



The ORTESOL Journal

Volume 23, 2005

Features

Reflections on the Gaps between Teaching and Learning

Understanding the Role of Reading in Source-Based Writing

Seeing Fluency First Through the Kaleidoscope of Grammaring

Self-perceptions of Non-Native English Speaking Teachers of English as a Second Language

Columns

In This Issue

Teaching Notes

Authentic Tag Question Practice for Avid Environmentalist Teachers

Kinesthetic-Figurative Methods for Coaching Pronunciation

The Pronunciation Conference

From the Bookshelf: *Vocabulary in Context*

Oregon Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages

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Contents

The ORTESOL Journal

Volume 23, 2005

Features

Reflections on the Gaps between Teaching and Learning2

Thomas Scovel, San Francisco State University

Understanding the Role of Reading in Source-Based Writing9

Julie Haun, Portland State University

Seeing Fluency First Through the Kaleidoscope of Gramming 17

Martha Iancu, George Fox University

**Self-perceptions of Non-Native English Speaking Teachers of English as
a Second Language26**

Katheryn Long, Clackamas Community College and Mt. Hood Community College

Columns

In This Issue 1

Teaching Notes

Authentic Tag Question Practice for Avid Environmentalist Teachers35

Reuel Kerzet, Portland State University and Portland Community College

Kinesthetic-Figurative Methods for Coaching Pronunciation36

Talisman Saunders, Portland State University

The Pronunciation Conference37

Patricia Pashby, University of Oregon

From the Bookshelf: *Vocabulary in Context*39

Bill Walker, University of Oregon

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In This Issue

Bill Walker & Deborah Healey
ORTESOL Journal Editors

This issue of *The ORTESOL Journal* marks the transition not only to a new look but also to a new approach. Past issues featured two or three primary research articles, sometimes from first-time authors. The newly reinvented *ORTESOL Journal* departs from this tradition, focusing on classroom-oriented articles by established professionals sharing their teaching practices and classroom experiences. The four feature articles are firmly anchored in the literature but not heavily referenced. Each encourages readers to reflect on their own practices. Three Teaching Notes and one book review round out the issue. The book review is unique, referring you to a link on the ORTESOL web site where you can read an extensive synopsis of the entire book.

Tom Scovel, noting that students don't always learn what we think we are teaching them, offers suggestions for teaching what students need in ways that are easy for them, rather than teaching what's easy to teach. He gives suggestions for creating better writing prompts and suggests that writing teachers de-emphasize subordination, allowing students to sometimes write the way they speak. He reminds us that humans are "biologically designed to acquire language via speaking and listening," not by reading and writing. He makes the case that certain grammar points would be easier for students to acquire "if teachers help students rely on their ears."

Julie Haun presents a collaborative approach to research paper writing. She has discovered that when students work together to read and write about a common topic they are more motivated and successful. As students develop competency in discussing the issues, they read more deeply, become more curious, and "transform their knowledge base" so that they can more easily organize their notes, synthesize the material, and support a thesis in a coherent, well-supported research paper.

Martha Iancu finds Fluency First to be a highly effective technique, offering students a way to become effective readers and thence good writers. When it comes to focus on form, she points out connections to Diane Larsen-Freeman's principles and practices of grammaring, i.e., grammar as a process and a skill rather than a body of knowledge that too often remains inert in the learner.

Katherine Long looks at how non-native speakers perceive themselves as English teachers. The three non-native speakers who participated in her study did not think of themselves as exhibiting the stereotypical negative teaching behaviors that educators may believe they have, citing "cultural factors and theories about language acquisition" as reasons for not conforming. Long offers practical, effective suggestions for teacher educators and supervisors based on her study.

In *Teaching Notes*, three ESL professionals describe their successes in the classroom. Reuel Kurzet explains how to teach tag questions in an authentic context while protecting the environment by recycling outdated handouts. In her pronunciation classes, Talisman Saunders illustrates ways to model sounds kinesthetically, using arm and hand movements to mimic mouth movements. Patricia Pashby shows us how she prepares her students for conferences to work on their pronunciation and come up with a plan for regular practice.

Bill Walker's *From the Bookshelf* article explores a new way of reviewing a book. After he offers a brief overview of Norbert Schmitt's *Vocabulary in Context*, in which he challenges us to reexamine our cherished beliefs about vocabulary teaching, Walker invites us to read a much longer, in-depth synopsis of Schmitt's book online at ORTESOL's web site, www.ortesol.org.

Reflections on the Gaps between Teaching and Learning

Thomas Scovel
San Francisco State University

One of the classic conundrums studied by psycholinguists is the well-known fact that people do not necessarily hear what is said, even when both interlocutors share the same language. Of course this is a common complaint of spouses and friends, but psychologists can document the problem in extremely specific ways, even in situations where the listener clearly understands virtually every word in the sentence that is spoken. Thus, in a famous experiment on one aspect of this puzzle called the phoneme restoration effect (Warren, 1970), researchers taped a group of similar sentences all of which had the initial consonant of the sixth word erased, so that the subjects heard sentences like the following pair.

1. It was found that the _eel was on the axle.
2. It was found that the _eel was on the orange.

When asked to write down every sixth word that was heard in sentences like these, almost none of the listeners wrote down “eel,” the actual English word that was spoken, but filled in a word which appropriately fit the context of each of the sentences spoken. Thus, virtually all of the listeners wrote *wheel* for the sixth word in (1) and *peel* for the corresponding word in (2), demonstrating that even when carefully attending to what is said, speakers of a language do not always accurately perceive what is said. The much more relevant conclusion, of course, is that comprehension is an active and dynamic process and is shaped by contextual cues as well as by the schematic knowledge of the listener or the reader.

I choose this very specific research finding as an introduction because if native speakers of a language who are instructed to listen carefully to short, simple sentences can so easily mis-perceive what they hear under laboratory conditions, it should come as absolutely no surprise to those of us who

teach ESL that there can be frequent and telling gaps between what we think we are teaching in our classes and what our students think they are learning! Obviously, there are enormous differences between the findings of one short, tightly controlled experiment on a narrow aspect of comprehension and a diverse and dynamic class of students struggling to acquire a multiplicity of skills in a second language over a period of several months.

Individual differences among students in terms of motivation, aptitude, and native language and literacy backgrounds greatly affect their ability to understand and acquire what we present to them and their responses to what we require they do in any given lesson. However, we can help our students acquire English by improving our communication with them, carefully focusing on what they most need to learn instead of what simply is easy for us to teach and test. Nevertheless, Warren’s experiment, as well as many similar psycholinguistic studies, clearly demonstrates that there is no easy link between what we teachers say and teach and what our students hear and learn.

Although I will touch upon a few illustrations of specific ways students might mis-perceive what we teach, in this article I promise not to dwell on microscopic examinations of linguistic comprehension but look instead at some much larger issues which appear to me to interfere with the transmission of what we teachers deem important to teach in contrast to what our students might actually need to learn. In particular, I would like to reflect on three topics of professional concern for all of you who teach academic ESL in North America, although I believe these ideas are also applicable to English language teaching in many of the wider contexts found across the globe.

A few prefatory observations are needed before I share these reflections. First, it is a pedagogical truism that teachers traditionally focus on material that is easy to teach and to test. The major reason why the Grammar-Translation method is still extremely popular in foreign language classes in the United States and in EFL classes around the world even in this new postmodern, post-methodological millennium (Kumaravadivelu, 2003) is because it is relatively simple and sure to teach and to assess. In short, Grammar-Translation demands very little from the teacher and, I might add, a great deal from the student. It is equally true that language teachers tend to focus on field independent details because, once again, they are easy to transmit and to verify.

These comments do not mean that I believe that all traditional teaching practices should be discarded, however. For example, I see many advantages in employing dictations as both a teaching and an assessment activity in my college level ESL grammar classes, although I never emphasize or grade either spelling or punctuation. Yet I am surprised at how often ESL teachers seem to believe that evaluating spelling and punctuation is important in the grading of dictations. Why, for example, do so many teachers fret about the natural confusion students display when writing the contraction *it's* for the possessive pronoun *its*? Obviously because it's so easy for a teacher to teach and test and so difficult for a student to learn to spell!

I am not arguing that all teaching and assessment should be confined to field dependent, holistic, synthetic, and top-down processing, but to me, a reflective teacher (Richards & Lockhart, 1994) needs to step back from time to time and look at the larger landscape, and that is why the three topics I have chosen here deal with the broad and general and not with the narrow and specific.

As a final introductory observation, I would like to acknowledge that both culturally and rhetorically, teachers in North America seem to prefer a dualistic approach to issues. However, I firmly believe that popular dichotomies such as the one I have already drawn (what teachers choose to teach versus what

students need to learn) only superficially deal with the complexity of “what goes on inside and between people,” to use Stevick’s succinct summation of classroom interactions (Stevick, 1998, p. xii). Just as the perception of whether a speaker said *wheel* or *eel* depends on a wide variety of contextual and schematic factors, so too is the relationship between teaching and learning enmeshed within a web of complicated variables. In brief, students and teachers share much more in common than they realize, and there are many continua, not dichotomies, that characterize our daily encounters with our students.

Contrastive rhetoric and the teaching of academic writing

Kaplan (1966) originally speculated that just as the linguistic structures of an English learner’s mother tongue contrast and thus interfere with the acquisition of English, so too might learners’ expectations about writing and composition in their mother tongue interfere with their learning how to compose

intralinguistic (or intracultural) variables play a more prominent role than intercultural factors do in shaping student learning

in English (for instance, how to organize a personal letter or an essay). Contrastive rhetoric has evolved considerably from early simplistic and speculative generalizations about presumed cultural differences (for example, Chinese are circular in their rhetorical style whereas Americans get straight to the point) and now embraces a range of diverse variables, including contrasts among different genres within a single language (Connor, 2002).

For those of us who teach ESL composition classes in academic settings, I think it is important not to fall back into that initial and comfortable belief that most, if not all, of our ESL students’ problems are a result of the contrast between their mother tongue writing style and the way we write in English or, much more accurately, the way we are expected to write in American academia. I am not trying to argue that intercultural factors are irrelevant when teaching ESL composition students. However, by and large, just as second language acquisition research revealed decades ago about the etiology of ESL grammatical errors, intralinguistic (or intracultural) variables play a more prominent role than intercultural factors do in shaping student learning. These same intralinguistic

or intracultural variables also affect the way ESL students learn to write and compose. Beginning with this premise then, here are two ideas I believe illustrate the value of focusing less on what teachers may believe to be important and more on what students probably need.

The first example deals with choice of prompts for compositions, especially for essays used to assess students' writing abilities or to place students into multi-level academic writing programs. The topics chosen usually reflect the interests and concerns of ESL teachers, who tend to be educated in the humanities, very often in English literature. ESL students in North American universities, almost without exception, major in disciplines outside the humanities: accounting, business, computer science, engineering, pre-nursing, etc. In the two decades which I have taught an ESL grammar for writing class at my own university, I can recall only one instance of an ESL student in my class whose major was in the College of Humanities, and she happened to major in her mother tongue, Japanese.

students are asked to demonstrate mastery of writing ... on a topic for which they have virtually no schematic knowledge

Given this contrast then, it is astounding that the vast preponderance of topics chosen for writing prompts are based not on fields about which ESL students might harbor some academic knowledge, but are topics far beyond their ken. Students are asked to demonstrate mastery of writing, the most difficult linguistic skill in their second or even third language, on a topic for which they have virtually no schematic knowledge. One of the starkest illustrations of this mismatch comes from my own department a few years ago when the English language ability of foreign graduate students was assessed by their ability to respond to a prompt that went into great detail, some of it inaccurate, about a problem in selecting science textbooks for a hypothetical high school district in California. Just imagine! These non-native speakers, who had just come to the United States, were asked to argue cogently for one solution over another on a topic about which they knew almost nothing. Incidents like this are a classic illustration of teacher-centered, not student-centered assessment.

The second example is subtler and perhaps more open to honest debate. Again, it illustrates the impact of contrastive rhetoric in its more contempo-

rary and eclectic meaning. This problem is not confined solely to ESL composition classes but is also frequently an issue in the teaching of writing to native speakers, especially in elementary and even high school classes. Invariably, composition teachers emphasize subordination (hypotaxis) over coordination (parataxis). In academic writing, the former is lauded as mature and engaging, and the latter is condemned as immature and boring. I am not arguing that ESL students should never be taught how to combine clauses through subordination, but I think that subordination could be introduced more slowly and certainly more reflectively.

