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Printing:
Pantagraph Printing
Bloomington, IL USA

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Published quarterly in
Spring, Summer, Autumn, and Winter by Teachers
of English to Speakers of Other Languages, Inc., 700 South Washington Street, Suite 200, Alexandria, Virginia 22314-4287 USA. Telephone 703-836-0774. Fax 703-836-7864. E-mail tesol@tesol.edu. Advertising arranged by Suzanne Levine at the above address.
Comments on Graham Crookes’s “On the Relationship Between Second and Foreign Language Teachers and Research”

A Reader Reacts ...

Kathleen Slattery

This article is written in response to “On the Relationship Between Second and Foreign Language Teachers and Research,” by Graham Crookes (1998), in which he described the often strained relationship between university academics who publish research and nonuniversity teachers who are expected to apply it. Questions he asked included: “Are teaching and research mutually exclusive?” and “How can research in second language acquisition become more relevant and accessible to practicing teachers?” His article concluded with a call for dialogue to improve the relationship between research and teaching in ESOL.

As an action researcher, one of my goals is to communicate the results of my research by publishing them. At times, this task has seemed virtually impossible because I am a full-time, public, adult school teacher. The time I take to devise and carry out research, reduce the data, apply statistics, read pertinent literature, create graphs and charts, and write and prepare a manuscript for publication is all my own. I have used vacation time and taken extra leave to do research, which has been entirely self-funded. It has been difficult to maintain a course load of 30-35 student-contact hours (hrs) a week while doing research. For these reasons, I can understand why there is a lack of action research papers being published by adult school or K-12 teachers in journals such as the TESOL Quarterly (TQ). In reviewing eight recent issues of TQ, I found that nearly all the articles were published by university-level teachers or PhD candidates. It is a journal written for teachers, but usually not by those of us teaching in K-12 and adult education.

Nunan (1989) proposes that teachers can use action research to “investigate their own classrooms” (p. 3) and bridge the “insurmountable gap between theory and practice” (p. 2). There is a great deal of emphasis on the use of classroom research to benefit the teacher’s understanding of his or her own classroom and to bring about change in the teacher’s own practices. This seems like a desirable outcome. It diverges, though, from standard definitions of research. Many years ago, when I was a young graduate student in marine biology, my professor told us that research that did not communicate what was learned through publication was not research. Although an individual teacher’s ideas that result from action research may be shared among colleagues at the same school, they contribute little to the field of education if not communicated to a wider audience through publication. In addition, just as “practicing teachers have come to distrust and reject theoretical research” (Nunan, 1989, p. 2), so, too, theoretical education researchers may distrust and reject action research that is not of publishable quality.

In response to criticisms within our field that action research “might result in more effective practice, but is it really research?” (p. 366), Nunan (1997) concluded that teacher research should be evaluated against the same standards that are applied to any other kind of research. As a full-time teacher doing unpaid action research on the side, I can affirm that it is very difficult to meet the standards established by university-level researchers. I agree with Nunan, however, that these standards are necessary for action research to be credible. Practicing K-12 and adult education teachers must find a way to do publishable action research because we know best the challenges of and the students, teachers, and administrators in our teaching contexts. Those of us who wish to teach and do research at these levels need to be paid to read the research of paid, academic researchers. We also need to be paid to do research and publish it ourselves. Allwright (1997) suggested that the dissatisfaction teachers experience when they try to integrate research into their teaching may lead to a demand for institutional (or collegial) support that will produce more satisfactory investigations. He concluded that “there is a good chance that something worthwhile will happen, whether it eventually follows the academic model or finds a way of forging a
new professional model of practitioner research” (p. 370).

One possible model for full-time adult education or K-12 teachers would be to allow them to retain their full-time status for purposes of salary, schedule, tenure, seniority, retirement, and benefits, but to reduce their teaching loads so they would have time to carry out research. This arrangement is not very different from what exists in resource specialist positions, in which full-time teachers spend part of their time developing materials and curriculum for other teachers. A teacher/researcher or research specialist could teach 20 hrs a week and research 20 hrs a week for the duration of a research project. Given that most K-12 and adult school budgets do not allow for research, teachers would have to secure funds through grant proposals. Funding sources likely to sponsor adult and K-12 action research include private foundations, the U.S. Department of Education, and state departments of education (Stoynoff & Camacho, 1998). In order to receive grants, teachers also would have to demonstrate their ability to carry out research. Many MATESOL programs currently have a strong research component, but teachers without research training would have to acquire such skills. Some teachers come to teaching with previous research experience and the necessary skills to engage in research, but others do not. The latter may acquire these skills by taking graduate-level research courses offered by colleges of education.

Action research emerged as a new theoretical research model in the 1980s. Since then, it has gained acceptance but lacks the structures that will allow K-12 and adult education teachers to implement it. The changes we could help bring about in the K-12 and adult education systems with our own action research are much needed.

References


The Author Responds ...

Graham Crookes

I think Kathleen Slattery makes some entirely reasonable comments in her response to my piece, and I do not think I can do more than second most of them, perhaps adding a footnote or rider to one or two. We are both in agreement that the workload (not to mention other aspects of working conditions) of most teachers makes it very difficult for them, unaided, to access research or conduct research in general. I doubt if this will alter, unless the conception of the role and responsibilities of teachers changes. Those involved in such a change include administrators, unions, the public, teachers themselves, and even students.

Of course, it is stressed in many places that the primary audience for the consumption of action or teacher research is comprised of teachers themselves as well as any immediate collaborators or colleagues. That is another reason why much action research never gets published. It is not necessary for research to be published for its effects to be felt at the site to which it most applies.

It is not really my place to say what the contributors to and audience of the TQ are or should be, but the institution of the TESOL Journal was, as I recall, a response to the feeling that TESOL needed a medium more explicitly directed toward the classroom teacher. Once this publication was established, the TQ was even more free than before to address a more academic audience and function as an entity closer to a regular academic journal. Accordingly, I do not think it is surprising that TQ does not generally publish what we might think of as typical action research reports authored by K-12 teachers. Some of what it publishes, however, is the work of people who were teachers, at times in their careers when they are able and required, in an academic mode, to investigate questions, some of which may, indeed, have arisen from their classrooms.

In conclusion, like the author, I look forward to any moves, particularly those involving general administrative shifts and reconceptualizations of the work of teachers, that would enable teachers to do more, or any, sustained and detailed investigation of their own practices and programs. And shifts in teacher preparation curricula that include a greater emphasis on acquiring research techniques, particularly if they have an action or problem-solving orientation in which research practices are presented as integral with pedagogical practices, are matters that I, like Slattery, would greatly welcome.
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Regardless of the type of educational program in which second language (L2) learners are enrolled (early-exit bilingual, late-exit bilingual, sheltered ESL, dual language), many of them eventually will transition, or exit, from the program and receive instruction in mainstream classes. This is surely good news because everyone associated with the education of English language learners (ELLs)—the students themselves, their parents, teachers, administrators, policy makers, interested community members—want them to develop English skills and move into mainstream classes, where they will be integrated with native-born students and where they can participate in the regular curriculum. In this article, we discuss the approach of educators in one school district, U-46, in Elgin, Illinois, in the United States, to developing criteria for making decisions about transitioning ELLs, and we present strategies for facilitating the transitioning process once the decision has been made. While different contexts call for particular approaches, we believe that the experiences of educators in District U-46 and the suggestions we make here can be useful in many different contexts.

Our interest in the transitioning of ELLs into mainstream classes at the secondary level stems from nearly three decades of combined experience as ESL educators and investigators in this area. Much of the research described in this article draws particularly on our involvement with District U-46.

Terminology

The terms English language learners and second language learners are used here to refer to students who are native speakers of languages other than English and who are not yet fully proficient in both conversational and academic English. Mainstream classes are those intended for native speakers of English and other students who are fully proficient in English. The term transitioning is used here to refer to the process of gradually transferring ELLs from a special program (i.e., the ESL classroom) to primarily English language educational experiences (i.e., mainstream classrooms). The term exit refers to the point at which students are officially declared ready to move out of the special program and spend their entire school day in mainstream classrooms.

Challenges and Goals of Transitioning

Despite universal support for transitioning ELLs, the transition process poses numerous challenges for educators and students alike. Some students leave special classes too soon and are not able to keep up in mainstream classes (Faltis & Arias, 1993). Other students stay in special classes too long, become bored and discouraged, and tune out of school (Mace-Matlock, Alexander-Kasparik, & Queen, 1998). The criteria for determining when students should make the transition into the mainstream are not always designed and implemented with enough attention to the complex factors that influence students’ degree of readiness for the transition. When ELLs are exited from special programs, many of them are placed in unchallenging mainstream classes (e.g., remedial classes, special education classes, low-track classes) (García, 1999; Harklau, 1994a, 1994b). Being in these courses may actually be worse for these students than staying in ESL and bilingual classes, where they generally have access to teachers who are prepared to work with them. They are likely to be forever locked into another kind of special program that leads to nowhere after high school, and they may not know enough about the system to recognize that this is happening to them (Harklau, 1994a).

Another difficulty is that secondary schools are not designed to provide much personal attention to any students (Goodlad, 1984; McLaughlin & Talbert, 1990; Sizer, 1985). The fragmented structures, large student-to-teacher ratios, short class periods, minimal communication across institutional boundaries, and generally teacher-centered instruction often work against ELLs, who need more time and attention from teachers than native English speakers (Lucas, 1993). All of these factors can be obstacles to the successful movement of ELLs into mainstream classes.

Our goal as educators is to facilitate a smooth transition for immigrant students into challenging classes that will prepare them for higher education or for desirable careers. But what criteria should be used to determine
when ELLs are ready to learn academic, cognitively demanding content in the mainstream? Whose job is it to decide? What practices and procedures should be in place to ensure that the transition meets student needs and does not make impossible demands on teachers? Whereas we have access to a wealth of research and practical knowledge about second language acquisition (SLA), instructional strategies, assessment of ELLs, and social and cultural factors in educating language minority students, we know much less about the successful transitioning of ELLs into mainstream classrooms.

Ensuring that the transition occurs smoothly takes careful thought and planning. In this article, we propose a framework that can be used as a planning guide for developing and implementing the transition process at the local level. Part 1 of the framework includes criteria that practitioners can consider in deciding whether to transition students. Part 2 lists strategies that will promote student success before, during, and after the transition process.

Part 1: Developing Transitioning Criteria

There are no clearly agreed upon criteria for determining when students are ready to be mainstreamed. Test scores measure certain skills and abilities, but what a particular test measures may or may not be a relevant indicator of success in mainstream courses. The perceptions of ESL and bilingual teachers capture some aspects of students’ development and abilities, but their subjectivity and possible lack of familiarity with mainstream course content, expectations, and teaching styles may limit the accuracy of their opinions. A simple criterion that some districts use is the length of time an ELL participates in a special program—the 3-years-and-they’re-out approach (or, in California after the passage of Proposition 227, 1-year-and-they’re-out). But L2 learning research shows that immigrant and refugee children come from many different types of backgrounds, and preparing them academically to compete with their monolingual English-speaking peers may take up to 7 years (Collier & Thomas, 1997; Cummins, 1989; Ramirez, Yuen, & Ramey, 1991).

Educators need a better sense of appropriate criteria for determining when ELLs are ready to be transitioned into mainstream classes. Without such criteria in place, there is no defensible basis for making decisions about the appropriate time to place a student in mainstream classes.

Bilingual and ESL teachers in District U-46 have been studying and planning transitioning and exit procedures for several years. The geographically large, suburban district, which encompasses seven townships in three counties, serves more than 4,300 ELLs, most of whom are Mexican immigrants, in a transitional bilingual education program. The experience of this district and the criteria identified by the staff serve as the basis for the transitioning criteria proposed in the framework that follows. A group of bilingual and mainstream teachers initially met in the summer of 1989 and developed a list of criteria that, based on their experiences, they believed predicted the success of bilingual students who were transitioned into mainstream classes. Since then, the criteria for determining student readiness for transitioning and the procedures to measure these criteria have continued to be developed, revised, and refined.

A federal Title VII grant permitted us to study the transitioning process over a 3-year period, from 1992 to 1995. During this period, teams of elementary bilingual and monolingual English-speaking mainstream teachers met weekly, collaborating on ways to transition bilingual students and integrate them with monolingual English-speaking students in mainstream classes in the intermediate grades. As part of the grant evaluation activities, bilingual staff members interviewed receiving mainstream teachers of more than 300 bilingual students 1 year after the students were exited. The data collected showed that students of the participating elementary-teacher teams who had spent time in integrated learning activities in mainstream classrooms with monolingual English-speaking children before they were officially exited fared significantly better in the mainstream than students of bilingual teachers who had not participated (OER Associates, 1995). Other factors that predicted students’ success in the mainstream were literacy and achievement levels in the first language (L1), literacy and achievement in English, cultural identity and learning strategies, and family support. From these findings, the bilingual and ESL teachers at the middle and high schools developed their own list of criteria that they could use to determine ELLs’ readiness for transitioning. These criteria are presented in the table for Part 1 of the framework (see p. 8) and each factor is discussed below. As the table and the following discussion indicate, one area of consensus among those involved in this process was that multiple criteria and multiple perspectives (e.g., those of teachers, counselors, parents, students) must be used to determine when a student should make the transition.

Before discussing the criteria, it is important to clarify that teachers are not expected to gather detailed information about all of these criteria for each student. Given the demands placed on teachers, that would be impossible. This list simply represents criteria that can shed light on a student’s readiness for the transition into the mainstream. As such, the list serves as both a tool and a reminder to educators in school districts, helping to ensure that some attention is given to these aspects of students’ learning and performance as they make decisions about program procedures as well as about individual students.

The teachers in District U-46 developed a checklist of exit criteria and test score information that stays in a student’s cumulative folder and is consulted at various times. At the secondary level, most transition and exit decisions are made in the early spring, when courses are selected for the following year, and sometimes at the beginning of the spring semester. ESL teachers, bilingual teachers, and math teachers make recommendations for students’ courses in the following year. At the middle school, the counselor and/or assistant principal use the teacher recommendations and the checklist to make transitioning decisions. A transition meeting is held to discuss the students who will be transitioning or exiting from the program the following year. The high school bilingual program uses a similar process for course selections. In addition, the high schools have an ESL/bilingual division chairperson and bilingual counselors with training in SLA, cross-cultural issues, and bilingual assessment procedures. They get to know the

Whereas we have access to a wealth of research and practical knowledge about second language acquisition (SLA), instructional strategies, assessment of ELLs, and social and cultural factors in educating language minority students, we know much less about the successful transitioning of ELLs into mainstream classrooms.

