

# MITESOL Messages

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A publication for Michigan  
Teachers of English to  
Speakers of Other  
Languages

## President's Corner

### Turning Joining Into Belonging

by Brenda Prouser Imber

I am honored to be serving as your President in this turning point year, one which begins our next quarter-century of growth toward our golden anniversary conference in 2025.

Turning points are always exciting, full of potential and goals that are sincerely intended to be met. In the meantime, however, along with the tantalizing vision of the future of MITESOL in the next twenty-five years, is the awesome and more immediate task of MITESOL's growth and direction during this next year.

Being responsible for this year's macro-micro vision is a humbling experience. One is faced with trying to live up to a MITESOL legacy that includes Penny Wheeler, Betsy Morgan, Sara Tipton, Sandy Hagman, Jean Holther and Alan Headbloom, to list those presidents from only the past five years.

Belonging to such an auspicious list carries the responsibility of how to continue to grow MITESOL into an organization  
(Cont. on p.6)

## Publishing a Newsletter: The Trials, Tribulations, and Ultimate Rewards of an ESL Newsletter Class

by Heather Meloche, ESL Instructor, Wayne State Univ.

Every ESL class generates its own challenges for teaching. However, when you have a class designed around the goal of creating an original, newsworthy, and creative publication for a large number of readers every semester, the challenge increases.

At the English Language Institute at Wayne State University, the Newsletter class provides students with a unique language-learning opportunity to write at least one article for each of two newsletter issues published during a semester. The WSU ELI Newsletter, which has an original look and title each semester, is distributed after each publication to, on average, around 100 readers throughout the ELI. The class meets once a week for approximately 13 weeks and is composed of a mixture of low intermediate to advanced student writers. The course description gives the impression that the class is heavily writing-based. However, at the class' core is an integrated curriculum that puts students in a position to negotiate orally and through writing about newsletter design, the rhetorical differences between academic essays and newspaper/magazine/newsletter articles, self and peer editing, audience, purpose, tone, and basic computer use including the use of Microsoft Word and PowerPoint.

(Cont. on p.9)

## MITESOL RECEPTION

Thursday night, March 1 7-9:00 PM, join your Michigan colleagues as MITESOL launches its second 25 years of affiliation within TESOL. The reception will take place at the Summit-Frank's Place, 4 blocks from the Convention Center on the corner of Broadway and Olive. This event is co-sponsored by MSU, EMU, and CMU. See you in St. Louie!  
Alan Headbloom  
Reception Coordinator

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## Going Digital

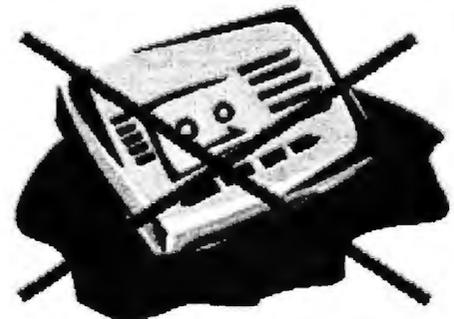
by Diana Phelps-Soysal, Newsletter Editor

Many schools are looking to CAN8 or other means of audio digitization to replace audiotapes; nevertheless, my school actually took the plunge. While I can appreciate this new technology, the transition was not very easy.

Last winter semester when I first heard that the audiotape language lab would be replaced by computers, I was elated. The Foreign Language Technology Center at Wayne State University was finally getting rid of the hundreds of cumbersome cassette tapes that lined the wall and was purchasing a digital audio program called CAN8. No longer would students have to struggle to find the correct tape they needed. No longer would they spend precious class time fast-forwarding through needless information to find the exact lesson they needed. Never again would they spend exorbitant amounts of time fiddling around with the rewind button in order to replay something that they couldn't quite catch. Instead, everything would be in a clearly-labeled, user-friendly hierarchy based on skill and level. There would be an oscillator so that my ESL students could see the sound patterns of the English sentence structure, which also means that students could have a visual representation of the length of the exercise. If students have difficulty hearing or understanding something, they could easily move the cursor to replay the area in question or push a button that slows down rapid speech. Best of all, I could create interactive activities that could correspond with the listening passages on cassette. I would have a variety of formats to choose from: multiple choice, fill-in-the-blank, open-ended written or oral questions, and a few others. In addition, there was a tracking device installed so that I could keep track of how well my students performed the tasks I would create for them. As I envisioned all of these revolutionary changes, I smiled to myself. The foreign language departments were finally moving into the new millennium.

In the summer, as I watched the destruction of all of the cassette players and tapes, I knew that our technological step forward was a reality; however instead of a slow transition, it had become a giant, bounding leap. I had supposed that the transition would be easier. In my naivety, I hadn't thought about how would all of the cassette tapes become ready for the conversion. Our department needed those audiocassettes. Someone with a fair understanding of computer operations needed to take charge of this situation, so it might as well be me!

When faced with this digital dilemma, I did what I could with the equipment that I had. First I recorded a cassette tape for about 10 minutes on an I-Mac computer, converted it to a PC readable file, placed it on a Zip disk, and brought it home so that I could place it on the hard drive of my home PC. When I had six or seven Zip disks full, I burned them on to a CD so that my department would have a permanent copy just in case something unforeseen happened. Then I returned to school and finally placed the audio file on to the CAN8 server at school. However, that wasn't the end. Once the



(Cont on p.4)

## "I Wanna Speak More English...with Real Americans!"

by Lovette Tiechart, ESL Instructor, Western Mich. Univ.

