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Contents/Contenido

From the Editor

I want to start out by wishing all our members and their families a very happy new year. I hope this year will bring you all that you may want, both professionally and personally.

The 21st Annual MEXTESOL National Convention is over and was a success. It gave us opportunities to talk to old friends and make some new ones. Also we brought new ideas back to our schools and classrooms. Then we had a nice relaxing winter vacation and now it's back to work.

This issue again has an international flavor. Besides two articles by well-known Mexican professionals, we also have an article from Puerto Rico and another from one of Ixtapa plenary speakers from England.

Our first article is by Wendy Scott, who gave our opening plenary speech at the Convention. In this article, Ms. Scott talks about how standard English is changing. I think this is a fact many of us have noticed, especially when we watch television programs or listen to *rock* or *rap*, there are some words we just don't understand. In her article Ms. Scott looks at how these changes in so-called standard English are viewed in England.

The next article is by Connie Rae Johnson of the Universidad de las Américas-Puebla. In *Learner Autonomy in the Learn-Centered Curriculum*, Ms. Johnson examines what learner-centered curriculum is and offers supplementary classroom techniques to help us promote learner autonomy.

José A. Santos Cartagena from the University of Puerto Rico at Cayey has sent us an interesting article discussing the merits of an "All English" classroom. He suggests that by limiting our students to the target language, we might be missing out on something. He offers examples of how the native language can be incorporated into daily classroom activities with unexpected rewards, as much for students as for teachers.

Finally, Vincent Carrubba, in a long-awaited article, gives us an in-depth look at American idioms and suggests techniques for teaching idioms to students. He looks at the grammatical classification of idioms, common idioms such as

proverbs and sayings, and even goes into meaning, use and grammar. He also offers us a peek into the meaning of some "vulgar" idioms.

This issue also offers us Marco's World, which exposes the trials and tribulations of a teacher preparing for the first day of class and a Teaching Tips Section looking into how to help students increase their vocabulary.

As usual I want to encourage you to participate in MEXTESOL and with the Journal. We are always looking for articles and book reviews. We'd also like your opinion about what you read.

The Editor

Editorial Policy

The MEXTESOL Journal is dedicated to the classroom teacher in Mexico. Articles and book reviews related to EFL teaching in Mexico and in other similar situations throughout the world are accepted for publication. Articles can be either practical or theoretical.

Articles and Book Reviews: The Journal welcomes previously unpublished articles relevant to EFL professionals in Mexico. The Editors encourage submissions in Spanish and English. Unsolicited book reviews are also published in either language.

Send three copies of each manuscript, including all appendices, tables, graphs, references, your professional affiliation and an address and telephone/fax number where you can be reached to the following address:

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Manuscript Guidelines:

1) Articles should be typed, double spaced and preferably no more than twenty pages long. References should be cited in parenthesis in the text by author's name, year of publication and page numbers. (For example: "The findings were reported (Jones 1979: 23-24) although they cause no change in policy.")

2) The list of references in an article must appear at the end of the text on a separate page titled "References". Data must be complete and accurate. Authors are responsible for the accuracy of their references. This format should be followed:

For books: Jones, D. J. 1984. How to spell. New York. ABC Press.

For articles: Moore, Jane. 1991. "Why I like to Teach." Teacher's Quarterly. June, 6-8.

Note: A copy of these guidelines in Spanish is available on request from *The Editor*.

Si usted quiere obtener la versión de este texto en español, favor de solicitarla a *The Editor*.

The Changing World of Standard English

WENDY SCOTT, UNIVERSITY OF NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE, ENGLAND [1]

Let me start by saying that I am writing from a British point of view. This in no way implies that I think British English is best: I just happen to live there at the moment. I would also like to say that I am not a sociolinguist, but simply an informed observer, textbook writer and teacher trainer. My concern is with non-native speakers of English and the maze of language which they are exposed to when they are in contact with native speakers, many of whom do not speak and write as the books say they do.

One issue which comes up time and again in the UK is the question of Standard English. Most native speakers could give you some sort of answer if you asked them to define Standard English; textbook writers assume that there is some sort of Standard English; and foreign learners of English usually hope to learn what most of us would think of as a Standard English.

Three years ago I moved back to live in England after having lived abroad for many years, which means that I am now surrounded by native speakers of English every day, which is a bit of a luxury for an EFL teacher. In the course of my work I mark the written work of non-native students of English on a regular basis. However, far from finding that being in the UK has made me more certain about what is acceptable and unacceptable in language terms, I find that the opposite is true. Words do not mean what they used to mean; native speakers make *mistakes* all the time, people use words I have never heard before, and worst of all, my colleagues at the University of Newcastle, my fellow native speakers, do not always agree when I ask them for help.

Recently I gave this year's students a diagnostic language test on which they did not do particularly well. I expect them to do considerably better on the same test at the end of the year, but I am well aware of the fact that British students doing an equivalent course at the same university would not score any higher than my students. In a recent survey of post-graduate students, one science student was quoted as saying, "I could definitely do with a refresher course on the basics of grammar covering such things as the differences between *their* and *there*" (Dewsbury 1994, 4-6). Now my students would know that!

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Does this mean that I expect more of foreign students than I would of native speaker students? I suspect it does. Richard Hudson in his book, *Teaching Grammar,* defines grammar as, "[The study of] a language, in the sense of a body of facts (i. e., rules) that native speakers know about their language.... The bare minimum of grammar, on which everyone agrees, consists of (a) morphology, (b) syntax" (Hudson 1992, 224). So where are these native speakers who know their grammar and on whom the foreign learner can rely?

Alan Davies looks at the question of the native speaker in some detail in his book, *The Native Speaker in Applied Linguistics*, and ends up defining a native speaker as someone who is not a non-native speaker. It seems that even if he feels that the idea of native speakerness is a myth, it is "a useful myth" (Taken from a review of Davies 1991 by George Kersham 1994).