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students and meet with them periodically to discuss their progress.

**Factor 1: Number of Years of Education and Type of Education Before Coming to the United States**

Teachers in Elgin noted that students who had been to school regularly before immigrating to the United States entered the mainstream sooner than their peers who had had long interruptions in their schooling. Research supports the teachers’ perceptions. Collier (1989) argues that the optimal time to immigrate to a new country is at approximately 11 or 12 years of age because children who have 6 or 7 years of schooling in their L1 (in the home country) have a strong cognitive base on which a new language can be added. In addition, the type of education that students had previously—for example, whether in a college preparatory school or a vocational school—can also help U.S. teachers determine the strength of their educational preparation. School district personnel get information about students’ previous educational experiences in interviews conducted when students enroll and through report cards and transcripts that students bring with them from their native countries. In interviews, care is taken to put students and their families at ease.

**Factor 2: L1 Reading and Writing Skills**

Closely associated with the number of years and type of previous education that immigrant students have is their level of literacy skills in their native language. It was observed that students who have strong literacy skills in their L1, academic knowledge, and learning strategies tend to fare better through the transition to mainstream classes and beyond. Again, research and theory support this observation. Cummins (1981) has described a common underlying proficiency that supports the transfer of cognitive and academic language skills from the L1 to an L2. Students who have more opportunity to develop literacy in their native language per-

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**A Framework for Facilitating the Transition of English Language Learners Into the Mainstream in Secondary Schools**

**Part 1: Establishing Transitioning Criteria**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria to Consider</th>
<th>Indicators and Tools for Documenting the Criteria</th>
<th>Suggestions and Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Number of years of education and type of education before coming to the U.S.</td>
<td>(a) Student background interview upon enrollment (b) Report cards and transcripts, when available</td>
<td>Through an interpreter, if necessary, make sure students are comfortable with examiner as they are asked to talk about themselves and their educational background.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Reading and writing skills in the first language</td>
<td>(a) Portfolios and other forms of authentic assessment (b) Informal reading inventories (c) Observations of student reading (useful even if examiner does not know the language well) (d) Writing samples</td>
<td>Literacy assessments should be ongoing throughout enrollment in bilingual/ESL program.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Reading and writing skills in English</td>
<td>(a) Portfolios and other forms of authentic assessment (b) Informal reading inventories (c) Observations of student reading (d) Writing samples (e) ESL class level</td>
<td>• National TESOL standards can be used as a guide to develop assessment instruments and procedures.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Success in mainstream classes while enrolled in bilingual/ESL classes</td>
<td>(a) Teacher questionnaire and/or interview (b) Reviewing student cumulative file and report card (c) Student interview</td>
<td>If students are placed in mainstream classrooms concurrently with bilingual/ESL enrollment, mainstream teachers should be advised of their limited English proficient (LEP) status.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Standardized achievement test scores</td>
<td>(a) Instruments adopted by district and/or state (b) Standardized tests in the native language</td>
<td>State education agencies can identify standardized instruments for some languages.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. English language proficiency test scores</td>
<td>Instruments adopted by district and/or state</td>
<td>Reading and writing measures as well as oral proficiency should be included.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Academic achievement</td>
<td>(a) Current math placement (b) Grade point average (c) Student report card (d) Teacher questionnaire</td>
<td>Measures should articulate with measures for mainstream students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Self concept and personal inclinations toward transitioning</td>
<td>(a) Student interview (b) Teachers’ observations</td>
<td>Interviewers should be adults with whom the students are comfortable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Counselor and/or teacher judgment</td>
<td>(a) Teacher questionnaire (b) Group transition team meetings</td>
<td>Teacher and counselor observations of students’ learning strategies, attendance, and behavior should be included.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Family support</td>
<td>(a) Student background interview (b) Counselor and/or teacher judgment</td>
<td>Parents should be involved in, informed of, and approve of transitioning decisions.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Part 2: Strategies for Facilitating the Transition

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Placement</th>
<th>Strategies</th>
<th>Time Frame</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Place transitioning students in classes with teachers who are supportive, sensitive, knowledgeable, and experienced with culturally diverse ELLs.</td>
<td>During the transition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Place transitioning students in designated classes with other transitioning students or with students from their language groups so they can support each other. This will also allow counselors and bilingual and ESL teachers to follow up on them.</td>
<td>During the transition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Place transitioning students in smaller classes so they can get more personal attention.</td>
<td>During the transition</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Professional Development</th>
<th>Strategies</th>
<th>Time Frame</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Provide professional development for all teachers in second language acquisition and development, cross-cultural issues and communication, and sheltered ESL instruction.</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Encourage ESL and bilingual teachers to visit mainstream classes to learn more about the content, expectations, and instructional approaches.</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Encourage mainstream teachers to visit ESL and bilingual classes to learn more about the content, expectations, and instructional approaches in those classes and to learn about the students before they are transitioned.</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher Communication and Collaboration</th>
<th>Strategies</th>
<th>Time Frame</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Encourage, facilitate, and participate in interdisciplinary planning and teaching among mainstream, bilingual, and ESL teachers through (a) joint staff development, (b) joint meetings on issues of mutual concern, (c) team teaching with planning time, and (d) joint planning of extracurricular activities.</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Establish mechanisms for maintaining regular communication between mainstream, bilingual, and ESL teachers and counselors so that the latter can monitor student progress and provide assistance to students and teachers as needed.</td>
<td>During and after the transition</td>
</tr>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Support Services</th>
<th>Strategies</th>
<th>Time Frame</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Establish personal connections between students and adults to develop mentors and provide foundation for support that students will need in the transition.</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Offer as much extra intensive support as possible through, for example, (a) Saturday academies, (b) after-school tutoring, (c) an extra period during the day, (d) bilingual and ESL study halls or resource centers where students can go for extra help and native language support, and (e) summer school courses.</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
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<td>11.</td>
<td>Train language minority students in mainstream classes as peer tutors so that they can support newly transitioned ELLs.</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
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<td>12.</td>
<td>Ensure that transitioning students have access to counselors knowledgeable about the transition process.</td>
<td>During and after the transition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>Encourage mainstream teachers to visit bilingual and ESL classes to talk to the students about what to expect in mainstream classes.</td>
<td>Before the transition</td>
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<th>Curriculum</th>
<th>Strategies</th>
<th>Time Frame</th>
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<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>Offer cognitively demanding, required general education classes in formats that allow ELLs to be successful (e.g., bilingual [native language] content courses, sheltered ESL courses, or transitional courses with designated mainstream teachers trained in ESL methodology).</td>
<td>Before the transition</td>
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<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>Design the curriculum to allow students to transition gradually. For example: (a) Allow students to move from native language content classes (e.g., bilingual math) to sheltered content classes (e.g., ESL biology) to regular content classes; (b) Offer content in bilingual/ESL courses specifically designed to teach concepts students will be expected to know in mainstream classes (e.g., events in U.S. history, how the government works, key authors in British and U.S. literature); and (c) Offer transitional classes reflecting mainstream content, structures, and processes.</td>
<td>Before and during the transition</td>
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<th>Instruction</th>
<th>Strategies</th>
<th>Time Frame</th>
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<td>16.</td>
<td>In order to better prepare students to succeed in mainstream classes, ensure that the bilingual and ESL classes emphasize reading and writing skills development and that bilingual and ESL teachers hold high expectations of ELLs.</td>
<td>Before the transition</td>
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<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>Encourage mainstream teachers to use cooperative learning and other student interaction strategies so that students can work and learn together.</td>
<td>After the transition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>Ensure that instruction in content classes is sheltered and that explicit language instruction and support continue for transitioning students in mainstream classes.</td>
<td>After the transition</td>
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<th>Staffing</th>
<th>Strategies</th>
<th>Time Frame</th>
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<tr>
<td>19.</td>
<td>When possible, provide bilingual/bicultural instructional assistants in mainstream classes with transitioning students.</td>
<td>During the transition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.</td>
<td>Make increased efforts to hire language minority teachers as mainstream teachers in all content areas.</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
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form better academically in English (Cummins, 1984; Hakuta, 1987). To ascertain students’ L1 literacy skills, teachers examine portfolios of student work, conduct informal inventories of students’ reading skills, observe students reading, and examine writing samples. Ongoing literacy assessments are needed to capture progress.

**Factor 3: Reading and Writing Skills in English**

Students in mainstream classrooms are asked to read academically demanding texts and perform various writing tasks independently. Therefore, they must have sufficiently strong reading and writing skills in English to succeed. Students’ ESL class level (e.g., beginning, intermediate, or advanced) indicates information about their literacy skills. Assessments of English reading and writing abilities should be consistent with those used in mainstream classes. The international organization for Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) has developed standards for assessing L1 literacy skills that can be used by school districts.

**Factor 4: Success in Mainstream Classes While Enrolled in Bilingual/ESL Classes**

In District U-46, secondary bilingual and ESL students often take one or two art, vocational, physical education, or other elective courses while enrolled in bilingual and ESL classes. In these elective classes, the students have opportunities to use their English in mainstream academic contexts. Success in these less cognitively demanding courses helps build scaffolds for success in the more demanding courses after transition. Evaluating students’ success in such mainstream classes provides valuable insights into their potential for success in other mainstream classes. Such evaluations can be conducted through teacher questionnaires, interviews, report cards, and student interviews.

**Factor 5: Standardized Achievement Test Scores**

The secondary teachers involved in developing the criteria in District U-46 strongly believed that scores on tests should not be the sole criterion for transitioning, especially scores on standardized tests in English. It is questionable whether academic achievement can be accurately measured when the students taking a timed test cannot understand the nuances of the questions in their L2. To address this problem, some standardized tests are given in students’ native languages. However, these scores must be weighed according to the level of academic proficiency students have in their native languages. Those who have had little schooling in their native language cannot be expected to perform well on such tests. Thus, standardized achievement tests are not given too much weight in decision making (see Durán, 1989), although they are one of many criteria considered in transitioning students in Elgin.

**Factor 6: English Language Proficiency Test Scores**

As with academic knowledge and cognitive skills, knowledge of academic English is difficult to measure through a timed test. However, students’ performance on English language proficiency tests—those that assess oral as well as written proficiency—is used as one indicator of fluency in written English. In Illinois, state rules and regulations require that language proficiency tests be given annually but do not prescribe particular tests or scores as determiners for the ELLs’ readiness to exit. In District U-46, the Illinois Measure of Annual Growth in English (IMAGE) and the oral and reading/writing components of the Language Assessment Scale are the two standardized English language proficiency tests used to monitor English fluency and literacy progress at the secondary level.

**Factor 7: Academic Achievement**

Several indicators of students’ academic achievement are used to support decisions about transitioning ELLs. Achievement in academic subject areas is one such indicator. The U-46 secondary bilingual program offers several different levels of math courses, some in Spanish as well as some in a sheltered English format. The teachers agreed that the level of math that students are enrolled in and how well students perform in math are potential indicators of how they will perform in mainstream classrooms. The teachers also supported the use of the students’ grade point averages (GPAs) to help with the exit decision. Obviously, students who complete tasks, turn in assignments, and attend school regularly get better grades than those who do not. The students with the stronger GPAs may be ready to exit sooner than test scores might indicate. Other indicators of academic achievement are student report cards and teachers’ judgments about students’ achievements.

**Factor 8: Self-Concept and Personal Inclinations Toward Transitioning**

The learners’ opinions of their own readiness to transition are considered among the transitioning criteria. Some students seem anxious to get out of special classes and tackle mainstream coursework. Others tend to be shy and fear entering more culturally diverse mainstream classrooms. At Elgin High School, bilingual/ESL students are sometimes given passes by the bilingual counselor to visit a specific class for a week or two during a study hall period, and then the teacher and student decide if the placement is appropriate. When interviewing students about their self-perceptions, it is important that they are comfortable with the person interviewing them so that they will respond honestly rather than saying what they think the interviewer wants them to say.

**Factor 9: Counselor and/or Teacher Judgment**

Counselors and teachers who know students best have important information from observations and interactions with students. Bilingual and ESL teachers have opportunities to observe student learning and behavior over a long period of time. In District U-46, bilingual counselors meet periodically with each bilingual/ESL student and help the student select courses for the following year. The counselors have a unique opportunity to identify learning patterns, talk with mainstream and bilingual/ESL teachers, monitor student records, and converse with the students on a one-to-one basis. Teachers’ and counselors’ judgments of their students’ readiness to move from special programs into the mainstream are an integral component of the criteria for decisions about transitioning. One way to determine teachers’ and counselors’ perceptions is to have them fill out brief ques-
Family support was also identified by teachers in U-46 as a factor that may be used to indicate transitioning readiness. ELLs whose parents have high levels of education may be ready for mainstream coursework even though test scores and other factors might not indicate readiness. These students will have active parent support when they encounter difficulties. Students without this type of family support may need more time in the nurturing specialized program and closer monitoring when exited.

As with the other criteria discussed here, family support should never be the sole criterion for determining whether to transition an ELL into mainstream classes. With regard to judgments about family support, special care must be taken not to base perceptions on stereotypes of the ways different groups view education or on misunderstandings of the ways in which parents show their support. Economically disadvantaged parents who work several jobs may not have time to participate in school activities, and parents who speak little or no English and are not highly educated may feel uncomfortable in the school. These parents may, nevertheless, value education highly and be willing to do whatever they can to support their children’s education. Parents from some cultures may not realize that they are expected to become directly involved in school because, in their cultures, it is the role of the school to make all decisions about their children’s education. Therefore, although family support is an important criterion, it is one that should not be used without sensitivity to cultural and socioeconomic factors.

The criteria listed in the table for Part 1 represent the factors that educators in Elgin have determined can shed light on whether it is appropriate for an ELL to begin the process of transitioning into mainstream classes in secondary schools. School districts can incorporate these criteria into the development of local procedures to determine the readiness of ELLs for transition and/or exit into the mainstream program at the secondary school level. However, which criteria will be most appropriate and useful will vary depending on the cultural and educational backgrounds of the L2 learners. We encourage the formation of planning teams comprised of mainstream, bilingual, and ESL teachers; program directors; school administrators; and counselors to select criteria, instruments, and measures, guided by district and school philosophies, goals, and resources.