Okay, "A" for the reduced speech usage, but what am I, if not a "real American," yesterday's mashed potatoes? I am an American who lived all my life (except a year teaching in Germany, and think I speak pretty good English. When it comes to speaking, I think I give my students as many opportunities to speak as the next teacher—pair work, small (3-4) group work, whole class discussions, debates, oral reports, chatting outside class, etc. So what's left?

I had to come up with an idea that is task-oriented and enjoyable. It had to be something meaningful, but something that could be undertaken within a two-to-three-hour time frame. Recalling pleasurable field trips from past summer institutes, I came upon the word that makes most international students (at least, those in Kalamazoo) smile: Meijer! For anyone living in the dark ages, Meijer is a discount department store with groceries and home furnishings that is large enough to get lost in, meet and speak with "real" Americans, and do this instructor's shopping at the same time.

Equipped with a fistful of twenty-dollar bills, it was off to Meijer. However, the planning took more time than the actual trip. The class was divided into groups of 3-4 students, none of whom spoke the same native language. Each group was given \$60 and a list of things to do or buy at Meijer. To this list, I stapled my business card so there would be no questions as to the seriousness of this task. Students could ask questions of Meijer employees (greeters are always happy to help) or other shoppers, but not me. They could talk to me only after they had accomplished all their tasks so I could check to see how they had done. An example of some items from the lists are as follows:

- \*have key made
- \*return bottles
- \*head of cabbage
- \*1 book holiday 33-cent stamps
- \*Prell shampoo
- \*Michigan postcard
- \*band-aids (40)
- \*1 seedless cucumber
- \*plastic spatula
- \*I can't believe it's not butter (1 lb.)
- \*roll Christmas wrap
- \*3 lbs. chicken pieces
- \*variety box teabags
- \*holiday napkins
- \*3 lbs. green peppers
- \*5-oz. kitchen paper cups
- \*Crest toothpaste
- \*a baby rattle
- \*½ gal. milk

Another motive for this activity was to buy some food that I would cook to serve at a pot-luck dinner at my home the following weekend. In all honesty the lists were considerably shorter as I had five different groups shopping. An incentive for getting the task done quickly and efficiently was the prize for the group that finished first. This turned out be candy canes for the winners and smaller candy canes for the losers. Every participant was pleased with the results and had to admit they HAD HAD to speak with "real Americans." Not only did they speak with "real Americans," but they learned a lot of vocabulary (including abbreviations), enjoyed learning English, got to know the people in their groups better, and later had a good dinner. In addition, I got part of my shopping done. Now the only question I hear is "When can we talk with "real Americans" again?"



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## **MITESOLers at TESOL 2001**

When you attend TESOL in St. Louis, don't miss out on a chance to see what these Michiganian's are doing!

\* **Karol Walchak** and **Leslie Grant** of Central Michigan University will be presenting a paper called "Incorporating Video into Listening Comprehension Testing." In addition, Karol will be doing a demonstration entitled "Peer Assessment with the Talking Journal." A brief summary of this presentation is featured on p. 5. For those of you who plan on attending AAAL, Leslie and Karol will be presenting "A Comparison of Textbooks Written For L2 Writers and Texts Written by L2 Writers." Furthermore, keep your eye out for the textbook that Karol, Leslie, and **William Spruiell** are working on for Prentice Hall!

\* Others from Central are quite busy as well, **Dorothy E. Zemach** is presenting on "Establishing Credibility with Japanese Students." Furthermore, she is working on a book called *English Grammar and Writing* in the Schaum's Easy Outlines series by McGraw-Hill. It's a grammar book for native English speakers. \* **Mary Lu Light** of Western Michigan University and **Cheryl Delk** formerly of WMU currently of Georgia State University are giving a presentation called "Revising a University-level IEP Curriculum." It is a presentation relevant to other IEP's.

\* **Glenn Deckert** of Eastern Michigan University will be leading an EFL discussion group entitled "CLT up against High Stakes Examinations." Then immediately afterward, he and **Jen VandeBogart**, a newly graduated MATESOL student from EMU, will be presenting a paper entitled "Developing a Graduate Course in Academic Communication."

\* **Sara Tipton** of Wayne State University and **Ann Fathman** will be sharing their insights from their time abroad in Slovakia in a presentation entitled "EFL Insights for ESL Teaching and Learning." In addition, Sara will be the co-discussion leader with **Maureen Burke** in the forum "Getting Started in ITA Education."

## **Updates : Local and Abroad**

**Mary Lee Field** (former MITESOL President) is currently teaching at Ibaraki University in Mito, Japan. In November Mary Lee gave a demonstration titled "In the Tunnel of Reading" at the JALT (Japanese Association of Language Teachers) Conference in Shizuoka, Japan. More recently, she presented "Strategies for Monitoring Comprehension" at Thai TESOL in Bangkok, Thailand. She won't be able to attend TESOL in St. Louis, but sends a warm greeting to all MITESOLers. You can reach her easily via e-mail at [mary.lee.field@wayne.edu](mailto:mary.lee.field@wayne.edu) or [field@mito.ipc.ibaraki.ac.jp](mailto:field@mito.ipc.ibaraki.ac.jp).

