton and Sveta would whisper their parts before each scene.*

#### Did you learn anything in particular from the project? Would you do it again?

*Yes. Something new about Prague. I visited some places that I’d never ever seen before. I practiced my English. I learned how hard it is to make a film. And I learned how to control myself on film and to feel confident in front of people and the camera. I never thought that would happen. I definitely improved my English. It was a life experience for me. And I learned how to not burst out laughing in front of the camera. I learned that even when we were out with the teacher it was fun. I learned to memorize a text and to pronounce the word unique. I’d definitely do it again. Especially now that I am more experienced.…. I’d do it again because of the English. And to find out about other people in other places. And I think other students should see it at school and definitely do a similar project of their own.*
The Czech students in this project used English successfully as an international language to communicate for authentic purposes with German students across the border. The video exchange project provided a student-generated context for developing and sharing knowledge with peers at home and abroad, using English as an international language. At the core of the students’ success were three key ingredients: motivation to use English for authentic, communicative purposes; pride in sharing their culture with a real audience; and the perception of video as a useful instrument for interpersonal communication and self-evaluation. Every student expressed the importance of the video exchange project in developing their English proficiency and enabling them to use English as a means of communication in an international context. Furthermore, each student took an active role in the decision-making, problem-solving, and evaluation process involved in creating the video for exchange. Despite the time commitment and effort involved, all students agreed that the project was educational, enjoyable, and worth repeating.

Final Thoughts

Even though video exchange projects require a substantial amount of preparation and time, they are well worth the effort. The students’ success in this project was reflected in their own words as recounted in the excerpted interviews (see p. 15). Each participant noted how the project had had a positive effect on self-image, fluency with English, presentation skills, technological expertise, and learning about cultural practices at home and abroad. Moreover, the teachers gained valuable information relevant to curriculum and instruction, namely, that video exchange projects are an optimal way to foreground and validate student knowledge, culture, experience, and personal voices in the EFL/ESL curriculum.

Note

1 All student names in the interview excerpts are pseudonyms. All excerpts are used with permission.

References


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Toshi and Ah Lee are students at a language institute at a university in the United States. Their TOEFL scores are approximately 450, which is high enough for admittance to the university, but their English skills are uneven. They speak well, but their reading and writing are impeding their progress. They have been allowed to take two university courses and two ESL courses—reading and composition—but they find the university courses too hard. They feel discouraged right now, and their reading teacher, Paula, wants to help them.

Paula knows Toshi and Ah Lee are the least proficient readers in her advanced reading class, but they do better if they read their assignments at home ahead of time. From their performance in class and on tests, she knows they are familiar with the rhetorical structures of written English and with the reading strategies she has taught them. Toshi and Ah Lee also know a lot about U.S. culture, so they have adequate background knowledge for reading comprehension. Paula is satisfied that the students’ top-down reading abilities and strategies are adequate, so she concentrates, instead, on their bottom-up reading skills.

First, Paula has Toshi read out loud. She soon realizes that it takes him so long to decide what the word is, that by the time he has decided, he has lost track of the meaning of the sentence. If he does not recognize a word as a whole unit, he seems unable to sound it out. When Paula looks at Toshi’s textbooks, she sees that he also has developed a coping strategy which prevents him from improving. When he has an assignment, he looks up each unfamiliar word in his English-Japanese dictionary and writes in the Japanese character. This takes him so long that he cannot keep up with the reading for the course.

Ah Lee’s case is different from Toshi’s. Ah Lee reads each word slowly, processing each alphabet letter separately, not automatically as part of a whole context of letter-to-sound information. She has a difficult time assigning the pronunciation of vowels so that she can figure out what the word is. She can sound out unfamiliar words, but, overall, her reading remains too slow for her to handle the large quantities of material that are required by her university courses.

Many beginning English-speaking readers have problems similar to those of Toshi and Ah Lee, but successful readers surmount them through their own induction of the generalizations needed, through an abundance of practice with meaningful and enjoyable reading, and, if necessary, through direct teacher intervention with specialized instruction. Toshi and Ah Lee have been unable to induce the generalizations by themselves; thus, they have never really enjoyed reading. If Paula wants to intervene to help these students directly, what kind of supplemental reading instruction should she use?

Using an English Reading Processor

Teachers such as Paula may be helped to develop better reading strategies for students.
like Toshi and Ah Lee by considering a hypothetical model of the English reading processor, based on a model by Medsker and Liebowitz (1994) and another by Adams (1990) (see the model on the right). Although this model is speculative, it is based on ample research with English readers. English-speaking readers begin by developing a phonological subprocessor to comprehend spoken English in infancy. At the time readers begin to read, this well-formed phonological subprocessor is linked to the orthographic subprocessor, which readers acquire as they become more proficient at reading. The linkage comes about because English writing is mainly alphabetic and the letters therefore correspond to the sounds of English, although the correspondence is not one-to-one. In reading, the orthographic subprocessor matches the incoming letters to the sounds they correspond to and sends this information to the lexical subprocessor, the next stage of processing. In addition, the reading process draws on a lexical subprocessor to recognize words and a syntax subprocessor to chunk the incoming words into phrases and clauses as an early step toward constructing meaning. These subprocessors are interactive: information flows both upwards and downwards continually to help the reader read the print and construct a meaning. The whole model represents a system which is driven by processing engines that draw and confirm inferences about the printed material based on background knowledge stored in the knowledge base. Paula uses this hypothetical model of the reading process to help her understand how to help Toshi and Ah Lee.

Toshi seems to be using a reading strategy that is common with some English-speaking beginning readers. Because he has never acquired the alphabetic principle—that written words are made up of individual letters that stand for the sounds of the language—he treats words as whole units, unreducible to letters. This strategy is somewhat effective for the earliest stage of reading, but it very quickly becomes inefficient. Toshi needs to acquire an orthographic subprocessor; he needs direct instruction in the letters and sounds of English. He needs to learn some bottom-up reading strategies so that he can use his knowledge and analogy to sound out unfamiliar words to see if he knows them orally or aurally.

What can the processing model tell us about Ah Lee’s situation? Ah Lee recognizes alphabet letter shapes and associates them with English sounds, but the process is slow, inaccurate, and laborious. Paula hypothesizes that Ah Lee has an orthographic subprocessor, but that it is undeveloped. She thinks that Ah Lee’s phonological subprocessor also may need some additional exercise, not with respect to pronunciation, but to listening. Ah Lee does not need to have perfect pronunciation of English sounds because that relates to the motor abilities of the vocal organs. However, she does need to have quick, accurate aural processing of English sounds to create the mental image of an English sound that she will need to draw upon in reading. In addition, Paula hypothesizes that Ah Lee may have to strengthen the connections between the orthographic and phonological subprocessors because quick, unconscious, effortless reading is based on accurate predictions, expectations, and confirmations about the common letter-to-sound correspondences found in English.

**Developing a Supplementary Reading Program**

Good reading programs develop all of the subprocessing areas depicted in the model. Because Paula feels that her existing reading program nourishes the top half of the model of the reading processor extremely well, she designs a supplementary reading program
that focuses more on improving Toshi and Ah Lee’s bottom-up reading strategies by helping them achieve the following set of goals:

1. awareness that words are made up of sounds called phonemes
2. recognition of English sounds, especially vowels
3. recognition of English alphabet letters
4. knowledge of the alphabetic principle: that each letter stands for a sound
5. familiarity with syllable and morphemic structures of English words

**Developing Phonemic Awareness**

The first goal of the supplementary reading program focuses on helping students develop phonemic awareness by teaching them how to segment spoken English words into their component sounds. I have used a variety of tasks to develop this awareness that other teachers may want to adapt to their classrooms. For instance, I have had students practice individual sounds using spoken rhymes and word play. Nursery rhymes, limericks, and poetry can be used with students of all ages. For certain ages and temperaments, however, I have found the nonsense rhymes in Dr. Seuss books to be more appropriately challenging. Have students think up as many words as they can that rhyme with one of their vocabulary words or with the names of people they know. Gather riddles that focus attention on the sound of words: “What is the longest word in the English language? It is *smiles*, because there is a *mile* between each *s*."

It takes only a few minutes in a couple of class periods for most students to learn to segment words into their component sounds. First, ask students to signal (e.g., clap, stomp, tap, or knock) for each sound they hear in a spoken word that you say to them: “Say *sell*”; students should clap three times. This is all oral practice, so spelling does not count. If students clap four times because they know the spelling, point out that *ll* just represents one sound.

**Teaching English Sounds**

Students can learn English sounds, especially vowel sounds, by breaking words down into their individual component sounds. For instance, teachers can have students remove the first sound of a word by asking questions like: “What word is left if I take the *p* off of *pill*? It is *ill*.” Teach students to take off the last sound of a word by asking, for example, “What word is left if I take the *p* off of *heap*? It is *he*.” (Remember, spelling does not count in this oral game, but if this bothers students, stick to examples in which spelling and pronunciation match at first.) Then, teach students to remove sounds from the middle of a word: “What word is left if I take the *p* out of *spell*? It is *sell*.” Finally, teach students to say the sounds of a word in response to a word you say. For example, if you say *ten*, they should make the sounds *t*/ *e*/ *n*. Some students tend to spell the words by saying *h*l/*l*/ *e*n*, but try to get them to focus on sound and not spelling. Then have them say the whole word again.

**Teaching Alphabet Letters**

The second goal of the supplementary reading program focuses on teaching students to recognize the letter shapes and names or sounds of the alphabet. Many students already know the letter shapes, but teachers should not take this knowledge for granted, even with intermediate or advanced students. Poor readers may be adept at hiding what they do not know. That is why they sometimes find themselves in classes too advanced for their skill level. Teachers can use any beginning reading or writing text-book that contains instructions on alphabet letter shapes to review. When students are learning to read alphabet letters, they sometimes are taught the letter name or the most frequent sound associated with the letter. Most studies show that it does not matter which method is used. I have also found that it can be enjoyable to practice letter recognition using different fonts, but have discovered that some students have difficulty reading some of the strange fonts available in today’s software.