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Educators need a better sense of appropriate criteria for determining when ELLs are ready to be transitioned into mainstream classes. Without such criteria in place, there is no defensible basis for making decisions about the appropriate time to place a student in mainstream classes.

**Strategies for Facilitating the Transition**

The director of bilingual education in School District U-46 has pointed out that, unfortunately, transitioning is often seen as a one-time exit from a special program rather than a gradual process. He adds that, in some schools, the perception of transitioning is typically, “We healed them, they’re cured, they’re out” (personal communication, November 26, 1997). The framework presented here is based on our conviction that the transition from specialized programs to the mainstream should be a gradual process rather than a passage based on rigid criteria. Gradual mainstreaming, which allows students to take fewer ESL/bilingual classes and more mainstream classes over a period of time rather than moving abruptly into the mainstream, can help soften the blow of the change. Ongoing support for ELLs in mainstream classes through strategies such as tutoring, bilingual and bicultural instruction from classroom assistants, and mentoring can also help them meet these challenges (Shannon, 1990).

Whereas Part 1 of our framework presents criteria for deciding whether a student is ready to be transitioned, Part 2 presents strategies that can facilitate the transition once the decision has been made. These strategies are presented in the table for Part 2 (see p. 9). They are organized according to the educational domain they impact, specifically the domains of student placement, professional development, teacher communication and collaboration, student support services, curriculum, instruction, and staffing. Because the timeframe for implementing the strategies can be critical to their success, we indicate when they should be applied. Some strategies should be applied in an ongoing way regardless of student transitioning; others should be applied only while students are in the transition process; some are relevant before or after the process of transition; and some should be applied before, during, and/or after the transition process.

These strategies are derived from our own experience, from observations and conversations with others, and from a synthesis of the literature on transitional processes for immigrant students in secondary schools (Lucas, 1997). Many of these strategies have been applied successfully in Elgin. For example, a student in the transitioning process may be taking geometry in his or her native language with a bilingual teacher, U.S. history in a sheltered ESL format with a mainstream teacher, and an advanced ESL class with an ESL teacher (Strategies 14 and 15). Bilingual counselors also try to place transitioning students in classes taught by teachers who are experienced working with ELLs (Strategy 1) and to assign two or more transitioning students to the same mainstream class so they can support each other (Strategy 2). Sheltered ESL instruction has been an ongoing staff development focus for all teachers (Strategy 4), and language minority teachers have been recruited and hired as mainstream teachers (Strategy 20).

While many of these strategies have been implemented in Elgin, we present them here, not so much as a description of what has
been done, but as suggestions for what school districts can do. As with the criteria presented earlier, the extent to which a school district can carry out the strategies will depend on a variety of factors, including the number of ELLs, backgrounds and training of personnel, and financial and human resources available.

Of course, considering multiple criteria and implementing these strategies poses a challenge. All teachers, including bilingual and ESL teachers, carry full teaching loads and take on many other responsibilities. By designating someone, such as a bilingual/ESL coordinator or a bilingual/ESL counselor, to keep track of the various facets of the transition process and to monitor student progress, ELLs can be assured of a coordinated and articulated process leading to a successful transition into the mainstream.

**Conclusion**

We have suggested a systematic way to identify criteria to initiate the transitioning process for ELLs, determine when and how students should be mainstreamed, design appropriate curricula to support ELLs through the transition, and develop purposeful strategies to ensure successful pathways into the mainstream. Because of the diversity among ELLs in educational backgrounds, academic development, and literacy levels, we suggest that districts use multiple criteria for determining when to mainstream students. However, deciding how to weigh the criteria and which ones to use requires serious thought and planning. Just as there is no one-size-fits-all approach to instruction for ELLs, there is no one-size-fits-all set of transitioning criteria that will be effective for all school districts. These decisions must be made locally, matching students’ academic, cultural, and social needs with district goals and resources.

We recommend that transitioning students be carefully placed in classes where they are most likely to succeed and where they can be monitored afterwards. Bilingual, ESL, and mainstream teachers need to communicate regularly with counselors and colleagues outside their specialties, discussing progress and difficulties and providing support services as needed for students in the transition process. Furthermore, all teachers and administrators need to learn more about the education of immigrants and ELLs. Most ELLs can develop academic English skills strong enough to participate fully in the academic curriculum. These successful transitions are most likely to occur when all teachers, administrators, and ancillary personnel increase their knowledge of and sensitivity about teaching linguistically diverse learners.

**References**


Authors

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Suzanne Wagner is a consultant at the Illinois Resource Center, in the United States. She has been a bilingual educator for the past 20 years, serving as an ESL teacher, a high school bilingual department chair, and a district Title VII director. She is currently pursuing a PhD in the College of Education at the University of Illinois at Chicago.
"For Information, Press One": The Telephone Automated Voice Response System

JuLee Rimarcik and Elaine Tarone

Consider the English language learner who calls a bank and hears, not a human, but an automated message generated by a computer:

Welcome to Ninth Bank automated phone service. For balance information, press one. For check paid information, press two. For funds transferred, press three. For the last five transactions, press four. For last year's interest earned, press five. To order a statement, press six.

Mahoney (1995) calls this sort of automated message an Automated Voice Response System (AVRS). In an AVRS, the caller must retrieve information by pushing buttons on a telephone keypad. The AVRS is distinct from voice/message systems where the caller simply listens to a tape recording or leaves a tape-recorded message. Its function is to offer listeners a selection of information from which to choose, according to their specific needs.

This sort of automated telephone message is becoming increasingly common in the United States; hence we can assume that learners of English who live in the United States encounter them frequently. Callers who are native speakers (NS) of English as well as those who are nonnative speakers of English (NNS) find these automated systems difficult to understand and navigate in ways that we will show below. AVRS messages range in complexity from the simple, which are suitable for lower proficiency learners, to the quite complex, which are challenging for the most proficient speakers of the language. These systems can serve as a rich source of authentic listening material as well as cultural information that ESL teachers can use to develop listening tasks for thematic units.

There has been no detailed description of this genre of listening material in the literature, and there appears to be no major ESL textbook that effectively uses AVRSs as a resource for task-based ESL instruction. Our experience suggests that AVRSs often represent an unfamiliar type of listening material for many ESL learners—even in their native language. Thus, they present a challenging task for listening comprehension. A poll of international students enrolled in an intensive English program at the University of Minnesota in 1995 (Rimarcik, 1996) found that although approximately half of the students polled had some experience with answering machines in their countries, most did not have any experience with AVRSs in their first language (L1), let alone in English, their second language (L2).

The Organizational Structure of AVRS Messages

A clear description of the organizational structure of AVRS messages is necessary in order to help teachers design listening tasks for ESL learners. To this end, Rimarcik (1996) recorded 15 AVRS messages in a large midwestern city and transcribed them. She chose to call telephone numbers that an ESL learner in the United States would be most likely to call, such as a bank, post office, school, airline, hospital, and credit card company. The data were collected over a 6- to 12-month period, then transcribed and analyzed.

An AVRS message is an unusual kind of spoken discourse between humans and computers, in which a computer sends prerecorded spoken messages to a human listener in response to the human’s messages typed on a telephone keypad. To illustrate the nature of this discourse, consider the following exchange that occurred when a person called a telephone company to request a repair:

Computer: Welcome to X Communications. If you have a touch tone phone, press one now. If you wish to speak in Spanish, press two.... [Sen-
Because the medium of the AVRS is oral, the index in its table of contents must be linearly and completely presented before the caller can make a choice. Thus, the AVRS may be difficult for learners simply because of the nature of the genre.
AVRS Message of the University Arts Ticket Office

Menu 1 (20 seconds)
You have reached the University of X Arts ticket office. For directions, press four.
For Tedd Mann Hall events, press three now.
For Rarig Hall events, press two now.
For Northrop Auditorium events, press one now.
Or, if calling from a rotary phone, please hold and an operator will be with you momentarily.

AVRS Message of the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) Office

Menu 1 (17 seconds)
This is the INS information line. If you have a touch tone phone, press one for English or two for Spanish after the tone.
If you are calling from a rotary phone, hold for further instructions.
Your call is important to us, so please have a pencil and paper ready to write down any information you might need.

(After the tone, the caller presses one.)

Menu 2 (55 seconds)
Do you want to get an INS form?
Press one.
For the location of your local INS office, press two.
How do I get a U.S. passport or visa information?
Press three.
How can I get a green card?
Press four.
How can I apply to be a U.S. citizen?
Press five.
My visa does not allow me to work. How can I change this?
Press six.
How can I bring my family or relatives to America?
Press seven.
What must I do to keep my permanent residency if I must be away for a year or more?
Press eight.
How can I adopt an orphan?
Press nine.
If your question was not answered, press zero.

(After a long pause, the caller presses four.)

Menu 3 (25 seconds)
What do I do to get a green card through an immediate relative who is either a green card holder or a U.S. citizen?
Press one.
To find out how to get a green card based on employment, press two.
To find out how to remove conditional status on a green card for those persons who have obtained their green card through marriage, press three.

(The caller presses two.)

Menu 4 (145 seconds)
Five different employment-based categories by which a person can qualify for a green card:
Category 1: Persons who have extraordinary ability in the sciences, arts, education, business or athletics, outstanding professors or researchers, and certain multinational business executives and managers.
Category 2: Professionals holding advanced degrees or aliens of exceptional ability in the sciences, arts, or business.
Category 3: Skilled workers able to perform skilled labor requiring at least 2 years of training or experience, professionals holding bachelor’s degrees, and other unskilled workers whose work requires less than 2 years of training or experience.
Category 4: Special immigrants or religious workers.
Category 5: Investors who invest one million dollars in a new commercial enterprise in the U.S. that creates 10 or more full-time jobs for U.S. workers or persons who invest $500,000 or more in the U.S. and create 10 or more full-time jobs for U.S. workers in a rural area of high need.
To apply for a green card based on employment, INS form I 140, entitled Petition for Immigrant Workers, is used to apply under Category 1 through 3.
INS form I 360, entitled Petition for Amerasian, Widow/er, or Special Immigrants, is used to apply under Category 4.
INS form I 526, entitled Immigrant Petition by Alien Entrepreneur, is used to apply under Category 5.
Also, Department of Labor for ETA 750A, entitled Application for Alien Employment, and ETA 750B, entitled Statement of Qualifications of Aliens (certified by the Labor Department), is required only for certain applicants applying under Categories 2 and 3.
A labor certification is not needed for applicants applying under Categories 1, 4, and 5.
Before completing an INS Department of Labor form, please be sure to carefully read all instructions before answering any questions.

(No choices are given. The caller automatically hears Menu 5.)

Menu 5 (15 seconds)
To request an INS form, press one after the tone.
To speak with an immigration information officer, press two after the tone.
To listen to the main directory, press three after the tone.
(Tone)

Sample messages transcribed by authors.
The vocabulary and syntax used in these AVRS messages to answer questions, to impart information, and to instruct the caller to execute certain actions is fairly formulaic, though sometimes culturally obscure to the outsider.

Linguistic Structure of AVRS Messages

The vocabulary and syntax used in these AVRS messages to answer questions, to impart information, and to instruct the caller to execute certain actions is fairly formulaic, though sometimes culturally obscure to the outsider. The majority of these messages employ the conditional together with the imperative to inform or instruct callers. Typically, there is a laying out of conditions under which to perform a task (e.g., If ____, then ____). The three forms most widely used in the data to signal a conditional were if, to and for. The syntax follows the same general patterns:

If you have (want) + N
If you wish (would like, are, want, etc.) + V
For + N
To + V

Following the conditional clause or phrase, an imperative clause instructs or commands the caller to perform certain actions. The verbs press, push, enter, touch (+ a single key), call, dial (+ a phone number), remain, stay (+ on the line), hold, and hang up are widely used for this purpose. Many of these requests or commands are softened by the addition of a modal or politeness form, such as please hold, please call, and you may enter. Two examples from the INS AVRS, however, deviate from these patterns in an apparent attempt to approximate patterns of informal spoken discourse:

How do I + V?
What must I do to + V?

The AVRS message genre uses a small set of specialized vocabulary items that may be culturally obscure. For example, there are specific symbols (telephone keypad characters) that are frequently mentioned (e.g., star, pound). These names are not obviously linked to their symbolic equivalents found on the keypad (e.g., *, #). A caller must know the difference between a touch tone phone (also referred to as a push button touch tone phone) and a rotary phone (also called a rotary dial phone).

Teachers can use AVRSs in a variety of ways as a resource for task-based instruction in listening comprehension in ESL classes. In some ways, an AVRS is ideal for this purpose: The listener must listen to specific
commands and respond with physical actions. Because the commands are recorded, they may be listened to over and over again. Simpler AVRS messages, such as that of the University Arts Ticket Office, can be found for lower proficiency learners, and more complex messages, such as that of the INS, for more advanced learners. Below is a list of suggestions for using AVRSs in ESL classrooms. The list begins with simpler activities and progresses to a rather complicated one, which is embedded in a content-based unit on immigration and employment. Clearly, lower proficiency learners might be restricted to the simpler activities and AVRS messages before progressing to the more complex ones as their ability increases.

1. Students can be invited to compare a simple AVRS message to a simple answering machine message. Divide students into two groups and give each group a recording of an AVRS message and a typical answering machine message. After they have listened to both recordings, have the students determine the differences between the two types of messages. (If less proficient learners have difficulty with this, they may be given written transcripts of the two recordings.) The teacher can circulate to answer questions and may write difficult vocabulary on the board for later discussion. Students can then come together as a class to discuss the differences and review new vocabulary.

2. Students can consider the cultural implications of AVRS technology. The class might discuss why AVRS messages are so popular in modern business culture, and why callers sometimes react negatively to the messages. What are the advantages and disadvantages for a business in choosing to use an AVRS message? What cultural values are implied when a business chooses to use one? What are the advantages and disadvantages of an AVRS message for customers? What can callers do to circumvent the AVRS and talk to a person? (Often a caller can press the star, pound, or zero key at any point during the message to talk to a human being.) If

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AVRSs are used in their own countries, students might compare how they are used in terms of cultural differences.

3. Students can relate an AVRS message to a model of a telephone keypad. Students respond physically to the aural instructions they hear, or, perhaps at first, to a printed transcript and an aural message. Give students transcripts of an AVRS message and a diagram representing a telephone keypad. While students listen to the recorded message, ask them to obtain specific pieces of information by choosing the appropriate buttons on their keypad diagrams, according to the corresponding menu choices. Students can indicate their choices by marking an X on the appropriate number or symbol key on their diagrams. This can be done in groups. The task can be made more authentic by using real telephones.