Coordination certainly predominates in speech, and for ESL students and especially younger native speakers, it is obvious that the ample use of parataxis in writing stems from the fact that beginning academic writers write the way they speak. But is this necessarily bad, especially if we consider that academic compositions are only one genre of writing and that subordination

does not predominate in all genres? Further, adopting the process approach, shouldn't ESL students first be encouraged to get their thoughts out into print and then fine tune them into a style more appropriate for academic discourse? The message that parataxis is unattractive, whether voiced explicitly or implicitly to the class by their ESL teacher conveys the criticism that the students' initial attempts to write are not appropriate, irrespective of the content or organization. Again, a major reason why subordination receives such a strong emphasis in academic writing classes is because it's easy for the native speaker ESL teacher (usually an experienced academic writer) to teach, and it's very easy to assess since it is so difficult for non-native speakers to master! I would challenge ESL writing teachers to reflect on ways they could de-emphasize the teaching of subordinate structures, especially in beginning composition classes and thus help encourage their students through the very challenging process of learning to compose academic discourse in a foreign language.

Grammatical triage

Asking teachers to practice grammatical triage may seem doubly startling. At first blush, it might

appear imprudent to adopt a term from emergency medical care to describe pedagogical practice, but I have intentionally chosen this term to evoke a strong metaphor of students' linguistic needs. The acquisition of a new language is always demanding, but the complex morpho-syntactic structures of English, especially in contrast to most East and Southeast Asian languages, which have very few noun or verb inflections, puts an inordinate learning burden on the majority of our ESL students. Rather than adopt the view found in virtually all grammar books and espoused, at least implicitly, by most ESL teachers that all ESL students need to master all the grammar of English, at least eventually, the metaphor of a hospital emergency room and the notion of triage stands as a stark alternative.

Here, I hasten to point out the selection is not among the student "patients" but among the structures to be taught—which grammar points should be given immediate and high priority and which might not even be taught at all? The less obvious way in which the notion of grammatical triage might prove surprising is the focus on grammar, which is sometimes viewed as either irrelevant or perhaps even antithetical to the goal of communicative competence. But as Canale and Swain (1980) were wise to emphasize in their original paper on this subject, structural or grammatical competence is an integral part of any communicative approach. The key point to stress, of course, is that other competencies are equally important (for example, pragmatic or sociocultural competence). In the past twenty-five years, many TESOL authorities have argued for the role of focus on form in communicative classrooms. So, to return to the idea of triage, it is indeed necessary to ensure that students learn grammatical structures, but, I would argue, teach the most relevant grammatical forms first and some not at all.

How then do teachers decide which structures demand immediate priority and which can be introduced later? Even more vexing, how can they identify which forms merit no attention at all and need never be introduced? Until fairly recently, if these decisions were made at all, they were based on the individual teacher's intuitions about language usage, a fragile yardstick, even if the teacher was a native speaker. Now, however, thanks to corpus

linguistics and discourse analysis, there are many references from which to make informed decisions about which grammatical structures are used in various types of discourse. Granted, there is a danger in relying exclusively on this data, something authorities like Widdowson (2003) have been quick to criticize. If teachers are prudent about applying this information to the particular needs of their own individual classes, I believe grammatical triage can be employed in a way that helps students acquire what is important to learn rather than what is easy to teach or to test.

Let me illustrate with one pedagogical practice I have adopted for my lower level grammar for writing class at San Francisco State University which, I assume, is similar to most initial academic writing courses in ESL programs in North America. Like many university ESL classes on the West Coast, the large majority of my students are Chinese (mostly Cantonese and Taiwanese speakers) with speakers of other East and Southeast Asian languages represented among the remaining members of the class.

Although these languages are radically different from each other in many ways, the Chinese languages, Japanese, Vietnamese, etc. are all unlike English in having very few syntactic inflections. Take verb phrases as one example. Virtually every one of my students has trouble learning how to mark English tense and aspect in both their speaking and writing.

As mentioned above, the typical grammatical syllabus teaches all the tenses of English as if they were all equally important and equally used (Azar, 2000), a process my poor students have already suffered through several times in their EFL education in their home country. But unlike speakers of Spanish or other languages more similar to English, these students come with a worldview that verbs are largely unmarked, so they have been constantly struggling with a panoply of tense forms. Even the supposedly simple past is difficult for them, irrespective of the distinction between regular and irregular verbs. Why mark every verb with a suffix reminding the reader that the event took place in the past when time words and/or context clearly specify the time?

Knowing that my students approach the English tense system with this question, and based on corpus

teach the most relevant grammatical forms first and some not at all

data indicating that native speakers rarely use the past perfect (Biber, Johansson, Leech, Conrad, and Finegan, 1999), for my ESL class, I forbid the use of the past perfect; that is, not only do I not teach it, but students cannot use it in any of their work (e.g., I cross out the “had” in their writing so that the past participle of their past perfect verb becomes a past tense). Besides helping to focus their attention on a single past form in their writing and speaking in class, this practice also helps reduce the overuse of the past perfect, a tendency I have noticed especially among my Japanese and Korean students (for example, when asked “Have you ever climbed Mt. Hallasan?” the answer is “*Yes, I had climbed it when I was in high school.”).

My goal is to help students allocate their limited time with me to perfecting the use of the past tense, and then we move on to using the present perfect, another common way of marking past time. Even if they never learn to use the past perfect effectively in later classes, they will not differ significantly from native speakers in their tense usage. However, if their inconsistent use of the past tense goes untreated, so to speak, and if I persist in teaching them all of the tense forms equally, there is the strong possibility that my students will emerge from my one semester class overwhelmed with the same grammatical problems they had when they entered.

Learning grammar by listening

We are blessed to live in a world where the majority of people are at least functionally literate and where all of the developed nations are served by an educated and literate citizenry. When I was born in China, the vast majority of people there could neither read nor write, and literate Chinese were the rare exception. Now, the situation is reversed, so much so that hundreds of millions of Chinese are learning to become literate in a second language—English. As ESL teachers, we are naturally committed to promoting literacy, and many of us teach courses specifically devoted to reading and writing.

Literacy is so ubiquitous in our educational culture and social milieu that we often forget that its counterpart, what we might call orality, is frequently

neglected, especially in academic ESL classes (Wilkinson, 1999, uses a similar term, “oracy” but with a slightly more restricted meaning). Again, it is so easy and comfortable to teach and test skills like spelling or punctuation that we completely forget that humans are biologically designed to acquire language via speaking and listening, and that all of us first learned our mother tongues by mouth and ear and not by hand and eye.

Again, I do not want to support the dualistic notion that ESL teachers must choose between promoting either written or oral skills, but I do think that it is healthy to consider whether the former are too heavily emphasized, especially as the major medium for learning vocabulary and grammar. To put it tersely, are we pedagogically imprisoned by our own literacy? Or, as I like to challenge my graduate

students who are learning to become ESL teachers, why is it that little children, who have not yet learned to read and write and are cognitively immature, pick up the difference in pronoun

movements between two-word verbs like *turn it off* and *think about it* but my ESL college students who are smart enough to major in mechanical engineering still come up with expressions like **think it about* or even **turn off it*?

The contrast between child first language and adult second language acquisition is a complex issue, of course (Scovel, 2000), but one way we can help our ESL students is to help them acquire English by ear as well as by eye. This, quite naturally, is the strategy that illiterate little children rely on when acquiring two-word verbs: they intuitively attend to which word is stressed in the two-word phrase and pick up the rule that if the first word is stressed (the verb), then it’s like any other verb and the pronoun must follow (*think about it*), but if the second word (the preposition or particle) is stressed (*turn it off*), then it sounds better if the pronoun comes between the verb and the preposition. Of course this process of implicit learning evolves over time and depends on massive amounts of comprehensible input, etc.

The point I wish to emphasize here is that children rely on what they hear, and especially in an ESL setting, our students have easy access to spoken English and opportunities to hear these spoken

Grammatical triage can be employed in a way that helps students acquire what is important to learn rather than what is easy to teach or to test.

patterns. Adult ESL learners (and their teachers) have been conditioned to learn (or to teach) the rules of English by relying almost completely on their eyes. In doing so, they miss many opportunities to pick up important mor-phosyntactic patterns which depend largely on how words are pronounced. Focusing on these spoken contrasts often involves more study and attention on the part of the teacher, and they are also more challenging to assess. As I think the illustration I just cited indicates that patterns like these are extremely useful for students to acquire, so they are more important for students to learn than other things that are simply easy for teachers to teach and test.

Let me share one more illustration of the benefits of learning English grammar by ear. Among the most difficult patterns for teachers to teach and the most frustrating for students to learn are those which apparently allow two different ways of saying the same thing. Almost invariably, students will mix one pattern with the other or have trouble learning the precise difference between the two. Such is the case with dative alternation in English (Yule, 1998) where students are confronted with a seemingly random word order alternation as in the following sentence pair, and overgeneralize to create a typical ESL error as in the third sentence:

1. Susan gave the package to Robert.
2. Susan gave Robert the package.
3. *Susan gave to Robert the package.

The historical explanations for dative alternation in modern English are not relevant here, but it should be noted that its use is confined to a relatively small set of verbs, like *give*, and most of the verbs follow the pattern illustrated in the first sentence as in example (4):

4. She delivered the package to him and reported this to her boss.

Let us return then to the question of how little children quickly pick up the two different ways of marking dative for verbs like *give* in (1) and (2) without incorrectly overgeneralizing patterns like (3), and yet, at the same time, how they learn not to apply dative alternation to other verbs they hear in English, as in the examples in (4). It is a bit more complicated than simply stating that monosyllabic verbs take dative

alternation but multisyllabic verbs do not, because (5) and (6) are an obvious exception to this:

5. Susan offered another glass of milk to her daughter.
6. Susan offered her daughter another glass of milk.

Once again, listening for stress is important in picking up this pattern. Of course one syllable verbs take dative alternation, but if the verb has two syllables, if it is Anglicized, so to speak, and is stressed on the first syllable, then it follows the same pattern as one syllable verbs. That is why *offer* is similar to *give* and why the verbs in (4) are not. This rule also explains the patterning of even new words in English; notice how *fax* and *email* both take dative alternation and are thus similar to *give* and *offer*.

There are exceptions and complications to the neat explanation just given (see Yule, 1998), but my basic argument still holds: complicated grammatical structures which are very difficult for ESL students to learn can be made much easier to acquire if teachers help students rely on their ears.

This approach is especially amenable in an ESL environment where students can be encouraged to seek and enjoy opportunities for listening to comprehensible input outside of the class-room. Because two word verbs and the dative are used so frequently in both spoken and written English, these structures are also important for students to acquire and to automatize. In this way, they can move on to focus on more important things than structural accuracy, which, after all, is only the first step toward genuine communicative competence (Canale & Swain, 1980).

Conclusion

In a thoughtful book which deals with a wide range of social and political classroom issues but which focuses primarily on systematic change, Clarke (2003), has a chapter on coherence, which he believes is central to teaching and defines in the following manner:

I posit “coherence” as the ideal to strive for, the situation that exists when our actions are perfectly aligned with our

We completely forget that humans are biologically designed to acquire language via speaking and listening

intentions. ... This implies that we must constantly examine our own behavior to make certain that we are being true to our ideals, and it requires us to study the individuals for whom the messages are intended so that we can adjust our efforts for better communication. In this conceptualization of teaching, it is the teacher who does the most of the changing. (p. 129)

I would be the first to admit that my actions, even limited only to those that transpire in the classroom, are not always in alignment with my intentions, and rarely perfectly so, but I like the goal that Clarke has challenged us to achieve. Furthermore, I trust that the intent of my ideas here is aptly captured in the second part of this quotation. If we study our students, the individuals for whom our messages are intended, and adjust our pedagogical efforts in order to better communicate with them, then I am confident that the gap between what we are trying to teach and what our students are attempting to learn can indeed be narrowed. Hopefully, our students will be changed because of these efforts, and just as hopefully, we will be transformed as well.

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Understanding the Role of Reading in Source-Based Writing

Julie Haun
Portland State University

One important responsibility of ESL instructors in university settings is to guide their students to go beyond writing based on personal experience to writing that requires them to interpret, analyze and synthesize information from a variety of sources for use in their writing (Pearson Casanave, 1995; Carson, 1993; Grabe & Kaplan, 1996; Jones, 2001, Heyden, 2001; Pally, 2000; Powell & Ponder, 2001). To meet this need, ESL programs often require students to complete a course in research writing.

The first class I taught in academic writing was typical of those offered in many ESL programs. The students entered my class with a background in writing essays based on personal experience and opinion as well as some experience writing personal responses to short articles. In my class, students were expected to select a topic, locate relevant sources from the library and then write an eight to ten page paper using the sources to support the thesis they had developed. Together, we toiled away on this task for the entire term.

I taught research writing this way for several years. Each term, a handful of students would thrive. A much larger percentage struggled and all but failed as they went through the lonely process of identifying an appropriate topic, trying to find useful yet manageable sources, and then figuring out what to do with all the information contained in all those sources. It was clear that an intermediate step was necessary: something that would allow them to experience the process of using sources to build their essays without the added complexity of having to locate, understand, and use those sources on their own (Powell and Ponder, 2001). I developed a writing assignment that

used readings I had selected, based on a theme of my choosing. To create this intermediate step, I needed to rethink my strongly held belief that in order for writing to be meaningful to students, they need to write about subjects of their own choosing.