**Teaching the Alphabetic Principle**

Once students have learned the letters of the alphabet, teachers can then begin to teach them the alphabetic principle. In this important skill, students learn to develop expectations and connections between letters and sounds by learning to associate letters with the sounds most commonly associated with them within the context of words. To assist teachers in this part of the instructional program, I have included several charts (see pp. 21, 22) that offer some information about letter-to-sound correspondences. These charts are adapted from information in Groff and Seymour (1987) and use the standard phonetic symbols of the International Phonetics Association (IPA). In addition to this background information, teachers may find it helpful to consider which psycholinguistic model would be the most appropriate for teaching these spelling and sound patterns to students. There is one caveat, however: I do not recommend that teachers photocopy these charts and use them to teach these patterns as abstract learning, isolated from meaningful language context and use. All language instruction should be made as meaningful and relevant as possible, even letter-to-sound patterns.
English Consonant Phonemes and Their Spellings

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<td>w</td>
<td>wet</td>
<td>liquid</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Consonants with Less Consistent Spellings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sound</th>
<th>Most Frequent Spelling</th>
<th>Other Spellings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>tʃ</td>
<td>chapp</td>
<td>watch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f</td>
<td>action</td>
<td>social, mission, shut</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>k</td>
<td>cat</td>
<td>back, school, keep</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>s</td>
<td>sat</td>
<td>pass, scent, cent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dʒ</td>
<td>gem</td>
<td>budget, educate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>z</td>
<td>as</td>
<td>buzz, dessert</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Some consonant spellings, however, have less consistent correspondences with their sounds. Information from the rest of the word is very helpful to the reader and can be taught explicitly to the student (see the middle chart directly above).

Teaching Syllabification and Morphology

The alphabetic principle, that letters represent sounds, is complicated by English syllabification conventions and morphology. For example, to pronounce the th sequence correctly as /θ/, students must understand that it has that pronunciation only at the beginning or end of syllables, as in thick, ether, or with. In the word foothill, both the morpheme boundary and the syllable boundary break the th sequence into /θ/ /θ/. Also, the letter t usually stands for /θ/, but the morpheme -tion is an important and consistent exception.

Vowels

Teachers should be aware that vowel sounds are much less consistently associated with one or two main spellings. There is also more dialectal variation in vowels, so the vowel sounds that teachers choose may not be identical to those listed in the chart to the right.

Finding Methods That Work

Again, I caution teachers not to extract information from the charts provided to use in the classroom because it is not as useful to teach abstract rules as it is to teach students to use the language accurately in meaningful conversation, reading, and writing. Students will find these spelling-to-sound correspondences more relevant if learned within the context of particular words that have common spelling patterns in English. There are many such word lists of common spelling patterns for teachers (e.g., Fry, Fountoukidis, & Polk, 1985). In the interest of space, I have provided the spelling patterns from the Benchmark Program developed at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (Downer 1991) (see the chart on p. 22).

The best way to teach the patterns of English is within the context of a whole language reading program. I have found spending approximately 20 minutes a day going over patterns in a reading or writing class period to be sufficient.

1. Before class, examine the reading assignment to find a few words that illustrate the spelling-to-word patterns in the Benchmark Program chart. The words do not need to be identical to those in the chart, but the patterns do.

2. During class, point out the patterns in the reading assignment to the students by writing them on the board. Find ways to have the students read the patterns over again, write them, pronounce them, give other examples of the same pattern, and talk about exceptions to the pattern. If students can learn these 120 common spelling-to-sound patterns, they can sound...
out more than 95% of the English words they will encounter.

3. Generalize very briefly about the patterns, giving hints like: “The doubled consonant in the word gives you information about the vowel in front of it,” and “The silent e at the end of a word actually gives you information about the vowel in front of the consonant: compare the words will and smile.” Students should be encouraged to induce such generalizations themselves.

4. Use analogies to help students figure out the pronunciation of new words from the readings you have assigned. For instance, use the analogy: “What word that you know is p-e-w like? It is like f-e-w. F-e-w is pronounced /fyuw/, so how is p-e-w pronounced?” Provide students with chances to use analogy as a strategy to sound out words they do not know.

5. Model the use of syllabification and analogy to sound out polysyllabic words, for example, cantankerous—can-tank-er-ous. Do not follow conventions of syllabification from the dictionary, however, because they are not always accurate for pronunciation purposes.

6. Spend a few minutes of each class looking at the morphology of a few words from your reading assignment, such as compound words like broadcast or derived words like nationality. Take a few minutes every now and then to focus on common prefixes and suffixes, such as re-, de-, pre-, -ness, -ion, and -able, that can be added to produce other English words. Students like to make up new nonsense words and funny definitions using these linguistic elements.

7. Help students develop automaticity with letter-to-sound patterns and reading by practicing analogies to known patterns.

**Conclusion**

The first stage of learning to read for native English speakers often involves the slow and laborious sounding out of words. ESL readers like Toshi must pass through this stage. Ah Lee has never gotten beyond this stage. There are a number of activities that teachers can use to help their students at this point: reading out loud, reading a large number of books that are very simple in meaning, listening and following along as someone else reads (books on tape are good for this), reading orally with another person who reads just a few milliseconds ahead of the learner, reading the same book over and over again if desired, and reading a number of books on the same topic to build up familiarity with words.

Students should not be given books to read that are too difficult for them because they usually will skip over rather than learn unfamiliar words. Instead, teachers should carefully select books and other reading material that contain a few new words, but many familiar words, so that reading is enjoyable. If students must read difficult books, the topics should be motivating. Students should select some of the new words to learn and practice. They should be encouraged to use a translation dictionary only minimally and not to write other language words or symbols in the English text.

Students must, through practice and experience with reading, get beyond this stage of consciously associating letters with sounds to the next stage of reading development, when the association between letter and sound becomes so automatic that the reader is unaware that it is going on. If Toshi and Ah Lee follow these steps, their reading skills will truly be nurtured holistically.

**Note**

1 All names are pseudonyms.

**References**


Downer, M. (1991). *Benchmark school word identification/vocabulary development program viewers’ guide to teaching word*
identification. Urbana-Champaign: University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Center for the Study of Reading.


Author

Barbara Birch is an associate professor of linguistics at California State University-Fresno, in the United States, where she teaches linguistics and reading, ESL methods, and English grammar for teachers. She has taught EFL in Spain, Ecuador, and Pakistan as well as ESL in Wisconsin and Connecticut.
In TESOL programs around the world, administrators routinely make decisions about hiring ESL/EFL teachers, evaluating their instructors’ job performance, cutting or retaining faculty, and giving raises and promotions. Such decisions are most often based on the administrator’s opinions (formed from classroom observation), students’ opinions (gathered from course evaluations), and a cursory summary of the teacher’s background (as found in a résumé or curriculum vita). Such information can prove valuable, but may not be sufficient for making responsible decisions about a teacher’s real strengths and weaknesses. For instance, student evaluations may be a reflection of teacher popularity, whereas an administrator’s observations often are no more than a kind of snapshot of the day-to-day activities in a classroom, and the teacher’s résumé or vita is necessarily a fairly cryptic outline of the facts about a very real person—one who has many other traits and abilities that cannot be reflected in such a document. In fact, ESL/EFL teachers rarely have the opportunity to present a cogent view of their teaching as it develops over the years as a combined result of their teaching philosophy, their experiences with curriculum development, and their interactions with students. It may be in administrators’ and teachers’ best interests for teachers to maintain a portfolio of their work that reveals the quality of their teaching in more depth. Thus, teacher portfolios can fulfill two important goals:

1. The act of creating and maintaining a portfolio may motivate teachers to improve their performance and develop themselves professionally. This practice can be started as early as graduate school by encouraging students to reflect on their education and training as part of their ongoing professional development (Anson, 1994).

2. The information included in a portfolio can assist administrators, as current or prospective employers, in evaluating the teacher’s qualifications (Seldin, 1991).

What Are Teacher Portfolios?

Traditionally, people in professions such as architecture, art, journalism, and modeling have maintained portfolios as a way of organizing and presenting samples of their work to potential employers and clients. The purpose of such portfolios was to demonstrate their professional skills and achievements. The concept of a portfolio is not entirely new in the field of education: For instance, student portfolios have been a common feature of K-6 reading programs for many years. The creation of a teacher portfolio for professional purposes, however, is much more recent, especially by teachers in the TESOL field.

The concept of a teacher portfolio meshes nicely with the relatively recent encouragement of ESL/EFL teacher reflection in general (Richards & Lockhart, 1994). Drawing on the literature for student portfolios, we (Brown & Wolfe-Quintero, 1997) defined a teacher portfolio as “a purposeful collection of any aspects of a teacher’s work that tells the story of the teacher’s efforts, skills, abilities, achievements, and contributions to his/her students, colleagues, institution, academic discipline, or community” (p. 28). The process of creating such a portfolio encourages teachers to reflect on their growth in the profession and provides a richer basis for external evaluation. ESL/EFL teachers can benefit substantially from developing a portfolio because

• it aids them in gathering together their thoughts about their strengths and areas for growth, and in synthesizing these thoughts into a cogent collage that represents their professional persona
• it allows them to add a rich array of information to the teacher evaluation process
• it gives them the opportunity to shape readers’ perceptions of them by selecting the types of information that readers will see and presenting that information from their point of view.
In all cases, documenting growth in the ability to think about one’s teaching and adapt to new circumstances would demonstrate professional development.