4. Students can transcribe AVRS messages they hear. The teacher can make recordings of three or four AVRS messages, and students, working in groups, can transcribe the information they have obtained to reconstruct each entire AVRS message, with all its choices transcribed. As a follow-up exercise, the groups can listen to a recording of their messages on a tape made by the teacher and see where any gaps may still exist in their reconstruction of the entire message. For example, students might be asked to listen to the INS message and transcribe menu Levels 1 and 2 in their entirety.

5. Learners can call predetermined AVRS messages from their homes in completing a group jigsaw task. Students can choose between two or three messages that the teacher has transcribed or listened to, as in Tasks 3 and 4 above. Group students according to the messages they have chosen and give each student a different menu choice to select and listen to. At home, students can listen to their messages and press the menu choice(s) they were given by the teacher. Then, to the best of their ability, they can transcribe the messages they hear once they make their choices. In the following class period, the groups can get together and compare their diagrams. This can be done in groups. The task can be made more authentic by using real telephones.

6. Task-based instruction using AVRSs can be integrated into a content-based or thematic unit that imparts valuable information about the culture. For example, students can plan a class outing to a nearby museum by calling different AVRS numbers to get needed information. One group of students can call the museum to find out the hours of operation and another group can call a local bus company to get directions to the museum and a travel schedule via public transportation.

Another example might be a unit for advanced-level students on U.S. immigration
employment categories by which a person may qualify for a green card, with key terms left blank for the students to fill in as they listen to the actual message at home; students are told they can listen to the message as often as they need in order to complete the cloze task. This homework could be checked the next day and problems and questions discussed in small groups in class, and later in the class as a whole.

7. Students can redesign an AVRS message. In groups, advanced proficiency learners might be asked to examine the transcript of an AVRS message they have already worked with and to rewrite that transcript in such a way that it is clearer to other listeners, for instance, by changing the vocabulary. Students might consider all the parameters of complexity discussed earlier in this article.

**Notes**

1 The full transcript of the INS AVRS is available in Rimarcik (1996).

2 Similar predictive conditionals are described in Yule (1998, Example 10, p. 128).

**References**


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raditional English language programs in Asian countries such as China, Japan, and Korea regard reading and writing as means of language study more than as means for obtaining information and communicating ideas. Learners who are taught English in this way typically develop habits of reading English texts word by word, looking at reading as a way of learning new words and grammatical structures rather than as a way of accessing information, and writing English with a focus on producing correct language rather than on selecting, organizing, and presenting ideas for effective communication to a reader. As English teaching goals in China, Japan, and Korea expand to include communicative competence, reading and writing tasks need to go beyond language practice as an end in itself.

This article describes ways to make EFL reading and writing instruction in Asian and comparable contexts more genuinely communicative, with language development in a supporting role. Communicative tasks reflect real-life reading purposes (e.g., to answer questions, obtain new information, and gain other perspectives) and writing purposes (e.g., to share personal experiences and ideas with interested readers, to communicate for academic and job-related reasons). Written text is viewed primarily as a vehicle of information rather than as a linguistic object (Johns & Davies, 1983).

Traditional Teaching of L2 Reading and Writing in Asia: A Description and Critique

Traditionally, the teaching of EFL in China, Japan, and Korea has emphasized gaining knowledge about the English language rather than using the language for genuinely communicative purposes. Traditional approaches (still common in secondary and postsecondary programs throughout Asia) blend elements of grammar translation and audiolingual methods and tend to be teacher-centered. For instance, reading is still usually taught using an intensive reading approach, in which lessons consist of a core text (reading selection) and a list of language points (grammar, vocabulary) drawn from the text, which students study. The students read new words aloud, imitating the teacher. The teacher explains the entire text, sentence by sentence, analyzing many of the more difficult grammar structures, rhetoric, and style for the students, who listen, take notes, and answer questions. They study new words; do grammar drills; answer comprehension questions; and do textbook exercises on pronunciation, grammar, spelling, sentence-making, and translation. At the college level, English classes typically include exercises to build reading skills, such as predicting, scanning, skimming, and inferring.

Writing is usually taught in translation and composition courses. In the grammar translation approach, the only writing that takes place is the translation of passages. Separate composition courses are offered infrequently because they require a great deal of work and it is difficult to persuade teachers to teach them. Where composition is taught, the traditional approach is product-oriented. For instance, students may examine a model of a particular rhetorical pattern, analyze it, and then write, imitating it. Teachers grade compositions with a focus on correcting errors rather than on responding to writers’ ideas.

Many criticisms have been made of the intensive reading approach (see, e.g., Fan, 1991; Kitao & Kitao, 1995). In fact, it is not a reading course, but a course that uses readings to develop linguistic knowledge. The attention to detail and the analysis of grammar and word usage required in an intensive reading course lead students to become slow, inefficient readers who are dictionary dependent. Students also develop other poor read-

More Than Practicing Language: Communicative Reading and Writing for Asian Settings

May Shih

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ing habits, such as paying equal attention to all words, translating word by word, trying to understand each sentence in a text independently without seeing how they all are related, and not varying their reading style to suit their purpose for reading and the type of material. These poor habits spill over to other skills, such as being able to listen for main ideas. Because the teacher does most of the work of providing background information before students read and expounding grammar and vocabulary, students tend to develop a passive attitude toward reading. Worse, classes become tedious and boring. Finally, the wrong criterion is used to select vocabulary to be studied: Words are chosen based on difficulty rather than on usefulness.

The traditional approach to teaching EFL writing has been criticized for its focus on sentence-level grammar and paragraph patterns, creating the impression that good writing is correct writing, rather than considering features of writing that are important in communicating a message to a reader. Writing is seen as a means of reinforcing and manipulating grammatical and rhetorical structures, not as a tool for communicating with an audience and stimulating thinking about subject matter (Raimes, 1987).

Reading and writing tasks such as those described above lack clear relationships to real-life reading and writing tasks. Students do not come to appreciate the power of reading in English to access information that is personally interesting and useful, nor do they experience the satisfaction of writing to express themselves and to share ideas with interested readers. A purely linguistic approach may have been acceptable in earlier days, when few people needed or wanted to use English for genuine communication. However, in our present era of increased international contact for business, professional, and personal reasons, Asian learners now have a greater need to listen, speak, read, and write in English for practical purposes. More local and international English language publications are available in Asian countries than ever before, and English is the dominant language of the Internet as well as of business communication. By the time learners have studied English for more than 6 years and have acquired a basic foundation in the language, upon reaching college or university (if not earlier), their focus should shift from learning about the English language to using English to learn and communicate about topics that are interesting and relevant to their lives.

### Communicative Reading and Writing Tasks

In this article, I use the term communicative in its broadest sense to refer to reading and writing tasks that involve exchanging information and opinions through the written medium, in situations in which readers and writers are not personally acquainted as well as in situations where they are. In communicative approaches, skills (e.g., skimming, scanning, writing topic sentences) and linguistic knowledge are developed in accordance with the purpose of a task and the type of text. Language teaching can be reactive (e.g., addressing students’ needs as they emerge) as well as predictive (e.g., preteaching crucial vocabulary, grammar, and rhetorical structures during prereading and prewriting stages of a lesson).

In the remaining discussion, I give examples of communicative reading and writing tasks applicable to English teaching in Asia. I obtained these ideas from several sources, including descriptions in published articles and textbooks; responses to a recent questionnaire I sent to selected universities in China, Japan, and Korea; and my own teaching experiences in China. The approaches are classified in the following categories:

1. **Tasks incorporated into existing curricula**
   - adapting existing textbook materials to new teaching techniques and tasks
   - extending activities: supplementing the existing textbook

2. **Changes from the traditional approach**
   - independent reading and writing outside of class
   - communicative scenarios
   - personal communication through English
   - theme-based units: reading and writing to learn

### As English teaching goals in China, Japan, and Korea expand to include communicative competence, reading and writing tasks need to go beyond language practice as an end in itself.

### Tasks Incorporated Into Existing Curricula

#### Adapting Existing Textbook Materials to New Teaching Techniques and Tasks

Teachers who must adhere to a prescribed, traditional textbook can teach in a manner that focuses students’ attention on content and actively engages them in the subject matter. In reading lessons, for example, teachers can use various techniques to guide students to concentrate on the message of the text rather than have students approach reading as a decoding or vocabulary exercise. Before students read a selection, teachers can involve them by eliciting their ideas on the topic of the reading with a picture, map, chart, problem situation, or provocative questions (Fan, 1991). Preteaching key vocabulary can be done using techniques that enable students to contribute to their understanding of what they read, such as creating a visual semantic map that connects new words to words students already know. Ideally, discussions lead to questions that the students want to have answered when they read, thus, providing a purpose for reading. These questions can be written on the board and referred to after reading, to see if they have been answered. Teachers can encourage students to use reading strategies appropriate for the task (e.g., if they are reading to find specific types of information, they can mark the information as they find it; if they are reading a text for thorough study, they can underline key ideas and write summary notes) to keep them focused on achieving the task. Teachers can impose a time limit to force students to concentrate on key information and not attend to every word and detail. Postreading activities should focus first on the text as a vehicle of information, with tasks that involve the transfer of information. For instance, students can fill in a chart or table, label a diagram or timeline, or apply information to solve a problem, and then work in pairs or groups to discuss answers (Johns & Davies, 1983).

For writing lessons, teachers can modify the instructions for traditional exercises to create tasks with a clear communicative purpose and audience. For example, Raimes (1983) suggests that rather than having students do an exercise in which they must support a topic sentence, such as “A beach vacation is always relaxing,” have them write an advertisement for a beach resort, trying to convince people to take a vacation there.
Extending Activities: Supplementing the Existing Textbook

Prescribed materials can be supplemented with tasks focused on reading to learn new information and writing to share the information with others. Here I offer an example of a lesson I observed in a university EFL class for English majors in China. The lesson featured a reading selection entitled “Biographies Bring New Companions” (Wenzhong, Yuanxi, Hue, & He, 1991, pp. 156-158). Using typical intensive reading procedures, the teacher spent most of a class period explicating grammar and vocabulary. As one of the main activities, the students formed groups to discuss the meaning of four vocabulary items: bring to life, in person, go about, and have an easy time of it. When the teacher asked for my critical feedback, I suggested that she give the students an opportunity to read and write more freely in English by adding the following reading and writing tasks to the lesson:

- **Reading task**—to satisfy curiosity about famous people. Students choose a person they would like to know more about and research the person’s life in the library or from readings the teacher provides (e.g., from sources such as an encyclopedia, Who’s Who, and magazines). In small groups, students report their findings orally and answer classmates’ questions.

- **Writing task**—to report on a presentation. Students write a report on a classmate’s research, using reported speech (e.g., “X told us that President Clinton ...”) and then have the classmate who did the research check the paper for accuracy. (This would allow for meaningful practice of the unit’s grammar point, reported speech.)

- **Alternative writing task**—to provide interesting information to a non-Chinese reader. Students (individually or in groups) write a short biographical sketch of a famous Chinese person for an English-speaking audience. They are allowed to use Chinese language sources to research facts.

These tasks have a clear purpose and audience. When reading and preparing oral and written reports, the students would have opportunities to learn and practice new vocabulary and grammatical structures, while also building skills such as considering the likely needs and interests of the audience.

### Sample Reading and Writing Tasks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Reading Task</th>
<th>Writing Task</th>
<th>Language Focus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Travel Information</strong>: Pretend you are a Chinese guide escorting foreign, English-speaking tourists around your country.</td>
<td>Scan English language travel guides for answers to visitors’ questions.</td>
<td>Design a poster to attract foreigners to visit your city (see sample poster on p. 23); write a brochure or booklet for visitors.</td>
<td>Sightseeing and transportation vocabulary; prepositional phrases of location</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Skill</strong>: Efficient scanning</td>
<td><strong>Skills</strong>: Audience analysis; organizing a descriptive piece; using concrete details</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Advertisements</strong>: Imagine you work for a company that is trying to market its product in the United States.</td>
<td>Analyze sample advertisements to get ideas on advertising strategies.</td>
<td>Work in teams to design your own advertisement for a product.</td>
<td>Comparatives and superlatives; concrete descriptive vocabulary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Skill</strong>: Analytical reading</td>
<td><strong>Skills</strong>: Audience analysis; using details to persuade</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Business Simulations</strong>: Imagine you are taking part in business negotiations (Jones, 1995).</td>
<td>Read business reports in preparation for a business meeting.</td>
<td>Draft and revise memos and business letters following up on the oral negotiations.</td>
<td>Key business vocabulary; communicating ideas clearly; using appropriate content and style in written and oral business communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Skills</strong>: Reading for key information; critical reading</td>
<td><strong>Skills</strong>: Summarizing business decisions; proposing actions in appropriate document format and language</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
cals (e.g., China Daily, Japan Times, Daily Yomiuri, Korea Times) and international newspapers and magazines (e.g., The International Herald Tribune, Newsweek International). The latter offer students more insight into other countries, people, and cultures (Kitao, 1995) as well as more international news than their local or national periodicals provide. Other types of authentic materials may be available locally, such as brochures and maps for English-speaking tourists. Because such texts describe familiar places, they also provide easily comprehensible models and stimuli for student writing (Ness, 1997). The Internet also offers a rich source of authentic reading material. Students can paste their reading selections on separate sheets of paper and keep them in a folder for postreading tasks, such as writing answers to questions about the main points of the text or writing about what they learned or found to be interesting.

The following are examples of follow-up tasks that hold students accountable for doing the reading, enable them to share information with each other, and provide writing practice:

- **summaries, reactions, book reviews**
- **reading journals, periodic conferences, and an individualized final exam**—Freshmen at Fu Jen University in Taiwan fulfill these postreading requirements as they engage in *quantity reading* of level-appropriate books for an entire term; additional class activities include oral reading, storytelling, audiocassette listening, and videotape viewing (Nash & Yuan, 1992/1993).
- **oral reports in small groups**—First- and second-year English majors at Aoyama Gakuin University in Tokyo read books (e.g., graded readers chosen from a self-access library) and write reports outside of class, then present their reports in small groups in class. Each listener is requested to fill out information from the report and to ask a specific question; this encourages active listening (M. Ernst, personal communication, 1997).
- **group reading diaries**—Third-year English majors at Nanjing University in China, working in research teams of three to five students, choose a story or other reading selection; team members take turns writing in a group diary, giving opinions and supporting them with information from the text and responding to each others’ writing (Ting, 1996). After reading the text first for meaning, students jot down chunks (e.g., words, phrases, sentences) that can be useful in writing. Students then draft diary entries using these chunks, revise their entries, and proofread them.