What I discovered, as this approach to the research writing process evolved from a single assignment to an entire course, was that working as a group to read and write about a common topic over the course of six to ten weeks can actually be exciting, useful, and less intimidating for students.

I have also discovered that by asking our students to jump from personal essay writing to individual research projects we miss an important opportunity to help students understand and develop their role as readers in the writing process. In her article "Reading for writing: Cognitive perspectives," Joan Carson (1993, p. 85) writes

A handful of students would thrive. A much larger percentage struggled and all but failed

Reading and writing are equally important in the process of a literacy event in which the most significant product is not the writing per se, but the meaning that has been created by the reader/writer from both comprehending and composing texts.

When the student's first experience in source-based writing is the independent research project, the reading process is primarily a private act. Yet, *how* students read their sources and interact with the ideas in those sources is vital to their success as writers.

My colleague Nancy Dollahite and I have developed an approach to introducing source-based

writing through guided research papers. These are short (three to five pages) papers based on information from three to six articles, selected by the teacher, on a common theme. The guided research paper enables students, as a learning community, to experience how writing from sources is a process of transforming knowledge for use in their own writing. The first stage of the writing process, when students read and acquire information from sources for use in their writing, is broken down into three steps: *exploring*, *focusing* and *organizing*. Each of these steps plays an important role in facilitating the students' conceptual understanding of themselves as active readers in the writing process.

Exploring

Students begin the writing process by exploring a topic. I select a theme and three to five readings that provide a variety of perspectives. The readings range from one to five pages in length and are drawn from magazines, books, university texts and web sites. Once we have completed a short discussion activity to introduce the theme, I give students one of the articles to read as homework and ask them to highlight any ideas that capture their interest as they read. When we next meet, we discuss the article together. Each student selects and reads aloud one of their highlighted passages. They explain what they think the passage means, share the reason for their interest, and consider why the author included the idea in the article.

As students talk, I listen, paraphrase their ideas, ask questions if I don't understand or want more information, and point out connections between the ideas students are discussing. This process, which can take the entire class period, is repeated for each article. As students become more comfortable with the process and familiar with the issues associated with the topic, they begin to make their own connections between the ideas of their classmates and the authors we are reading.

Often as a follow up to the discussion, I ask students to write a written response to one or two ideas of their choosing from an article. These re-

sponses include a paraphrase of the idea(s) they have selected and an explanation of why they think this idea is important or interesting. I never begin a discussion by asking students to identify the author's thesis and supporting points, nor do I assign any type of comprehension questions. Sometimes, after we have discussed an article, I may ask students to write a summary of the article, but often I don't.

Students regularly select and discuss sentences that represent key points the author is making. If they don't, it doesn't worry me, as long as their understanding of the ideas they select is accurate, and they are establishing a connection to the reading and discussing issues related to our topic. After several years of using this strategy for learning about a topic, I still find myself pleased and excited by the fact that these discussions yield such useful and interesting information about the students, about the topic, and about the material we are reading.

they begin to make their own connections between the ideas of their classmates and the authors we are reading.

What do students learn during this exploratory stage? First, students are building a knowledge base and context for their writing. As students read, discuss and write responses to the articles, they are acquiring and beginning to

articulate the ideas they will use to write their paper (Carson, 2000; Leki, 1993; Powell and Ponder, 2001). Goldstein and Conrad (1990) found in their research on advanced ESL writing that students are often not able to provide sufficient and appropriate support in their writing because they do not have enough content knowledge to fully develop their topic. Simply exploring the writing topic in an open, reader-based manner is the first step toward encouraging students to become active readers absorbing and analyzing information related to their topic.

In his article "Reflecting on commentary: Mind, intellect, and a use of language," Rudolph Bernard (2000) writes that in order for students to read and write about a topic, they must be intellectually engaged. He argues that the best method for achieving this engagement is by having the students, rather than the teacher, initiate the points of discussion within an article. Sustained interest in a topic, he points out, comes from allowing students to develop their own pathway to understanding the ideas in an

article and to thinking about the topic in a more general manner.

In addition to providing an opportunity for students to develop a personal interest in the topic, these exploratory discussions spark a communal interest that enriches the topic. By discussing the articles as a group, the class develops what Powell and Ponder (2001) call a “collective curiosity” about the topic. As students contribute their interpretations of and reactions to the ideas in the text, they add to the collective understanding of the topic. Thus, they create a far richer understanding of the material than a single student could bring to the reading. Students also begin to listen to each other and offer their own ideas more easily when they realize the goal is simply to explore the issues (Bailey, 2000; Blanton, 1993; Johns, 1993).

A further advantage of the reader-based approach of the exploration stage is that the momentum created as students become more actively engaged in the topic makes it possible to assign more complex readings than students might be willing to tackle if they were reading the material on their own (Bernard, 2000; Blanton, 1993). Reading texts that offer more depth and complexity can translate later into more substantive material for the students to include in their writing.

The third benefit of this exploratory stage is subtle, powerful, and absolutely essential for helping students develop as writers. Students begin to see themselves as builders of knowledge rather than simply summarizers and paraphrasers of other people’s ideas. Blanton (1993, p. 235) writes that “students need to move away from seeing the text as a self-contained document where everything to know about the text lies on the page in black and white. As Leki (1993) notes:

Writing teachers, in their effort to help students unlock the meaning of a reading, often rely on comprehension questions or summarizing activities that end up contributing to students’ misperception that the purpose of reading is to “ferret out the meaning the author put there (p. 17)

*these exploratory discussions
spark a communal interest
that enriches the topic*

When students do not understand their role in assigning meaning to text, they are severely handicapped when they sit down to write an essay that requires them to analyze, synthesize and transform information for use in their own writing.

With repeated opportunities to choose the points to discuss in a reading and how to respond to those ideas, students learn that their interpretation of a text is significant and has value. During my class discussions, I begin on the first day by talking about the students’ and the author’s ideas on equal terms. For example, I might say, “So, Kazue, you’re saying ‘X’ which I notice is similar to what Smith (the author) is saying here in paragraph 4. Or, “it sounds like several of you disagree with Smith’s point about Y, but your reasons for disagreeing are different.”

At the end of a discussion, or as a summary of a discussion in a previous class, I might say “In our discussion, there seemed to be four key ideas that interested the group. As we move on to discuss the next article, let’s see what, if anything, Douglas has to say about these ideas.” These four key ideas may be related to the author’s thesis, or they may be ideas that grew out of the discussion of passages that were not central points in the article. The point is that students see their ideas combining with those of the authors they are reading to form a collaborative portrait of their writing topic.

Focusing

The second step in the writing process is to narrow the writing focus to one specific aspect of our topic. We begin this by developing a research question. The research question is an important tool that guides students as they read their sources, as well as providing a clear focus for students as they write drafts of their paper later in the writing process. For at least the first paper of the term, the entire class typically uses the same research question. The students may work together to develop this question or the teacher may develop one, being mindful of the ideas students seemed most interested in during their exploratory discussions.

For example, in a class exploring globalization, the teacher had tentatively developed the following research question: How is globalization affecting the

environment? However, after completing the open readings of the sources, the teacher changed the research question to more closely reflect the interests of her students: How is globalization affecting worldwide health?

When students work from the same research question, it makes class-wide discussions more meaningful, facilitates in-class activities and, as the writing process evolves, offers students a powerful lesson in voice as they see the many ways their classmates choose to answer the research question. The papers students generated from the research question on globalization and health varied widely. They included, among other topics, globalization and fast food, globalization and women's health care, and globalization and changing medical training.

Once the research question is established, students are ready to complete what we call a *focused reading*. Using the research question as a focusing tool, students reread each source, highlighting any information that might be useful in answering their question. We suggest to students that they read quickly without pausing to analyze each passage before they decide whether or not to highlight it. Once they have reread all their sources, they can return to each piece of highlighted information to develop a deeper understanding of its meaning. In addition to highlighting the information, the students may also make separate notes of these passages.

In small groups, students discuss the information they have highlighted and how they think it is related to the research question. As students share their focused reading notes, they may decide to add or delete from their own notes based on the comments of their classmates, or they may remain steadfast in their particular vision of how the passages they have selected relate to the research question.

As with exploring, the first step in the writing process, this second step, focusing, helps develop vital concepts about reading for students. First, students begin to see that sources serve different functions at different stages of the writing process. During the exploration stage, students read texts to develop a basic understanding of the issues related to

a topic and to consider their own reactions to those ideas. In this second step, students are reading the same sources in order to find information that might help answer a question.

Students see that their purpose for reading greatly influences how they read an article. For example, during the focused reading, students may skip entire chunks of an article that are not relevant to their question. In her article "Teaching writing IS teaching reading," Barbara Kroll (1993, p. 69) comments:

writers must understand that the 'purposes' for reading also vary from reading event to reading event; different purposes will lead to very different ways in which students undertake and accomplish the reading tasks.

When students complete their focused reading, they notice that some articles contain many highlights while others may have only one or two relevant pieces of information. As this occurs students begin to understand

that they can move away from the robotic approach to reading in which they incorrectly believe that the only way to read any piece of writing is to go through the entire text, line by line, word by word (Carson, 1993; Leki, 1993, Pally, 2000). Grasping this concept can go a long way toward reducing the intimidation and panic students feel when faced with a stack of reading material.

In addition to understanding that their purpose for reading will influence how they read a text, students also learn that it is their own writing task that dictates what information within a reading is useful or relevant and which is not. When working with students on source-based writing, I look forward to the moment when this conceptual light bulb goes on. Students move beyond the paralyzing belief that they can only use an idea from a source if it matches the author's use of that idea. Spivey (1990) notes:

readers who are reading to write attend selectively to content that may be relevant to their own written text, even though that content may not be what is emphasized in the [original] text itself.

students begin to see that sources serve different functions at different stages of the writing process

This is a continuation of the concept, introduced during the exploring stage, that the student plays a significant and active role in assigning meaning to a text as it is read. In order to successfully analyze and synthesize information from sources, students must be given permission to transform the passages contained in an article for their own use (Bailey, 2000; Carson, 1993; Flower, 1990, Leki, 1993; Spivey, 1990).

This concept is highlighted when students see that their classmates may select entirely different passages during the focused reading to help answer the same research question. A single passage will have different values for each person who reads it, as well as changing in value as a single student reads and rereads material, each time adding to the knowledge structure they bring to the reading process and thus altering the meaning of text. Once students have completed a focused reading of each article, developed a set of reading notes, and discussed their notes with their classmates, they are ready for the next step in the writing process.

Organizing

This third stage of the writing process involves sorting and organizing the information students have gathered from their sources. By this time, the students have read each source at least twice. They have also created a set of notes from their focused reading that they feel will help them answer the research question. Now they need to figure out how the information in their notes is related. In other words, they need to analyze and synthesize this information so that it forms a cohesive outline of ideas. While there are several ways to accomplish this, this article will describe just one method that we call *brainstorming a list*. This method has two steps: brainstorming and categorizing. The two steps are usually completed in one class period.

First, at the beginning of class, students quickly review their notes and then set them aside. In small groups, students brainstorm any ideas they have that answer the research question. These ideas are written as words and short phrases. As students are working together, their ideas contribute to and inspire the ideas of others. Once they have generated a written list of ideas, they are ready to begin the

second part of the process. In this step, students read through their list and, as a group, begin numbering all similar items on the list with the same number. Students begin by numbering the first idea on the list as number one. They move to the second idea and discuss whether it is related to or different from the first idea and number it appropriately as either one or two. They continue down the list until they have discussed and numbered all the ideas.

For example, Table 1 below shows a list that was developed and then numbered by students answering the research question “What makes a successful city?”

As students work through this process they will find themselves explaining what they feel each idea means and why one idea belongs or does not belong with another idea. They will discover, among other things, that not all the ideas on the list fall into a category. These ideas students can cross off their list. They discover that some ideas work better if they are broken up into two ideas or if two ideas are combined

into one. Once the list is numbered, students then describe or name each category. In the example of successful cities, students described the three categories as follows:

#1 Strong social structure

#2 Solid economy

#3 Good physical and cultural environment

Students complete the entire sorting process without looking at the readings or even their notes. In fact, in the several years that I have used this method for synthesizing notes, students have never asked to look at their sources or notes. While the process can feel chaotic or messy when students first begin, the sense of ownership students feel regarding the information and how they have organized it is powerful. Groups share with each other the categories they have developed and take notes as they listen to the very different ways students have thought about the information. I tell them they are welcome to either use one of the organizing frameworks developed in class or to repeat the process at home and come up with their own rough outline of ideas to answer their research question.