**Portfolio Contents**

A teacher portfolio should include anything a teacher feels is appropriate, subject to this caveat: The information should be representative and well organized. Two guiding principles may help teachers successfully develop their portfolios:

1. Avoid flooding the reader with too much information.
2. Avoid presenting a hodge-podge of information that is impossible to interpret.

Instead, teachers should present examples of their work with clear, concise, yet reflective explanations of what the examples mean to them professionally. They should also present the examples and reflections in a clear, well-organized, and easy-to-read manner, while also making sure that each piece of work is a valid, representative example of their accomplishments and abilities.

Some possible items that might be included in a teacher portfolio are given in the sample list on the right. These items are listed under broad categories that include: a cover letter, an updated résumé, a statement of teaching philosophy, samples of work, evaluations and other feedback, and several other items. One teacher at the University of Hawai‘i at Manoa (UHM) suggested that the teacher portfolio should be a sort of “greatest hits collection of music with liner notes that explain why these particular songs were selected.” We stress that our sample list contains only suggestions for what teachers might want to include in their portfolio; many other ideas are possible.

Perhaps the best approach to creating a portfolio might be for teachers to make just a few points emphasizing particular qualities of their teaching, supporting each point with representative examples. For instance, teachers might want to emphasize that they have adopted a communicative approach to teaching, or a process approach, or that they are especially creative, or have developed a particularly innovative set of materials. The supporting materials might include a statement of why they have adopted that approach, some of the materials they have developed as a result, what types of work students have produced in response to their approach, and what colleagues and students have said in evaluations that has direct relevance (e.g., “This is the most unusual and creative lesson I have ever observed,” or “I talked so much in this class.”). Judiciously selected and coherent examples can go far in impressing readers without overwhelming them (and potentially causing them to abandon reading the whole document). In contrast, a simple collection of lesson plans is far less powerful in creating an image of the teacher and can be boring to read.

For purposes of professional development and reflection, it might also be important for teachers to include areas in which they want to grow professionally. Perhaps students or colleagues have noticed a particular weakness. Teachers can identify that area, reflect on ways to improve it, and then show changes in materials or methods of responding to students that demonstrate their direct response to the insights they have gained.

This section of the portfolio would grow and change as teachers progress in their careers. Including this type of information is crucial in situations where the portfolio is a required part of professional development; whether it is wise to include this type of information for hiring or retention decisions may depend on the teaching environment. Some administrators might interpret this information as a sign.

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**Sample Items for a Teacher Portfolio**

1. cover letter (perhaps reflecting on the purposes and organization of the portfolio)
2. updated résumé (briefly presenting all pertinent facts relevant to teaching background and qualifications), including lists of
   - conference presentations (including actual handouts from selected presentations)
   - published articles (along with copies of selected articles)
3. statement of your teaching philosophy, including discussions of
   - the theoretical underpinnings of your belief system and how your belief system affects decisions such as materials selection, teaching strategies, and classroom management
   - a description of what you actually do in the classroom, why doing things that benefit your students, and how you know when teaching strategies are working well
4. samples of your work, including
   - a videotaped class (including supporting documents)
   - syllabi (with an explanation of how you created them)
   - tests (with a discussion of how you do assessment and grading)
   - students’ work (with comments on their relationship to your teaching)
   - your feedback (including a statement of how you give feedback)
   - original materials (with an explanation of the purpose of these materials)
5. selected comments from evaluations or observations of your teaching (along with an explanation of how you interpret these evaluations), including
   - evaluations from students
   - observations by colleagues
   - observations or evaluations from supervisors
6. other items
   - letters of recommendation
   - thank-you letters from students or colleagues
   - awards or certificates
   - pictures of classroom activities
   - whatever else best represents your professional abilities and accomplishments
of weakness, whereas others would appreciate the qualities of reflection that have caused a particular teacher to improve over time. In all cases, documenting growth in the ability to think about one’s teaching and adapt to new circumstances would demonstrate professional development.

**Portfolio Uses**

**Professional Development**

At UHM, we have used teacher portfolios in a variety of ways, some more successfully than others. For example, graduate assistants in the English Language Institute (ELI) and the Hawai‘i English Language Program (HELP) have, at times, been required to create a reflective portfolio as part of their professional development as teachers. Although this requirement might be viewed as needless extra work, in actuality, graduate students have responded very well to the experience. For example, one teacher said, “I liked being able to reflect upon my teaching—writing it up in the portfolio was a reflection and a retrospective of what I had done. It has been really helpful ever since, because I have been able to show it to other people, and look back at what I did.” The creation of a portfolio helped another graduate student when it came time to be considered for a position in the ELI: The student’s portfolio was so impressive that a previously unsure feeling on the part of the person doing the hiring became a strongly positive one as a direct result of reading the portfolio.

**Evaluation**

Teacher portfolios can also be used for evaluation purposes. The HELP program recently introduced a teacher portfolio component to the evaluation process of its instructors.\(^1\) As part of this process, an ESL department committee assigned to evaluate full-time instructors annually, based on a variety of sources of information, including classroom observations, student evaluations, and teachers’ portfolios. Instructors discussed the potential content of their portfolios with faculty before submitting their portfolios to the evaluation committee. The evaluation committee found that the portfolios added an important dimension to the annual review because they intersected with student evaluations and administrators’ observations to reveal a deeper picture of instructors’ strengths as well as areas of recommended growth. However, some of the instructors saw the creation of a portfolio for evaluation purposes as an intrusive, time-consuming—perhaps even frightening—process. One of the problems may have been the relatively limited time frame within which the portfolio had to be produced. This could be alleviated by asking for smaller samples of work that, over time, could gradually be accumulated into a more comprehensive portfolio. Or perhaps portfolios would better serve teachers if they were encouraged as part of professional development, but not required for evaluation unless a teacher chose to submit a portfolio at the time of annual review. However, the need for administrators to see a richer picture of teaching may have to outweigh the discomfort of the teachers.

As a result of these mixed experiences, the role of teacher portfolios for evaluation purposes in the HELP program is currently under review. However, because we found that teacher portfolios richly illustrated teaching, departmental advertisements for full-time instructors in the HELP program now include phrases such as “documented evidence of teaching ability and curriculum development” in the statement of minimum qualifications. We are looking for actual samples of what a teacher has done, not merely years of experience in a certain kind of program or letters of recommendation. Teachers who have developed a portfolio are able to provide such documentation with little trouble.

**Conclusion**

A number of benefits and difficulties associated with using portfolios for professional development or evaluation have been presented. Teacher portfolios may be most successful when they are a voluntary part of professional development for graduate students and full-time teachers. However, they appear to be more problematic when they are required by administrators for evaluation purposes. Teacher portfolios may serve the
needs of administrators but be seen as an imposition on the part of teachers. Nevertheless, teachers who want to have more control over how they are viewed by those who evaluate them may want to do the work that is required in developing a portfolio. It is our conclusion that we should aim for both goals: Administrators should work with teachers to create portfolios for professional development and reflection, and, for purposes of evaluation, they should also require teachers to submit samples of work that illustrate their teaching ability. It does not seem to be a good idea, on the one hand, to require teachers to submit a portfolio for evaluation if they have not already been required to do so as part of their ongoing professional development. If, on the other hand, teachers have created a portfolio, it would be a shame for them not to use it to project the kind of professional image that seldom comes through in more traditional documents to achieve a stronger and more accurate evaluation. We should remember the most important factor of all, that teacher portfolios are in the hands of teachers who can use them to understand and present themselves as developing, changing, and growing TESOL professionals.

**Note**

1 Only the HELP program has full-time instructors who undergo a contract renewal process. The ELI is staffed entirely by graduate assistants, whereas the HELP program is staffed both by full-time instructors and graduate assistants.

**References**


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The Scholarly Writing Program (SWP) was developed as part of the Program in Linguistics at the University of Florida. The SWP curriculum was specifically designed to help international graduate students in the natural science and engineering fields acquire the academic writing skills necessary to fulfill their theses and dissertation requirements at the university.

In response to the increased enrollment of international students in the Masters of Business Administration (MBA) program at the university, the College of Business sought to implement a curriculum similar in purpose to that of the SWP—to help improve the language skills of its international students—but in the context of a business-related curriculum (McGarry & Cook, 1997).

To this end, the College of Business formed a partnership with the Program in Linguistics, whereby ESL instructors in the SWP and MBA faculty collaborated to develop a new course on Professional Writing for Business Administration (PWBA). The PWBA course is listed as an additional section of scholarly writing within the curriculum of the Program in Linguistics. It is taught by doctoral candidates in linguistics. Students pay university tuition and fees for the course and receive 3 hours of graduate credit, which they can apply to their MBA programs of study. As a member of the SWP faculty, I was part of the team that helped design the PWBA course. I present here my contributions to this design, including a discussion of the contextual, theoretical, and pedagogical issues involved.

**Background**

The impetus for the cooperative relationship between the College of Business and the SWP came from Steven DeKrey, assistant dean and director of the MBA program. DeKrey was motivated to recruit international students by trends in the international business community. Moreover, he hoped to foster a cooperative relationship between the university and international students that would benefit the university by bringing to the school a wide variety of multicultural perspectives on business and benefit the international students by offering them a quality graduate education.

A significant concern surfaced in the early stages of the matriculation of these actively recruited international MBA students. Many faculty members expected these students to be able to perform at academic levels nearly equivalent to those of U.S. graduate students. This was not a problem in terms of course content. Most of the international students arrived with a broad understanding of the major concepts of the core MBA curriculum (e.g., management, accounting, marketing, and finance). However, their ability to write reports and case studies and give oral presentations in English proved to be inadequate, which resulted in their inferior performance. Consequently, frustration arose among both the faculty and the international students, which, in turn, led to feelings of alienation on the part of the students.