**Communicative Scenarios**

In communicative language teaching, class activities that simulate real-life situations help build pragmatic, cultural, and linguistic components of L2 competence in an integrated manner (Li, 1984, 1987/1988). Students should be given contexts, roles, and tasks that resemble situations, roles, and tasks that they conceivably could face someday, such as helping a foreign visitor on the street or serving as a translator for a U.S. company. Communicative competence involves the ability to react mentally as well as verbally in such situations (Li, 1984). The table on p. 22 presents scenarios illustrating reading and writing tasks, along with language points and skills.

Even more ideal than imaginary scenarios would be arrangements for students to conduct research and write for an authentic English-speaking audience. For example, students could write and publish a guide for foreign visitors to their university.

**Personal Communication Through English**

For authentic communication, EFL students can correspond with people in an English-speaking country or with other non-native speakers of English in countries where English is the lingua franca. For example, Niederhauser (1997) reports that the students in her sophomore writing class at Honam University in Kwangju, Korea, wrote compositions about interesting aspects of Korean culture for U.S. students who were studying.
Korea in their global studies course. The U.S. students began an exchange of letters. Similarly, I had students in my U.S. culture class at Central China Normal University (Wuhan, China) work in teams, researching topics cross-culturally by writing to individuals and organizations in the United States for information and then writing group research papers.

Electronic mail (e-mail) now makes it quicker and easier for EFL students to communicate through English with people all over the world. An added benefit is that while students write on computers, they also acquire word processing skills. Composing on the keyboard seems to motivate students in ways not often seen when they compose by hand, and students naturally write with the audience and purpose in mind (Kroonenberg, 1994/1995). After two or more teachers agree to have their students correspond through e-mail, they can structure the activity as a personal, one-on-one communication (i.e., where one student from one class corresponds with another student from another class) or as a whole-class activity (i.e., where messages from the whole class are sent en masse to the other class and students then write to one person or to the entire class). Students can also join international electronic discussion lists. Teachers should ensure that the e-mail communication has a purpose by assigning specific tasks tied to the goals of the course (Warschauer, 1995). Students in my composition classes here in the United States, for example, have obtained useful firsthand data for their research papers on international topics (e.g., women’s rights around the world, the future of Hong Kong) through e-mail communication with students in other countries. In on-line projects, students can collaborate on researching the topic as well as on writing and publishing the results on a Web site for others to read (Gaer, 1999).

The traditional approach to teaching EFL writing has been criticized for its focus on sentence-level grammar and paragraph patterns, creating the impression that good writing is correct writing, rather than considering features of writing that are important in communicating a message to a reader.

Theme-Based Units: Reading and Writing to Learn

In theme-based units, students develop a range of academic (and/or job-related) reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills while learning about a topic. The following are examples of theme-based units and courses that have been developed at universities in Japan and Korea:

- A thematic unit on human rights—Sophomore and junior business and law majors at Ryukoku University (Kyoto, Japan) read and discuss several articles on minorities in Japan and the U.S. civil rights movement, read at least three books independently, and then write an academic research paper (S. Lee, personal communication, 1997).
- Thematic units on a variety of topics—Freshmen and sophomores at International Christian University (Tokyo) read articles and book excerpts on a variety of topics (e.g., educational values, intercultural awareness, overconsumption and a sustainable world, bioethics) to practice academic reading skills (e.g., previewing, marking a text), participate in small group discussions of the text, write themes, and write critical thinking quizzes (P. McCagg, personal communication, 1997).
- A course on American culture—Freshmen in a U.S. culture course at Honam University (Kwangju, Korea) read articles and excerpts from U.S. newspapers, magazines, the World Almanac, a book on holiday craft projects, and other sources. Instead of taking traditional multiple-choice tests, they write brief opinion papers on the articles they read so that they can practice expressing their ideas clearly in English (J. Niederhauser, personal communication, 1997).

Developing Linguistic Competence

In all of the approaches mentioned in this article, language development should not be ignored. On the contrary, it should be integrated with the development of reading and writing skills. Research findings in applied linguistics provide guidelines. Research in the field of English for specific purposes (ESP), for example, offers ideas on how to exploit texts for the teaching of lexical, grammatical, discourse, and stylistic points, while viewing written discourse from a communicative perspective. Recent research on vocabulary learning and reading (see, e.g., Coady & Huckin, 1997) provides insights on how extensive reading, along with varied vocabulary enhancement activities, are a key to effective vocabulary learning. Text-based prereading, while-reading, and postreading vocabulary exercises can be used to consolidate vocabulary learning (Paribakht & Wesche, 1996).

Overcoming Obstacles to Change

In this article, I have synthesized ideas for making reading and writing lessons more meaningful for EFL students in Asia. However, teachers who try to introduce such innovations may encounter resistance. The following are examples of reservations expressed by colleagues and supervisors about teachers, students, materials, tasks, and standardized curricula and examinations. These concerns are followed by possible responses.

Teachers

- Teachers do not want to change and are not trained in newer methods.
- We can explain the rationale for proposed changes and show positive results from action research in classrooms. We can share techniques and offer training.
  - Teachers think translation is the most important thing.
    - There are ways to set up translation tasks so that they resemble real-life translation situations.
  - Teachers end up teaching grammar and vocabulary, no matter what approach they take.
    - It is important to teach grammar and vocabulary, but it is also important for students to be able to use English in ways that can enrich their personal and professional lives. Too much time and energy spent solely on language study means less time and effort actually using English.
  - It takes too much time and energy to prepare new materials and lessons.
    - Students respond positively to tasks that spark their interest and have relevance to them. Such activities prove more satisfying and interesting to teachers as well.
  - With large classes, it is not feasible to assign much writing. It is too much
work to respond to and grade so many papers.

Provide enough input, time, and preparation during prewriting. Avoid overmarking papers and ask students to revise and edit their own writing as much as possible. Assign group papers. Have students write for outside audiences and get feedback from those readers, and have them read and respond to each other’s papers.

**Students**

- **EFL students are not motivated to communicate because they have little chance to really interact with foreigners.**

  Reading and writing in English do not require face-to-face contact. One can learn many interesting things about other people’s lives and cultures by reading and writing in English.

- **Students are used to the traditional approach.**

  Students usually learn to appreciate and enjoy any approach that the teacher is enthusiastic about and that they perceive as meeting their needs.

**Materials**

- **Suitable authentic materials are hard to find.**

  Check local bookstores, newsstands, and tourist offices. Write to organizations abroad. Collaborate with colleagues and share materials. Enlist the help of foreign teachers. Explore the Internet. Have students obtain their own materials locally or by writing to organizations abroad.

**Tasks**

- **It is hard to find an audience for students to write for in an EFL setting.**

  Sometimes a simulated audience will do. Students can be very good at imagining. The Internet can also serve as a source of audiences (e.g., electronic discussion lists, e-mail, chat rooms).

**Standardized Curricula and Examinations**

- **Standardized curricula and exams make it difficult to change teaching materials and methods. Teachers have to ensure that students perform well on the required exit exams.**

  It is possible to cover the material needed for the exam while introducing desirable changes. There is indeed a need for reform at the top. In the meantime, small changes in individual teachers’ classrooms are a start.

**Conclusion**

The examples in this article demonstrate that there are many ways to make reading and writing tasks more meaningful for EFL students. What these approaches have in common is that the reading and writing activities do not focus on manipulating language forms, but on using English as a means of interaction and learning. These kinds of experiences can be very powerful motivators for students.

**References**


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“What is past is prologue.”

The Tempest, 11, 1

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The choice, as every choice, is yours: 
to fight for freedom or be fettered,
to struggle for liberty or be satisfied 
with slavery,
to side with life or death.

(Abu-Jamal, 1997, p. 121)

A few years ago I developed a content-area ESOL course on the U.S. justice system for an intensive 4-week summer program at Michigan State University. I was guided by my own interest in the justice system, past success using mock trials with students, and widespread interest in the O.J. Simpson case. I wanted to create a course that would challenge intermediate- to advanced-level international students to improve their English language skills, while developing their awareness of issues of social justice in the world around them. The case of Mumia Abu-Jamal, an African-American, death-row inmate with a recently published book, Live From Death Row (1995), provided a viable means for achieving these goals. There was also a sense of urgency in examining this topic because Abu-Jamal was set to be executed during the last week of the course.

Abu-Jamal gained a stay of execution, and I have continued to teach the course in subsequent years. In the following pages, I describe an ESOL content-based course that draws on the critical pedagogical tradition of Freire (1970), Giroux (1997), and others. Extensive scholarship suggests that a content-based instructional (CBI) approach helps second language (L2) learners master academic language by providing them with thematically organized material in the major subject areas (Brinton, Snow & Wesche, 1989; Gianelli, 1991; Mohan, 1986; Snow & Brinton, 1997). The U.S. justice course I have developed draws on the strengths of the CBI approach, as I encourage academic language development in English by immersing students in the language of social studies through an examination of the U.S. system of justice and the case of death-row inmate Mumia Abu-Jamal. My students engage in reading and writing assignments, video presentations, class discussions, and debates and take community field trips to the courts, police station, and sites of protest. This course moves beyond the development of academic language and content by posing problems and addressing the need for social and political action. Through critical pedagogy, the goal becomes to develop in students “a critical perception of the world” and a “method of approaching reality in order to unveil it” (Freire, 1970, p. 103).

The Use of Critical Pedagogy

Critical pedagogy is a way of teaching and learning that poses problems about the world, with the goal of helping all participants become more fully human and transform the reality around them. Recent developments in critical pedagogy have been influenced by the work of the late Paulo Freire, an educator who began his career working with the poor of Northeastern Brazil. Freire rejected the traditional model of education, or banking concept, wherein teachers deposited knowledge in students’ minds. Rather, he sought to develop a libera-
Despite the pressures to standardize educational curriculum and practice, teachers at all levels can introduce into their classrooms less traditional, yet authentic, materials about individuals whose voices often go unheard and from cultures not often represented.
“critical perception cannot be imposed” (p. 103) and that truly listening to and honoring students’ points of view is important. For example, I asked students whether police are ever justified in using excessive force. A Korean student responded forcefully that they should be allowed to use force in terrorist situations. Several East German students, on the other hand, were equally adamant in opposing such police force. Our ensuing dialogue enabled each of us to hear about issues faced in various countries, and together, we brainstormed parameters for the use of police force. The small- and large-group discussions of the various readings helped increase students’ understanding of the case, and the regular vocabulary reviews and quizzes helped them incorporate courtroom vocabulary into their writing and speaking assignments (see the sample follow-up exercises on p. 28).

Writing assignments provided other opportunities for students to develop concept awareness and vocabulary. Following a class discussion on the role of race and money in the justice system, I asked students whether a person’s economic status or skin color make a difference in how they are treated in the justice system in their countries. I also asked students to write their own decision on the Abu-Jamal case after they had had a chance to review the evidence at hand. Finally, to enable students to move from reflection to action, I gave them the opportunity to write their opinions on the ethics of the case and letters to the governor of Pennsylvania asking for clemency for Abu-Jamal (see the sample writing exercise, left).

Students practiced listening in a variety of ways. They watched a videotaped documentary (Filmyer, 1996) about the case and listened to selected audiotaped recordings of Abu-Jamal’s (1994) canceled program on National Public Radio. One of our first listening activities was a cloze exercise using Bob Marley’s (1974) song, “I Shot the Sheriff” (see the sample cloze and discussion exercise on p. 30). Some of our more intriguing cross-cultural dialogue about excessive police force arose after viewing a videotaped segment of the TV series NYPD Blue (1995) (see the sample listening and dialogue exercise on p. 30). After reviewing courtroom vocabulary, students also gained intensive listening practice during a field trip to a circuit court to hear sentencing procedures (see the sample courtroom visit exercise on p. 31). Following their courtroom visit, students toured the nearby city jail and police department. This field trip raised students’ awareness of many issues for consideration, such as the fact that the vast majority of those being disciplined and punished were poor people of color, though they represented less than half of the city’s population. Some students were also able to attend a Free Abu-Jamal rally on the steps of the state Capitol building.

In addition to the numerous class discussions in which they participated, students were also able to use the academic language they were acquiring by engaging in a simulated trial that brought together many of the issues and much of the vocabulary learned in the course. After being given a scenario that implicated one of their peers in an alleged crime, students took part in role playing prosecution and defense teams, developing their evidence and testimony, and holding a trial before a jury of their peers (see the sample mock trial exercise on p. 32). As part of the trial preparation, students were asked to write statements describing their characters and their relationships with the defendant. One student, posing as a prosecution witness, described her relationship with the suspect:

When I moved to this room in the first few days, he introduced himself and we had a funky conversation. During the conversation, he explicitly mentioned he had some good stuff for sale, and he did show some pills to me. Of course ... I refused his offer and we had no interaction thereafter.

Another student, serving as a witness for the defense, described a different conversation with the same defendant:

That night, I talk with him on phone. He suggested me to come to the...
Sample Cloze Exercise and Discussion

I Shot the Sheriff (Bob Marley and the Wailers)

Listen to the song and try to fill in the missing words and phrases.
I shot the _______________ , but I did not shoot no _______________ (2) (refrain)
All around in my _______________ , they are trying to track me down,
They say they want to bring me in _______________
For the ______________ of the deputy (2)
But I say
I shot the _______________ , but I swear it was in _______________ _______________
I shot the _______________ , and they say it is a _______________ offense
Sheriff John Brown always _______________ me, for what, I don’t know
Every time I planted a _______________
He said, “Kill them before they grow” (2) and so
(refrain)
____________ came my way one day, and I started out of town
____________ ______________ I saw Sheriff John Brown
He was aiming to shoot I down
So I shot, I shot him down
(refrain)
Reflexes got the better of me, and ______________ ______________ 
Every day the bucket goes to the well
One day the bottom will drop out (2)

Questions:
1. For what crime are they trying to bring in the singer? Did he do it?
2. Why was the killing of the sheriff an act of self defense?
3. The singer says, “what is to be must be.” Do you think he regrets his actions?