In this stage of the writing process, students move into viewing the information from sources as

A single passage will have different values for each person who reads it

part of their own knowledge base. Carson (1993, p. 96) writes that “critical literacy occurs when a person not only understands information but transforms it for a new purpose.” This occurs when students are able to knowledgeably discuss with their classmates their writing topics, such as what makes people take risks, not because they’ve read an article on the causes of risk-taking, but because they’ve read articles on the topic of risk, discussed ideas with their classmates, considered their own knowledge and, from all of this, generated a list of possible reasons.

Further evidence that students have transformed the information from their sources into their own knowledge base is their ability to discuss these ideas without referring directly to the articles. In these first three stages of the writing process, students have had opportunities to discuss the idea from the readings using their own words. Each time they do so, their understanding of the ideas becomes stronger and their ability to articulate them grows. By the time students write their first draft, their struggle to paraphrase ideas is considerably lessened. Rather than the teacher extracting specific sentences from the articles for students to practice paraphrasing, the process of paraphrasing is embedded in the context of exploring, focusing and organizing ideas.

paraphrasing is embedded in the context of exploring, focusing and organizing ideas

Conclusion

To summarize, students begin the writing process by exploring, as a group, the ideas in each of their sources in an open, reader-based manner. Students not only begin to acquire information for use in their writing, but they also begin to see their own ideas and their reactions to the ideas in the readings as significant. By working as a group to share and explore ideas, they enrich the topic and increase their willingness and ability to understand complex read-

ings. In the focusing step, students use a research question to guide their second reading of the sources. In this stage, they begin to recognize that their role as writers influences how they read a text and what information within a text is relevant. Finally, in the organizing step, students begin to analyze and synthesize the information from their sources into a rough outline. It is at this stage that students transform source information for their own use and begin to recognize their control over the information they have acquired from their reading.

Once students complete the first three steps of the writing process, they are ready to develop their thesis and write the first draft of their essay. As writing teachers, we are eager to get on with the actual writing and so, it is easy to gloss over these initial steps –foisting much of the work involved in reading sources onto the students as solitary assignments to be completed as homework. The writing teacher may tell her students that they “have a week to read their sources and develop a thesis statement.” Or, in an effort to efficiently move students through the source material, teachers may assign sets of comprehension questions for each reading and then provide short periods for students to discuss their answers with each other.

I have come to believe; however, that how students learn to interact with their sources greatly influences their perception of themselves as critical thinkers, readers and writers. As writing teachers, we play an important role in facilitating this powerful conceptual understanding.

Notes

1 See Tony Silva’s 1997 article, “On the ethical treatment of ESL writers” and Nathan Jones (2001) article “Why assign themes and topics to teach

writing? A reply to Tony Silva,” for discussion on student choice in selecting writing topics.

Table 1

1- strong neighborhoods	3-attractive urban design	3-major league sports team
2- good economy	3- cultural amenities	3- arts community
1- volunteerism	1-affordable housing	2- safe
3- interesting places to go	3- good air and water quality	1- strong sense of self
1- good schools	3- natural beauty	3- dynamism
2- diverse industry	2- flexibility	2- variety of people
1- active citizens	3- easy to get around	1- good colleges

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Seeing Fluency First Through the Kaleidoscope of Grammaring

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A typical criticism of whole-language instruction is that it ignores grammatical correctness, thus producing students who “can’t put together a decent paragraph or essay” (Ryan, 2002). However, best practice includes a focus on form and, in fact, accuracy is woven throughout the fabric of a good whole-language course (Dosch, 2002). This is true of the whole-language approach called Fluency First. The initial emphasis is on developing fluency, but attention then shifts to clarity and finally correctness (see Appendix A for the criteria for evaluating fluency, clarity, and correctness in writing). Note that fluency involves mastery of fundamental structural attributes of English, such as word order, so some grammar issues receive attention even in the fluency stage.

In Fluency First, to progress through stages of fluency, clarity, and correctness, students read and write massive amounts of English and use the language in a workshop atmosphere. Adele MacGowan-Gilhooly reported that ESL student passing rates at City College of New York doubled after the adoption of the Fluency First approach (1995/1991). Although the ideal is to use the Fluency First approach in a course that fully integrates reading and writing skills, Fluency First techniques can still be used effectively in a separate reading or writing course.

I was attracted to Fluency First originally because students who passed my intermediate-level reading classes did not gain the requisite skills for reading competently at the advanced level. Diagnosed from the perspective of Fluency First, my students were faced with assignments focused on clarity (negotiating academic texts) before they had developed fluency in reading.

I adopted Fluency First techniques in my intermediate level reading class (see Appendix B) and was delighted with the results. The class itself was more engaging, and the students not only improved their English reading skills but discovered pleasure in reading. Later I used a Fluency First workshop format in intermediate writing courses (see Appendix C), added a Fluency First component to the advanced level reading course, and converted the beginning level reading course to Fluency First.

I have found Fluency First techniques to be highly effective. However, adopting Fluency First is more complex than simply selecting a new textbook. It is a different way of structuring learning and classroom work. It can involve materials development and requires the expertise and flexibility to teach according to the learners’ emerging needs rather than moving systematically through a textbook. Yet I firmly believe that Fluency First offers optimal conditions for learner progress.

In November 2003, Diane Larsen-Freeman led a workshop titled “Grammaring” and presented the plenary address at the annual conference of Oregon Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (ORTESOL) in Portland, Oregon. Subsequently, in the late spring of 2004, a group of ORTESOL members read and discussed Larsen-Freeman’s thought-provoking book *Teaching Language: From Grammar to Grammaring* (2003). Larsen-Freeman presented a rich, multifaceted view of current concepts related to language and language acquisition, especially focusing on strategies for addressing the *inert knowledge problem*, in which “knowledge that is gained in (formal lessons in) the classroom remains inactive or inert when put into service (in communication within and) outside the classroom”

(2003, p. 8). To this end, she introduced the concept of *grammaring* based on the definition of grammar as “one of the dynamic linguistic processes of pattern formation in language, which can be used by humans for making meaning in context-appropriate ways” (2003, p. 142). According to Larsen-Freeman, seeing grammar as a process and as a skill is the starting point on the road to improving the effectiveness of classroom instruction and overcoming the inert knowledge problem.

Participants in the book discussion group concurred that addressing the inert knowledge problem is a high priority for language teachers. As we discussed the various aspects of Larsen-Freeman’s conceptualization of language and language teaching, it struck me that if the principles and practices that she presents were a road, following it would bring us to the neighborhood of Fluency First.

I don’t claim that Fluency First is the only approach compatible with the principles and practices of teaching grammaring. Nevertheless, I believe that a better understanding of the principles behind Fluency First could help TESOL professionals adapt techniques for teaching grammaring more effectively in a variety of contexts. In the rest of the article I will identify Fluency First principles and point out connections to Larsen-Freeman’s principles and practices of teaching grammaring. (Unless otherwise indicated, all page numbers cited in the next section refer to Larsen-Freeman’s 2003 book.)

Fluency First Principles

1. Learners learn and acquire language by being exposed to it and using it meaningfully.

Language is a *dynamic system*. Through language use, language changes (evolutionary change of language across time), and through language use, language is acquired (the interlanguage of the learner is restructured). Karl Diller stated it this way: “The act of using language meaningfully has a way of changing the grammar in the user” (1995, p. 116, cited in Larsen-Freeman, 2003, p. 30).

Larsen-Freeman emphasized the importance of meaningful language use: “Meaningful practice of a particular type not only helps learners consolidate their understanding or their memory traces or achieve fluency, it also helps them to advance in

their grammatical development” (p. 99). She further explained that “students will best acquire the structures and patterns when they are put into situations that require them to use structures and patterns for some meaningful purpose other than decontextualized or mechanistic practice” (p. 117).

2. Learners learn and acquire language through listening, speaking, reading, and writing it a lot.

According to the language acquisition theory known as *connectionism*, as language data follow various neural paths in the brain, connections between the most-used neurons are strengthened and organize themselves into networks. These networks tend to assimilate new patterns to old patterns and analyze items of new information as variations of known information. When anomalous data are processed, a point may be reached when the system undergoes a perturbation and a new order emerges, resulting in the restructuring of the learner’s interlanguage. Active use of the language thus develops neural connections and networks. In addition, connectionism is compatible with the observation that “frequency in input is an important factor in second language acquisition” (p. 82).

3. Activities that are fun, interesting, and relevant to one’s own life are conducive to language learning and acquisition.

Learner engagement in learning activities is essential (p. 152). If attention wanes, Larsen-Freeman advised making changes in class activities (p. 153).

4. The development of language competence is a gradual process.

Learners may have periods of apparent regression and plateaus as well as periods of steady or rapid improvement. Eventually, successful learners will increase the proportion of use of correct and appropriate forms over time.

Chaos/complexity theory accounts for the fact that language learning is nonlinear, characterized by periods of apparent stagnation and bursts of progress (pp. 111-112). A complex system may assimilate data without changing, but at some point, input can result in a massive reorganization of the system. It is like looking through a kaleidoscope. If the viewer starts to turn the kaleidoscope cylinder slowly, the image

may not change. However, when the movement reaches a certain point, the colored pieces suddenly rearrange and a new image is formed. An example from language acquisition is the learner's initial correct use of irregular past tense verb forms (for example, *went*) being superseded by over-generalization of *-ed* endings (for example, *goed*) when the learner first assimilates the regular past verb pattern.

5. Learners who attain fluency are better able to improve their clarity and correctness than are learners who are not fluent.

6. Developmentally appropriate instruction and feedback promote progress toward clarity and correctness.

7. Postpone emphasis on correctness in grammatical structures that are not essential to communication of meaning until fluency has been demonstrated.

Attaining fluency entails acquisition of the fundamental patterns of a language (for example, S-V-O order), but not all structures are equally important. Larsen-Freeman asserts: "It is a myth that grammar can be learned on its own, that it need not be taught" (p. 78).

Grammar learning is not a simple aggregation process. Rather, it is characterized by *morphogenesis*, the generation of new patterns through interaction as well as instruction. According to Larsen-Freeman:

rather than viewing grammar development solely as a process of conforming to the grammar of the community, which is governed by deductive and inductive operations, [. . .] language development involves the spontaneous creation of grammatical patterns, which then, as speakers communicate with each other, adapt themselves to the overt patterns of grammars of other individuals in the community Besides [. . .] allowing for the creativity of new patterns in language, which are triggered by the input data but which are not pure imitations of it, this point of view has the added advantage of including a social dimension. (p. 112)

8. A novel is an ideal text for language learning if it has an engaging plot that motivates readers to keep turning pages.

The vocabulary and writing style in a novel tend to become familiar and the reader has an extended context for guessing vocabulary items. Also, it is not important for the reader to understand every word and every detail of a novel; it is enough to get the general development of the story.

9. Viewing a movie clip of the part of the story that learners will read can provide schemata to help learners understand what they are reading even if there are many unfamiliar vocabulary items.

Engagement and attention are essential, so "activities have to be independently motivating, seen by learners as worth doing" (p. 117). The story line of the novel and the pleasure derived from watching the movie tend to stimulate student engagement.

The use of extended texts also allows teacher and learners to benefit more fully from the fact that language has a *fractal* structure, that is, language has patterns that are self-similar at different levels of scale. The fractal structure of language is reflected in the fact that the ten most frequent words occur in the same rank order in texts of various lengths (p. 32). Another example comprises the three dimensions—form, meaning, and use—that characterize language structures at different levels of scale, from phoneme to discourse (pp. 35-36). Figure 1 on the next page represents this fractal character of language. The large triangle is composed of smaller triangles, which are in turn composed of smaller triangles. At every level of scale, each triangle (representing a language structure) is characterized by the three dimensions of form, meaning, and use.

Larsen-Freeman views language acquisition as "a gradual process involving the mapping of form, meaning, and use" (p. 87). She believes that the three dimensions of grammar are learned differently: form through repetition, meaning through associative learning, and use through consideration of the communication context (p. 42-43). Through viewing the movie and reading the novel, learners experience all three types of learning in a meaningful context.

Larsen-Freeman teaches students this *linguistic heuristic*: "A change in one dimension will cause

changes in other dimensions.” For example, a difference in form means that there is also a different meaning or use (p. 44). A novel provides a meaningful context for illustrating these changes. Similarly, working with grammar in context facilitates the application of Larsen-Freeman’s *challenge principle*: When addressing any particular grammar issue, predict which one of the three dimensions will present a greater long-term challenge to the learners and select teaching techniques that will help the learners deal effectively with the most challenging dimension (p. 45).

Working with the extended texts of the novel and movie facilitates *horizontal planning*, that is, spreading the various phases of lessons across several days (p. 147) and enables learners to explore clusters of structures that typically occur together in texts (p. 149).