So is the existence of a Standard English also a myth? In the UK we do not have a rigid system similar to that in France, where individuals recently narrowly escaped having to conform to a law which, according to an article in *The Observer*:

> would have banned foreign terms from the French vocabulary and offenders would have faced fines for using foreign words.
>
> But the highest constitutional body in Paris yesterday stepped back from the linguistic brink and solemnly declared that the French can go on enjoying *le picnic, le sandwich, le jogging* and even *le cheeseburger*. (*The Observer,* 31 July 1994)

However, there is no avoiding the fact that Standard English is somehow associated with standards. In the UK the Standard English debate has been fired by the National Curriculum requirements. The report from the Kingman Committee on the teaching of English in schools states that "...one of the school's duties is to enable children to acquire Standard English, which is their *right* [my italics] (Kingman Committee 1998, 2.31).

Everyone seems to have an opinion about Standard English, about falling standards, about the plethora of new words which abound in English, about whether change in the language is a good thing or a bad thing. No less a person than Prince Charles had this to say on the matter:

> We've got to produce people who can write proper English. All the people I have in my office, they can't speak English properly, they can't write English properly.... If we want people who write good English and write plays for the future, it cannot be done with the present system and all the nonsense academics come up with (28 June, 1989, quoted in Carter 1993)

The National Curriculum does not aim to produce playwrights, but it does define what is meant by Standard English in the curriculum:

> Standard English is distinguished from other forms of English by its vocabulary and by rules and conventions of grammar, spelling and punctuation which pupils should learn to follow.
>
> Spoken Standard English is not the same as Received Pronunciation and can be expressed in a variety of accents.
>
> (English in the National Curriculum Draft Proposals, May 1994, 1)

The last part of this definition has been the subject of debate in many sectors of society, and the status of accents is still by no means clear. In his inaugural lecture delivered at the University of Nottingham in December 1992, Professor Ronald Carter, Professor of Modern English Language there, drew attention to an interesting linguistic phenomenon made use of in television advertisements:

> ...the accents used to overlay many current television and radio advertisements betray some fundamental British social attitudes towards accent variation. Thus, standard accents (know as RP or received pronunciation) are used to sell banking and insurance policies, "lean cuisine" ready meals, expensive liqueurs and exotic holidays; regional accents are used particularly to market cider and beers, holidays in inclement British coastal resorts and wholesome foods.... (Carter 1993, 7)

This subject is in itself a fascinating one with all sorts of sociolinguistic implications, but here it is a question of terminology: RP is assumed to be "standard accents." Moving back to the students I teach, many of them have children who go to school in Newcastle for a year and end up speaking with a Newcastle accent, which is certainly not RP. When these children go back to Norway, they sometimes find themselves in the situation where their English accent is acceptable in England, but not in Norway.

I come back to the question of acceptability and change in the language. Quoting again from Professor Carter's lecture:

> ...language is subject to <u>constant</u> change. It is dynamic, not static. New words evolve for new contexts. Words always move into semantic spaces left vacant or created by shifts in ideology and in cultural practices. (Carter 1993, 4)

The focus of language change is often directed towards the world of words, and, as Katherine Whitehorn, writing in *The Observer* says: "the changing nature of words brings out more protests than and eight-lane motorway" (*The Ob-*

server, 7 August, 1994) Robert Allan, editor of the new Chambers dictionary is quoted in *The Independent* newspaper as saying:

> I always resist pressure to champion "pure language", the sort of thing the Queen's English Society stands for. It's an illusion. "Standard English" is what is acceptable to people in power. It is socio-political, not a linguistic thing. (*The Independent*, 10 September 1994).

The debate about language change is endless. Many years ago I read Professor Jean Aitchison's book, *Language Change: Progress or Decay?*, now in its 2nd edition, and was fascinated by the parallel she draws in the book between the changes in human language and the changes in the song which humpback whales sing every year. All humpback whales apparently sing the same song during the mating season every year, but it is a different song every year. It has been found that the song which the whales sing at the beginning of each breeding season is the same as the one which they sang at the end of the previous breeding season. As the breeding season progresses, the whales change the tune gradually, thus "constantly changing their communication system" in a way similar to the way in which humans change their communication system. (Aitchison 1991, 210-211)

The image of the humpback whales is a gentle one; one that for me conjures up the feeling of a gentle flow of gradual change, but recently the changes in English I have experienced have left me feeling a little bewildered at times, more as if a herd of elephants had wandered through my living room.

Take the sentence, "I was gobsmacked by shrimping dweebs". If one of my students had said this, I would have said that I didn't understand the sentence although I do understand the word "gobsmacked".

"Gobsmacked by Shrimping dweebs: appears as a headline in *The Independent* newspaper on 10 September this year and led into an article on the new words that have entered the English language. (Anyone who wants to find out what the sentence means can look the words up in *Chambers' Encyclopedic Dictionary*.) In 1993 the *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* included 4,000 new words. *The Longman Register of New Words*, published in 1989 had over 1200 new words and meanings; volume two came out only one year later in 1990 with over 1000 new words. These include words like *to handbag*, "to attack or destroy as if by hitting with a handbag" an activity which seems to be associated almost exclusively with Margaret Thatcher. Mr Allen apparently regrets not putting it in the *Chambers'* dictionary referred to above.

Many words which eventually find their way into dictionaries are words which have been said on television or on the radio or have appeared in the newspapers. Some do not make it into the dictionaries. In an interview in *The Inde-*

pendent newspaper, Alan Clarke, a former MP and author of the bestseller about the Thatcher years, *Diaries*, talks about his regrets on being out of active politics:

> I am riddled, or is it raddled, by quasidisreputable episodes and you could say I'm actively disqualified, but I know different. (*The Independent,* 28 June, 1994)

I can see no reason why *riddle* should have an irregular past tense, but you never know these days, and does it really matter?