Sample Listening Practice and Dialogue About Excessive Force

Videotape Clip from NYPD Blue

Preview: Sipowicz, the balding cop with the mustache, has been questioning Iolescu, a Romanian immigrant, about his alleged illegal activities: Bombs were found in his apartment and he had a list of rich U.S. families and their addresses. Iolescu seems to want to use force to “take from the rich and give to the poor.”

At the beginning of the clip, Sipowicz decides that Iolescu hasn’t told him everything during the previous interrogation. Sipowicz believes that Iolescu has already placed a bomb somewhere where it might hurt somebody.

Watch the video clip from NYPD Blue, a popular TV show. If you have any questions about the action, tell me and we can play it back.

Discussion:
1. Sipowicz uses violence during his interrogation of Iolescu in order to get information. Is this justified? Why or why not? Do police behave this way in your country? In your opinion, are these violent tactics ever justified? In what cases?
2. Iolescu believes that Sipowicz beats him because he is a poor immigrant, but wouldn’t beat him if he were a rich man. Do you think that the police generally treat the poor more roughly than the rich?
3. Iolescu uses terror to try to address a social problem—the great wealth of the rich versus the extreme poverty of the poor. Would you agree with Iolescu that capitalism’s economic violence against the poor is also a form of terrorism? Is terrorism ever justified?
Although students were, perhaps, expecting to hear a more in-depth case, they still found the experience of being inside a U.S. courtroom informative. Some students found it interesting to compare the U.S. court system to that of their own countries. Drawing on student suggestions, the next time I taught the course, I found a longer case for students to hear and added a visit to the adjoining police station and jail.

Students were asked to clip articles related to legal cases from newspapers each week, write short summaries, and define a few new vocabulary words. Several students mentioned that this assignment caused them to read the newspapers regularly. One student commented, “It’s always interesting to be able to read newspaper articles. I would have liked to watch news on TV about the case.”

Attending a Court Session

The courts follow formal procedures, and it will be important for us to behave formally when present. This includes arriving on time, not moving around during the session, and speaking quietly or not at all. Also, you will be busy taking some notes in a notebook. I would like you to:

- Write down any expressions that you hear but don’t understand.
- Write down any actions or procedures that you would like to have explained.
- Describe the major characters in the courtroom: the judge, the defendant, the prosecuting attorney, the defense attorney, the witnesses, families of the defendant, etc. You might even try to draw the physical features of these characters and to describe their personalities as well.

For homework, I would like a one-page description of this court experience, in which you can focus on any of the items above.

**Implications for Educators**

Writing from death row, Abu-Jamal (1997) offered some advice that I try to follow to critically assess my teaching practices and the world around me: “Talk to your friends, read and open your eyes—even to doorways of perception you feared to look into yesterday” (p. 121). Although originally designed for international students at the university level, the U.S. justice, content-based course described above has implications for ESOL teachers and educators at many levels.

In his last book, Freire (1998) wrote that “the freedom that moves us, that makes us take risks, is being subjugated to a process of standardization of formulas and models in relation to which we are evaluated” (p. 102). Despite the pressures to standardize educational curriculum and practice, teachers at all levels can introduce into their classrooms less traditional, yet authentic, materials about individuals whose voices often go unheard and from cultures not often represented. Such
Sample Role Play Exercise

Mock Trial— The State v. Petrovich

The Case: On Thursday, July 11, Lara Petrovich,* a.k.a. “Tanya,” was arrested by police in downtown East Lansing. She is alleged to have stolen a car, led police on a wild, high-speed chase along Grand River Avenue, and assaulted a police officer with an illegal weapon. If convicted of these crimes, she could receive up to 15 years in the state prison.

The Players:

Prosecution

1. Prosecuting attorneys 1 and 2: You must try to prove that Lara is guilty of all charges. You must find witnesses and evidence which will support your arguments and your case.

Witness 1: The owner of the stolen car. You testify that Lara stole your car by threatening you with a deadly weapon.

Witness 2: The arresting officer. You testify to following Lara in your police car, clocking her speed, and witnessing her dangerous driving. You also testify to being attacked by Lara with a deadly weapon.

Witness 3: Police officer from New York. You testify that Lara, known to police in New York as “Tanya,” is wanted in your state for armed robbery.

Witness 4: Surprise witness. Prosecutors, this is your chance to be creative!

Defense

1. Defense attorneys 1 and 2: You must try to prove that Lara is innocent of the charges. You may wish to argue alternative explanations for her arrest (e.g., police conspiracy).

Witness 1: You are an amateur photographer. You were present at the scene where Lara was arrested. You testify that she was not driving so fast, that she was unarmed, and that the police handled her roughly (police brutality) during the arrest. (Do you have photographs as evidence?)

Witness 2: Doctor at the hospital emergency room. You were present when the police brought Lara in with a broken arm after her “arrest.” You testify that the police forced a confession from her in the hospital room.

Witness 3: Surprise witness. Defense attorneys, here is your chance to be creative!

Witness 4: Lara. Should she testify in her own defense?

Judge: The Honorable Judge Hones, presiding.

Preparation:

1. Prepare your witnesses and their testimonies. You must all agree on the basic facts.

2. Prepare evidence: weapons, medical reports, radar speed checks, photographs. All such evidence must be presented the day of the trial.

3. Prepare counterarguments and counterwitnesses. Use your surprise witnesses to counter the strengths of the other team.

*Student’s name is a pseudonym.

References


Author

Donald F. Hones has a PhD in curriculum, instruction, and educational policy from Michigan State University and has taught ESL/EFL in the United States, Ecuador, and Spain. Currently, he prepares teachers to work in the fields of ESL and bilingual education at the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh, in the United States. He is a past contributor to TESOL Journal and coauthor, with Shou Cha, of Educating New Americans: Immigrant Lives and Learning (Lawrence Erlbaum, 1999).
Using the World Series to Practice Name Recognition

Luther Killebrew

One of the most difficult aspects of listening in a foreign language for beginning-level students is the recognition of names, especially in a society as diverse as the United States. When listening, students want to give meaning to every word. However, in the case of names, there is no meaning other than the identification of a person. Furthermore, most names are of foreign origin and bear no resemblance to English words. When listening, it is important for students to be able to identify names, for if a student can recognize a word as a name, and that name is unimportant for overall comprehension, it can be ignored. Conversely, if a word is not recognized as a name, it has great potential for creating a barrier to overall comprehension. I designed this activity to help my university students in Japan practice name recognition. The overall objective is not to teach students specific names in English. Rather, it is meant to give students the opportunity to become used to picking out names in normal discourse.

The Activity

Few things are as closely associated with U.S. culture as the Fall Classic, otherwise known as the Major League Baseball World Series. This televised event is also a good opportunity for students to practice listening for names in English. While watching the World Series, students are asked to complete two tasks. First, they are asked to fill out a lineup card, which lists the names and positions of players in the order that they bat. At the beginning of the game, the starting lineups are announced. Although the lineup is announced too fast for students to totally complete their card, it is a good beginning, and the first chance for students to hear the names of the players. Then, as each team bats, students will have numerous opportunities to fill in missing names. As players are involved on defense, students can fill in positions. The second task is to record the names of batting players who make outs, the defensive players involved, and how the out was made—as a strikeout, ground out, or fly out.

Preparation

The only preparation required is copying handouts and letting the students know when the game is going to be played. It may be a good idea to prepare a room where students can watch a game together. The game can be videotaped and shown during class or students can do the activities as homework, or for extra credit, while watching a live broadcast.1

Why Use the World Series?

Baseball is the ideal sport for this activity for several reasons. First, there are as many as 20 players involved in the game (the 9 defensive players and a designated hitter if the game is in an American League ballpark). Second, unlike other sports, there are very few substitutions, especially early in the game. Therefore, only the original 20 players will be mentioned by the announcers. Third, due to the pace of baseball, there are many opportunities to hear individual player’s names in a short amount of time as they bat, and there is also enough time to record information between at-bats. In other sports, like basketball or NFL football, the pace of the game is too fast, and any number of players may be mentioned in a single play. Finally, baseball is a good introduction to U.S. culture. This activity can be used with any baseball game, but the World Series is especially good. Unlike regular season games, there is excitement from the first pitch. Students can hear it in the voices of the announcers and the reactions of the crowd.

Caveats

This activity is not suitable for all students in all situations. First, it requires students to have some knowledge of baseball. For students from countries with strong baseball traditions, notably Japan, Korea, Taiwan, Cuba, and many Latin American countries, this is not a problem. However, for students with no background in the sport, there would likely be too much confusion as the game is played to complete the assigned activities. Also, even if a student comes from a baseball-playing country, they may have no interest in sports and resent the activity. For these reasons, an alternate activity, such as a movie or news broadcast, might be a better option.

Follow-Up Activities

Several activities can be done in conjunction with this name-recognition exercise. For instance, students unfamiliar with baseball can be paired with someone knowledgeable...
Sample Exercise: World Series Name Recognition

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Batter</th>
<th>How did they get out?</th>
<th>Fielder(s)</th>
<th>Position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4.</td>
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<td>5.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How did each team make their outs in each inning? Fill in the correct information.

Top of the 1st

Bottom of the 1st

Note: Continue outs list for each inning, for example, for Top of the 2nd, Bottom of the 2nd, and so on.

Current Events Portfolios

Nicole King

ESL students are often reluctant to read authentic English texts (e.g., magazines, newspapers) because they feel the material is beyond their reach. Current events portfolios, however, help students focus on the main points of such texts and draw their attention to what they do understand—rather than what they do not understand—thereby increasing their confidence significantly. Once students realize they are, in fact, capable of reading and understanding these authentic texts, they will discover a wealth of interesting and entertaining information at their fingertips and a continuous source of second language input.

Procedure

1. Have students select a short newspaper or magazine article that is of interest to them. I require the article length to be at least half a magazine page or its equivalent, if from a newspaper. Bring a sample of sources to class, including local and regional newspapers, magazines of general interest, and magazines on specific topics, such as sports or music. Encourage students to bring their own texts from home. By allowing students to generate the content of the course through their text selection, they become more empowered readers.

2. Ask students to read their articles at home and complete the first four sections of a portfolio worksheet that you have prepared (see sample worksheet, p. 36). In Section I on Important Vocabulary, students should write a few words that are important to understand...
ing their articles, identify the parts of speech, and give the meaning of the words in the context of their articles. For example, one of my students who selected an article on a proposed trigger-lock for handguns chose trigger as one of his vocabulary words. He identified it as a noun in this context and defined it as a lever or button that is pushed to fire a gun. In this section, students may use dictionaries if they wish, but they must write their definitions using words that their classmates can understand easily.

Section II, Important Information, is designed to help students identify the key ideas in their articles by responding to wh-questions about their content. They should then use this information to write short synopses of their articles in Section III, the Summary section.

In Section IV, the Opinion section, students give their opinions of, or reactions to, the articles. They also ask my opinion about some aspect of their articles or about a related topic.

Section V, the final section of the worksheet, is left blank for my use. Here I write comments to the students about their articles and worksheet responses. This section is explained further in Step 3 below.

3. Once a week, ask each student to submit a new article (original or photocopy), accompanied by a worksheet. I skim the articles, read the worksheets, and respond in the last section. My responses are based on the content of the articles and the questions posed by the students on the worksheets. I sometimes give my reasons for agreeing with the students’ opinions or sometimes play devil’s advocate. For instance, the student who wrote about the article on trigger-locks did not think that the devices were a good idea because if he needed to use a gun to defend himself, he would want to be able to do it as quickly as possible. I agreed with him on this point, but added that carrying guns does not necessarily keep people safe because their own guns are often used against them. If a student has misunderstood any major point, I also try to provide clarification. Each student keeps a collection of his or her articles together in a folder throughout the course.

4. Approximately every 2 weeks, group students into threes to discuss their articles. They are not to discuss every article they read, but should choose one recent article that they feel would interest their group. Students should take turns spending approximately 7 min each discussing their articles. For the first 2 min, they should summarize their articles. For the next 2 min, they should add their opinions on the topics of their articles. For the final 3 min, they should lead minidiscussions of their topics and elicit feedback from the other two group members. The student who chose the trigger-lock topic, for example, questioned his classmates about gun-control laws in their home countries and asked whether they would vote for or against a trigger-lock law.

I usually offer several general questions as examples for students who feel unsure about leading the discussion. This 7-min process is repeated so that every student has a chance to lead a group discussion. Finally, the groups disband and all students write a brief summary of the feedback they received from their classmates on the articles that they presented.

School students or adults as well. I generally lead the students through completing the worksheet the first time using an article that we all read together. This helps to clarify my expectations for the assignment.

Conclusion

This activity is designed to be an ongoing process that increases students’ confidence and skills with each article they successfully digest and discuss. They are motivated to find high-interest articles because the success of their group discussions depends on their choice of articles and on their effective communication of the content.

Author

Nicole King is currently an instructor in the Intensive English Program at Pittsburg State University in Kansas, in the United States. She has also taught ESL in San Diego, California, and EFL as a Peace Corps volunteer in Chad, in Central Africa.
Creating Standards Sheets for Writing Assignments

John M. Levis

Teaching is primarily a classroom activity, but it also occurs with no students present at all. Nowhere is this more true than in teaching writing, where responding to papers effectively is crucial for student learning. As for many teachers, teaching writing is a major part of my job, although it is not my specialty. My initial reaction to a batch of papers is usually a case of grader’s block, a problem I address through specially developed, criteria-based grading sheets that reduce grading time while helping me be fair and thorough. These sheets take some time to develop but save far more time by eliminating the need to rewrite comments for repetitive difficulties on student papers.

Using grading criteria for writing is not new, and grading rubrics are widely available on the Internet (e.g., http://www.odyssey.on.ca/~elaine.coxon/rubrics.htm). However, I have found that most rubrics are not easily adaptable to assignments that do not fit the essay mold, such as expressive or technical writing. This is largely because most rubrics attempt to include all key characteristics for a general format. They also often do not even fit common writing tasks addressing specific writing and grammar issues. The relative seriousness of common errors in English has long been discussed (Burt & Kiparsky, 1972; Hughes & Lascaratou, 1982; Lane & Lange, 1999; Sheorey, 1986), but it is unfortunately difficult to specify them for writing in general. Different writing tasks require different structures and strategies.

This teaching tip will describe how to develop criteria for writing assignments, then tell how criteria-based grading sheets make grading easier and help students be more responsible for their learning.