**CONGRATULATIONS TO WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY ON THEIR ACCREDITATION! MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY HAS STARTED THE ACCREDITATION PROCESS AS WELL!**

### **GOING DIGITAL** (cont. from p.2)

digital audio files were on the computer, they needed to be cut up according to lesson and labeled in an identifiable format. Sometimes that was even more time-consuming than the digitizing process. Furthermore, there were many computer problems with both CAN8 and the new computers purchased for the lab. Whew! It makes me tired just writing about it! While many people were enjoying summer barbeques and playing in the leaves in the fall, I was at my computer listening and re-listening to a myriad of ESL cassette tapes. Fortunately, my school now has the proper equipment and the digitizing process takes less than one-fourth as much time as it used to even with the continued glitches; however, I will not soon forget the lectures from *Learn to Listen: Listen to Learn* nor the vocabulary words from the *Oxford Picture Dictionary*.

In retrospect, I do think that the transition was worth it, despite that fact that I still have more work to do. The students seem to enjoy using the computer to assist them in their language development despite some of the technical glitches. The language lab is very functional and modern-looking. Nevertheless, if your school is planning a similar transition, say good-bye to your free time! Going digital is not as easy as it may seem!

## Peer Assessment with the Talking Journal

by Karol Walchek, Associate Professor, Central Michigan Univ.

The notion for the "talking journals" arrived as a result of my desire to provide advanced students with more opportunities to hear both errors and accuracy in pronunciation work. Ideally, these opportunities would be activities that allowed students to practice specific pronunciation skills we had been working on in class, combined with an opportunity to train their "ears." I wanted students to recognize accuracy and error and to afford them with the time and skills necessary to review their fellow classmates work.

The idea was to focus students on their fellow students' pronunciation skills. There were, however, several logistical problems, not the least of which was my being able to oversee and control discussions and corrections of errors. Initially, I assigned students to homework. I assigned them to rate several tapes and then asked them to present their results in class and offer a brief explanation and description of what they heard.

This first effort presented several problems. This took a great deal of time away from class practice and instruction. Students were often late with their homework. This problem was not a result of lack of desire; instead, students were perplexed by the number of errors they heard because they often did not know what to listen for, and they were not confident in their ability to provide feedback. Moreover, lacking confidence in their ability to discover errors, the students frequently discussed the tapes with the students who made them; instead of listening to the errors, students were simply reporting them based on the information from their classmates.

Subsequently, students could ac-

curately identify their partners' errors with greater accuracy and frequency—based on what their partners told them, not on what they were taught. I struggled with different methods for presenting the work so that I could oversee it.

After several failed attempts at arranging the journal in class, I finally arrived at the idea for the "Peer Talking Journal." The following is a brief list of the steps I followed.

- Students are instructed on some aspect of pronunciation, e.g., back channels, "Uh huh"; asking questions, e.g., wh- questions: "What are you doing this afternoon?", yes/no questions: "Did you like the movie?"; or specific sounds, e.g., /ð/: *this, bathe*, etc., /æ/: *man, cat*, etc.
- Students are given an assignment, such as an interview, to record themselves using the specifically targeted elements of pronunciation. (They could record their homework in the language lab or at home.) They submit tapes based on an assignment. I ask that they do not "practice" the interview, but they are welcome to practice the questions they have developed. (Collect these a day before in order to create a proper mix of groups and tapes.)
- Students are placed in groups of three or four. (If possible, groups should be mixed—different language groups will hear sounds with varying levels of accuracy.)
- Students are provided with a list of criteria for "checking off" pronunciation errors. (The peer assessment sheets should reflect only the items targeted during class instruction.

These sheets ask that peer assessors not only record errors, but also the number of times an item was used correctly.)

- Each group is provided with a tape recorder and the same number of tapes as people in each group. No group member will review the tape of a person within the group.
- Each group rates the tapes they are given. They listen to each tape, focusing on the targeted areas of pronunciation. They rate the tapes based on the criteria listed on the peer assessment sheets.
- Instructor collects both tapes and feedback sheets for a final review and to grade students on assignment. Peer reviewers are given grades (check, check plus, check minus) on their ability to distinguish correctness from error. Student tapes were also rated by the instructor.

While I found that organizing this particular class meant overcoming several obstacles, e.g., finding enough recorders for each group, developing assessment sheets, and creating interest, the classes themselves *were* both interesting and productive. Students did, indeed, develop skills for "hearing" errors, and in doing so, helped to develop their own pronunciation skills. Moreover, students looked forward to "showing off" their practiced tongues and ears. They were also rewarded with assessment sheets that reflected what they were doing right and what they needed to work on. In the final analysis, and my data gathered from course evaluation sheets, students noted that this activity was one of the most helpful and exciting of the course.

**Joining to Belonging** *cont. from p.1*

of members who do more than merely join. In other words, how to turn our database of mailing labels into a group of *belonging* members.

On the Fall 2000 Conference Questionnaire, we asked how we could get you more actively involved in MITESOL. Although your responses reflected already overloaded plates and 24-7 schedules, the majority of you did indicate that you would be willing to take on a small, well-defined, short-term task. Thank you!

These responses have shaped one part of the vision for the direction of MITESOL's growth this year — to offer you a way to belong that is both realistic and rewarding. We, as your elected officers, invite you into a degree of engagement that is *do-able* in your role as an active member who receives value from your professional organization.