**Theoretical Design**

To improve the performance of the international business students and ensure the success of the interdisciplinary partnership, the staff of the SWP adapted the curriculum it designed for natural science and engineering students in several ways. First, it designed the PWBA course to reflect content unique to the first-year MBA curriculum, including accounting, finance, operations, organizational behavior, and marketing. The course conformed to models of content-based ESL instruction, which synthesizes language learning with content in a chosen field, thereby enhancing both language ability and interest in the field (Johnson, 1993; Shih, 1986; Snow, 1991; Snow & Brinton, 1988).

For the PWBA course specifically, two
content-based models seemed to offer the most serviceable design: an adjunct model, after Snow and Brinton (1988), and an adaptation of a process model, discussed and critiqued by Long and Crookes (1992). By adjunct, Snow and Brinton are referring to students who are "enrolled concurrently in two linked courses—a language course and a content course" (p. 556). The ESL component of such a course enables students to learn important language skills using information specific to their chosen fields. Long and Crookes, following Breen (1984), define process as a focus on communication and learning styles within a particular content area. Using these models, we developed the PWBA curriculum to maximize the students’ hands-on experience with course content material.

To develop appropriate activities for the PWBA course, ESL instructors from the SWP needed to familiarize themselves with the core content areas of the MBA curriculum. The core MBA faculty offered the necessary training sessions and a list of recommended reading.

Second, the SWP staff designed the new course to address modes of development in writing and speaking unique to business presentations. Such presentations in the core MBA curriculum consist primarily of case studies and executive reports that require a certain level of familiarity with these different modes, including description, exposition, comparison and contrast, and persuasion. In a marketing class, for example, students may be assigned a product line. After performing a cost and marketing analysis, the students then would be required to report their findings orally and in writing using these organizational modes.

Third, the course was designed to emphasize multiple language skills deemed essential by the MBA faculty and administration for the successful completion of MBA courses: reading, writing, and speaking. To achieve proficiency in these skills, the curriculum was based on a process approach, whereby students move from a variety of idea-generating activities to activities using these skills, such as drafting, editing, redrafting, and presenting. Feedback throughout the process is crucial.

As a result of these design adaptations, a multiskill dimension was emphasized in the adjunct, content-based curriculum. The students analyzed written and oral information; composed, revised, and redrafted reports on this information; and presented their findings to their peers.

Pedagogical Design

In this section, I present individual classroom activities that I used in the course, evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of each unit, and offer suggestions for future activities.

Assignment 1: Pretest

Students wrote an impromptu essay on the following topic: What effect will the war in the Persian Gulf have on your country’s economy? They were allowed to write their essays using one of two different scenarios: that the war would be either short- or long-lived.

This assignment proved to be timely (coincidental with the start of the Persian Gulf War) and relevant to the course content. In addition to this event being significant to international business, the topic generated a good deal of student interest. Given the length (about one and one half pages) and organization of the essays, students appeared to be both knowledgeable about and attentive to the details and ramifications of the topic. One Japanese student’s remark is typical of the types of responses given on the pretest:

The United States can produce oil by itself, but Japan is different. Ninety-nine percent of [the] oil used in Japan is imported, especially from these Middle-east countries .... For Japan, the worst thing is that these countries [will] stop exporting oil. Even if they won’t stop exporting, the price of oil will drastically increase.

Assignment 2: Corporate Profile

This assignment required three class sessions. In the first session, I introduced students to the most common organizational modes of writing, after which they learned techniques in self- and peer editing. Students then chose a corporation to research outside of class. In the second session, students wrote a one- or two-page essay describing their corporation based on their research. Some of the topics they discussed in their corporate profiles included:

- the company’s share of the market (intra- and interstatal and global)
- goals the company has established
- the student’s position within the company structure (real or imagined)

I used the third class session as well as individual conference times to help students with the editing process. Working in pairs during class, students evaluated their partner’s essay using the following set of peer-review questions (Schenck, 1988):

1. What did you like most about the profile?
2. What is its purpose?
3. How is each paragraph related to that purpose?
4. In what ways is the writing appropriate for the audience?
5. In what places is the writing unclear?
6. Where should the writer add more detail or eliminate repetition?

Following this peer-review exercise, the students rewrote their papers as an out-of-class assignment.

Adjunct Assignment

As an adjunct activity to the first two assignments, the students prepared a 5-minute oral presentation on their corporations, which they gave in the following class session.

I decided beforehand, however, that I would not use class time discussing strategies for effective presentations until I had had the opportunity to observe and comment on the students’ individual presentation styles. Because the PWBA course resulted, in part, from faculty frustration regarding the students’ lack of adequate presentation skills, it was necessary to classify the tactics they were using. After I had assessed these tactics, I prepared a unit on successful presentation strategies.

Presentation Strategies

I assessed the students’ presentations in two ways. First, I commented on general tendencies of all or most of the students in the form of in-class feedback, including comments on voice quality and clarity, pronunciation, organization and coherence, brevity, and the use of visual aids. Second, I gave each student written and oral feedback during individual conferences. The written portion of the evaluation consisted of individualized responses to the issues above.

Through the process of writing, presenting, and receiving evaluation, the students indicated that they had enhanced their language skills in several ways. First, they had become less fearful of speaking a nonnative language in front of an audience. Second,
they had learned to prioritize their ideas, highlighting the most important points first. Third, they had gained important insight into aspects of speaking, such as the use of prosodies, stress, and stylistics, which enabled their listeners to better understand their presentations. Fourth, they had benefited from the numerous opportunities to practice speaking publicly.

Subsequent events also served as topics for this exercise, including the Middle East peace process between the Israelis, Palestinians, and their neighbors; the emergence of China as a major economic and political world player; the devaluation of the Mexican currency and Mexico's ensuing economic problems; and the war in Bosnia.

In summary, the corporate profile assignment offered many advantages. Not only did the students gain valuable writing practice, they also established a context upon which future assignments could be based. The students were required to apply information they had learned in class to their chosen corporation.

Assignment 3: A Bold Venture

The second major writing/presentation component of the course involved a case study. In this assignment, which required four class sessions, I asked the students to analyze and offer solutions to a particular problem. For instance, I asked them to make a case for the following scenario:

Your company (the company described in your profile) has decided to open a branch office in Nairobi, Kenya. This is a bold first venture in the Third World for your company. The president of the company has asked you to research the venture and write a report explaining the ramifications of the venture.

To give the students background information to help them prepare their responses, I first had them read an article from the *World Press Review* (Cruickshank, 1991) that discussed the future role of Third World countries in major world economies. I also gave them additional information about Kenya, including data on population growth, gross national product, foreign debt, major imports and exports, topography, communication, and transportation. I then divided the students into groups of three to brainstorm the problem and work on solutions. The students researched the topic further outside of class, using readily available library resources.

In the second class session, the students wrote a preliminary draft of their response. In the third session, they worked in pairs to peer edit their papers, and then individually prepared their presentations. Finally, in the fourth session, they presented information about their topics to the class.

During the course of this assignment, I scheduled out-of-class time for individual conference sessions. Students also spent out-of-class time writing their second drafts.

Overall, this assignment was greeted with much enthusiasm. The students were eager to discover more information about Kenya and were open-minded about making a case for or against the venture until after they had carefully weighed the data. However, in future semesters, I will provide additional information from journals and magazines the students often read, such as *Harvard Business Review, Fortune, Money*, and the *Wall Street Journal*. These materials are written in a familiar style using business jargon.

Assignment 4: Case Scenarios

When I first presented this exercise, the Persian Gulf War was in a period of transition. Every major world power had a stake in the outcome. Critics speculated on the outcome and how it might affect the configuration of the Middle East. Pivotal world events provided the ideal impetus for a compare-and-contrast assignment.

First, I divided the class into four groups of four students each. I assigned each group to represent one of four major world powers: the United States, the former Soviet Union, the European Community, and Japan. Then I proposed the following problem:

What will the impact of the Persian Gulf War be on the economic climate of your country (or entity)? Consider a best-, worst-, and likely case scenario, and compare and contrast them.

The students brainstormed the problem using a variety of resources, including articles from magazines and newspapers such as *Time, Newsweek, the Wall Street Journal,* and the *New York Times*. They continued their research out of class and drafted a report to give to the government they represented. I distributed and discussed guidelines regarding the writing of reports to help them prepare. Each group then prepared a short presentation outlining their research. The students peer reviewed their written drafts, revised them, and delivered a class presentation based on their final drafts, which they turned in.

Students responded enthusiastically to this assignment. For the writing component, each student individually wrote a portion of their group report. They then combined their portions and each group edited their entire report. The presentations were executed in much the same way. Each member of the group spoke on a particular aspect of the problem (e.g., political, economic), with one student summarizing the group’s conclusions.

As in the initial pretest exercise, current world events shaped the development of this activity. Subsequent events also served as topics for this exercise, including the Middle East peace process between the Israelis, Palestinians, and their neighbors; the emergence of China as a major economic and political world player; the devaluation of the Mexican currency and Mexico’s ensuing economic problems; and the war in Bosnia.

Assignment 5: To Sign or Not To Sign

As in the previous assignment, I again divided the class into groups, but this time according to their MBA concentrations: finance, accounting, marketing, or operations. Next, I posed the following problem:

You are an administrator of Sony USA, with responsibilities in either finance, accounting, marketing, or operations. The CEO, on the recommendation of your group, has just announced that singer-superstar Michael Jackson has been signed to a multimillion-dollar contract. The Chairman of the parent corporation, Sony Ltd., is not pleased with the decision, given Mr. Jackson’s problems with charges of alleged child abuse. He calls you to Tokyo to justify your position.