10. Readers should not use a dictionary while they are reading the novel.

Readers will tend to stop frequently to look up unfamiliar words, losing the flow of the story or finding the reading makes little sense. Rather, readers should keep reading even when they meet unfamiliar words and try to guess the meaning based on what they already know (from the movie or from the way the story is developing), marking words that they want to look up later. To develop fluency, readers need to develop a tolerance for ambiguity and a readiness to use any available clues to guess meaning. Coaching learners in these strategies helps them learn how to learn (p. 153).

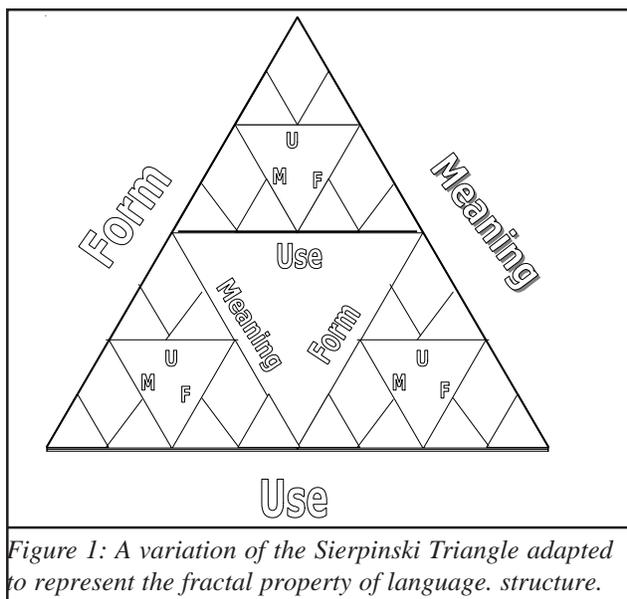


Figure 1: A variation of the Sierpinski Triangle adapted to represent the fractal property of language structure.

11. Free writing about aspects of the novel engages the learner in freely expressing ways that the story connects to his or her own life and contributes to the development of fluency.

According to the *generation effect* described by Stevick, students remember best what they themselves construct (Larsen-Freeman, 2003, p. 122).

From the perspective of *chaos/complexity theory*, free writing engages learners in language creation. Chaos/complexity theory involves the study of complex, dynamic, nonlinear systems. In this model, not only does the state of a dynamical system change over time, but “the nature of the relations among the elements that constitute it also change, as with a developing embryo” (p. 111). Thus, Larsen-Freeman suggested that “the language system is not only restructured or reweighted as a result of use; it is created” (p. 111).

12. Learners who are shy or feel incompetent in speaking a foreign language can improve their oral skills by reading their own writing to a group of peers and discussing their ideas together.

This might be seen as a way of scaffolding oneself, using one’s own writing to support the development of oral skills. Normally the term *scaffolding* involves a knowledgeable partner interacting with a learner to enable the learner to be able to do something that he or she could not do alone (p. 88).

13. Working in small groups maximizes the opportunities for learners to use English meaningfully in the classroom.

As learners use English in meaningful interaction, they develop their language ability. As Diller put it, “language use *is* language learning” (Diller, 1990, p. 339). Interaction also promotes the process of *nucleation*, the initiation of rapid growth in a skill or knowledge (p. 149).

Using language in classroom interaction facilitates emergence. *Emergentism* describes how complexity in a dynamic system “emerges at the global level from the repetition of fairly simple processes or the actions and interactions of agents at

the local level” (p. 112). Some examples are (1) a honeycomb and (2) a flock of birds formed by the actions of individual birds. This is one way to explain how human grammars emerge: “they represent the class of possible solutions to the problem of how to map a rich set of meanings onto a limited speech channel, heavily constrained by the limits of memory, perception, and motor planning (Bates and MacWhinney, 1989, cited in Bates and Goodman, 1999)” (cited in Larsen-Freeman, 2003, p. 113).

As Menezes (n.d.) explained the ramifications:

a net is only a net because of its various interconnections that continue repeating the same pattern; [in the same way] language learning, as I see it, functions like a fractal: cognitive operations catalyzed by interconnections among the multiple parts of its system repeat themselves over and over, constructing a network of knowledge/use of the language in a continuum.

The dynamic character of language, its fractal nature, and its emergent quality are connected. Larsen-Freeman asserts,

Use, change, and acquisition are all instances of the same underlying dynamic process and are mutually constitutive. As MacWhinney (1999) observed, all three are examples of emergentism (use or real-time emergence, change or diachronic emergence, and acquisition or developmental emergence) operating in different time frames—and, I would add, at different levels of scale (p. 113).

14. A learner who is not afraid of making mistakes will develop fluency more quickly than one who is.

Thus, in responding to free writing, the teacher should react to the content of the learner’s writing; the teacher should comment directly on problems of grammar, vocabulary, or even spelling only when as a result of inappropriate forms the meaning is unclear.

15. Emphasis on correctness should be contextualized so that the learner relates the correct form to the expression of a particular meaning that he or she is already trying to express or decipher.

The best time for instruction is at “the point of need” or in “a teachable moment” when the learner needs and wants to know about a particular form or structure.

16. Appropriate feedback for writing assignments differs according to whether the focus is on fluency, clarity, or correctness.

- a. For fluency, feedback should respond to content, not form. If some content is unintelligible, seek to elicit the intended meaning from the learner and offer appropriate phrasing. This type of feedback should be provided for the first draft of higher-level assignments as well.
- b. For clarity, appropriate feedback for revision includes systematic (gradually building up over time) attention to rhetorical structure and salient grammar issues.
- c. For correctness, appropriate feedback for editing includes systematic attention to fine points of grammar, mechanics, and format.

The philosophy behind these strategies is contained in Larsen-Freeman’s assertion:

Errors do not merely present opportunities for feedback. They can also provide helpful windows on learners’ minds, showing teachers and researchers what learners are thinking, their stage of development, and what strategies they are adopting (p. 125).

Larsen-Freeman urged teachers to

be alert to ‘teachable moments’ when [you] can focus learners’ attention on emergent forms in learners’ interlanguage. ... It is thus students’ learning that guides the teaching rather than vice versa (p. 145).

She advocated practicing a checklist process for teaching different forms rather than addressing them in a preplanned sequence. It is not necessary to teach grammar structures in a certain order (p. 146).

These strategies are compatible with Larsen-Freeman’s description of *judicious effective feedback*. Judicious effective feedback includes (1) attending to errors that show the student is ready to learn (appropriate to learner stage of development); (2) focusing on errors, not mistakes; (3) addressing

errors when students are trying to say something they don't know how to say; (4) dealing with errors that are committed when the focus of the activity is accuracy; and (5) providing feedback on errors where learners need negative evidence in order to eliminate a hypothesis (p. 131-134).

17. In providing feedback to writing with a clarity or correctness focus, use techniques that challenge the learner to identify and correct his or her own errors, but only after the class has received instruction in that particular type of error.

This means cultivating grammaring as a skill. Based on the 3-dimensional analysis and considering the dynamic character of language, Larsen-Freeman defined grammaring as “the ability to use grammar structures accurately, meaningfully, and appropriately.... [G]rammar can be productively regarded as a fifth skill, not only as an area of knowledge” (p. 143).

18. A focused, collaborative peer editing process can provide useful feedback for learners to improve their writing and editing skills.

This is a process in which scaffolding can occur in the *zone of proximal development*, Vygotsky's term for what a learner cannot do alone but can do as a result of interacting with a more knowledgeable partner (p. 88).

19. The relationship between teacher and student can be deepened and strengthened when the teacher reads and responds to the student's double-entry journal.

By interacting in writing in journals, teacher and learners often come to know each other on a different level than is possible in oral classroom interaction. This is important, according to Larsen-Freeman, because “good teaching depends on a teacher's ability to create a positive, trusting relationship with his or her students” (p. 155).

This also enables the teacher to more effectively help learners express their intended meaning, because discovering the meaning a student is trying to express, as Larson-Freeman puts it,

requires that teacher and students achieve... intersubjectivity so that the teacher is aware of what the student is trying to say. ... If a teacher fails to achieve intersubjectivity with her students, her efforts may be fruitless (p. 132).

Other Levels of Compatibility

Particular aspects of grammaring are not represented in these Fluency First principles but are compatible with the practice of Fluency First. For example, it is easy to incorporate the Three Dimensions of Language pie chart (p. 35) into mini-lessons and other interactions related to language structure. The teacher can use the context provided by the novel, movie, research, and group activities to raise learner awareness of reasons that underlie rules (p. 51) as well as to create situations in which students use certain target forms meaningfully (p. 145). Similarly, Larsen-Freeman's seven techniques for explicit teaching of form, meaning, and use (consciousness-raising activities, output production practice, feedback strategies, slow motion, zoom, wide angle, and camcorder) (p. 150-52) can be integrated into the flow of Fluency First processes.

Conclusion

Larsen-Freeman's vision of grammar as a process and a skill as opposed to a body of knowledge has profound implications for language teachers. The model of language that emerges from the concepts she presents is a constantly changing fractal network of connections that absorbs new data, generates new patterns, repeats many processes, and operates in a nonlinear fashion, undergoing periods of little apparent change and then sudden states of chaos and restructuring, like a kaleidoscope.

To overcome the inert knowledge problem, teachers should seek ways to translate Larsen-Freeman's vision of grammaring into practice. They must involve learners in frequent and active use of language for meaningful interaction, integrating feedback from more knowledgeable partners (teachers and classmates). To take advantage of teachable moments and to better serve learner needs, desires, and readiness to express meaning through appropriate forms, teachers should use a checklist rather than a preplanned sequence of grammar topics. Teachers should seek ways to work effectively with the

nonlinear and emergent qualities of language learning and to facilitate the process of morphogenesis. Finally, teachers should take advantage of the fractal nature of language by offering insights into the three dimensions of form, meaning, and use at every level of scale.

In my view, the principles and practices of Fluency First coincide perfectly with those of grammaring, so I urge teachers who seek an approach that by its nature fosters grammaring to consider Fluency First. It is advisable to experiment by starting small—add a few Fluency First techniques to a class and evaluate their effectiveness as you decide whether and how to transform the course more fully in the future. In the beginning, you and the students will need to adjust to changes in rhythm and in your teaching role, but once procedures are in place, Fluency First activities tend to develop their own momentum. Besides being effective, Fluency First brings joy to language teaching and learning.

Here is an example of a grammar breakthrough in my reading class. Several times in a novel my students were reading this semester, the unreal conditional was used. One student copied a sentence in his double-entry journal and in his free writing asked why the form “were” was used rather than “was” or another form that agreed with the singular subject. I wrote an explanation in my response to his journal. During group work, he realized the other students were puzzled by the same question, so he showed them his journal. It was a “light bulb moment” for the group, who reacted with a murmur of delight.

Of course, this was an early step in the students’ process of competently using the unreal conditional. The following unedited examples of students’ reflections on their Fluency First reading experiences reveal the process of developing fluency and clarity.

A beginning level student told me that before he enrolled in our program he hated reading in English. After reading two books he commented, “I think my reading ability is improved and I like reading now.” He wrote about how the relationship of a main character with her father affected him:

Fly Away Home is good for me because I am not a person who perseveres, so I was affected by her. ... I worry about them every day when I read book. That was

good story. ... *Fly Away Home* teach me don’t run away if I had big problem and never give up.

An intermediate level student wrote,

When it was a very fine day, I could enjoy reading those books under the blue sky. ... It was very beautiful sight. ... I could enjoy reading books, so after I would go back to Japan, I would read some books under the sunshine. ... I could have great memories here with reading books. ... I will never forget these memories. ... Thanks to you, I became to like reading books, and I could enjoy sharing our journals. ... I want to be an English teacher.

An advanced level student in a TESOL course selected the Fluency First reading experience as an excellent example of integrating language skills. “I read the book, write a journal about that, talk about that and listen to my group mates’ opinions, so it involves all skills. Besides, I learned about American and Korean cultures and my group mates learned about Japanese culture. ... I think that this work gave me many benefits. I didn’t like to read books before, but the book was very interesting and easy to read. My reading skill was developed. I talked about my culture, American and Korean cultures, so I knew about them and compared. That’s very fun, and my speaking and listening skills were developed. There is no drawback to do this work.”

“A good reader is a good writer and a better student” according to Dulcinia Nunez, a visiting professor at the University of North Texas (Boome, 1999). Fluency First inspires second language students to become readers, a major step forward in their language and academic development. By providing meaningful content and practices that nurture all language skills in accord with the grammaring principles and practices proposed by Larsen-Freeman, Fluency First offers great promise in the struggle to overcome the inert knowledge problem.