This takes me into the area of grammar, and what is acceptable or not acceptable. I find myself talking to the radio or to the television saying to these reliable native speakers who supposedly all have a grammar which everyone agrees on, "Please don't say that. It will confuse my students." I am not talking about the schoolgirl who said that when she was appearing on television she was nervous because she had "to remember to talk proper, and to use *were* and *was* in the right places." Nor am I talking about slips, which are perfectly natural in spoken language. I mean sentences like, "Colleagues have seen him yesterday," which was said and repeated by the BBC correspondent for the Vatican last month when reporting on the health of the Pope. Or sentences like, "No other members of the royal family was there," which was said on the BBC television news recently.

There is also the much reported sentence from Neil Kinnock, former leader of the Labour Party: "She could give a better answer than that to I and to my honourable friends," which was said during Primer Minister's Question Time on 14 April, 1998. (For a discussion of the language issues raised by this sentence, see *Why did he say it?* by David Crystal in *English Today*.)

Who decides whether these sentences are acceptable or not? Certainly not the BBC, although many people consider the BBC to be the upholders of British English. Talking about pronunciation, for example, Graham Pointon, writing in *English Today* points out that:

> we [the BBC] try to judge our amendments to coincide with, or follow, developments in the country as a whole. I hope that we never initiate changes, nor find ourselves in the vanguard. (Pointon 1998, 41)

The BBC state categorically that they only reflect the state of the art as far as language in general is concerned. So is it the great British public who decide what is acceptable or unacceptable? Marks and Spencer, a large British High Street store, used to have a notice at certain check-out points in their food departments which said, "Less than 5 items". It was pointed out by a member of the public that this was grammatically incorrect. The notice now says, "Fewer than 5 items."

Unfortunately, as teachers of English as a foreign language, we do not have to hand the expertise of the writers of the National Curriculum, the weight of the BBC or the vigilance of the great British public. As teachers of English as a foreign language in a world of constantly changing language, we are the ones who have to decide if the language of our students is acceptable English or not.

Out of interest you might like to look at the following sentences and try to decide if they are acceptable or unacceptable.

> Japan wants to shout the Australian a beer.
> This is a non-smoking guest house.
> Show me an alligator and I'll show you somebody truckin' hard the other way.
> The 19.40 train from Leeds approaches platform 2 now.
> I'm sorry, I'm not understanding you.
> Please present your ticket at the attended window.
> The University offers several careers including engineering and business administration.
> These is definitely bats in the bushes.
> Americans graze more than the British.
> This piece of music allows him to show his pianistic talents to the full.

Two of the sentences were written by non-native speakers. The others were said or written by native speakers of English from the US, Australia or the UK. I have yet to find a group of native speakers who agree on the acceptability or otherwise of all the sentences, so perhaps we can call them semiacceptable, which is a useful word in this changing world of Standard English, even if I cannot find it in my dictionary.

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Learner Autonomy in the Learner-Centered Curriculum

CONNIE RAE JOHNSON, UNIVERSIDAD DE LAS AMÉRICAS, PUEBLA[1]

Most teachers believe that the idea of a Learner-Centered Curriculum, where the students are responsible for deciding the direction their learning experiences will take them and how they will achieve their final goal, to be a relatively new concept in education. Others think that allowing the students to take control of their own learning process can only be attempted when working with adults who have their specific objectives in mind. As you will read in the following section these assumptions are misconceptions. The purpose of the following discussion is **not** to convince teachers that their teaching approaches and techniques are obsolete, but to offer supplementary classroom techniques to promote learner autonomy, the basis of which has been in existence for nearly eighty years.

History

Elements of the Learner-Centered Curriculum began to appear at the turn of the century when progressive educational curriculum developers such as John Dewey began to explore many of what are now important features of Learner-Centered Curriculum. The concept of a school where the students "discovered" knowledge through self-directed investigation and the teacher was a guide through the process was a social reaction to the typical *Herbartians'* style of education where the curriculum was designed to teach a "known" body of knowledge. These progressive educators thought that the content of a course was interesting to the student only when it served the purpose of the learner. The students participated in formulating their own goals for learning instead of the adult or "expert" selecting the content based on his view of what would be important to the learner in the future. The guiding philosophy was that schools should offer learning opportunities for children and young learners to explore topics that were related to their present experiences and to provide the students with the skills to self-evaluate their own learning and behavior in terms of cooperation and participation with other members of the group (Posner 1992: 50-55).

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These learning and teaching theories were embodied in Dewey's curriculum philosophy which has become known as *Experiential* or *Social Reconstructionist*. This educational philosophy evolved at the end of the 19th century and in the early years of this century during the Industrial Revolution when many people, especially recent immigrants, were living and working under difficult conditions. The experiential (or learner-centered) view of education was part of a response to a host of ills brought on by major social changes caused by the secondary effects of the Industrial Revolution. During this period, formal education for the poor was limited to a minority and training in the practical skills needed by the masses to get along in American society went on primarily through apprenticeships and the activities of daily living. As the United States and other nations became increasingly urbanized and industrialized, compulsory school attendance laws were passed causing the curriculum of public schools to become more oriented toward practical subjects and social utility. Before this change in curriculum, the educational system had offered classes which emphasized classical literature, history, philosophy and other classes which had little to do with the immigrants' reality.

Dewey believed that traditional educational philosophies were inadequate largely because they viewed the goals of education as external to the learner. Dewey viewed the purpose as internal, found within the experiences of the individual, such as thoughts and feelings. He felt that "true" education was that which had positive reactions for the further development of the learner. With this, Dewey had added a new curriculum criterion of educational development for the healthy growth of individual experience. Any subject or course that was chosen for, or recommended to students, should contribute to their intellectual, social and personal development. During the 1920s and 1930s the traditional academic curriculum that American schools had inherited as a legacy of the nineteenth century gradually incorporated different experiential emphases; however, few experiments in genuinely experiential education were initiated and most of these were on a small scale and of short duration.

The most well documented experiential school was Dewey's own laboratory school at the University of Chicago. He wanted life in the school to offer opportunities for children to act morally and to learn how to judge their own behavior in terms of the social ideals of participation and positive service. The materials for learning were consistent with the experiences the learner already had but would also introduce new objects and events to stimulate new ways to observe and judge. He did not believe that the goal of a curriculum should be merely the acquisition of subject matter, but instead it should be a tool for understanding and intelligently ordering experience. It should be a vehicle for providing the skills and knowledge necessary to help the learner become autonomous in his process of learning.