I distributed articles from the *New York Times* detailing the contract between Sony and Jackson and accusations of child molestation against Jackson. The groups brainstormed the problem using information...
from this article and combining it with their knowledge of their subfields.

For homework, each group prepared a one-page written report and a 5-minute oral report which they would give to the chairman of Sony (played by me). They also were asked to speculate on potential questions the chairman might ask them following their report.

In the next class session, students presented their reports to me and responded to a series of questions. These questions were direct and my demeanor confrontational.

When the students responded to my questions, it was obvious they had done their homework. They were able to cite data from their MBA concentrations, which militated in favor of the venture between Sony and Jackson. Moreover, they handled the direct and often confrontational questions with aplomb and a high degree of professionalism.

The additional advantage to this assignment was that it forced the students to think quickly on their feet. They were required to answer questions they could not predict. Furthermore, the questioner was in an adversarial role and a position to determine the students’ future with the corporation. Therefore, students experienced some anxiety, not completely unlike that which they might experience in a typical business context in which middle- and upper-management decisions must be justified to superiors.

Assignment 6: The Final Report

This final course assignment combined the various styles of writing into a single writing task. It consisted of a year-end report to the board of directors of the student’s corporation, summarizing the year’s performance, comparing that year’s performance with that of the previous year, and providing recommendations for the next fiscal year. Following the initial draft, the students reviewed their colleagues’ work and met with the instructor for further input. They then composed and submitted a second draft.

The results of this assignment indicated that the students had made significant progress throughout the course. Their work displayed a high level of organization. Their recommendations offered for the next fiscal year were based on actual data gathered from a combination of their own experience with the company and extensive research they had conducted throughout the semester. Several students even contacted corporate officials to obtain the necessary data to write a credible report.

Although a 10-minute oral presentation discussing the company’s performance and offering recommendations for the next fiscal year had been scheduled, it had to be canceled due to insufficient class time. (Instructors interested in this activity would want to make time for the presentations. This would give students a final opportunity to analyze the corporations they had been researching over the course of the semester as well as another opportunity to enhance their presentation skills.)

Conclusion

Was the class itself successful? To answer this question, I distributed an evaluation tool and tabulated the results. The instrument, adapted from the one used in the English Language Institute, asked three questions:

1. What activities in the class were most helpful to you in learning English?
2. Do you see any ways in which this course could be improved in the future?
3. Do you have any other comments?

The students rated the combination of language skills they learned the most positive aspect of the course. They also appreciated the familiarity of content. In response to the first question, “What activities in this class were most helpful to you in learning English?”, students listed giving presentations; participating in peer reviews; linking the three language elements; conducting research for special topics, especially company research, business ethics, and impacts of the Persian Gulf War; discussing assignments in individual conferences; and speaking English in front of audiences.

Suggested improvements included increasing in-class discussion, using more familiar business-related materials, and videotaping presentations for review. Other student comments suggested that there be increased opportunities to meet privately with teachers, that teachers encourage all students to speak in class, and that teachers increase the number of in-class activities.

The PWBA course is but one design that offers a means by which MBA students can approach the task of language learning within the familiar confines of their chosen vocations and interests. Adjunct, content-based models, such as the one presented above, are valuable to both academic departments, which seek to incorporate their international students, and to international students who endeavor to be successful in the classroom.

References


Author

Richard G. McGarry is assistant professor of ESL, director of the Appalachian English Language Institute, and director of the TESL program at Appalachian State University in Boone, North Carolina, in the United States. His research interests include discourse analysis, applied grammar, and second language pedagogy.
This issue’s tips underscore the importance of guiding language learners to the confident independence they need to become true language users. By engaging in “Language Learning and Interactive Research” with Denise McCarthy, CALL students discover that interactive research can build language skills and cultural awareness. Kate Allen and Annie Marquez help their students record new vocabulary on “Word Calendars.” “Using Games to Get Feedback,” Ingrid Wisniewska demonstrates how teachers and students can learn more about each other using interactive games. The “One Hundred Words” of Lynne Davis’s exercise challenge her students to hone their reading, writing, and editing skills.

Language Learning and Interactive Research

Denise McCarthy

Because students in computer-assisted language learning (CALL) classes often spend more time interacting with computers than with people, creating activities that interest these English learners and actively involve them in the learning process can be particularly challenging to instructors. Recently, however, students in my CALL class at the Mission Campus of City College of San Francisco embarked upon a research project that offered them rich language and computer literacy learning opportunities and involved them in activities that were meaningful and relevant, both to themselves and to other ESL students and instructors on campus.

The Class

Students in CALL classes at Mission Campus are Spanish-speaking immigrants whose ESL skill levels range from low intermediate to high intermediate. Students take CALL classes to advance their language skills and develop basic computer literacy skills. These classes are noncredit, open-enrollment courses that meet 2 hours each day over the course of a semester.

The Project

By the middle of the semester, students in my CALL class had learned most basic and some advanced computer operations in Microsoft Word. They were ready for a new challenge that would integrate their new computer skills with meaningful language learning activities.

At the same time, ESL instructors on campus were engaged in ongoing discussions regarding the often sporadic attendance patterns of their ESL students. I decided to present their concern to my CALL class to see if the students would be interested in exploring the issue of student absences as a learning activity. The class took up the issue enthusiastically and organized to conduct research among their fellow ESL students to discover possible reasons for the poor attendance.

Like good researchers, the students defined their research topic, proposed hypotheses, designed their research plan, developed research instruments, conducted the research, and analyzed the data. Finally, they reported their research findings to the ESL classes and instructors involved in the study.

The Process

Step 1: Defining the Research Topic

To define their research topic, the class began by generating questions about the attendance practices of ESL students on campus: Was there, in fact, an attendance problem? If so, how extensive was the problem?
What were the main reasons ESL students did not attend classes on a regular basis? The class then decided to conduct a survey among ESL students on campus to find the answers to these questions.

**Step 2: Designing the Research Plan**

The next step involved designing the research plan and creating the research instruments. First, the class hypothesized that there were many reasons to explain why ESL students were not attending their language classes regularly. They brainstormed 24 possible reasons, which they condensed into a list of 17 main reasons for absenteeism. Using the table function in Microsoft Word, they then created a survey instrument for collecting data (see the sample questionnaire, right). Finally, they defined their survey sample: They would survey students at each ESL level (Spanish Literacy and ESL Levels 1-8), looking at both attendance patterns and reasons for absences over a 2-week period.

**Step 3: Planning the Research Process**

After the students had created their own survey instruments on the computer, the class planned the survey process. They agreed to conduct personal interviews rather than have students fill out the questionnaire on their own. This was to ensure that language and literacy issues would not interfere with their data collection. They decided to interview students enrolled in the Spanish literacy class in Spanish because these students were still in the process of developing native language literacy skills before beginning their English studies. The class also decided to interview students in the beginning-level ESL classes (Levels 1 and 2) in Spanish as well because these students were not yet proficient enough to understand the survey questions in English. Finally, the class agreed to interview the intermediate- and advanced-level ESL students (Levels 3-8) in English so that both they themselves and the students being surveyed could benefit from the language practice. After rehearsing their introductions and questions, the class began collecting data.

**Step 4: Conducting the Research**

Over the course of a week, the students visited designated ESL classes to conduct their survey. They took turns introducing the research plan and organizing the ESL students into groups to be interviewed. A total of 119 students were included in the sample.

**Step 5: Organizing the Data**

The students collected data on the number of days interviewees attended their ESL classes over a 2-week period and the reason(s) for any absences during that time. They then tabulated these numbers and used Microsoft Word to create two bar graphs to present the data: one depicting the number of student absences and one depicting the reasons for the absences (see the graphs on page 34).

**Step 6: Analyzing the Data**

After the graphs were completed, students examined the results to form conclusions from the data. They reviewed their hypotheses and analyzed their findings, first in discussions and then in writing.

**Step 7: Presenting the Findings**

The researchers decided to write letters to the ESL classes and instructors involved in the study, outlining their findings. In the process, they had to decide what language to use to present the information so that their readers would understand it. Those who presented their findings to the Spanish literacy...
class, for example, created their graphs and letters in Spanish appropriate for literacy students. Those who presented their findings to the beginning-level ESL classes used English basic enough for these learners to understand. And, finally, those who presented their findings to the intermediate- and advanced-level ESL classes used more advanced English.

**Springboard Activities**

Teachers can use student projects such as this as springboards for other learning activities. For instance, instructors involved in the survey process at Mission Campus photocopied the research materials my CALL class had produced and used them with their ESL classes to develop literacy skills (Spanish and English), oral language skills (discussion of results), and metacognitive awareness (e.g., What role does regular class attendance play in the learning process?). They also used the results of the research to prompt discussion about critical pedagogical issues such as cultural adjustment and managing life as a new immigrant.

**Conclusion**

During the 3-week period in which my CALL class conducted its research, the students developed their language and computer literacy skills in the context of negotiating meaning in a purposeful and relevant project. That it was a rich and fulfilling learning experience for these students is evident in statements they wrote in the letters to their fellow students: “We are very proud of the results we got which were satisfactory.” “We were happy to find that most students find their classes interesting.” “We had fun practicing our English and also our computer skills.”

**Author**

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Word Calendars

Kate Allen and Annie Marquez

Many language learners like to count the number of words they know because an increasing vocabulary gives them a sense of progress and language learning success. By encouraging students to keep a daily word calendar, teachers can tap into their students’ need for success by helping them keep a visible count of their growing vocabulary. At the same time, teachers can use word calendars to learn more about their students’ interests, as reflected by the choice of words in their calendars, and thus respond to their students in more relevant ways. We have found word calendars to be very helpful to our ESL students, whose ages range from 16-60 and whose English language levels range from low intermediate to advanced.