So what values can MITESOL offer you this year? We promise to offer you a degree of belonging that is *do-able*. We hope to encourage you to become a contributor to the newsletter by writing a brief description of a daily lesson or a fun activity. We hope to convince you that your ideas and activities are a valuable part of the professional development of your colleagues. We hope to offer you an opportunity for a collaborative spring conference. We hope you will share in each other's professional development by presenting your work at our annual fall conference.

Another value of your membership in MITESOL is carried in the potential for connecting and collaborating, not just with your MITESOL colleagues, but with other professionals in nearby states and in related areas of interest. We already have a good partnership with ATECR and the Fall 2000 Conference had a few presenter / attendees from Ohio — a small but promising step.

Our professional development plans for the year 2000-2001 include our annual fall conference and a possible spring conference collaboration with MABE in Kalamazoo in April. We believe that such an offering will be of special interest for our K-12 members. More information

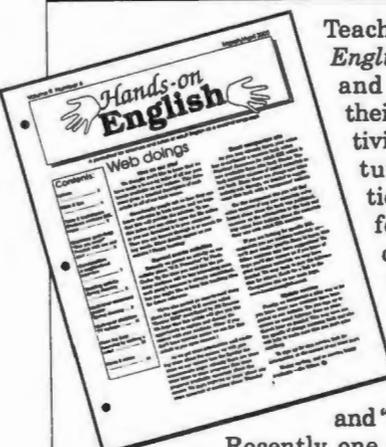
on this possibility will be provided via the list-serve and on the Web as soon as it becomes available.

In general, the board is hoping to increase your ability to network within your SIG and Regional Groups and increase the opportunities to network across organizational and / or geographical boundaries that will be of value to all our members.

Most importantly, we hope to increase your reasons for turning this year into your time to belong to the reality rather than the roster of membership in MITESOL, and to encourage you to use all the avenues of access to the professional excellence of your organization.

We also hope to hear from you via individual e-mail to me (prousimb@umich.edu), the list-serve or the new bulletin board. In closing, we extend a sincere invitation to you to attend any of the meetings of your elected board. Our next board meeting will be held on February 17, 2001 in Ann Arbor at the Washtenaw Intermediate School District (WISD). Our website lists all the meeting dates and cities. We look forward to seeing and hearing from you.

**A great resource**



Teachers tell us that *Hands-on English* is "high-interest, practical and immediately useable" for their teaching. They say the activities provide "excellent opportunities for student interaction." They also say it's "great for multi-level adult ESL classes," with an "upbeat, uncomplicated approach."

Over and over we hear from readers "my students love the multi-level crosswords!" and "I look forward to every issue." Recently one teacher wrote to us asking "Why didn't I discover you before?"

If you haven't seen *Hands-on English* yet, perhaps you'd like to take a look! Ask us for a **free sample issue** to see if HOE would be useful for *your* teaching!

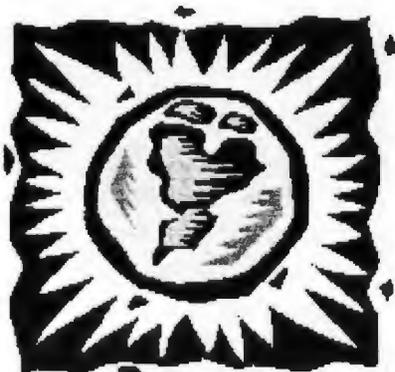
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(A one-year subscription is \$21. Back issues are \$5 each. A printable order form is available on our website.)

## Professional Connections

by Maggie Phillips, President-Elect

Every year while planning the annual fall conference, the MITESOL board conference planners first decide on a theme for the conference day as well as for the year ahead. This is done, I believe, so that we might create a perspective, or focus through which we view our contribution to the membership at large.



In the spirit of the fall 2000 theme, "creating, collaborating, connecting," I would like to propose that we begin not only to see but to utilize our internet resources in order to connect and collaborate, and thereby, to create something exciting and valuable for ourselves.

At the moment, MITESOL members are connected via an E-list and, recently, a discussion board on our website. Both are easy to use and, in my case on one occasion, an amazingly fast way to solve a problem. A company near Ann Arbor that I was negotiating with to provide ESL services to its employees asked me if I could do translations of their work materials into Vietnamese. Not knowing of any Vietnamese translators personally, I sent an E-mail to Elizabeth Berriman, our

E-list manager, who posted it, and within forty-eight hours I not only had two able Vietnamese translators but also a very good lead on a potential instructor for the course I was proposing. Just this week I checked out and then checked in to the discussion board on the MITESOL website and could see a similar potential for connecting and collaborating.

Brenda Imber is kicking off the effort to get connected by contributing two Internet sites to the E-list. She wants to be sure that those who post sites feel they must endorse the quality or usefulness of the source they pass along. She suggests a disclaimer such as "used it, liked it" or "heard of it, never used it."

The point, really, is to begin in small ways. We are in the infant stage of the World Wide Web where information is free and somewhat daunting. How we gather and share is the first challenge. In the spirit of creating, collaborating, and connecting we can begin again to get back to the basics and rebuild our grass roots organization. Hmmmm, a possible theme for fall 2001?



## BOARD TALK

by Karen Gilbert, Secretary

The annual transition Board meeting was held at the WISD center in Ann Arbor on November 11, 2000. This is the first meeting after the Fall Conference, the time when one Board greets and hands over responsibility to the Board elected at the conference.

Please check your list of Board members in this newsletter (pp. 2-3) for the full current list; feel free to call or e-mail anyone with your questions or comments. Jean Holther and Lisa Rumisek were honored for their years of service to MITESOL.