Dewey's goals were (1) to offer children of all ages opportunities to recognize social problems that affected society, (2) to teach the learner how to formulate attainable goals for themselves and other members of their group, (3) to seek solutions to these problems through their self-directed learning experiences, and (4) to evaluate the attainment of the goals. The over-riding philosophy behind all of the courses that the learner took was that he was the center of the curriculum and an active participant in the decision of purposes and goals for the class. The learner was responsible for the selection and organization of the learning experiences to meet their goals and in the evaluation of the curriculum and of his own learning (McNeil 1985: 332-333).

From the early 1970s though the 1980s the learner-centered classroom has under-gone a rebirth due to the influence of humanistic and cognitivist psychologists. This revival has effected all content classrooms at all levels and for all ages. The Second and Foreign Language classroom has felt the change as much as Physics and World History.

Autonomy and EFL

Learner autonomy and learner self-direction are two terms that are often applied in relation to both the Learner-Centered Curriculum and language learning strategies. In the past, autonomy and self-direction have been used to reflect minor differences in meaning, but for the purposes of this paper, they will have an identical meaning: the learner's attitude of responsibility for his own learning and how it can be best achieved.

Language teaching methodologists have in the last decades looked at how the tasks set for students and materials that they are asked to use can be improved or changed. The importance of self-concept and affective factors have become significant considerations in learning and teaching theories. Research into the learners' cognitive or mental processes has shown that students are not the "passive" learners that they were once thought to be. They are actively involved in selectively processing incoming data, contrasting, elaborating, hypothesizing, reconstructing meaning and integrating it with previously stored information for future use. New insights from the area of sociolinguistics have emphasized the pragmatic function of language as a determining factor in the selection of content to be processed (Wenden 1991:1). These disclosures have further encouraged the development of the learner-centered classroom.

Teaching practices which reflect the learner-centered philosophy can now be found in many "eclectic" EFL/ESL classrooms. The new learner-centered techniques are intent on making the students more responsible for their own learning making them better learners instead of passive "victims". Even though these techniques give the learner a more central role in the classroom, they are

also focusing on the teachers and obliging them to change *what* and *how* they teach. They encourage teachers to help students learn how to learn and many times give suggestions for providing *learner* training.

Recent research and theory in second language learning strongly implies that the success of learners is principally due to their use of strategies to assist in gaining command of the language skills. Recently many studies have been published indicating that overtly teaching learning strategies to less competent learners, considerably enhances the development of the second language skills. Acquisition of language learning strategies also encourages greater overall self-direction or autonomy which is essential to the outside-of-class active development of the second language ability.

Owing to our culture and educational system, most Mexican language students are passive and accustomed to being spoon-fed the content of their classes. They like to be told what they must do to learn and then will only do what is necessary to get a passing grade. Attitudes and behaviors like this make it difficult to help students. Teaching learning strategies will have minimal success unless the learners want to have greater responsibility for their own learning. Learner autonomy is a gradual process, increasing as the learners become more accustomed to the idea of being responsible.

Foreign language teachers also have problems adjusting to the idea of learner autonomy. We expect to be seen as authority figures in the classroom not as helpers, guides, consultants or advisers. In our new capacity as a learner-centered strategy facilitator, we can help students to identify their existing learning strategies, conduct training to acquire new ones and, thus, help the learners become more independent. This change can also make us more creative teachers. Our new status will no longer be based on hierarchical authority, but on the quality and importance of the relationship between student and teacher.

Strategies defined

During the past fifteen years one intensive area of investigation by educational and linguistic researchers has been student learning strategies. Researchers have found that "strategies are especially important for language learning because they are tools for active, self-directed involvement, which is essential for developing communicative competence. Appropriate language learning strategies result in improved proficiency and greater self-confidence" (Oxford 1990: 1).

In the area of modern curriculum development, interest has been shifting from emphasizing *what* students learn, which is the product or end result of the language class, to *how* the second language is being learned, which is emphasizing the cognitive process of learning. This is evident in the various learner-cen-

tered approaches such as counseling-learning, community-learning, Co-operative-learning, etc. In these the student is guided through the process of learning or *concept formation* . Concept formation was an important education principle for Dewey's laboratory school, but in recent years the term has begun to be known as *insight, inference*, and *problem-solving*. The common element is that they all demonstrate the principles of how thinking skills are developed.

A variety of process factors such as second language level, teachers, task requirements, sex, age, nationality, field of study, learning styles have been identified to affect the choice of strategies. Obviously, those students who have had more language learning experience will employ strategies which are more sophisticated and those who have had teachers who emphasized tasks which called for certain types of strategies over others will tend to use those. Age affects style and strategy choice as does sex. Young children generally resort to memory strategies while it has been found that females have a wider range of strategies to choose from than do males (Oxford: 13). Also the country of origin influences the strategy used. For example, Spanish speakers prefer kinesthetic and tactile as major learning styles, do not like group work learning situations but use more social strategies than other language groups. In major fields, visual learning is preferred by students in hard sciences while humanities majors are the least oriented in that direction. (Reid 1987: 94-98) Cognitive styles of learning such as field dependent or field independent are also seen as affecting patterns of learning and thinking. Other related cognitive styles like *extroverts* or *introverts* and *judging* or *perceiving* have a strong effect on the strategies that the EFL learners use (Johnson 1994:18-19).

According to Wenden (1991: 18) there are two main kinds of learning strategies, *cognitive* and *self-management* strategies. The learner uses cognitive strategies in order to process input of linguistic and socio-linguistic nature. Self-management (also referred to a metacognitive or regulatory) strategies are used by learners to check or manage their own learning. It is this strategy which is most generally connected with self-directed learning.