Procedure

Preparing the Calendar

At the beginning of each month of the semester, students prepare a word calendar. Students may use notebook paper to make their calendars, but we found that larger paper often works better, allowing more space in which to write. We also used preprinted calendar sheets, which were commercially available at the time. Have the students draw a grid of 6 rows by 7 columns, or 42 boxes. Each column represents a different day of the week and each row a different week of the month. The students write their name and the name of the month at the top of the calendar, the day of the week at the top of each column, and the corresponding date in the appropriate box under each column. The empty boxes in the sixth row can be used for teacher comments.

Filling in the Calendar

Every day, including weekends and holidays, the students write down a new English word they have learned that day. The words may be ones they discovered through everyday activities such as reading, listening to the radio, or watching a movie or TV program. Beneath each new word in the calendar, students also write down its meaning in their native language. Finally, they give an example phrase or sentence showing how to use the new word (see the calendar below and on p. 36).

Sample Student Word Calendar

Artwork created by Kumiko Sakaguchi for her word calendar project, YMCA, Kumamoto, Japan, 1995. Used with permission.
Using Calendars in Classroom Activities

Once a week, students exchange their word calendars with a partner. One partner looks over the week’s words and then quizzes the other partner on the words, asking questions like

- What does the word mean?
- Where did you find it?
- Can you give me an example of how to use this word?

Students score each other for each correct answer. Teachers may ask the students to review all the words for that week or just a few, depending on how much class time they want to spend on the exercise.

At the end of each month, students display their calendars on a bulletin board so other students have a chance to see everyone’s choice of words. This gives students an excellent opportunity to learn from each other and further expand their vocabulary by copying down new words from other students’ calendars.

A variation on this sharing technique is to put students together into small groups. Each student gives their calendar to the person in the next seat. That person then chooses the word or expression they like the best from their classmate’s calendar, writing this word or phrase down on a separate piece of paper to keep before passing the calendar on to the next person. By the time the calendars have rotated around the entire group, each student will have collected a new list of words. The teacher may also want to select their favorite words and phrases, or those of their students, and copy them onto a poster to display on the bulletin board each month (see the sample poster on p. 37).

Extension Exercises

Using word calendars, students can learn as many as 31 new words each month. However, this certainly should not be the only way of increasing their vocabulary. Students can build on these words by changing them into different parts of speech. For this exercise, the students can prepare another grid listing seven different parts of speech across each column, for example noun (simple, gerund), verb (present, past, participle), adjective, and adverb. In each of these seven columns, students can write in words from their month’s calendar, changing each word into as many parts of speech as possible. Hence, the word sailor can become sailing, sailed, sails, and so on. Students learn word derivations in high school, but often tend to forget how to produce and use them. This exercise is one way to demonstrate how they can build on words they already know by employing strategies they previously learned.

Another suggestion for making use of the word calendars is to ask the students to write a short story at the end of each month using...
as many words as possible from their calendar. Again, teachers can display the stories on the bulletin board, along with the calendars.

For additional practice, we even asked our students to make word calendars over their long summer vacations as a way of reinforcing what they learned during the school year and as a way of encouraging them to keep practicing and expanding their English.

Authors

Kate Allen teaches applied linguistics and English at Kyushu Lutheran College, in Kumamoto, Japan.

Annie Marquez is founder and current president of the Kumamoto chapter of the Japan Association for Language Teaching (JALT) and teaches English at Kyushu Lutheran College, in Japan.
Using Games to Get Feedback

Ingrid Wisniewska

Getting feedback from students need not be such a harrowing experience. Using games to find out about students’ feelings and attitudes toward their language learning can be a good way of building group trust and airing possible problems. Games also can be used as a warner or as a group review to help you and your students evaluate their learning progress. Here are some well-known games that I have adapted to find out more about what students think.

Find Someone Who ...

Using this student-centered game, give each student a blank strip of paper on which to write what they like about learning English can adapt this game to their classes by asking questions such as

- What do you enjoy teaching most?
- What do you find most difficult to teach?
- What is the best/worst thing about teaching English?

Prove It!

The original version of this game can be found in Advanced Communication Games (Hadfield, 1987). In this game, give each student a strip of paper on which you have written a sentence about the class that may or may not be true. All the sentences should begin with the words everyone, no one, or most people (e.g., Almost everyone hates grammar.). I have adapted this game so that the sentences are about language learning activities, such as, “Everyone likes reading aloud.” Have the students walk around asking each other questions to prove that their statement about the class is either true or false. Afterwards, have them report their findings to the class, for instance, “Everyone in this group likes grammar except Johanna, who says she speaks more confidently if she forgets about the rules.”

When I speak English, I can pretend to be an extrovert.

(see above) Have them write one sentence only. When they have finished, collect the strips of paper, shuffle them, and redistribute them so that each student receives someone else’s paper. Have the students walk around asking each other questions to try to find the original author.

When each student finds their someone who, have them ask that person three further questions to get more details about why they like learning English. Then have the students return to their seats and write down what they found out. At the end of this activity, have each student report to the group what they think is the strangest, funniest, or most original reason for learning English.

Variations

Teachers can vary the questions they ask students, such as

- What do you find most difficult/interesting about learning English?
- What do you find most similar to/different from your own language?
- What do you enjoy/hate most about your English lessons?
- What do you find most/least useful in your English lessons?

Teacher Training Adaptation

To help evaluate student progress and encourage group discussion, teacher trainers can adapt this game to their classes by asking questions such as

- What do you enjoy teaching most?
- What do you find most difficult to teach?
- What is the best/worst thing about teaching English?

Variations

Topics for this game can focus on future lessons or homework (e.g., Everyone would like to do more exam practice., resulting in a kind of group planning session.

Teacher Training Adaptation

Topics for teacher trainees can focus on evaluating their textbooks (e.g., Most teachers think there is not enough grammar in the textbook.) or on their attitudes toward mistakes or testing.

What Are You Good At?

Working alone, have students write down five things they feel they are good at in English (e.g., I am good at spelling.) and five things they feel they are not very good at (e.g., I am not very good at pronunciation.). Then, in pairs, have the students ask each other questions to find out how many things they have in common from their lists. (They are not supposed to show each other their lists.) Afterwards, have each pair share with the group the things they are both good at or not very good at (e.g., I am terrible at dictations.). In addition, encourage them to share successful learning strategies with each other and with the group. This is a good way to develop student awareness of individual learning strategies, take the emphasis away from teacher input, and draw on the successful learning experience of the group.

Variations

Have students write down five things they are confused about/clear about in English

Other Resources for Classroom Games

I have found that these games generate a lot of useful discussion, the results of which are sometimes quite unexpected. They have certainly given me a lot of feedback about what my students think about my lessons.

Reference


Author

Ingrid Wisniewska has taught English and trained teachers in Britain, Japan, Poland, and the Czech Republic. She now lives in the United States, where she is a freelance teacher trainer and materials writer.

One Hundred Words

Lynne Davis

Recently, through some personal writing assignments requiring strict word limits, I discovered, to my surprise, how many extraneous words I use in my writing. I also discovered how much fun it is to weed out and throw away those words, choosing only what is important and relevant, and saying it in the most efficient way. I do not seem to come by this practice naturally, however. In fact, I only seem to do it when forced to out of necessity.

This personal experience led me to try a similar exercise with my students in an advanced ESL writing class. Their task was to read articles and summarize them as a first stage in the process of composing a research paper.

Setting the Parameters

In previous assignments, I had refused to give my students a word limit, even when they asked for one, explaining that their ideas and the material they used should determine how much they wrote, not some arbitrary quantitative requirement. Sometimes I gave them vague parameters on length, such as a half to a full page, for example, or a minimum of 200 words. But somehow, by doing this, I felt I was encouraging hot air, banality, and meaningless phrases.

This time, however, I set a new challenge for my students. I limited their summaries to no more than 100 words. By imposing this strict word limit, I got my writers to focus on several important skills. First, they were forced to study the articles carefully and choose only the main ideas. Then they were forced, by spatial limitations, to summarize these ideas succinctly. As it turned out, coming up with the words was not the most difficult part of the assignment; choosing which words to keep and which ones to eliminate was.

Encouraging Self-Editing

An exercise in which students are required to write something within a given word range helps them focus on their grammar and, interestingly, encourages the useful habit of self-editing. My students, for example, willingly tried combining sentences when they realized they could shave off a few words that way. As they became experienced with this technique, they began asking for some of my own examples of editing, such as how to eliminate redundancy, extra adjectives, and weak phrases. Some students even tried reducing clauses to phrases.

The students understood the meaning of the phrase main points, and were able to grasp the main points of the reading. They were also pleased to discover that they already had most of what they needed; it was simply a matter of sculpting away the excess.

Defining the Criteria

Defining the criteria of the assignment at the outset—beginning with the 100-word requirement—also makes the grading and feedback processes much easier for everyone to understand. Because the students know what is wanted, they are more likely to succeed at achieving it.

Building a Layering Process

I stopped here, but this technique could also be built into a layering process. Ask students to
1. write a 100-word summary
2. check their papers for length, accuracy, and clarity
3. add another 50 words for the supporting details

This layering process can help students learn to distinguish between main ideas and important details. It can also help them understand that the length of a summary is somewhat arbitrary, depending on how much detail the writer chooses to include.