The conference in Grand Rapids was reviewed: the participant rating was an overall 4.3 out of 5.0. The site at the ATC worked out well and everyone enjoyed the presentations and professional contacts.

The new MITESOL discussion format on our website was announced at the conference, the Board plans to promote the use of this new means of communication between members.

The next Board meeting will be at the WISD building on Wagner Road in Ann Arbor, February 17, 2001, starting at 9:00 a.m. In addition to MITESOL business and planning, Linda Lewis White, who represented MITESOL at the Michigan Reading Forum meeting, will be giving us a brief report, and Jackie Moase-Burke will be the plenary speaker. Please plan on joining us for all or part of the day if you are interested in Board activities.

## Cuba: Raising the Profile for the New Millenium

*Lisa Morgan, doctoral student, Michigan State University.*

"Raising the Profile into the New Millennium," was the title of this year's Cuban Linguistic Association's conference for English Language Specialists taking place in Havana from December 14-16, 2000. This was an especially important year because the association was celebrating its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary and was able to attract more than 250 Cuban members and several foreign conference attendees/presenters who came from Spain, Canada, Mexico, the U.K. and the United States.

The association's 9<sup>th</sup> annual conference was held in four facilities, all in close walking distance to one another, in the lovely Old Havana area of the city. My personal favorite was the elementary school, a cheerful, bright environment for both learning and having a conference. Dick Allwright, (University of Lancaster, U.K.) is a special friend of the Cuban English language educators as he had addressed the association's inaugural meeting nine years ago and once again spoke at this year's opening plenary session entitled " 'Exploratory Practice': A Decade of Development." Guy Cook (the University of Reading, U.K.) another featured speaker, talked to a crowded room on "Old Dogmas, New Directions."

English for Specific Purposes is booming in Cuba and

this was certainly evident in the many presentations that centered around the teaching of such diverse groups as maritime engine-room staff, employees of the Institute for Foreign Trade, public health students of English (doctors and nurses), and anyone remotely involved with Cuban tourism. I



was particularly intrigued by the story told to me by some of my new-found professional friends. They told me that a number of English teachers, in order to understand the inner workings (and language) of hotel employees, were encouraged to work alongside their students as wait staff, reception clerks, etc. This clever idea resulted in an ably trained staff. However, a second consequence of this bold experiment left the ELT profession short when several teachers joined their students for a job in tourism which provided them with more lucrative monetary rewards than teaching. Heavily represented at the conference were also faculty from the Pedagogical Universities which can be found in each of the Cuban provinces. Their presentations addressed many issues in ELT. A sampling can be found in the following titles: "Oral

Presentations in Academic Contexts, Developing Research Skills in the English Grammar Course and Conducting a Workshop Through a Workshop."

Our hosts were gracious and helpful in every way and the association's board went out of their way to make us feel at home.

We were invited to attend a pre-conference cocktail in one of the many elegant old hotels in *La Habana Vieja* and a post-conference Chinese dinner at one of the board member's homes. There we relaxed, ate a delicious meal and chatted about

our respective professional and personal lives. I was also impressed with the high level of involvement of retired teachers of English in the association and conference proceedings and had a lively conversation about the role of English in the lives of two elderly sisters who painted a real-to-life picture of what the language has meant to them in their long and interesting lives. A special thanks should go to conference organizers Tony Irizar and Adita Chiappy. They dutifully answered my initial e-mails filled with questions about the conference, sent me conference proposal forms, arranged hotel and transportation for me, were always available to answer questions and sent me off on the last night of my stay with a delicious home cooked Cuban meal. Thank you Tony and Adita and to all the Cuban teachers I met during my stay in Cuba.

## ESL Newsletter *Cont. from p1*

As the instructor for this course over the past several semesters, I have seen many challenges boldly present themselves from the very beginning of each semester. Here is the short list, which includes the most adversarial roadblocks along each semester's path.

### "I don't get it."

The first and perhaps biggest challenge is getting students to conceptualize what a newsletter is. Most understand writing in English in terms of the academic essay – that five-paragraph, thesis-driven, formal piece of writing. However, many students don't understand the differences between the academic essay and an editorial, a review, or a personal interest story.

To confront this challenge, the first few classes are usually spent pouring over past issues of the newsletter, inviting in guest lecturers from the university newspaper and other publications to take students' questions, discussing the differences between various written genres, and brainstorming about topics typically found in newsletters. A lesson on audience and purpose is very important at this point so that students understand what it is that they are doing in this class and why we write a newsletter at all.

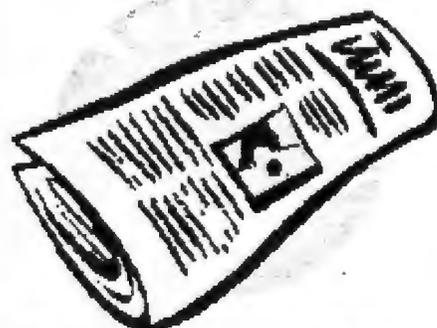
What students cannot understand until after they choose an article topic they feel comfortable with, begin to write their articles on their own, and start to put their articles together with others' is that a newsletter is a combined effort and can be anything based on the dynamic and the goals created by the team who contributes to it. This is a difficult concept to grasp but a very rewarding one once the first issue of the newsletter is published mid-semester and students see how their efforts have taken shape. As a result of getting past this conceptual

hurdle, the second issue of the newsletter is usually produced quickly and with much more confidence and ease.