Briefly, *Cognitive* strategies can be sub-divided into four principle types: *selection, understanding, storage* and *retrieval*. Since humans are constantly being bombarded with input through all of our senses, we must <u>select</u> only what we wish to process. Usually it is unconsciously programmed in advance what information we will pay attention to. After the information has been selected, it is transferred to where it is changed into a meaningful representation (<u>understanding</u>) before being <u>stored</u> in long-term memory. Information which has been selected and stored must be able to be <u>retrieved</u> automatically when needed.

Self-Management Strategies are used by students to regulate their own learning. In the literature of cognitive psychology they are referred to as the metacognitive strategies and are those which are most related to autonomous learning. These strategies are sub-divided into planning which is when learners decide their objectives for the language task and the means by which they will reach it. Monitoring consists of the self-assessment which is done during the learning or communication process, and evaluating occurs when the learner evaluates the result of the learning process or use of a particular strategy. (Wenden: 20-28).

Oxford (1990:14) presents a different system of language learning strategies which are divided into two distinct classes: *direct* and *indirect*. The *direct* is composed of memory, cognitive and compensation while the *indirect* consists of metacognitive, social and affective.

Of the *direct* class, memory is used for "remembering and retrieving new information, cognitive strategies for understanding and producing the language, and compensation strategies for using the language despite knowledge gaps". In the second group of strategies, *indirect*, the metacognitive strategies are used for "coordinating the learning process, affective strategies for regulating emotions, and social strategies for learning with others".

The table in the Appendix shows Oxford's (1990:18-21) strategy system with the sub-strategies and examples.

Application

There have been many cases worldwide of schools which have applied experiential language learning and where learners of all ages have become motivated to use a wide range of learning strategies, thus, becoming more autonomous learners. At the beginning of this paper, it was stated that the learner-centered approach could be used with all ages of students. However, most teachers find it difficult to believe that elementary school students in a second language class can be taught with this system. Oxford (1990:221) documents a program in Denmark which has found strategy learning to be very useful in its elementary EFL program. All of the primary grade levels have used the learner-centered program in English classes containing a range of 20-30 students per group. The children come from lower-middle class economic families where few are expected to continue their studies beyond high school. In this program the learners decide their own needs and interests, make their own syllabuses, form contracts with the teacher and regularly self-evaluate their progress. At the beginning of the course, the students are asked why they want to learn English and what they would like to do with the language. This enables the learners to decide their own needs for the language. The first materials are brought in by the students and reflect what they

wish to achieve. The children learn grammar inductively by making wall-posters about those points. A large range of possible learning strategies are introduced to the children and they are encouraged to use as many as possible while working with their materials and activities, thus, making decisions for themselves about the direction their learning will take.

Wenden (1991: 137) mentions another experiential primary school in Finland where the learners are introduced to self-directed learning in their English class in order to cope with heterogeneous groupings. The topics are chosen because of their relevancy to the learner and for practice of the language skills. Initially, the themes are directly connected to the students' immediate situation and then gradually expanded first to the Finnish society and then to the international community. However, it is the learners who design the class activities to meet their objectives. Teachers are given training in autonomous and experiential learning while they are completing their graduate level courses in education.

Besides primary, there have been many recorded accounts of secondary, university and adult language classes explicitly or implicitly teaching language strategies in order to facilitate the process of autonomy in language learning. Allowing students to have a voice in the direction they want their learning to take, should not be seen as a passing fad. Active learning techniques and a degree of participant choice have always been a basis of all good EFL training for teachers and learners alike.

Alternative classroom activities to promote autonomy

Introducing an awareness in our learners of their own learning style preferences that they bring with them to the language classroom is the first step in achieving learning autonomy. This involves identifying the learning styles and strategies that your students already have. For most of our students, the idea of a learning style preference is new. As a communicative class activity, begin with general questions that they can answer as a group activity about their classroom learning experiences. For example:

> Do you understand better when you hear instructions or when you read them?
> Do you remember better when you study alone or with friends?
> Do you learn better in class when the teacher lectures or when you do an experiment?
> Do you prefer to work by yourself on a project or in a group?
> Do you learn best in class when you can participate physically in a learning activity or by taking notes.

Or, the following questionnaire can be easily written on the blackboard or dictated as a class activity. Make sure the students use the scale provided to facilitate their answers.

1	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*
never	*rarely*	*sometimes*	*often*	*very frequently*

1. I learn best step-by-step.
2. I learn best by acting a situation out in dialogue form.
3. I learn best by seeing something first.
4. I learn best by listening to something first.
5. I learn best by using a combination of senses.
6. I learn best by using a variety of techniques depending on the situation.
7. I learn best in one-to-one situations.
8. I learn best when doing small group work because I like to have someone to work with.
9. I learn best when working alone at my own rate.
10. I learn best as part of a large classroom group.
11. I think how I feel determines how I learn best.
12. I generally participate actively in small-group discussion.
13. I generally participate actively in large-group discussion.

(Wenden 1991: 146)

After the students have considered their answers try some of the following activities: have students tell you the purpose of the questions, discuss their answers and allow this to lead into an open forum concerning how each student learns best, put them into groups for further investigation in the library, have them discuss and decide the different styles that their teachers use and design questionnaires to be given to other students at the school. The purpose of these activities is to help students to increase their awareness of learning differences and identify and assess the effectiveness of their own individual styles in the hope that later they will be able to modify their particular style(s) to better adjust to different learning situations.

Another alternative is to use a scale to measure language learning strategies which are published and easily available such as the SILL (*Strategy Inventory for Language Learning*) of which representative items are shown below.

1.   Never or almost never true of me
2.   Generally not true of me
3.   Somewhat true of me
4..   Generally true of me
5.   Always or almost always true of me

When learning a new word...........
1. I create associations between new material and what I already know
2. I put the new word in a sentence so I can remember it.
3. I associate the sound of the new word with the sound of a familiar word.
4. I use rhyming to remember it
5. I remember the word by making a clear mental image of it or by drawing a picture.

When learning the new language...............
6. I say or write new expressions repeatedly to practice them
7. I look for words in Spanish that are similar to new words in the new language.
8. I find the meaning of a word by dividing it into parts which I understand.
9. I look for similarities and contrasts between the new language and my own.
10.I look for patterns in the new language.