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Appendix A

Criteria for Fluency, Clarity, and Correctness in Writing

Fluency: A fluent piece is interesting, understandable, shows ease of expression, is complete and logical. Communication is never lost. The language may not seem like a native English speaker's, but the writer shows enough control of structure and vocabulary to express his or her ideas. The vocabulary may at times be too simple or inappropriate for the topic, but in general, these weaknesses do not prevent the reader from understanding what the writer is saying. There may be errors in grammar or spelling, but not of the type that cloud meaning (for example wrong word order, missing pronouns, literal translation). The length of the piece is appropriate to the topic, and the writer maintains a central focus, with no gaps, and with a discernible beginning and ending.

Clarity: The writing is interesting and comprehensible, and has a clear focus throughout, with no digressions or gaps. The reader doesn't have to struggle to get the meaning. Sentences and paragraphs are logically related to one another, and the piece demonstrates a hierarchy of ideas with adequate connections between those ideas. There is a clear main idea and sufficient support for that idea. The piece accomplishes its intended purpose, with an introduction and conclusion. The conclusion, however, is not unnecessarily repetitive. The piece has no consistent syntactic problems of the type that interfere with clarity (for example few tense indicators, wrong word order, missing subject pronouns, wrong word forms, insufficient sentence boundaries). There is 50% or better control over punctuation, and 75% or better control over verb forms, subject/verb agreement, negation, pluralization, and spelling.

Correctness: The writing is fluent and clear, as per the above criteria, plus the following. The essay addresses the topic adequately, has a clearly expressed thesis which is satisfactorily developed and

supported, and in general is cohesive and coherent. Each paragraph talks about only one subtopic, and supports that subtopic with appropriate examples. Sentence structure displays almost native like sophistication, and there is at least 90% accuracy in verb usage, punctuation, subject/verb agreement, negation, and spelling. There are no errors in word order, pluralization, or pronoun usage. Errors in the use of articles and prepositions are tolerated.

Note. From *Fluency First: A Whole Language Approach: A Resource for Teachers of ESL and Basic Writing* (4th ed., p. 14), by A. MacGowan-Gilhooly, 2001, Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt. Copyright 2001 by Adele MacGowan-Gilhooly. Adapted with permission.

Appendix B

Fluency First in a Reading Class

The focus of my intermediate reading class is to develop fluency in reading. Fluent reading is “reading at a normal pace and understanding most of what you read without relying on a dictionary” (MacGowan-Gilhooly, 1996b). Learners read novels and popular nonfiction at a rate of about 10 pages per day (about 4000 words). Students choose short passages that particularly interest them and, in double-entry journals, copy them and freewrite a reaction to each passage.

In class, students discuss their journal entries in small groups and do group tasks to help each other grasp the most significant aspects of the plot and characters. They view related movies to help them cope with challenging texts, to increase their motivation, and to engage them visually and aurally as well as through the written word. More formal writing and oral assignments round out the activities for each book.

The reading activities in my intermediate level reading class include the following. For more details, see Iancu (2000).

Reading Activities

- A. Pre-reading Movie Clip
- B. Novel Reading
- C. Double-Entry Journals
- D. Small Group Discussions
- E. Small and Large Group Activities

- F. Quizzes
- G. Projects and Presentations
- H. Exam

Appendix C

Fluency First in a Writing Class

In my intermediate Fluency First–inspired writing workshop, each student writes about 10,000 words: freewriting totaling about 2400 words, a personal book of about 3000 words, and a research project of about 4600 words. Students go through a multi-step process of freewriting, composing, revising, and editing with a small group of peers in a workshop atmosphere.

When learners achieve fluency, they begin working consciously to improve the clarity (rhetorical and general grammatical accuracy) of their writing; then they focus on correctness at a more sophisticated level. Grammar and vocabulary are learned at the point of need, as much as possible through student initiative and taking into account each student’s readiness to relate to various grammatical structures or patterns. Throughout the process, the teacher provides feedback and guidance regarding each student’s progress and needs.

The elements in the research project for my intermediate level writing class (based on MacGowan-Gilhooly, 1996a) include:

Research Project

- A. Position Paper
- B. Point-of-View Pieces
- C. Bibliography
- D. Library Process Report
- E. Double-Entry Journals
- F. Research Reports
- G. Interview
 - Interview Questions
 - Transcription
 - Analysis
- H. Research Summary
- I. Other Possible Elements
 - Book Report/Review
 - Site Report
 - Survey or other original research project

Self-perceptions of Non-Native English Speaking Teachers of English as a Second Language

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While I was completing my MA TESOL at Portland State University, a non-native speaker (NNS) of English remarked that during her studies in Japan, her English teacher told her that there was a hierarchy for English teachers: the best teachers are trained native speakers (NSs); the second best teachers are trained non-native speakers; the third best are untrained native English speakers; and the worst are untrained non-native English speakers. After hearing this, I sought to understand why some individuals – both native and non-native English speakers – felt that native English speakers might automatically be considered better teachers. As I continued with my quest to better understand what both NSs and NNSs had to offer the field of TESOL, I realized that I had found an area that I wanted to research.

I examined the self-perceptions of non-native English speaking teachers (non-NESTs) of English as a Second Language (ESL) regarding their teaching behaviors. Three non-NESTs from Oregon institutions participated in my study. They did not perceive themselves as having the stereotypical teaching behaviors of non-NESTs. In general, the participants cited cultural factors and theories about language acquisition as reasons for non-stereotypical behavior. These findings suggest that categorical comparisons should not be made about non-NESTs, especially those who have been trained and are working where non-stereotypical behavior is the norm.

Ownership of English

English is no longer a language that is used primarily for communication between native speak-

ers, but rather one that is used internationally for a variety of purposes. As a result, linguists and English teachers now refer to “World Englishes” (Kachru 1985). As more emphasis is placed on this perspective, traditional views on what constitutes a speaker of English are also changing. Some professionals in TESOL (Widdowson 1994, Norton 1997), argue that ownership of English is not limited to only those who are native speakers, but is available to all speakers of the language.

Traditionally, to be a true speaker of a language, one needed to be native-like. In order to judge whether one spoke like a native speaker, one would then need to be able to define what a native speaker is. Various authors have pointed out how difficult it is to create a list of characteristics of the native speaker or even to state how to determine who counts as a native speaker (Liu 1999, Medgyes 1999, Davies 1991, Kramsch 1997).

Resistance to Non-native Speaker Authority in Teaching

We now see that if English belongs to those who use it, the standards within the Inner Circle (the United States, Canada, Great Britain, Australia, and New Zealand) can no longer be applicable to all varieties of English, and therefore deviations from the norm should be accepted and not regarded as deficiencies simply because they come from a non-native speaker (Kachru, 1992). Unfortunately, this idea is a difficult one to establish due to the strong feelings that are currently held about the superiority of the NS and Inner Circle varieties.

This is especially true in English language teaching, where studies have shown that some feel a NS norm should be followed (Friedrich 2000, Tsui & Bunton 2000). Some international Master’s degree students who have felt confident about their teaching ability have expressed numerous concerns about various aspects of language and cultural competence (Polio & Wilson-Duffy 1998). The NNSs who become ESL teachers need to address the issues of competence that may follow them throughout their career in the field.

NEST/non-NEST Dichotomy

The NEST/non-NEST dichotomy includes a number of differing characteristics (Reves and Medgyes, 1994). The behaviors listed in Table 1 below are based on those described by Medgyes (1994, 1999). This article draws on two of these areas: own use of English (e.g., NESTs use real language while non-NESTs use “bookish” language), and attitude to teaching culture (e.g., NESTs supply much cultural information and non-NESTs supply little cultural information).

I examined the self-perceptions of non-NESTs regarding their teaching behaviors to see if the non-NESTs that I encountered fit the description given by Medgyes. The research questions were as follows:

1. What are the non-NESTs’ perceptions of their teaching behaviors?
2. What is the relationship between the non-NEST’s perceptions of their teaching behaviors and stereotypes of those behaviors?
3. If the non-NESTs’ perceptions do not fit the stereotypes of teaching behaviors of non-NESTs, what experiences have contributed to their non-conformation?

Overview of Participants

Three teachers participated in this study. All the participants were female. Each participant had a different native language (L1), with differing home cultures in Europe. They had between six and 40 years of experience

teaching English. Their total length of stay in the U.S. ranged from 2.5 to 51 years, although not all of that time was consecutive for all of the participants. Two of them spent a year in the U.S. as exchange students. All of them first experienced the U.S. before becoming adults. The participants have taught either survival English or academic English, or a combination of the two.

Participant 1: Elizabeth

Elizabeth first experienced the U.S. through an exchange program when she was in high school. She then returned to the U.S. about a decade later as an adult, and has lived here since 2001.

Participant 2: Mary

Mary came to the U.S. as a teenager with her family. Although she has returned to visit her native country, she has lived in the U.S. since 1950.

Participant 3: Laura

Laura first experienced the U.S. through an exchange program when she was in high school. Afterwards, she returned to her native country. Feeling dissatisfied in her native country, she left after one year and came back to the U.S. Although she visits her native country, she has lived in the U.S. since 1976.

Data Collection

Data were collected through a written questionnaire (see Appendix for sample questions) and an interview with the teachers. The statements in the questionnaire about teaching behaviors were adapted from Medgyes (1999).

The follow-up interviews were based on the responses to the questionnaire and provided me the opportunity to explore the reasons behind any non-

Table 1

NESTs	non-NESTs
<i>Own use of English</i> Speak English well Use real language Use English confidently	Speak English Use “bookish” language Lack confidence in their use of English
<i>Attitude to teaching culture</i> Supply much cultural information	Supply little cultural information
<i>Perceived differences in teaching behaviors between NESTs and non-NESTs (based on Medgyes, 1999)</i>	

conformity with stereotypical non-NEST behaviors. The study also explored the subjects' general teaching attitude and attitude toward teaching language. Various themes that emerged in the interviews were also examined. The focus of this article is on behaviors regarding own use of English and attitude to teaching culture.

Own Use of Language

All three participants perceived themselves as individuals who speak English well, use real language, and use English confidently. They did not identify at all with the stereotypical behaviors of non-NESTs, which are that they speak English poorly, use "bookish" language, and lack confidence in their use of English. A major factor involved in their language acquisition seems to be their integration into U.S. culture through early contact in their teen years and their subsequent acceptance of U.S. culture.

Elizabeth's Self-perceptions

Elizabeth described her desire to learn about U.S. history and culture and not dwell on the history of her own country. During the interview, I asked Elizabeth why she feels that she speaks English well and uses real language. The main factors that she discussed were positive feedback from others and motivation to learn English.

Long before she began teaching, Elizabeth had a successful experience as an exchange student here in the U.S. She felt that this success had helped her with learning English well. Elizabeth was always interested in learning languages, and the warm reception she received from her host family and classmates added to her desire to work on her English skills. When she was asked if it had been easy for her to learn English, she gave the following reply:

I think maybe it was for me because I've always really been into languages....
[W]hat certainly added to it was that I was an exchange student and I had a wonderful host family and they were really an incentive to me.... I identified with my host family a lot, ... I identified with a lot of things in the U.S.

Elizabeth's ability to identify with her host family and host culture created a safe space in which she could improve her English skills.

Not only did her host family welcome her, so did the students at her school. She joined an international club that consisted of both international students and American students. They did many activities together, and this positive feedback helped her transition into U.S. culture.

In addition to external sources, Elizabeth had an internal factor for her English study: motivation. Elizabeth described how her level of motivation has affected her:

I worked on my accent for one thing and I was...very motivated to learn languages.... And I still do that... when I read the newspaper or when I hear something on TV... let's say a political speech or something and I... catch something and I'll write it down and look it up because I just want to improve all the time.

In general, Elizabeth had positive feedback from others and strong motivation. These two factors led to her desire to remain in the U.S. and improve her English to a point where she feels confident when speaking.

Mary's Self-perceptions

Some of Mary's perceptions of her own language use matched those of Elizabeth, but she gave additional factors involved in the development of her teaching behaviors. There were several that she discussed: her love of English; her hope to escape the atrocities of Europe; her desire to fit in with U.S. culture; and her belief that speaking English well will help her students to understand her.

First, she first gave me the following reason as to why she feels that she speaks English well and uses real language:

I have made a special effort to make that true.... I came to this country at thirteen, being fairly limited in my English although I had started learning English ...at least by kindergarten or the first grade. I majored in English...in school, and it was my big love.

They did not identify at all with the stereotypical behaviors of non-NESTs

I made a deliberate and overt...effort to be very fluent in English and I actually have a better vocabulary than most native English speakers.

For Mary, her love of English was a catalyst for improving her English skills with such deliberation that she feels extremely confident about her use of English.