### "Are you kidding??!!! I CAN'T do this!!!!"

The second challenge that arises comes in the form of the students' attitudes. Most of the advanced-level students see the course as a simple "blow-off" course in the beginning, especially when they compare the course's two-article requirement to their intensive writing course's five to seven lengthy academic essay and heavy reading load. When I explain the syllabus at the beginning of the semester, the advanced students look at me as if I had merely asked them to get up and walk across the room and back for a grade. They are often in for a shock as they realize the amount of work and responsibility that goes into writing and producing a newsletter. Yet the biggest problem is with the lower-level students in the course who have an intense amount of anxiety and fear about publishing for a wide audience and working side-by-side with more advanced students. Many of these students drop the course in the very beginning of the semester or stop coming after the first couple of classes. Their fear is visible and usually clearly voiced.

As a result of dealing each semester with these confidence issues, I have tried to make the atmosphere in the course very relaxed and friendly. We bring food to each class session. Classes not spent in the computer lab doing individual writing assignments are organized and referred to as "team meetings" expressly for the purpose of creative generation of ideas, design, and feed-back. In addition, the class includes a lot of student-instructor contact in order to quell the feelings that can lead to a student's aban-



donment of the course and its benefits.

### "How could you let me publish that mistake??!!!"

As an instructor of a course such as Newsletter, a teacher must decide what his or her philosophy is on editing students' work. When the time for students to edit their work has run out, to fix or not to fix the remaining mistakes myself is the question that I struggle with every semester as the Newsletter instructor. Despite the fact that readers may be bothered by the fact that the WSU ELI Newsletter has its small but significant share of wrong verb tenses, misplaced commas, and occasional inaccurate word choice, for our class, the bottom line is that producing a newsletter from nothing be a learning experience. The inevitable fact is that learning experiences generate mistakes and people learn through those mistakes.

Any embarrassment this challenge presents to students is dealt with by discussing errors and editing even after publication so that students continue to work on their personal grammar problems. Students are motivated by this initial embarrassment and tend to self-edit much more thoroughly for the second issue.

### "The computer ate my article."

Computer problems are faced in any course that requires students to word process their work. It is no different for the WSU ELI Newsletter class. Large portions of

*(Cont. on p11)*

## Rationale for Excellent Instruction of Culturally Diverse Public School Children

*Elizabeth Niergarth, ESL Instructor, Saginaw Valley State Univ.*

Since 1986, I have taught English as a Second Language to children, adult refugees and university students. There is a commonality that all of these students possess which is, of course, the need and/or desire to learn English. After all, we are the one remaining superpower, and English is the language of international business and commerce, which equates to money and financial success. We live in a global community. But children and adolescents who come to the United States with their parents (often as refugees) are in a special situation. They did not choose to leave their homes, their schools, their friends, and often their extended family. But their parents decided to leave their home country in the hope that they would be able to pursue the American dream of a more secure financial future for their family. Often this population has never had the opportunity to study English in their country, and the transition from their home culture to American culture can be very difficult. It is my

opinion that it is absolutely essential that programs be in place to help linguistically diverse school-aged children succeed academically and socially. At a time when few Americans have mastered a second or third language, these students could be a real asset in U.S. Government and business.

The first criterion in teaching children is to understand the situation they face when going to school with American children. Many areas in the United States have become very diverse in the last 20 years, as the rate of immigration has increased more than at any time since the beginning of the 20th century. There has been opposition to educating non-English speaking kids because many citizens do not want to spend more tax dollars and because they do not really understand or want to understand each new ethnic group that comes to their community. As a result, these newcomer children are often not welcomed or wanted in American schools. In the past, Black, Native American, and immigrant children dropped out of school and took low-paying and low-status jobs as their parents had before them. However, in the late sixties and seventies, educators began to take seriously the idea that these children were entitled to an equal education and could contribute to society, in general. In 1971, Massachusetts passed the first bilingual law in the country, Chapter 71A.

Where I taught in Westfield, Massachusetts, this law was in place. The law stated that if there were at least 20 children in any school district speaking any one foreign language as the mother tongue, a bilingual program must be set up in that school system. Since the law was presented as TBE (transitional bilingual education), the children's first language could be utilized while developing a proficiency in English. This method gave limited English proficient (LEP) children an opportunity to learn English gradually. If there were fewer than 20 children in one language group, children were "pulled out" of regular classrooms at times when language learning was particularly difficult for them

(i.e. in a Language Arts or Social Studies segment of their day) and given ESL instruction. The bilingual model used stated that since math is a universal subject and not heavily language weighted, LEP children can understand it when it is taught by a mainstream teacher in a mainstream classroom. In fact, many students from the former Soviet republics were at a much more advanced level of science (algebra, physics, etc.) than many of their American peers.

It cannot be stated too strongly that the educators teaching these students must be trained to be aware of the academic, social and cultural difficulties facing these children. The educators must know how to instill confidence in these



students and must have the courage to defend them from attitudes ranging from overt racism to skepticism to just plain ignorance. My comment to mainstream teachers often was "if Pavel/Maria speaks with an accent, it only means he/she can speak two languages." And there was the case of a third grade teacher who insisted that a little Polish girl (just arrived from Poland with absolutely NO English) learn to recite a poem (in front of the class) like the other American children. The child could not *read* the poem, first of all, because she could not understand the words, let alone *pronounce* them. Estera's solution to this was to pretend she was sick, and not want to go to school. She cried on the school bus every day....she was eight and a half years old! When I was able to get this information from her brother, I

immediately went to the principal at the school. Fortunately, the principal was supportive and moved Estera from that teacher's classroom into one where the teacher was understanding and compassionate toward the language difficulties facing this child.