Or you can devise your own observation form by making a list of the strategies you think are the most important for the purposes of the program you are using.

Once you know how your students are presently learning, you can help them to learn more efficiently by exposing them to various activities in which they will find it necessary to use strategy(s). Teachers must learn how to facilitate the learning process of students and students must learn how to learn. Strategy training is especially important in the area of second languages because student self-direction is necessary if the learner is to reach an acceptable level of communicative ability.

Oxford (1990: 202-203) identifies three types of strategy training: awareness training, one-time training and long-term training. During awareness training the learners are introduced to and becomes familiar with the general idea of learning strategies. They are not required to use strategies in any language tasks but it only raises their conscious understanding. One-time strategy training is the learning and practicing of strategies which the learners needs to meet their particular objectives. This is short and can usually be accomplished within several sessions. Long-term training is more prolonged, includes a larger number of strategies and seems to be the most effective training technique. This type of training involves a longer period of time since the learner must learn not only when and how to use the strategies, but, also how to monitor and evaluate the performance of them. The learner is completely informed of the reasons why the strategies will help, and has an adequate amount of practice and time for self-evaluation.

As the teacher directs the strategy training, he/she should be sure to point out the reasons why strategy training is important, provide ample practice in more than one language task and teach the learners how to evaluate the success of their new strategy. Learning strategy training must include not only the strategies but it must also begin with a discussion of role changes that the teacher should

explore with the learners about their feelings of accepting more responsibility in the learning process. If students cannot change some of their beliefs about education, there will be little benefit from the process. Also, if cultural influences are the reasons why the learners are opposed learning new strategies, the new strategies will have to be introduced gradually and possibly mixed with those strategies the learner already is familiar with. In other words ...camouflaged.

Each teacher must make decisions about the strategy training of learners based on their own situation and students. If learner autonomy and strategies are new to you, then some of the ideas presented in this paper can be adapted to your situation. Or, perhaps you are a teacher who is familiar with the research, but will say to yourself, "That's nice, but I don't have time to use them with my groups". Use something of what you have learned here to prepare your students. Language skills and self-directed learning must be approached as a single unit with the learners. Remember, we as teachers must prepare our learners for tomorrow and what better way than to give them strategies they can carry with them into any learning situation. An autonomous learner will have the skills to continue his studies of English not for one class but for the rest of his life.

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Appendix

Ⅰ. Direct Strategies
    A. Memory
        1. Creating mental linkages
            a. Grouping
            b. Associating/elaborating
            c. Placing new words into a context
        2. Applying images and sounds
            a. Using imagery
            b. Semantic mapping
            c. Using keywords
            d. Representing sounds in memory
        3. Reviewing well
            a. Structured reviewing
        4. Employing action
            a. Using physical response or sensation
            b. Using mechanical techniques
    B. Cognitive Strategies
        1. Practicing
            a. Repeating
            b. Formally practicing with sounds and writing systems
            c. Recognizing and using formulas and patterns
            d. Recombining
            e. Practicing naturalistically
        2. Receiving and sending messages
            a. Getting the idea quickly
            b. Using resources for receiving and sending messages
        3. Analyzing and reasoning
            a. Reasoning deductively
            b. Analyzing expressions
            c. Analyzing contrastively (across languages)
            d. Translating
            e. Transferring
        4. Creating structure for input and output
            a. Taking notes
            b. Summarizing
            c. Highlighting
    C. Compensation Strategies
        1. Guessing Intelligently
            a. Using linguistic clues
            b. Using other clues
        2. Overcoming limitations in speaking and writing
            a. Switching to the mother tongue
            b. Getting help
            c. Using mime or gesture
            d. Avoiding communication partially or totally
            e. Selecting the topic
            f. Adjusting or approximating the message

g. Coining words

h. Using a circumlocution or synonym

II. Indirect Strategies

   A. Metacognitive Strategies

      1. Centering learning

         a. Overviewing and linking with already known material

         b. Paying attention

         c. Delaying speech production to focus on listening

      2. Arranging and planning learning

         a. Finding out about language learning

         b. Organizing

         c. Setting goals

         d. Identifying the purpose of a language task

         e. Planning for a language task

         f. Seeking practice opportunities

      3. Evaluating learning

         a. Self-monitoring

         b. Self-evaluating

   B. Affective Strategies

      1. Lowering anxiety

         a. Using progressive relaxation, deep breathing or meditation

         b. Using music

         c. Using laughter

      2. Encouraging yourself

         a. Making positive statements

         b. Taking risks wisely

         c. Rewarding yourself

      3. Taking emotional temperature

         a. Listening to your body

         b. Using a checklist

         c. Writing a language learning diary

         d. Discussing feelings with someone else

   C. Social Strategies

      1. Asking questions

         a. Asking for clarification or verification

         b. Asking for correction

      2. Cooperating with others

         a. Cooperating with peers

         b. Cooperating with proficient users of the new language

      3. Empathizing with others

         a. Developing cultural understanding

         b. Becoming aware of others' thoughts and feelings

Silenced Narratives:

What a Second/Foreign Language Can't Embody

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As teachers of English as a second/foreign language, we are constantly faced with the dilemma of how much of the first language we should allow in the classroom. Thus, even though most of us (80%) tend to allow the use of the native language, as Roberts Auerbach's (1993) investigation revealed, we still feel guilty about such practice due to the widespread assumption that proficiency is acquired with an English-only approach. The last time I taught my college's intermediate EFL composition course, I found myself climbing on the English-only bandwagon. I decided ahead of time that students would not fall back on their Spanish, specifically during class discussions of their peer-written essays. I was totally convinced then that I had to and could get them to stay in English simply by encouraging them to take their time to put their thoughts in order and, if they could not find the words in English for an idea they wanted to express, to try to work around it using other words and expressions.