Developing Grading Criteria

1. To develop a grading sheet, evaluate three student papers, take notes, and add any common problems to the grading sheet. The setting assignment above usually reveals difficulties in using nouns referring to general classes (e.g., Students often avoid difficult teachers). Therefore, I have added the following comments to the grading sheets:
   • Generic nouns are not expressed with the correct form.
   • The + plural noun (e.g., The international students) does not express a generic meaning.

2. Next, evaluate three more papers, take notes, and add any common problems to the grading sheet. The setting assignment above usually reveals difficulties in using nouns referring to general classes (e.g., Students often avoid difficult teachers). Therefore, I have added the following comments to the grading sheets:
   • Generic nouns are not expressed with the correct form.
   • The + plural noun (e.g., The international students) does not express a generic meaning.

3. Next, read three more papers, testing the criteria again. If new patterns emerge, add them to the developing list, such as:
   • Sentences are not connected effectively through the use of old information.
   • The introduction should start with a general context for the research.
   • Relationships between sentences should be clearly signaled by logical connectors.
   • Use nouns that refer to general classes (generic nouns). These are most commonly written in plural form without the (e.g., students) or with an indefinite article (e.g., a student).
   • Connect the ideas in different sentences by starting each sentence with repeated or old information from the previous sentence.

Rewriting the Grading Criteria as Writing Goals

To extend the usefulness of the criteria, they can be rewritten in goal-oriented language (for future assignments) to help students self-evaluate:

• The introduction should start with a general context for the research.
• Relationships between sentences should be clearly signaled by logical connectors.
• Use nouns that refer to general classes (generic nouns). These are most commonly written in plural form without the (e.g., students) or with an indefinite article (e.g., a student).
• Connect the ideas in different sentences by starting each sentence with repeated or old information from the previous sentence.

Benefits for Teachers

Grading criteria can save a huge amount of time, especially for assignment types used in subsequent semesters. I grade at least twice as fast with grading sheets because common difficulties are already written out. This allows me to use written comments more sparingly and effectively, either to point out a pattern or to focus a student’s attention on correcting the more important mistakes. Having specific criteria also makes grading revisions far less time-consuming because students turn in grading sheets with the revised paper. Moreover, having assignment-specific criteria makes grading fairer by helping teachers concentrate on the key crite-

Sample Grading Criteria for Research Setting

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name: A. Ahmed</th>
<th>Grade (Draft):</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>(Revision):</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**KEY DIFFICULTIES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(Draft)</th>
<th>(Revision)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You have not explained how the research topic is related to a more general topic likely to be understood by the reader (e.g., “The effectiveness of teaching with computers” is related to the widespread use of computers in society).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old information is not placed in a way that makes it easy to connect sentences.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Logical connectors needed to make relationships between sentences more clear.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generic nouns are not expressed with the correct form.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The + plural noun (e.g., The international students) does not express a generic meaning.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**OTHER COMMENTS**

You have several good ideas, but it is not clear how your ideas connect together. Also, you need to use generic nouns with a correct form to express general ideas.
Decreasing the Likelihood of Stragglers in Your Class

W. Browder Swetnam

It is 10:02 a.m., you have taken attendance, and you have just begun the introduction to the day’s lesson when the stragglers arrive: “Sorry teacher, for late,” or perhaps they say nothing at all. They take their seats as they arrive, one by one. Meanwhile, the class is momentarily distracted with each latecomer, and those who come late miss the introduction altogether as they shuffle through their backpacks for books, notebooks, pen, and eraser. “Sorry, what was that first part again?” they ask.

Reducing Tardiness

Tardiness is a common problem in just about all classrooms, and ESL classrooms are no exception. However, there are some steps that teachers may take to decrease the chances that their students will arrive late on a consistent basis:

1. Always be prepared for class before the students arrive. All materials should be ready to go and the objective(s) for the day written on the board. If students can see that the teacher is always prepared at the beginning of class, they will see that it is to their advantage to arrive for class on time.

2. Begin the class at the appointed time whether all of the students have arrived or not.

3. Grade students on their participation in class. Make part of the participation grade dependent on timely arrival to class. For example, award three points for arriving on time, one point for arriving late, and zero points for an unexcused absence.

4. Make certain that students understand that they are expected to arrive on time for class and that timeliness is a part of their grade for the class. Stipulate this in the class syllabus.

5. If you make use of a cooperative learning setting in your class, assign a group participation grade to the members of the group as a whole based on timeliness, preparedness, and participation. For example, if all members of the group are on time, prepared for class, and participate well, they each get three points. However, if one member of the group is late, they each get only one point. This puts group pressure on the stragglers to arrive on time for the class.

6. Give special material rewards to students who, at the end of the term, have perfect attendance, including no tardies. These can be small gifts, treats, music, or some set of special privileges.

7. Talk with students who arrive late after class. Ask them about their tardiness and how they can avoid arriving late in the future. Perhaps the students have a transportation or scheduling problem, in which case you might help them come up with a solution. A note or phone call to the parent(s) may also be helpful.

Recommended Reading


8. Create a sign-in sheet or timecard system so that students are actively responsible for their own attendance being recorded, rather than passively waiting for attendance to be taken by the teacher.

**Conclusion**

Of course, not all of the suggestions above can be implemented at once, but several can be made part of the class rules, of which students should be made well aware. Perhaps the most important point is that, whichever of these suggestions you decide to use in your class, make certain that the students understand them thoroughly at the beginning of the course. It is, indeed, unfair to expect students to follow such rules and to penalize them for not doing so if they do not understand the rules to begin with. Discuss these issues with your students the first day of class, and with students who join the class later, so that there are no surprises. These suggestions will not entirely eliminate the straggler problem forever, but they may help to lessen it.

**Author**

*W. Browder Swetnam has taught in Mexico, Nicaragua, and Romania. Currently, he teaches in the Intensive English Program of Elmira College, in the United States.*

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*How to Buy a Home in the United States* was developed by the Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL) and the Fannie Mae Foundation. CAL is an educational institution in Washington, DC, with more than 35 years of experience preparing curricula and instructional materials for English as a second language learners. The Fannie Mae Foundation transforms communities through innovative partnerships and initiatives that revitalize neighborhoods and create affordable homeownership and housing opportunities across America.
The successful admission of international students to U.S. universities is often based on their performance on the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL). Because of the importance of this test, many international students focus their preparation for attending English-speaking universities by preparing for the TOEFL. As a result, many English language programs throughout the world have special classes designed to prepare students for the TOEFL. In most cases, these preparation courses use a test preparation guide as a basis for instruction. In this review, we present four sets of criteria that can be used to evaluate TOEFL preparation materials. We have used these criteria to evaluate 12 popular TOEFL preparation texts and one CD-ROM (see the tables on pages 42-43). We also include a cross-referenced annotated bibliography. Although the criteria and the annotations are somewhat subjective, we feel that they offer a principled means by which to evaluate and select TOEFL preparation materials that can be individualized to reflect specific program needs.

During the 1999-2000 academic year, the TOEFL will be administered in three different forms: two paper versions and one computer version. The institutional tests, which are actually old international TOEFL tests, will still be offered on paper. Likewise, new international TOEFL tests, which will be modeled after recent international TOEFL tests, will be offered on paper, but only in 13 countries (e.g., Japan, Thailand, Korea, Taiwan, China, India). International TOEFL test-takers in the United States and many other countries will take the new computer-based test (CBT). The two paper tests share roughly the same format, but the CBT format is radically different from that of the two paper versions. As the TOEFL evolves from the paper to the CBT version, TOEFL preparation instructors, students, and materials developers should note the changes made to ensure familiarity with current test formats and to avoid outdated material that does not provide adequate preparation for the TOEFL.

Therefore, those who select and evaluate TOEFL preparation materials must consider the relevance of the lessons that are presented and the soundness of the testing strategies with respect to these actual TOEFL versions.

Although 12 of the materials reviewed here focus on preparation for the paper test, the criteria used to evaluate them may also be used to evaluate the CBT preparation materials as well. However, materials reviewers should note that the paper test preparation materials may not be appropriate for CBT preparation, and the one CD-ROM reviewed here would not be suitable for preparing students for the paper version.

**The TOEFL Materials Evaluation Criteria**

The four tables contained in this review are used to compare TOEFL preparation materials across a range of categories. The first three tables follow the structure of the TOEFL and include the following categories: listening comprehension, structure and written expression, and reading comprehension. The fourth table is a summation that presents an overall evaluation of the materials based on test preparation and user friendliness. If a book receives a low score for one of the categories, it does not necessarily mean that the material is inappropriate for use. A low score, however, indicates a shortcoming or potential problem. For example, if an instructor is teaching a TOEFL class that is focusing on providing students with significant amounts of listening practice and information about listening strategies, the instructor could look at the first table containing criteria to evaluate listening comprehension and see that the Cambridge Preparation for the TOEFL (1996) and Cracking the TOEFL (1997) are exceptional in these two areas, whereas the TOEFL Test Preparation Kit (1995) and the TOEFL Sampler (1998) would not be as effective in meeting the instructor’s goals. Similarly, if the course focus was on strategies, the instructor could look across the tables to see which books included strategy instruction.

**Conclusion**

The information presented in the tables is extremely useful in narrowing the choices of books and allows text selection to be more principled. Through the use of this information, instructors can better select texts that accomplish their instructional goals. By adapting the categories to meet specific program goals, these criteria can be used with a variety of materials and situations. The annotated bibliography also provides a rich source of information about the books that are currently in use.

**Annotated Bibliography**


   This book is ideal for the TOEFL preparation teacher who likes to plan each lesson based on error analysis. Each answer in the book’s eight practice-test answer keys has a detailed explanation of why the right answers are right as well as why each wrong answer is wrong. Furthermore, the answer keys cross-list the grammar problems found in the second section of each practice test with the 170 grammar explanations and example sections covered in the book. However, the teacher who prefers to teach from the book, section by section, may find it difficult and impractical to cover the entire book within the duration of a course.

   This book is designed for high intermediate- to advanced-level EFL learners. However, despite its thoroughness, the book contains limited practice exercises related to each problem explanation. Therefore, the author recommends that intermediate-level students use *Barron’s Practice Exercises for the TOEFL* first.


   This book contains 32 practical objectives for learning and recognizing the language that is encountered on the TOEFL. Each objective is accompanied by numerous practice exercises. *Building Skills for the TOEFL Test* is set apart from other TOEFL preparation textbooks by its focus on language skills and strategies. For example, some of the listening objectives include “recognizing language functions” and “deriving meaning from gram-
of the books reviewed, this one contains particularly sound advice for the reading section of the TOEFL because students are encouraged not to read entire reading passages on the TOEFL.


This textbook contains the most comprehensive review of idioms and vocabulary in context exercises of all the material reviewed. Sound advice is provided for all three sections of the TOEFL. The book is nicely designed for use in a 45- to 60-hr course and contains 48 lessons, three full-length practice tests, three section tests, several minitests, and several minilessons.


### Evaluating TOEFL Preparation Materials for Listening Comprehension

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MATERIALS</th>
<th>Validity/</th>
<th>Amount of</th>
<th>Similarity to</th>
<th>Modeling of</th>
<th>Sound quality of recording</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>usefulness of listening strategies</td>
<td>Listening Practice</td>
<td>TOEFL items</td>
<td>TOEFL-like intonation</td>
<td>recording</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Barron’s</td>
<td>B</td>
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<td>4. Cliffs</td>
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<td>5. Princeton</td>
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<td>6. Heinle &amp; Heinle</td>
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<td>7. Kaplan TOEFL</td>
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<td>8. Longman Introductory</td>
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<td>12. TOEFL Kit</td>
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<tr>
<td>13. TOEFL Sampler (CD-ROM)</td>
<td>N</td>
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</table>

### Evaluating TOEFL Preparation Materials for Structure and Written Expression

| MATERIALS | Validity/| Amount of | Similarity to | Clarity of | Integration of |
|-----------|----------|-----------|---------------| grammar | grammar into |
|           | usefulness of grammatical strategies | grammar practice | TOEFL items | grammar explanation | reading and writing instruction |
| 1. Barron’s | B | D | C | B | D |
| 2. King & Stanley | A | B | C | B | A |
| 3. Cambridge | B | B | C | B | B |
| 4. Cliffs | A | A | C | B | B |
| 5. Princeton | A | A | C | B | D |
| 6. Heinle & Heinle | B | B | B | B | C |
| 7. Kaplan TOEFL | B | B | B | B | D |
| 8. Longman Introductory | B | B | B | B | C |
| 9. Longman Preparation | B | B | B | B | C |
| 11. NTC’s Preparation | A | B | B | A | B |
| 12. TOEFL Kit | N | D | A | N | N |
| 13. TOEFL Sampler (CD-ROM) | N | D | A | N | N |

(See p. 43 for Key.)
Evaluating TOEFL Preparation Materials for Reading Comprehension

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MATERIALS</th>
<th>Validity/usefulness of reading strategies</th>
<th>Amount of reading practice</th>
<th>Similarity to TOEFL items</th>
<th>Similarity to TOEFL reading passages</th>
<th>Emphasis on improving reading speed</th>
<th>Emphasis on learning vocabulary from context</th>
<th>Amount of vocabulary practice</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. Barron’s</td>
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<td>2. King &amp; Stanley</td>
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<td>6. Heine &amp; Heine</td>
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</table>

Overall Evaluation of TOEFL Preparation Materials

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MATERIALS</th>
<th>Validity/usefulness of test-taking strategies</th>
<th>Amount of test practice</th>
<th>Emphasis on teaching idioms and colloquialisms</th>
<th>Extent of explanation in answer key</th>
<th>Cross-listing of practice answers with lessons</th>
<th>Overall likeness to actual TOEFL tests</th>
<th>Level of student friendliness</th>
<th>Level of teacher friendliness</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Barron’s</td>
<td>B</td>
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<td>6. Heine &amp; Heine</td>
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<td>8. Longman Introductory</td>
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<td>9. Longman Preparation</td>
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This kit is a useful tool for providing authentic materials for preparing students for the paper version of the TOEFL test. A copy of an actual retired TOEFL test is included in this kit, along with several practice exercises written by ETS. However, there are no lessons and few question explanations.


This CD-ROM is the first of its kind to introduce the new computerized TOEFL test format. The TOEFL Sampler provides a tutorial on how to use the software and practice questions with review material to explain correct answers. This CD-ROM is the most authentic material available for preparing students to take the computerized TOEFL.

Note
1 To obtain a copy of the questions used to generate the tables, contact Randi Reppen at randi.reppen@nau.edu or John C. Herbert at z98622@kwansu.ac.jp.