And there is always the humor and joy of teaching and interacting with linguistically diverse children: Examples: have you ever heard of "the Sarah Dessert?" And there were the two Vietnamese students who looked out the window in rapt anticipation to see it "raining cats and dogs." One of my students, a nine-year-old Chinese girl, used to greet me by swearing at me! "#&@!# have you been, Mrs. Niergarth?" This, of course, was what she heard working with her mother in the kitchen of the parents' restaurant. The parents, whose

English was limited, thought this language was acceptable and, in fact, wonderful, because it was English! I saw Moddie last summer and she had grown into a very accomplished young woman fluent in both Mandarin and English.

Many of these children have now graduated from high school and gone on to college or universities. They have overcome obstacles most of us can only barely understand. But they have become truly bilingual and will be valuable assets to our communities and society as a whole. We are squandering our human resources if we do not empower these linguistically diverse children. They deserve no less than our attention, compassion and creative energies in promoting their linguistic abilities for the good of our society as a whole.

## Newsletter *cont. from p.9*

the class meetings are "Writing Workshop" days where students continue to write and edit the drafts of their articles in the computer lab. Students are given a short tutorial on whichever program – Microsoft Word or PowerPoint – we are using to put the article together and then they are let loose to come face-to-face with the computer and any evil behavior it unleashes. Our computer lab facility has had viruses that have eaten hours of student work. Sometimes, the wrong swipe at the keyboard makes an article disappear for good. What is important is that we have a facility for students to go and work and write together with me and other students there for guidance and questions that continue to pop up with each paragraph written. If students lose work in the lab, usually an abrupt and loud "AAGGHH!!" sends

other students to the rescue. It becomes a learning experience as more advanced computer users help those not as computer proficient, and the integrated curriculum is woven even more into the course. "I just don't have time to finish."

The final challenge is time. Deadlines are, of course, important to teach any student of any age. The importance for a newsletter course is that the instructor finds a comfortable number of issues to publish within the semester or term. Some advanced students in the WSU ELI Newsletter class have made the suggestion that we should publish three issues a semester. Other lower-level students found it hard to keep on top of two issues. The beauty of a newsletter course is that, because of its creative goals, an instructor can push those advanced students who can contribute

more and give slack to those students who need more time and effort.

In the end, the benefits of a newsletter course are clear.

**"I have so much more confidence when I write."**

**"I never thought I could do that."**

**"I feel really proud of myself."**

For many of the students, Newsletter class opens up a door to their own sense of personal expression and their own voice in English. Through publishing something that is their very own from concept to finished product and is distributed to such a large audience, those who succeed in tackling the challenges inherent in the course tend to find that they grow not only as a writer, but also as a person who has successfully connected to a very capable and innovative "English self."

## Textbook Evaluation

by Patricia Mathews Ward, Central Mich. Univ.

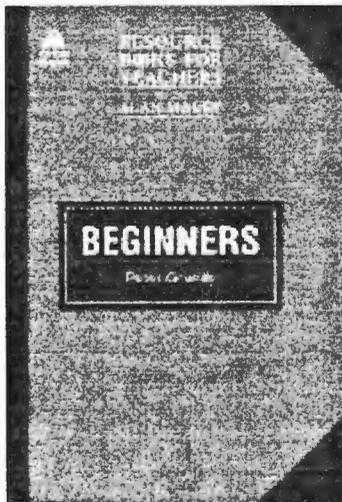
**Beginners** by Peter Grundy. 1994. Resource books for teachers. Maley, A., series ed. Oxford University Press, London, 149 pages. Black and white line drawings.

**Beginners** is part of the Oxford University Press, (OUP) series of resource books for language teachers. This is a book of activities for teachers of beginning language learners. Peter Grundy teaches applied and theoretical linguistics at the University of Durham. He has extensive experience in Britain and overseas teaching language as well training language teachers. He has authored or co-authored other books in the OUP series. In a concise first 24 pages, Grundy applies contemporary language learning theory to the needs of teacher and students in a beginning language course. The remaining nine chapters are activities. The practical application of theory to practice makes **Beginners** of particular value for beginning language teachers of beginning language learners.

The introduction and first chapter discuss pedagogical concerns for beginners and for teachers of beginners. This section helps the teacher identify her teaching goals and methodologies as applied to the special characteristics of beginners. The overall pedagogical orientation is to promote individual learning in a whole class context. The activities can be used to supplement a course book or as a foundation for a course. The activities incorporate a variety of teaching methodologies: TPR, Community Learning, adaptations of Fidel charts, CALLA and Content-based Language Teaching. Activities are

laid out in a recipe format with student learning level, time for activity, materials, language structure, procedure, variations and comments. Line drawings illustrate how to make simple materials. Most activities are not dependant on sophisticated material resources. This book would be appropriate for the EFL teacher in schools with limited resources and/or developing countries.