At the beginning, this approach seemed to work. Every time students asked me the dreaded question. "¿En español?" (In Spanish?), I would remind them of the strategy and sometimes would throw in a little speech on the benefits of using only English. But after a while, students developed their own strategy to satisfy my constant request and at the same time get their message across. They would begin expressing their ideas in English, then they would quickly change to Spanish before I could even begin to consider telling them to "say it in English," and then just as quickly change to English. Eventually this situation would cause laughter since we were all aware of the trick that was being pulled off. Toward the second half of the semester I realized that more often than not I was yielding to their "¿En español?" request. So much so that some students were getting away with saying everything in Spanish. At that point I started getting a little bit frustrated because I could not at least explain to myself why a growing number of students kept drifting towards Spanish in spite of my constant "broken record" exhortation.

As a matter of meaningful coincidence, or synchronicity, as Jung (1965) would call it, I came across Spellmeyer's (1993) views on language which began to shed light on my question:

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> Because words have the potential to conceal as well as disclose, any
> struggle over language at the same time entails a struggle over worlds fought on
> the deepest levels of the self--that part of the self most intimately connected
> with other selves and with history. To silence any person, to prohibit his speech
> or discredit his manner of speaking, is therefore to silence much more than the
> person, not only everyone from whom the person learned his words, but also
> everything these words have made real....(pp. 268-269)

Could it be, I asked myself, that those students who insisted on expressing themselves in Spanish were actually fighting a force (namely me) that was, even if unintentionally, silencing them and their worlds? And what about those students who didn't speak at all? Had they given up on a language that could not "embody" their experiences, could not make them become real and meaningful? As I reflected on these questions I came to realize that I already knew the answers, and in fact, had known them all along. After all, hadn't I myself as an EFL learner been in similar situations before? Hadn't I at times burst out in Spanish both with my students in class and with my bilingual colleagues in the English department? I had to admit that in fact I already knew from my very own experience of that internal "struggle over language and worlds."

Feeling the need to explore the matter further, I began to pay close attention to those moments when my students would insist on using Spanish. I wanted to identify (confirm?) what it was that was triggering their use of their mother tongue. More specifically, I wanted to investigate (corroborate?) the possibility that students were actually refusing to use English when what they had to share with the class was very close to their own world and experiences. Since we were approaching the end of the semester, and the chances for observing the behavior became fewer, I developed a questionnaire asking students to describe in detail (and in Spanish) any story or anecdote that they remembered (a) telling in their own language because they felt English would fall short, or (b) keeping to themselves because they had to speak English. What I was able to gather from both the observations and the questionnaire was a world of narratives that unfortunately was being "silenced" because of the inescapable fact that the vehicle of expression was not the students' own language. Let me share with you some of those narratives that exemplify the great loss I now believe can result from an English-only approach. (I have included my own approximate translation to the students' original Spanish version.) I will then present other arguments from research, and finally, some suggestions for classroom practice.

Some Silenced Narratives

Pedro, a third-year Economics major who was never hesitant about expressing himself in English, wrote this in the questionnaire:

Once we were discussing parents' relationships with their children. I wanted to talk about the loss of my father, not in the physical sense, but in the sense that I lost him as a friend and companion. In class it was very hard to express that because I had to use a different language and also because it dealt with something that touched me deeply. Also, the same thing happened when we were discussing domestic violence and child abuse.

Ricardo, who wrote a passionate essay on the elderly, when asked in class by one of his peers why he had chosen that particular topic, began (in English) by saying:

I think older people deserve more love and more respect. We young people, we don't give it to them.

Suddenly he stopped and in an obviously emotional tone asked me, "How should I say this?" Sensing his need for expressing himself in Spanish, I said to him, "Why don't you just say it as you feel it. " He then proceeded to open a little window to his world in the language that could allow him to do just that, his mother tongue:

I live with my grandmother, and I can say that the elderly have a lot to offer. All we have to do is to really care for them, to express to them our love. I spend most of my time with older folks and I can tell you that they have more to offer than we do. That's why I'd rather be with them than with people my age. I like to be with them and show them my respect and my appreciation.

Ismael, who would never take the initiative to speak in class, expressed this in the questionnaire:

English definitely kept me from speaking in class on many occasions. But at one point, we were talking about abortion and someone commented that it should be acceptable in cases of rape or when the mother's own life is in danger. I remember that I told this story (and I said it in Spanish because I considered it important and interesting for the class) about this buddy of mine who was conceived as a result of a rape, and he tells me that he now feels that his mother doesn't really love him, although she says that she does. It's really sad! And his father visits him from time to time.

The last two of these narratives led to very engaging class discussions, a lot of which sprouted spontaneously all around the room. And even though they took place mostly in Spanish, they were very rewarding to us all adding to the special bond we had already been developing as a class. Pedro's narrative, however, along with who knows how many others, was unfortunately lost.

The Case Against English Only

Phillipson (1992), almost echoing Spellmeyer's argument on language, says that "the ethos of monolingualism implies the rejection of the experiences of other languages, meaning the exclusion of the (learner's) most intense existential experience" (as cited in Roberts Auerbach, p.16). In other words, if we deny our students the opportunity to express themselves in their native tongue, as I tried to do myself, we are actually preventing them from voicing those narratives whose significance in the students' own lives demands that they be heard. Not only that, we are also denying ourselves the chance to get to know and understand our students a little better, and denying everyone in class the chance to become enriched by those personal stories that could only become embodied through the student's own language.

Another argument against allowing only the second/foreign language in the classroom is the fact that it is based on the erroneous assumption we practitioners tend to make that students will learn English only if they are forced to use it. Research, however, suggests that such "rationale....is neither conclusive nor pedagogically sound" (Roberts Auerbach, p. 15).

What I observed in the classroom experience I have described supports the above claims, but some of my student's comments in the questionnaire are actually the most convincing argument.

> The course taught me different things. First, that learning English can be a pleasant experience. Second, that in terms of writing and vocabulary, I'm not doing as badly as I used to think. And finally, the course helped me to put into practice what I know and to try to think in English. Once I tried to say something in English and then I asked you, "How should I say this?", and you answered "Say it as you feel it." I decided to say it in Spanish because it's the way I think, act, and, above all, love. The times I had to say something in English, I didn't feel pressured because you don't pressure. You give us the confidence and motivation to do it.