I then asked Mary what factors were involved with her moving to the U.S. at a young age, and how that affected her adjustment. She then described that time in her life:

All teenagers want to be a part of whatever is present in their lives...at the moment...and I was no exception to that. I wanted to cast off all of the ugly war[s]...because I was born during all the revolutions...in Europe. Franco was taking over as dictator of course in 1938, and Mussolini was doing his worst as were Hitler and Stalin. So it was a big mess...Guernica...that's what my childhood looked like and so by the time we managed to get out of that mess and get to the United States I was very eager perhaps more than most teenagers to cast away anything other than what was really...fitting in, being one of the group...one of the kids. And of course my English at that time was British English.... I started learning English at a very early age and came to this country speaking...English a little bit differently and with a different accent than most of my peers so I worked on that as well. I haven't been quite as successful with the accent as I have been with everything else otherwise my English is as perfect as it gets.

As Mary illustrated, her early years were filled with unpleasant memories, and she longed for a way to escape them. She also hoped to fit in with her peers and become "one of the group." By focusing on her use of English, she was able to turn her attention on something that did not have negative associations and that would help her become accepted more readily by her peers.

Laura's Self-perceptions

In general, Laura's saw her behavior in ways that were similar to one or both of the other participants. She explained how developing from a teenager into an adult affected her language development:

I developed as an adult in the English language.... I feel there is a shift that...when you're monolingual you really don't realize though but when you go from one country you're a child or a teenager and then you develop, you go beyond the teenage years and you become an adult. Things shift and you become more yourself. And so the person you're able to express in that language is the person you're going to be with, yourself, for the rest of your life. And so I became who I am in English so I'm very comfortable with it.

For Laura, both her language and her personality were evolving at the same time, and the connection between becoming an adult and being able to express what that meant affected her positively.

Before that actual metamorphosis occurred, Laura found herself in an exchange program where she stayed with a dynamic family that welcomed her. As Laura explained,

I was raised in a family where...you don't express yourself...emotionally. And so I came here and the host family I was with was very warm and very open.... And that was really neat.

Just as Elizabeth found a safe environment with her host family, Laura did, too.

Unfortunately, though, re-entry into her native country proved to be a definite challenge: "What was difficult was going back and conforming and not being able to express myself the way I was as an entire person." Laura had reached a point where the words she had acquired in English were now so connected with who she was that she felt compelled to later return to the U.S. so that her identity could once again become complete. Having her identity tied so closely to her ability to express that identity in English seems a major reason why her perceptions of

her early years were filled with unpleasant memories, and she longed for a way to escape them

her use of English do not conform to the stereotypes of non-NESTs.

Attitude to Teaching Culture

Additionally, all three teachers perceived themselves as individuals who provide cultural information. They did not identify with the stereotypical behavior of non-NESTs, which is to supply little cultural information. The participants view culture and language as being closely related, and they believe that the teaching of culture facilitates language acquisition.

Elizabeth's Self-perceptions

During the interview, I asked Elizabeth to further elaborate on her self-perception. Her response was as follows:

I think teaching language is very closely connected with culture. If I give my students material on culture, then there's always something they can relate to because they can compare certain things with their own culture and I totally believe that by looking at aspects of the new culture they will also learn more about their own culture as they look at it from a distance. And I find that a very important process... as part of language acquisition being part of a culture.... [U]nderstanding between cultures is one part of one very important aspect of teaching languages. Just teaching a language does not help you look at a culture from a different perspective. You need to supply language material, you need to supply the cultural material and trigger topics or give them insight that they can talk about that they can relate to. That's basically what I do and why I do it.

From this, it appears that Elizabeth is giving three important reasons for her supplying cultural information to her students: one, it promotes understanding of the student's own culture; two, it promotes understanding of the target culture; and three, the bridge created by understanding the two cultures helps facilitate language acquisition. For Elizabeth, the teaching of language necessarily includes the teaching of culture.

Mary's Self-perceptions

Regarding her attitude toward teaching culture, Mary responded "neutral/don't know" to both the statement "I supply much cultural information when I teach" and "I supply little cultural information when I teach." Yet when I asked her to discuss how she supplies cultural information, she described a teaching behavior that did not conform to the stereotype of non-NESTs. To begin with, Mary shared her belief of how culture and language are intertwined:

Cultural information is part and parcel of what we do.... [L]anguage in use is culture in use. I mean I think there's no way you can...separate culture from language.... [Y]ears ago there were all sorts of rote kinds of ways and repetitious ways that we taught language and...because the students had brains...they did make learning out of it but it was sure a dumb way to teach....

[W]e don't make it so difficult for the students anymore...all good teachers include...cultural elements in what they're doing because that's what makes language real and useful.

the teaching of language necessarily includes the teaching of culture.

Mary gives an important reason for supplying cultural information to her students: it facilitates language acquisition by creating a realistic learning environment. Interestingly, this idea of supplying cultural information to facilitate language acquisition is one of the same reasons that Elizabeth gave for supplying cultural information in her classroom.

Laura's Self-perceptions

Laura described her teaching of culture as being "in context." She gave a description of how she might approach holidays, such as Valentine's Day, which usually occurs on a day when class is held: "We talk about...who celebrates it and what people do here and what they do in their country, ...what they didn't do in their country. We...have this activity for varying levels." Culture, in this instance, is a way to draw the students out and encourage participation since the students are able to talk about something they are familiar with.

Besides using culture as a way for students to practice the language, Laura also uses it as a way to

help them be more successful in their navigation through U.S. culture when they step outside of the classroom. Laura shared how this aspect helps her students. She said that she can teach them what is “formal and informal” and “what is acceptable with certain people and not acceptable with others.” She asks the students to call her by her first name since she calls them by their first name. Laura shared how this cultural information is important in the workplace:

They’re not going to call their boss Mr. or Mrs. If they did they’d be... looked at as someone who’s not understanding the cultural aspects of the fact that you need to call people by their first names unless otherwise indicated. You know they have to know those things otherwise it sets them apart.

For Laura, cultural information is essential for her students, so she supplies it for them.

Summary of the Findings

cultural information is essential for her students, so she supplies it for them

This study indicates that not all non-NESTs of ESL conform to teaching stereotypes. Therefore, it seems inadvisable to use sweeping generalizations when describing teaching behaviors of non-NESTs, especially those who have been trained and are working in sites where non-stereotypical behavior is the norm.

Most notable in the participants is their unanimous positive perceptions of their own use of English. They all agreed or strongly agreed on their questionnaire that they speak English well, use real language, and use English confidently. They also readily gave reasons for those perceptions in the interview.

Finally, there were a few recurring factors that could have contributed to their non-conformity to teaching stereotypes. With regard to their use of English, a strong theme was a desire to fit into U.S. culture and an early exposure that encouraged such a fit. Another theme was their motivation to learn English. A major influence on their attitude toward teaching culture was a belief that culture and language cannot be separated, and that cultural learning facilitates language acquisition.

These contributing factors suggest that the participants were able to overcome the stereotypes regarding their own language acquisition by their ability to become a part of U.S. culture. They have embraced the concept of culture and language as inseparable and therefore exhibit teaching behaviors that contextualize activities and that reinforce the belief that language acquisition is facilitated by the presentation of cultural material.

I have used Medgyes’ (1999) descriptions of the dichotomous behaviors of NESTs and non-NESTs as a basis for the behaviors in my study. The results I have found differ from those of previous studies (Reves & Medgyes 1994, Árvá & Medgyes 2000). There are some possible reasons for this discrepancy. First of all, each participant was exposed to American English and American culture at a young age. Secondly, they were exposed for a longer period of

time. Although it is unclear at what age his participants were exposed, none were exposed for longer than a year and a half. These factors are important to note because they may have been what influenced their

language acquisition and, therefore, their perceptions of their use of English.

Implications for TESOL

Applications for Teacher Educators

The results of this study clearly demonstrate that not all non-NESTs conform to stereotypical teaching behaviors. Therefore, teacher educators should question the practice of describing NESTs and non-NESTs in dichotomous terms and should avoid promotion of such stereotypes. For example, teacher educators should avoid deliberately grouping individuals according to native speaker or non-native speaker status in the classroom.

Additionally, this study suggests that effective non-NESTs may be able to facilitate language acquisition through supplying appropriate cultural information. All three of the participants described how they themselves were able to incorporate the target culture into their own identity. Therefore, teacher educators may want to look at additional ways of addressing cultural issues so that future teachers can truly understand the powerful connec-

tion between culture and language. For example, future ESL teachers in the U.S. will need to be equipped with information like that suggested by Laura—the use of first name rather than last name in business contexts—if they want to succeed in getting a job themselves.

Applications for Teacher Supervisors

Teacher supervisors should be aware when hiring non-NESTs that effective non-NESTs may not conform to stereotypical teaching behaviors. Non-NESTs should not necessarily be hired merely to teach grammar classes or other classes in which a non-NEST is viewed as one who has superior knowledge. Non-NESTs should also be considered for teaching positions in which they can prove their ability to teach items in context or classes that are traditionally reserved for NESTs, such as pronunciation or listening/speaking classes.

Applications for Teachers

This study shows that teachers do not necessarily fit into the dichotomous categories that describe teacher behaviors. Instead of accepting these ill-fitting labels, teachers should examine their own self-perceptions and make informed decisions about the kinds of teaching behaviors they currently exhibit and the kinds they wish to embrace. Rather than falling into the either/or fallacy, teachers can view these behaviors as being on a continuum and that the behaviors may fluctuate depending on the class, students, experience, and a myriad of other reasons. For example, in a class of students who share the same L1, a teacher can use L1 to explain important course information or to contrast grammatical points such as syntax. However, in that same class a teacher can choose to answer a student's L1 question in English.

Additionally, non-NESTs should not limit themselves to teaching classes that are traditionally given to NNSs; they should request teaching new courses that are outside of their regular assignments. NESTs would also do well to support non-NESTs who may be struggling against being pigeonholed into a certain type of class. For example, NESTs and non-NESTs could alternate teaching certain courses. Furthermore, rather than one teacher being assigned to teach one class, two teachers could be assigned to team teach two classes, thereby allowing both NESTs and non-NESTs to collaborate more effectively.

Limitations of the Study and Future Research

The study only addresses the NNS ESL teachers' perceptions of their behaviors, which may not reflect their actual behaviors. Although the participants gave examples to illustrate some of their points, those examples are being filtered through the teacher rather than coming from an outside observer. Future research might incorporate observations of the participants in addition to their self-perceptions, in order to compare the two.

Furthermore, this study examined only three non-NESTs, which will not reflect the perceptions of non-NESTs as a whole. Studies with more participants are needed. Additionally, since all the participants came from Europe, it might be useful to look at non-NESTs from numerous countries and multiple continents. It would also be helpful if male non-NESTs were included in a future study.

Finally, this study only addresses ESL teaching situations. It would be useful to examine how non-NESTs perceive their teaching behaviors when they are in EFL contexts. This would be especially helpful since the conclusions drawn in this study related so much to acculturation, which may not be a factor if a non-NEST is teaching in his native country.

Conclusion

Although the dialogue regarding NESTs and non-NESTs is far from over, the conclusions of this study should be of interest to those who want to better understand speaker identity. People do not fit into neatly labeled categories, so the desire to sort and file ESL teachers by their NS status needs to be suppressed.

Interestingly, when I asked each participant what kind of teacher would be successful in their type of situation, the answers varied greatly. Some behaviors were suggested, but they were not the ones listed in this study. Among those behaviors were the following: setting clear expectations, establishing a clear curriculum, and creating a learner-centered class. Additionally, character traits were suggested: compassion, patience, warmth, empathy, and a willingness to learn. Knowledge of the language was also mentioned, as well as the ability to convey that knowledge. However, the most important response

was stated by Elizabeth and Mary in almost exactly the same words: there is no recipe for a perfect teacher.

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Appendix A

SELECTED ITEMS FROM QUESTIONNAIRE

Part 1

Please answer the following questions as completely as possible.

What is your native language?

What is your ethnicity?

How many years/at what academic level did you study to qualify as a teacher of ESL?

How long have you been in the US?

How many years of experience do you have as an English teacher?

Describe the school where you teach.

What is your motivation to be an ESL teacher?

What do you think accounts for your success as an ESL teacher?

Part 2

Please indicate how strongly you agree with the following statements by circling the number that corresponds to your perceptions:

Strongly Disagree = 1; Disagree = 2; Neutral/Don't Know = 3; Agree = 4; Strongly Agree = 5

	<u>SD</u>	<u>D</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>A</u>	<u>SA</u>
I speak English well.	1	2	3	4	5
I use real language.	1	2	3	4	5
I use "bookish" language.	1	2	3	4	5
I lack confidence in my use of English.	1	2	3	4	5
I speak English poorly.	1	2	3	4	5
I use English confidently.	1	2	3	4	5
I supply much cultural information when I teach.	1	2	3	4	5
I supply little cultural information when I teach.	1	2	3	4	5

Teaching Notes

Authentic Tag Question Practice for Avid Environmentalist Teachers

Reuel Kurzet

Portland State University

When I'm not teaching or thinking about teaching, I'm often thinking about environmental issues. And so it was one afternoon when I hesitated to recycle "perfectly good" *outdated* handouts on "Portland Places to Visit" while pondering how to improve my teaching of tag questions. Many grammar textbooks present tag questions, and I've often taught them before, but I've never been satisfied that my students truly understood their use because I had never presented them in an authentic context. Suddenly the recycling and the tag question problems fused into a very successful lesson that even included some dictation—which my students love.