Author

Lynne Davis teaches in the intensive English program at the Center for English as a Second Language at Southern Illinois University at Carbondale, in the United States. She also writes book reviews for TESOL Matters.
I decided to use Instant Grammar Lessons with two groups of my students, who were happy to assist me in evaluating this very exciting book. The first group was a class of six French women for whom the perfecting of English was a leisurely pastime and a preparation for spending holidays in Anglophone countries. The second group consisted of people from a nearby village: two primary teachers, a wine grower, the proprietor of a chambre d’hôte, the receptionist from a famous wine cave, and several retired people. The students in this group ranged in age from 15 to 50 and their education level from baccalaureate to elementary plus.

The book’s five sections contain 32 units of photocopiable lessons covering essential grammar at the intermediate and postintermediate levels. The material, I am sure, would be useful to use in conjunction with the Cambridge First Certificate or similar courses.

Structures include past, present, and future forms; modals; and reported speech. Word and discourse grammar are particularly targeted. The book advocates an interactive method and approach; to this end, the author has included economical and intelligent Lesson Notes, an indispensable guide for those unfamiliar with interactive methods. The format and print size make the book attractive and easy to read.

Although Battersby acknowledges that his activities may be used conventionally as written tasks, he enthusiastically recommends using an interactive approach to encourage active listening, evaluating, and dialoguing, while emphasizing the importance of extra written practice to provide the student with a clear and permanent record of what has been learned. The sections on Sequencing, Matching, Rephrasing, and Completion, and a particularly intriguing section on Dictation, provide ample scope for realizing the author’s goals of interactive, learner-centered, and certainly lively classroom practice.

The reaction of the older students was very interesting. Some admitted that they enjoyed playing school as they knew it and where they were successful—teacher as boss, marks out of 20, someone being top of the class, and formal dictations, which are traditionally fundamental to language teaching in France. However, the focus of the dictations is different in this book. Students do not write down everything the teacher says, only examples of target word partnerships like make and do, prepositional phrases, and phrasal verbs. The ability to recognize such word partnerships in oral communication is an important language skill, and listeners need to be as aware of form as of content.

The students were keenly interested in the methodology involved and in the author’s stated aim that it should be explained to them. Demystifying the teacher? Unheard of in their day!

The students were impressed to discover a book that supported their English teacher’s unusual pedagogy. They found the Sequencing and Rephrasing sections very satisfying in their logical progression and were more than usually eager to do the follow-up work. They were also delighted to find an error in the answer to Section 1.3, Exercise 2, number 15.

The village group was challenged by having different levels of ability, mostly depending on how recently they had been in school. The younger students, however, learned as much from this experience of working with the older students as they did from the work itself. The students with less language education began to realize that it was not always necessary to understand the meaning of every single word, especially with the help of sign.
Are you looking for something different for your intermediate- to high-level students in speaking/listening and conversation classes? Fluent American English offers an original approach to the topic of conversational style. The three-video series relies heavily on Deborah Tannen’s research on conversational styles across cultures. Steinbach’s approach is twofold: (a) to offer insight into conversational style and (b) to help students build functional skills.

Part 1 introduces students to the idea of different conversational styles, specifically those typified by high consideration or politeness (e.g., Japanese), high involvement (e.g., Arabic), and a combination of the two (e.g., U.S. English). Tangentially, Steinbach also includes the conversational styles of other varieties of English.

Video is an ideal medium for presenting conversational styles because students can see as well as hear the differences. Steinbach uses popular sports metaphors to illustrate and compare concepts. Bowling, for example, with its structured rules for turn-taking, illustrates the high politeness style. Each player has a clearly defined turn while the others watch. In contrast, rugby is the metaphor for the high involvement style because the play is continuous and unpredictable and involves all players at all times. U.S. English conversational style is represented by basketball, where one finds turn-taking (politeness) and full-team interaction (involvement) in a carefully crafted balance.

Part 1 clearly illustrates stylistic differences by showing two groups of international students engaged in typical conversation. It also identifies some of the characteristics of the basketball, or U.S. English, approach to conversation. These include features such as turn-taking, body language, pacing, and volume. This video could be shown in its entirety at the beginning of a course. Although it is paced at a speed appropriate for ESL students, it could also be used with teachers and teacher trainees, as long as these groups are informed at the outset of the measured pace. The video could also be used in workshops on cultural sensitivity and diversity training. For classroom use, it would be wise to show this video a second time, about half way through the course, to review the material and to remind students of the goals they are working toward.

Parts 2A and 2B present students with 12 steps to learning the conversational style of U.S. English. Step 4, for example, works with body language, and Step 5 with backchanneling. These videos are designed for classroom, home, or lab use, but because conversation involves interaction with other people, the classroom setting is most appropriate. Teachers can show one or possibly two segments each week.

These videos can be shown in international settings as well. Currently, the National Police Academy training unit in Tokyo uses them in their intermediate-advanced communications skills class. Instructors at universities in Bogotá and Cairo are also using them in teacher education programs.

Two booklets, one for Part 1 and another for Parts 2A and 2B, contain tape scripts, vocabulary, and suggested learning activities. Part 1 also comes with an Inventory Package that includes a set of student questionnaires on students’ personal conversational styles.

This series is extremely well done technically. Steinbach narrates most of the videos herself. However, these tapes consist of more than a talking head. Major points are clearly highlighted with appropriate sports footage and actual conversations among real people. When the three conversational styles are shown, unrehearsed, their differences are quite dramatic and very real. A few amusing graphics enhance the presentation. Students and teachers alike will find the Fluent American English Video Series a refreshing change of pace and a real aid in grasping the complexities of conversation in U.S. English.

Author

Dorothy S. Messerschmitt is currently a professor in and the coordinator of the MA TESL program at the University of San Francisco, in California, in the United States. She is also a former president of both New Jersey TESOL and CATESOL, the California affiliate of TESOL.

Order Information

These videos come in standard VHS format, but are also available in PAL and SECAM formats for an additional fee. For further information or to place an order, call The Seabright Group at 530-759-0684 or visit http://www.TheSeabrightGroup.com.
Mark Powell, a teacher trainer in business English and author of *Business Matters* (1996), has written *Presenting in English* especially for intermediate- and high-intermediate-level business students. The language activities in this book draw on business communications research focusing on the techniques of successful speakers. Nonetheless, this book is full of useful information that will help any public speaker.

The seven sections of the book cover a wide range of presentation skills, including structuring the talk, using visual aids, and handling questions. However, the primary focus is on delivering the talk, using a variety of voice and rhetorical techniques.

The audiotape, available in British and U.S. English versions, poses a slight dilemma for antipodeans. Personally, I would have preferred a single international version with a range of accents.

The style of the book mirrors the author’s formula for effective presentations: It is snappy, uncluttered, direct, and positive. The A4 format (i.e., workbook size) makes reading easy, with plum-colored shading used to highlight headings, definitions, and key points. Visuals, such as cartoons that introduce each section, are used sparingly, but clearly and to good effect. The progression of skills is logical, with clear instructions and language reinforcement activities that are varied and innovative.

My favorite section, Section 7 (pp. 103-119), explores an often overlooked aspect of presentations: the question-and-answer period. The exercises in this section include a number of reordering activities based on typical but simplified patterns as well as an exploration of language functions common to rapid Q&A exchanges. The presentation exercises on pages 107, 109, and 111 worked particularly well with my high-level classes. Another effective Q&A activity, discussed earlier in Section 4.7 (p. 56), focuses on the use of “softeners” to show polite uncertainty when responding to a question or to rephrase a negative remark in a more positive, diplomatic way.

The book also effectively incorporates into some of the exercises familiar quotations from famous speeches to demonstrate how various rhetorical techniques have helped ensure their lasting impact and ease of recall.

The medium of persuasive language is intended to maximize audience impact. It is the language of business and sales—slick and slightly stylized, but effective in conveying the message. As such, *Presenting in English* targets business students. However, there are a number of activities that offer useful techniques for any speaker, especially techniques on chunking (pp. 36-38), pacing (p. 40), softening (pp. 56-57), and repetition (pp. 58-60).

*Presenting in English* is the kind of book that busy teachers can appreciate because of its practical applications and direct approach. The material is easy to access, well laid out, clear in intent, and sure in execution. Some of the 72 units are quite short and quickly covered; others may take several hours to develop with a class. There are a number of activities so effective in reinforcing important speaking skills that teachers will want to use them over and over again. Try them, they work.

**Reference**


**Author**

*Donna Millen has taught ESL/EFL for 20 years in Canada, Latin America, and Australia, specializing in the areas of English for academic purposes and English for health professionals.*
Naoko, a young woman who has studied EFL for several years in Japan, is typical of many language institute students who want to continue their education at English-speaking universities: Her choices of where to study are limited because she has only scored a 450 on the TOEFL test. She has taken the test three times already and is registered to take it again, but she has lost her confidence. Although she has a solid background in grammar, the structure and written expression section of the test confuse her. She cannot remember enough of the conversations in the listening section to answer the questions adequately, and she never has enough time to finish the reading section.

In the *Longman Introductory Course for the TOEFL Test*, Phillips addresses the concerns of students like Naoko by emphasizing that the book is intended for students whose TOEFL scores are in the 380-480 range. Skill exercises therefore simulate test conditions but not test difficulty. The language level of the text is slightly easier than that of the actual test.

Each section of the book (listening comprehension, structure and written expression, and reading comprehension) follows the same format: a diagnostic pretest, skill exercises, and a posttest. The book also has a chapter on the Test of Written English, two practice tests, appendices for further study, and scoring charts to map student progress. Audiotapes and a user’s guide, containing tape scripts, explanations, an answer key, and teaching suggestions, are available separately or with the book as a set.

Teachers can adapt Phillips’s traditional skills approach by using the diagnostic pretests to assess student needs. For example, my lower-level students improved their listening skills by recognizing key words in answers to help them remember conversations. My intermediate-level students sharpened their TOEFL grammar skills by learning how to identify clause connectors and how to trace pronoun references. Both levels profited from the reading comprehension skill exercises on skimming for main ideas and stated details.