Authors
John C. Herbert recently graduated from the MA in TESL program at Northern Arizona University, in the United States, and is currently teaching in the Language Center at Kwansei Gakuin University in Nishinomiya, Japan. He has 5 years of experience preparing students for the TOEFL and other standardized English tests in the United States and Japan.


Evaluation Key:
A Indicates this characteristic is stronger than in most other textbooks and is noteworthy
B Indicates a positive characteristic in a textbook that might be shared with other textbooks
C Indicates that a particular characteristic is present but not to an above-average extent
D Indicates that a characteristic is poorly represented, or not represented at all
I Indicates that insufficient data were available for judging this characteristic
N Indicates that the textbook was not designed to include this characteristic
REVIEWS

Many books about language and teaching English strike me as being less interested in helping me as a teacher understand what I am doing in the classroom and more interested in propagating the wonders of linguistics. In About Language, Scott Thornbury has created the first work that uses linguistics to help teachers learn about language rather than to expand the community of linguists. About Language is written for teachers or novice teachers of English, both native and nonnative speakers, who do not have a background in language analysis. The aim of the book is to give teachers a short introduction to various aspects of the study of language and practice in using this knowledge in a typical teaching activity.

The book begins with a short introductory chapter on why knowledge about language awareness is important for language teachers. The rest of the book is divided into two main sections. The first contains 28 short chapters on a series of tasks exploring various aspects of language, such as intonation, modality, determiners, and conversations. The second section has corresponding chapters that give the answers to the tasks as well as sensible commentary on possible solutions to the tasks. The book is easy to use because the short chapters (4-6 pages on average) are specific and contained. For readers who are familiar with the material, the tasks will help make their knowledge explicit and illustrate how to make connections between the knowledge about that aspect of language and their teaching. Readers who are unfamiliar with a particular aspect of language can easily refer to the section of the book dealing with that aspect for more in-depth commentary on the subject.

One excellent feature of the book is that each chapter offers a wide variety of tasks, including identification tasks (e.g., Find examples of X), categorization tasks (e.g., What is like X? What is not like X?), matching tasks (e.g., Match examples X with definitions Y), interpretation tasks (e.g., Explain all examples of X), evaluation tasks (e.g., Is this exercise useful for practicing X?), and application tasks (e.g., Design an exercise to practice X). For example, in the vowel chapter (p. 27), readers are asked to look at a series of couplets such as

Who’s that knocking? Could it be the Duke?
Give me a lantern—I’ll go and take a look.

They are asked to pick which couplets rhyme in their dialect. For example, the couplet above rhymes in Scottish English. Then readers are given two different couplets with either all the vowels or all the consonants missing. The task is to see which is easier to read and to conclude which are more important for understanding speech. (The consonants win hands down.)

Readers will appreciate how well knowledge about language is integrated with knowledge of teaching. For example, Chapter 2 discusses the different kinds of competencies one needs to speak a language (e.g., competence in vocabulary, syntax, discourse) and uses the idea of these competencies to examine ways of making a syllabus for a language course. There are also numerous tasks that ask the reader to analyze some learner language or typical activities from standard EFL/ESL textbooks and activity books—an exercise rarely, if ever, presented in other books on language. For example, in my favorite exercise, readers are given a sentence such as, “I asked her if she was living here, and she said no, she was staying” (p. 6). They are asked to explain what pronunciation problem led to the misunderstanding in the sentence. By using tasks and activities like this, the book succeeds in getting the reader to think about language as well as how it is used by learners.

The only drawback to the book is that although it is an excellent introduction to language analysis, it offers teachers very little information about what they can do if they want to learn more about language and theories of language and language learning. The book contains a reading list at the beginning, but it is short, incomplete, and one of the few sections that has no commentary.

Overall, however, About Language is a gem of a book. It skillfully integrates work on language and language teaching, includes a variety of meaningful tasks, and contains insightful and down-to-earth commentary. Perhaps most important, it manages to be brief without being superficial.

Author
Nat Bartels has worked mainly as an English teacher and occasionally as a Spanish teacher in a variety of countries for slightly more than a decade. Currently, he is pursuing a doctoral degree at the University of Leipzig, in Germany.
ESL and Literacy: Strange Bedfellows?

The question of what the term literacy means to ESL educators was recently discussed on NIFL-ESL (retrieved from the World Wide Web on October 4, 1999), an e-mail discussion list moderated by staff at the National Clearinghouse for ESL Literacy Education (NCLE) at the Center for Applied Linguistics, in Washington, DC, in the United States.

One educator who was writing a grant application wondered, “Why do people think ESL is lumped with literacy? Lumped with education I can see. But I can only understand the link to literacy by Congress’s definition of literacy.” Before long, from many states away, one of her peers chimed in: “Why is ESL/ESOL lumped with literacy at the adult level? ESL, by definition = English, SECOND language. ESOL = English for SPEAKERS of Other Languages.”

For several subscribers, the association was not necessarily problematic. One explained the political history as such:

Whether or not adult ESL/ ESOL should be funded together with adult literacy/basic skills education, I believe they were joined together when Congress passed the Adult Education Act in the mid-1970s. This and subsequent legislation, including the current Workforce Investment Act, provided funding for adults (ages 16 and up) who were out of school and lacked a high school diploma. That included (and includes) those who want to learn English as a second or other language (whether or not they have formal education acquired in their first language), native speakers of English who have very low reading and writing skills, and all adults who lack basic skills or secondary level skills.

One subscriber painted a picture of the changing concept of literacy:

I have another take on why ESL is part of literacy instruction. Over the past 5-15 years, definitions of literacy have been broadened, and basic skills including communication in the “official” or “primary” language of a state has been included in how we define literate people. We have come to view literacy as it applies to real life tasks in the home, the community and the workplace. In this view of literacy, ESL is indeed a component. I think maybe it becomes less confusing when we think of basic skills education, rather than literacy instruction.

Another subscriber addressed the pragmatic side of the issue:

Although I object to lumping ESL needs in with literacy needs because so many of our adult ESL students are certainly not illiterate in any traditional sense, still, in adult ESL you take money where you can get it, and a strong case can be made for including ESL needs under the literacy umbrella.

Like most discussions on the list, this one was not neatly resolved. Many participants expressed strong views on the complexities and ongoing challenges of teaching and managing ESL programs, as the following excerpt indicates:

Some of our most motivated learners have been those who have a strong educational background in their native language and who are at the intermediate or advanced levels in English. Moreover, to complicate the mix, those with low literacy in the first language are sometimes quite advanced in English speaking and listening skills and often have strongly motivated, academically oriented goals similar to those with well-developed first language literacy. We’ve struggled over whether these populations—who are often equally disadvantaged economically—should be deprived of services in order to provide more services to those with low literacy and a life skills orientation.

For information on joining the NIFL-ESL discussion list, please go to NCLE’s Web site at http://www.cal.org/ncle or send e-mail to ncle@cal.org.

Fran Keenan
National Clearinghouse for ESL Literacy Education (NCLE)
At the Center for Applied Linguistics

Submissions for Heard On the Web may be sent by regular mail to:

Marjorie Terdal
Editor, Heard On the Web
TESOL Journal
Department of Linguistics
Portland State University
P.O. Box 751
Portland, OR 97207 USA

E-mail submissions may be sent to: marjorie@nh1.nh.pdx.edu
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.

Readers consider the following factors when evaluating a manuscript. The manuscript:

1. analyzes, presents, or discusses current ESOL methodology, curriculum materials and design, teacher development, literacy, bilingual education, and classroom inquiry and research in an original way, and in terms accessible to classroom teachers
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
5. is well written and organized and conforms to the specifications of the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (4th ed.)

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 Fitzgerald Gersten, Editor, Tips From the Classroom, TESOL Journal, USIS-AmEmbassy Tunis, Department of State, Washington, DC 20521-6360 USA.

Readers Respond: Readers Respond offers you a forum to comment on or react to any article, perspective, or tip from previous issues. Submissions should not exceed 500 words. Submit two copies of your Response to the editor of TESOL Journal, Stephen J. Stoynoff, at the address listed at the end of these guidelines.

Reviews: Reviews should evaluate recently published ESOL classroom materials such as textbooks, curriculum guides, computer programs, or videos. Reviews should be no longer than 700-750 words. In the body of the review, include

1. a brief summary of important features of the material (without commentary)
2. an evaluation of these features, with the merits/demerits of the material
3. a discussion of any wider ESOL pedagogical issues in the material
4. possibly a discussion relating the material to ESOL methodology, theory, or current trends
5. an explanation as to why the teacher/reader would want to use the material (or not)

Send two copies of your review to Mary Lee Field, Reviews Editor, TESOL Journal, 147 W. Kenilworth Avenue, Royal Oak, MI 48067 USA.

Heard On the Web: Heard On the Web encourages contributions from TJ readers who regularly monitor or participate in electronic discussion lists in any field related to teaching ESOL. To submit, readers may (a) monitor their own professional discussion list and send in a question together with a summary of the exchange on the topic (please include the Web site address and the date on which you retrieved the information), (b) respond to a question printed in a previous issue of TJ, or (c) go to the Web site listed at the end of a particular contribution, join the on-line discussion, and report on the experience. Submissions should not exceed 500 words.

Send two hard copies of your submission to Marjorie Terdal, Editor, Heard On the Web, TESOL Journal, Department of Applied Linguistics, Portland State University, P.O. Box 751, Portland, OR 97207 USA, or an electronic version to marjorie@nhl.nh.pdx.edu.

Special-Topic Issues: The autumn issue of each volume will be devoted to a special topic. 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. Issues will generally contain commissioned articles as well as those solicited through a call for papers.

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1. All submissions to TESOL Journal should conform to the requirements of the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (4th ed.), which can be obtained from the American Psychological Association, Book Order Department, Dept. KK, P.O.
2. All submissions to TESOL Journal should be accompanied by a cover letter that includes a full mailing address and a daytime and evening telephone number. When available, authors should include a fax number and an e-mail address.

3. Authors should include two copies of a brief biographical statement (on a separate sheet, in sentence form, maximum 50 words).

4. Submit copies, not the originals, of student artwork or black-and-white photographs. Originals will be requested if the submission is accepted.

5. Manuscripts submitted to TESOL Journal cannot be returned, so authors should be sure to keep a copy for themselves. Submissions will be acknowledged within 1 month of their receipt.

6. Manuscripts submitted to TESOL Journal may not have been published previously and may not be under consideration for publication elsewhere.

7. The editor of TESOL Journal reserves the right to make editorial changes in any manuscript accepted for publication to enhance clarity or style. The author will be consulted only if the editing has been substantial, though authors will be able to review their articles prior to publication.

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9. TESOL Journal retains the right to edit all manuscripts that are accepted for publication.

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A. You have followed the human subjects review procedure, if there is one, established by your institution, if you work for one.

B. If you are not bound by an institutional review process, or if it does not meet the requirements outlined below, you have complied with the following conditions.

Participation in the Research

- You have informed participants in your study, sample, class, group, or program that you will be conducting research in which they will be the participants or that you would like to write about them for publication.
- You have given each participant a clear statement of the purpose of your research or the basic outline of what you would like to explore in writing, making it clear that research and writing are dynamic activities that may shift in focus as they occur.
- You have explained the procedure you will follow in the research project or the types of information you will be collecting for your writing.
- You have explained that participation is voluntary, that there is no penalty for refusing to participate, and that the participants may withdraw at any time without penalty.
- You have explained to participants if and how their confidentiality will be protected.
- You have given participants sufficient contact information that they can reach you for answers to questions regarding the research.
- You have explained to participants any foreseeable risks and discomforts involved in agreeing to cooperate (e.g., seeing work with errors in print).
- You have explained to participants any possible direct benefits of participating (e.g., receiving a copy of the article or chapter).
- You have obtained from each participant (or from a participant’s parent or guardian) a signed consent form that sets out the terms of your agreement with the participants and have kept these forms on file (TESOL will not ask to see them).

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- If you will be collecting samples of student work with the intention of publishing them, either anonymously or with attribution, you have made that clear to participants in writing.
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de Mejia, Anne-Marie, Bilingual Storytelling: Code Switching, Discourse Control, and Learning Opportunities, Vol. 7, No. 6, pp. 4-10.


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The Autumn 2001 special issue of TESOL Journal will focus on the use of sustained content for language learning. The role of content in language classes has frequently been discussed in ESL/EFL literature. In these discussions, researchers, materials writers, language teachers, and other specialists have focused on (a) the type and quantity of content to integrate into language classrooms and courses, (b) ways to adapt instruction to make content accessible to language learners, and (c) models of content-based instruction in the context of ESP, EAP, adjunct, sheltered, and theme-based curricula and courses. Some, but not all, of these models use sustained content (i.e., a type of curricula in which a single content area, such as psychology, earth science, or history, serves as a carrier topic and context for language learning). Much of the current literature focuses on the role of content-based instructional models for the acquisition of content. In contrast, this special issue will focus on sustained content for the acquisition of language.

The purpose of this special issue of TESOL Journal is to bring together a variety of perspectives on sustained content for language learning from a range of settings, including ESL/EFL elementary, secondary, university, IEP, adult, and private language school contexts. Possible contributions might include, but are not limited to, the following topics:

1. Discussion of the theoretical underpinnings of sustained content for language learning.
2. Examples of instructional frameworks or organizational structures that support sustained content for language learning.
3. Examples of models of sustained content use, broadly defined as ways in which sustained content can be used in a variety of settings.
4. Examples of curricula, based on sustained content, that showcase how sustained content is implemented in a particular setting or context.
5. Descriptions of courses that use sustained content, with special attention paid to the activities and types of assessment used within those courses.
6. Classroom-based research on one or more aspects of sustained content for language learning (e.g., learning outcomes, needs identification, instructional processes, communication patterns, learner satisfaction, teacher roles, materials selection).
7. Reconceptualization of various types of content-based curricula with a focus on sustained content for language learning.

The topics listed above are meant to be illustrative, not restrictive or mutually exclusive. A submission may address several of the areas listed, in addition to other related areas. Submissions are welcome in all departments: perspectives, feature articles, tips from the classroom, and reviews. All submissions must conform to regular submission guidelines, with the exception that three copies are requested of all submissions, regardless of the department.

The deadline for submissions is January 5, 2001.

Send queries and material to:
John Murphy, Department of Applied Linguistics and ESL, P.O. Box 4099, Georgia State University, Atlanta, GA 30302-4099 USA.
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