To prepare, I called each place on the handout—the Washington Park Rose Garden, the Japanese Garden, the Portland Classical Chinese Garden, Hoyt Arboretum, the World Forestry Center, the Oregon Zoo, the Children's Museum, the Portland Art Museum, and Multnomah County Library—and corrected all of the outdated information on my handout copy. As expected, admission prices (for adults, seniors, children, and college students with ID) and, at some places, hours had changed.

In class, I introduced tag questions, showing how the verb in a tag must be negative if the verb in the preceding statement was affirmative, and vice versa. I demonstrated the falling intonation of the tag when the speaker thinks s/he knows the correct answer and the rising tag intonation when the speaker is less sure. Students, as usual, seemed confused about when the speaker was sufficiently sure of a statement to use falling versus rising intonation. They were confused about when the statement part should be negative and the tag affirmative, and vice versa. But instead of providing practice with the inauthentic examples in the text,

which they all knew the answers to, I passed out the outdated "Portland Places" handout.

Next, I pointed out the date on the handout and asked the class if they thought that all of the information was still current. They thought not. Then I asked which information would be the same and which might have changed. They correctly guessed that addresses and telephone numbers were least likely to have changed and admission prices most likely to have increased. They thought some places, but not all, might have changed their hours. This provided an authentic context for asking tag questions.

Students took turns making tag questions from the information on the front side of the outdated handout. I answered their tag questions, providing updated information where appropriate. Students wrote down the correct information about prices and hours—particularly for places that they wanted to visit; this provided an authentic dictation.

For the back of the handout, I tore my copy into five "cards," each with information on one place, and gave them to five students. Students circulated asking and answering tag questions, and receiving (dictated) information from other students to correct their handout. Periodically, I rotated who held the "cards," but after a few turns, students could also get current information from students who had previously asked someone with a "card." Students understood how to use tag questions and enjoyed both the dictation and getting useful information about Portland.

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Kinesthetic-Figurative Methods for Coaching Pronunciation

Talisman Saunders
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Many instructors who have taught pronunciation know how difficult it can be to teach certain sounds, particularly those that are articulated in places out of sight or require complicated muscular movements. It is fairly easy to model /b/, exaggerating lip movements, but comparatively difficult to model /r/ and tell a student what she is doing incorrectly.

For their part, pronunciation materials have gotten more sophisticated in their methodology over the last ten years. No more reliance on boring minimal pair drills: video and software packages provide instruction in full motion. Most current textbooks will include drawings of the head and mouth. Additionally, they provide detailed written instructions to the student, describing place and manner of articulation quite fully.

Still, as a teacher of pronunciation with such resources at my disposal, this writer has seen certain sounds continue to elude my students. When coaching /r/, I can tell them, "Move your tongue back and make it tense. Don't curl it up – air should flow over the tip. The back sides of your tongue should be pressing against your upper back teeth." I can point to the drawing in the book. But... still, no luck. For such unfamiliar and invisible muscular movements, visual and spoken instruction fall short.

It was while using the textbook by Sue F. Miller, *Targeting Pronunciation*, that I tried a new teaching method that produced surprising results. In the chapter on /r/, the book presented a little two-step drawing of a hand. In the first drawing, the hand was clenched in a fist; in the second drawing, the hand flew open in an open-palm gesture. It was a kinesthetic way of symbolizing the tenseness of /r/. Students were to say the word "ray," while using their hand: "Rrrrrr (clench)...aaaaay (release)." This little gesture seemed to "click" in some students' minds, and their /r/ audibly improved.

Inspired by this breakthrough, other ways of using the hands and body sprang to mind. To further convey how /r/ requires tongue pressure on the upper back teeth, I told students to tense their bent arms at their sides and push, as if pushing out the sides of a box around them. "Rrrrr...ah!" they would say, pushing to each side at the release of the sound. Making the physical movement at the same time as the sound seemed to help.

Perhaps best of all, it when I became frustrated with pointing at a drawing, I began using my arm and hand as a model, as in Figure 1.

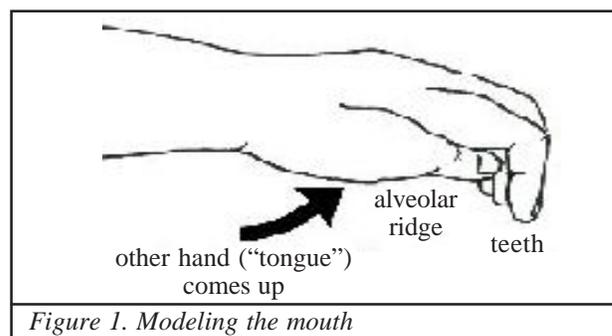


Figure 1. Modeling the mouth

When teaching /θ/, I could bring my right hand (tongue) up to tap the tips of the left-hand fingers (teeth). For /l/, the right hand (tongue) came up to press the middle of the left palm (alveolar ridge). For /v/, I curled my fingers (teeth) to press against my other hand (lower lip).

While some sounds cannot be modeled kinesthetically, the method can be helpful for several. Creativity is the order of the day – you never know how an unconventional method of teaching may connect with your students.

Talisman Saunders has worked as an ESL and EFL teacher since 1992, and has been an instructor in Portland State University's IELP since 1997.

The Pronunciation Conference

Patricia Pashby
University of Oregon

Explicit instruction of pronunciation is once again finding a solid place in the curriculum of many language institutes. Although much pronunciation instruction and practice can be successfully carried out in the classroom, one-on-one conferencing—whether 10 minutes or half an hour, every week or once a term—can provide the attention students need to start overcoming features contributing to comprehensibility difficulties. For teachers who feel uncomfortable conducting a pronunciation conference, here are a few tips based on my classroom experience.

Before the conference, I have the student record and submit a diagnostic consisting of a short reading passage and several questions about the student’s background and needs, including “What are your most serious pronunciation problems?” I listen and fill out a sheet identifying what I perceive to be the features most likely to be distracting to the listener. These often include stress and rhythm, intonation, syllable stress, vowel length, and/or segmentals. The “Speech Profile” section in *Well Said* provides some useful samples of these kinds of diagnostic tools.

If you’re comfortable making an immediate assessment, a diagnostic may instead be completed at the beginning of the conference. Be sure to mark a second copy of the reading, or if free speaking, take notes to refer to afterward. A classroom performance may also serve as a diagnostic. If you’re unsure of how to assess and prioritize pronunciation features, I highly recommend the *Pronunciation for Success* teacher training video. This provides numerous samples from students of various language backgrounds and explicit suggestions of what to focus on and how.

During the conference, I usually cover two or three pronunciation points. With each, I make sure the student can hear the point and then produce it. For materials, I use several student texts with easily accessible, clear samples such as Baker & Goldstein’s *Pronunciation Pairs* (for minimal pair work), Beisbier’s *Sounds Great*, and Miller’s *Targeting Pronunciation*. I also keep a small mirror handy so that the student can see how she is moving her mouth. After the student produces the point successfully, I make sure she can do it in various environments. With discrete sounds, this means in initial, medial, and final position.

Explicit instruction of pronunciation is once again finding a solid place in the curriculum

If there is time, I move into less mechanical tasks, such as asking the student to tell me a story, describe a picture, or explain her position on a topic from her field. I then monitor how well the focus point is handled. Note: I tape record conferences, so the student can later refer to them for review and practice.

At the end of the conference, I help the student set up a plan for independent practice. I remind her that no improvement will take place without daily practice; the muscles and mind must be retrained. Focusing on the kind of language most useful to the student’s situation, we work together to formulate a practice plan that will work for her. This plan might include one or more of the following:

- The student makes her own list of words or phrases containing the feature to be practiced daily in front of a mirror and, if possible, recorded for self-monitoring.
- The student uses the dictionary to find and practice the correct syllable stress of key words needed for upcoming classroom presentations and discussions.

- The student mirrors lines from television shows or movies for rhythm and intonation practice.
- The student may work with online sources or software in a language lab.

The student leaves the conference with the following: a recording of the session, a copy of the diagnostic notes, photocopies of exercises from student texts, and a clear plan for daily practice and monitoring.

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From the Bookshelf

Vocabulary in Language Teaching

Bill Walker

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Vocabulary in Language Teaching by Norbert Schmitt. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000. Pp. vii + 224.

What's wrong with the following sentence? *The patient is in steady condition*. It's grammatically correct, isn't it? Nevertheless, if you are a native speaker, you are uncomfortable with it. You would say the patient is in *stable* condition. Unfortunately, ESL/EFL students make collocation mistakes like this all the time. Moreover, they get frustrated when they memorize long lists of vocabulary words, work on writing grammatically accurate sentences, and end up with the teacher saying "but we don't say it like that."

All too often, ESL teachers busy themselves teaching reading, writing, listening and speaking along with grammar, but assume that vocabulary will somehow take care of itself. In fact, many teacher training programs neglect it. Fortunately, Norbert Schmitt has written a book which thoroughly explores the nature of vocabulary and its vital role in language learning and teaching. Although lexical knowledge and competence are central to communication, few ESL professionals are aware of what students need to know about words and how to go about helping them acquire sufficient breadth and depth of lexical knowledge. With clarity and insight, Schmitt gives both the MA TESOL student and the established professional a comprehensive and broad examination of the lexical approach to language teaching.

The nine chapters in Schmitt's book provide a thorough introduction to vocabulary for the classroom practitioner who would like to teach vocabulary and exploit its potential contribution to language learning. The author begins by exploring what it means to know a word, drawing on Paul Nation's descriptions of the kinds of word knowledge that learners need. After reviewing the history of vocabulary teaching movements, Schmitt points to the future. He notes

that powerful computer programs, examining millions of words of text, are now yielding more information about vocabulary and its synergistic links to grammar. He puts a great deal of emphasis on multi-word units and word associations, then goes on to explore how "encyclopedic" vocabulary knowledge is acquired and how the instructor can coach students on developing skills and strategies for increasing their lexical competence. Finally, he examines approaches to assessing vocabulary knowledge.

In each chapter, Schmitt provides scores of explicit examples to illustrate the principle. Schmitt generously includes "Applications to Teaching" sections throughout each chapter. End-of-chapter exercises invite the readers to think about how to apply the principles in the classroom and how to relate them more deeply to their own teaching experiences. Six appendices and an extensive list of references complete the volume.

Though Schmitt does not explicitly point out that some of our cherished assumptions about vocabulary teaching may, in fact, be erroneous, the astute reader may be stimulated to question long-held precepts. Can students really learn new words from context? Should I require students to use only monolingual dictionaries? Should word lists be avoided at all costs? Just how many of the words in a given text do students really understand? Is the comprehensible input really comprehensible?

To read an extended, in-depth synopsis of *Vocabulary in Language Teaching*, go to the ORTESOL web site and click on the ORTESOL Journal link. If you are intrigued by any of the topics, go read the book itself. You will be well rewarded.

Bill Walker spent seven years teaching in the Middle East and is now at the American English Institute at the University of Oregon. He has served on the ORTESOL Board for the past seven years.

ORTESOL Journal

Information for ORTESOL Journal Contributors

Editorial Policy

ORTESOL Journal, a professional, refereed publication, encourages the submission of previously unpublished articles on topics of significance to individuals concerned with the teaching of English as a second or foreign language, especially in elementary and secondary education, and in higher education, adult education, and bilingual education. As a publication that represents a variety of cross-disciplinary interests, both theoretical and practical, the *Journal* invites manuscripts on a wide range of topics. The following areas are of special interest:

1. curriculum design and development
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The *Journal* particularly welcomes submissions that draw on relevant research with a focus on direct application in the classroom (methods, materials, techniques, and activities) at all levels of instruction. Journal articles should be written in a style which is reader-friendly and therefore accessible to classroom teachers. While maintaining a practical focus, the articles should, nevertheless, be well-founded in research and include references to the appropriate literature.

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1. All manuscripts receive a blind review.
2. Please submit the manuscript as an electronic file (.rtf or .doc). Also include, in a separate electronic file (.rtf or .doc) the author's name, full mailing address, daytime and evening telephone numbers, email address, institutional affiliation, and short (50 words) bio-data. Images may be incorporated into the manuscript for review, but should also be available as separate files for printing.
3. Submissions must not have been previously published and should not be under consideration for publication elsewhere.
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5. Send electronic files via e-mail attachment to:

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