The simplified corpus of the lessons and exercises helped my students develop TOEFL skills and, more important, build confidence. As I continue to teach with the book, I find myself wishing that it contained more skill exercises. I think students like mine would benefit from the additional guided practice.

The *Longman Introductory Course* offers a significant advancement in TOEFL preparatory materials because it addresses an audience that is usually sidelined: low intermediate-level students who need structured guidance to succeed on the exam. Through diligent study and application, these students will be able to improve their TOEFL scores markedly.

In fact, after studying Phillips’s text, Naoko gained confidence in her abilities to listen selectively, decode grammar, and scan reading passages. She improved her TOEFL score to a 515, which enabled her to enroll at an English-speaking university, where she is now studying international business.

**Note**

1. Naoko is a pseudonym.

**Author**

Mike Mutschelknaus is the ESL coordinator at Saint Mary’s University in Winona, Minnesota, in the United States. He has also taught EFL in Chad and Russia.

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**An Invitation to Reviewers**

We welcome your reviews of recently published ESOL textbooks, curriculum guides, computer programs, and videos.

Send your submissions to:

Mary Lee Field
Reviews Editor
TESOL Journal
147 W. Kenilworth Ave.
Royal Oak, MI 48067 USA
Editor’s note: In the Summer 1998 issue, Christine Uber Grosse asked TESOL Journal readers to suggest methods of teaching pronunciation, particularly to advanced-level ESL students who have difficulty with certain sounds or sound clusters. Two readers responded.

Dear Ms. Uber Grosse and TJ Readers:

What can be done for advanced-level students who have problems with intelligibility? Such students need an approach different from what they are used to. Their speech probably has fossilized because they have been practicing sounds using their first language rhythm. It is hard to make a target sound clearly when the timing is wrong. As Brown (1990) wrote, “[R]hythm in English is not just something extra, added to the basic sequence of consonants and vowels, it is the guide to the structure of information in the spoken message.” That is why a number of educators, such as myself, have written pronunciation textbooks systematically emphasizing rhythm.

Which methods are most effective? The resources listed as suggested reading (see the sidebar below) offer guidance on new ways of thinking about pronunciation. Also, readers interested in becoming involved in discussions regarding pronunciation and teaching strategies are encouraged to become TESOL members and join the Speech/Pronunciation Interest Section.

Reference


Judy B. Gilbert
Author and consultant
Orinda, CA USA

Dear Ms. Uber Grosse and TJ Readers:

In response to the question about effective methods of dealing with pronunciation problems at the highest levels, I can share the following comments and advice. As someone who has taught advanced ESL students for many years, it has been my experience that pronunciation issues often receive short shrift in advanced classes because the focus of the classes tends to be on writing. Teachers may resort to repair strategies when communication goes awry and may concentrate on reduction or stress and intonation changes when teaching grammatical structures, such as past modals or adjective clauses. Few, however, seem to deal with pronunciation in any systematic fashion. That said, the instructors that I consulted on this issue all agreed on certain basic principles concerning the teaching of pronunciation and were willing to share some strategies that seem to have been effective.

Suggested Reading

For Background


For the Classroom


My colleagues emphasized that teachers of students at all levels must instruct them on the mechanics of producing sounds in isolation. No matter how fluent students may be, they are often unaware of how open their mouths should be or where their tongues should be placed or how much air is required to produce a particular sound. For example, teachers whose students are struggling with differentiating an /f/ sound from a /v/ sound might ask the student which sound produces more air.

Once the students are able to produce a sound, they are asked to practice it in groups of words or phrases. The two /th/ sounds—the voiceless /θ/ as in thing, and the voiced /ð/ as in then—can be practiced in phrases like, “I think that ....” something students clearly need to know how to say in any case.

Backward build-up is a technique many of my colleagues favor. They ask the students to start with a sound they can make in a particular word or position in a word, but cannot make in other environments. One instructor told me about a student who did not seem to be able to say the word work (perhaps, the instructor said, because of the /w/ sound at the beginning, in conjunction with the /θ/ sound in the middle), but was able to produce the word her perfectly. After a few attempts, the student was able to carry the sound from one word to the other. The student also learned to return to the word her whenever the /θ/ sound presented problems again.

Finally, it must be said that students who have access to a language lab and other learning resources have a definite advantage in learning pronunciation. Students in the American Language Program at Columbia University in New York, where I taught for many years, had the use of an excellent media center as well as ready access to the pronunciation materials written by the former director of the center, Linda Lane. Her book, Focus on Pronunciation (1993), includes many content-based activities with very focused pronunciation exercises.

Reference

Judith E. Gilbert
ESL Resource Room Coordinator
Academy of Future Technologies (IS-162)
Bronx, NY USA

Dear TJ Readers:
Most teachers endorse learner-centered practices, such as asking students to participate in cooperative groups or pairs. My question is whether such practices violate the cultural preferences of ESL/EFL students. If so, should teachers adjust their methodologies to accommodate these preferences, or should they encourage students to adapt to their pedagogical practices?

We want your questions as well as your responses. Do you have any questions that you would like to ask your fellow TESOL professionals? Ask the TJ is an open forum for giving and getting advice from professionals around the world.

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Guidelines for Contributors

Editorial Policies

TESOL Journal, a refereed publication of teaching and classroom research, encourages you to submit previously unpublished articles that discuss teaching English as a second, foreign, or additional language to learners of all ages, in any setting. TESOL Journal invites manuscripts on a wide range of topics, including, but not limited to, current ESOL methodology, curriculum materials and design, teacher development, literacy, bilingual education, and classroom inquiry and research.

TESOL Journal prefers a reader-friendly writing style and asks that you make the content of your article accessible to classroom teachers. Contributors should locate their inquiry and research within a broad theoretical framework or relate it to a set of theoretical principles, but articles should retain a practical focus.

General Information

Submission Categories

TESOL Journal welcomes submissions in the following categories.

Perspectives: A Perspective submission should present your views on ESOL-related sociopolitical and professional concerns around the world. You should present a cogent argument for your views, but limit the number of references you cite. Perspectives should not exceed 800-1,000 words, though the editor reserves the right to adjust the length as warranted. Submit two copies of your Perspective to the editor of TESOL Journal, Stephen J. Stoynoff, at the address listed at the end of these guidelines.

Feature Articles: A feature article should be no more than 2,000-4,500 words (including references and sidebars). To facilitate the blind review process, submit three copies of your article, with all references to your identity deleted. Please put your name, affiliation, telephone and fax numbers, mailing and e-mail addresses on a cover sheet. Do not desktop your manuscript, and do not use running heads. Submit your manuscript to the editor of TESOL Journal, Stephen J. Stoynoff, at the address listed at the end of these guidelines.

Tips From the Classroom: Tips From the Classroom briefly recount successful ESOL techniques, activities, or methods in such a way that they could be adapted by teachers in diverse programs or teaching situations. Submissions should not be recounted in the manner of a diary, but rather as a set of guidelines for successful implementation. Tips might include the following information: appropriate levels, objectives, approximate class time and preparation time required, necessary materials, implementation procedure, and any caveats or alternatives to the recommended procedure. Submissions should be no longer than 300-800 words. Send two copies of your submission to Bridget Gersten, Editor, Tips from the Classroom, TESOL Journal, Box 4A, 3527 Sharonwood Road, Laurel, MD 20724 USA.

Reviews: Reviews will evaluate articles, books, and other materials. They should focus on the merits/demerits of the material (without commentary). Reviews should not exceed 500-750 words. In the body of the review, include a brief summary of the material (without commentary); an evaluation of the material; the merits/demerits of the material; a discussion of any wider ESOL pedagogical issues in the material; possibly a discussion relating the material to ESOL methodology, theory, or current trends; an explanation as to why the teacher/reader would want to use the material (or not). Send two copies of your review to Lee Field, Reviews Editor, TESOL Journal, 147 W. Kenilworth Avenue, Royal Oak, MI 48067 USA.

Special-Topic Issues: Special-Topic Issues are solicited through a call for papers. Topics are approved by the TESOL Journal Editorial Advisory Board 2 years prior to publication. Those wishing to suggest topics or make known their availability as guest editors should contact the editor of TESOL Journal. Special-Topic Issues will generally contain commissioned articles as well as those solicited through a call for papers.

General Submission Guidelines

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2. Discusses and reflects upon research findings that are applicable to classrooms in which there are ESL, EFL, or EAL learners.

3. Encourages practitioners to engage in their own reflective practice and classroom research on connections between oral and written language during language and content learning.

4. Reflects sound scholarship, with appropriate, judiciously selected references to other authors and works.

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Helen Dunford, ESL Teacher (Los Angeles)

"...I know many teachers and students who are desperate for this kind of publication; a source of current and genuinely usable slang expressions presented in clear contexts with humorous and memorable illustrations. STREET SPEAK could save hours of preparation for vocabulary lessons. Instead of having to search through newspapers and magazines for up-to-date examples of slang and idiomatic expressions, you can simply turn to the appropriate lesson and teach words and phrases associated with such topics as parties, school, health, dating, etc. One interesting feature is the way each piece of language is accompanied by an example of how it sounds in Real Speak ("If you don't get a grip..." becomes "If ya don't ged a grip..."). This section has easy-to-understand explanations of why certain phenomena frequently occur in American pronunciation; for instance, how and why 'want to' almost invariably becomes 'wanna.'

The authors have been imaginative in the choice and variety of practice activities. Each of the 10 lessons begins with clever illustrations designed to help students guess the meaning of the dozen or so new expressions. My students 'had a blast' guessing what some of the dating vocabulary meant!

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