Grundy dismantles two myths about beginning language learners. The first is the idea of the 'false beginner' meaning there are no 'real' beginners because almost everyone in the world has had some exposure to English. The second myth places all beginners in a single category. Grundy defines "beginners" as referring to



several distinct categories of learners, these include: absolute beginner, older beginners with high affective and cognitive development, false beginners, beginners with/without L2 learning experience, adult beginners and young beginners. Within these categories there are evening class beginners, beginners of English as a school subject, intensive course beginners and overseas beginners. The different categories of beginners have

different learning needs. The assortment of teaching methodologies employed in the activities address the assortment of learning needs a teacher encounters in a class of beginning language learners.

The introduction reveals Grundy's experience as a teacher trainer by asking the reader to reflect on her own experiences as a second language learner for each category of beginner. Chapter One, titled 'Decisions,' outlines seven pedagogical concerns as they apply to the needs of beginners and the teacher: Syllabus options; content or method; product or process; teaching strategies for beginner; classroom activities; introducing supplementary materials, giving instructions. This chapter helps the teacher identify her objectives for the class. The book stresses that recognizing the students' objectives is the most effective way to engage them in the learning process. An assortment of teaching methods are represented on a continuum between grammar-based and sociopsycholinguistic orientations. The teacher is asked to complete a chart that echoes Cummins' quadrant to help identify when students will be learning—in class or out of class, and how to each category of beginner can best benefit from class time. This process allows the teacher to identify appropriate methods to achieve her objectives and those of her students.

Subject matter is presented through themes of interest. Activities are context embedded. In most cases grammar structure is implied but obvious enough to satisfy the grammar hungry adult learner. The nine activity units are designed for the first hundred hours of instruction and are graded in four levels. The variety of

## Textbook Review *cont. from p9*

activities and suggestions for variations maximize the opportunity for language input. Chapter two contains activities for very first lessons that are appropriate for students unfamiliar with the Roman alphabet. The contents include the title of each activity, the level and the language employed. The indexes identify language awareness, functions, structures, notions, study styles, and activities appropriate to younger learners. This cross-reference makes the book easy to use.

Grundy notes the challenge to teachers of beginners to engage students by introducing methods that they can efficiently use to learn for themselves. The ten first lesson ideas all build on what the student already knows in English. Most lessons include speaking, writing and reading components and require that students interact with each other. Topics include numbers, telling time, colors, holidays, questionnaires and understanding signs. Grundy does not mention cultural components directly apart from the particular needs of non-Roman alphabet learners. The flexibility of the lessons allows the teacher to use the interests and language learning needs of the students to define context. And in this way cultural issues can be integrated into lessons.

To summarize, *Beginners* is a practical resource book for teachers of beginning language learners. The initial emphasis on the practical application of L2 learning theory to beginners and the simple reflections and guidelines for teachers to prepare to understand the learners' needs reinforces the value of the activities for teachers. This section helps the teacher become more engaged in the learning process. In Freeman and Freeman's terms, this text empowers the teacher to empower the learners.

## Globetrotting

*by Monika Mulins Kimball, Associate Professor, Madonna Univ.*

December 2000

It's been an extraordinary year for me, beginning with a presentation at TESOL and the reunion with current and former MITESOL members in the beautiful city of Vancouver, in March. On June 1, it was off to Dallas, Texas, to witness the birth of my grandson Harrison. This miracle was followed by a trip to the PRC in July. Responding to invitations from Chinese universities, a delegation from Madonna University, including the Academic VP, the Dean of the School of Business, the Dean of the College of Education (my husband), and I went to Mainland China. We met with representatives from Yanshan University (Qinhuangdao), Beidaihe Training Center (Qinhuangdao), and China Agricultural University (Beijing). While my colleagues and my husband remained in Beijing, I flew to Shanghai's Tongji University to meet with prospective students. I also administered our English Placement Test and interviewed the students who were anxious to join M.U.'s MBA program. If it had only been a little cooler, the entire experience would have been even better. At the seashore in Beidaihe, at the head of the Dragon, which is the beginning of the Great Wall, it was less tropical, but in Beijing we "melted" and our intestinal problems did not help matters much. Who would have thought that McDonald's in Tiananmen Square was the "coolest" place in town! Not only for its air conditioning but its toilets. (Under the circumstances, not a minor point, I might add).

Barely over the "China jet lag", it was off to Japan in August and an exiting three week teaching stint at Nagoya Gakuin University. I shared the honor with Carolyn Baughan from the IEP at Illinois State University. Carolyn taught a TOEFL course, and I had developed curriculum for a course focusing on issues, language, and various expectations related to EAP. Our students were sophomores who ultimately wanted to spend a year abroad at an American university. Carolyn and I had some excellent teaching moments at NGU and will always treasure the experience. Since I had been there before, it was like coming home. Unfortunately, several of the faculty from the past were off on summer breaks, but I was able to have dinners and "shop talk" with Dr. Ikumi Imani. She and I shared treasured memories of summer days at Ferris State University when we were laying on the ground in some farmer's field outside of Big Rapids, watching the most spectacular Persius showers we had ever seen. I also enjoyed a reunion with several NGU students who had spent a year at Madonna U. and who wanted to hear about our new MTESOL program. If my health holds out I hope to have another exiting year in 2001. It looks like that may come true as I was just informed that I have yet another grandchild on the way. Hurrah, und Gott sei Dank! Have a great year, everyone!





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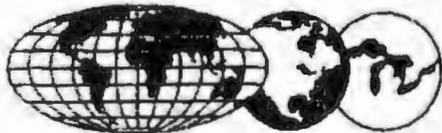
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