Suggestions for Classroom Practice

I am now strongly convinced that we should allow students to voice their narratives in their native tongue when they have the need to do so, and in the process we should not feel guilty about it. Here are some activities I have begun to try in one way or another which help to dissipate the guilt since they use the students' narratives as a point of departure towards the use and development of English.

When teachers and students share the same first language

1. After students have told a narrative in L1 class, have them write it in English as homework or as part of a *Writing Portfolio* or *Dialogue Journal*.

2. Have students write a narrative essay in English based on one of the narratives they told in L1 and then have them share it with the rest of the class.

3. Have students act out in English some of the narratives told in L1 in class trying to depict the situation and attempting to solve conflicts or deal with unfinished business. You could have them videotape themselves and then present the video in class for discussion.

When they don't all share the same first language

1. Allow students to share their stories in their L1 with their language group, and then the whole group tries to piece the story together collaboratively in English for the rest of the class.

2. Have students in the same language group develop a video in English on any of their "silenced narratives." They then present it to the rest of the class for discussion of content, language use, and possibly performance and technical production.

3. Put students in small groups (4-5) making sure all language groups are represented. Have each member share his/her narrative in English, helping each other to articulate their ideas. Each group can then choose their favorite narrative to retell to the whole class collaboratively.

4. Variation on No. 3: students choose a letter (A, B, C, D). Student A tells his/her narrative to student B. Student B then retells it to student C who in turn retells it to student D. All students listen to help along with language and content. Then student B tells his/her narrative to student C and the cycle repeats itself.

5. As homework, have students write any of the narratives they have heard in the third person.

These few activities serve to show that the students' use of their mother tongue can actually be a useful and powerful tool rather than a hindrance in second/foreign language development. More importantly, they illustrate how we as teachers can promote the respect and appreciation that other "languages and worlds" rightfully deserve by allowing them to surface and be heard. In a world where old walls are crumbling down and the spirit of multiculturalism is beginning to prevail, the rippling effects of such classroom practice can be a contributing factor in improving relations among individuals and peoples alike.

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Do you feel iffy about teaching idioms?

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Well, don't feel that way! Get with it and make up your mind to really get idioms down pat--for your own good and that of your students.

Introduction

Idioms are so much used in everyday life yet so ignored in teaching. Many teachers think they are insurmountable obstacles preventing fluent control of a language. On the contrary, they are essential for achieving fluency in conversation and for improving understanding of the spoken language. Idioms play an important role in all aspects of communication: listening, speaking, and formal and informal reading and writing. When we refer to reading, it seems that there is always a mixture of formal and informal writing styles which include many idiomatic expressions. The following are some examples in current magazines:

> The day after formally *kicking off* his campaign in January, Colosio elaborated only slightly...
> ...details of the heralded event are not only *fuzzy*... (Spencer 1994:2)
> ...that mathematics is little more than *a bunch of* unrelated rules... (Harper 1993: 52)
> Broadcasting *big mouths*. If the spotted owl can't adjust...then *screw* it.(Anderson 1993: 42)

It is also true that the non-native speaker's use of idioms with a native speaker promotes a communicative relationship of solidarity and friendliness. On the other hand, speakers who never use idioms give the impression of being serious, unimaginative and very official. (Makkai 1987: viii) Therefore, idioms should be presented early in the English course and continued in intermediate and advanced courses. Idioms are the lifeblood of change in language indicating that they come from a dynamic society. American English is heavily idiomatic because as new concepts develop, we need new ways to express them; we put together already existing words and add a new sense to them. This is true of all known languages.

Definition

An idioms is a word or phrase which has an unexpected or unpredictable meaning as contrasted with its literal meaning. Hence, to speak of a car or machine as a *lemon* does not refer to the fruit, but to the fact that it is no good. The *burn up the road* does not mean to set fire to a street or highway, but to drive

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very fast. In other words the meaning of an idiom cannot be understood by looking at its individual words.

Classification

Grammatically speaking, idioms can be:

<u>phrasal verbs</u>: check out, chip in, show up, butt in, bring up the rear
<u>verbal phrases</u>: to get one's goat, to get the ax, to hang out one's shingle
<u>noun phrases</u>: a snake in the grass, a hot number, an idiot box, the last straw
<u>adjectival phrases</u>: dead to the world, flat broke., fly-by-night business
<u>adverbial phrases:</u> talk off the top of one's head, go at it hammer and tongs
<u>prepositional phrases</u>: (used adverbially or adjectivally) to be on the go, to be in a
   tight spot, to sit on high cotton (in the South).

As we can see, these grammatical categories reflect how the idioms are used in a sentence as verbs, nouns, adjectives or adverbs.

Many idioms are metaphorical: A is B--*My car is a lemon. That exam was a dog*. Many are derived from slang which is vocabulary associated with very informal or colloquial styles (Trudgill 1992: 66) It is more playful, vivid, colorful and ephemeral than ordinary language; it is sometimes socially taboo and sometimes becomes part of standard vocabulary: *hot dog*. Now we come to the vulgar aspects of idiomatic usage which teachers must come to grips with and must realize that it is commonly used in the USA. To many people it is offensive and, therefore, avoided on the grounds that it is in bad taste. Students will often ask about such idioms and teachers should know their meanings in a linguistic, objective manner. Among some of the common vulgar idioms are:

son of a bitch or *S.O.B.*: terrible, miserable, horrible person; in a positive sense:
   He's a lucky son of a bitch. He won a lot of money.
fuck around: be promiscuous or do something without a purpose.
fuck off: go away, don't bother me.
fuck up: make a mess of something: to fuck up an exam.
fuck you: directed at a person in disgust, anger, annoyance or contempt.
asshole is used in the same sense as *fuck you* and can also mean stupid..
Oh, shit, and *Oh, fuck*: exclamations expressing momentary surprise, anger, annoyance caused by unexpected accidents or displeasures. (Carrubba, 347)

Another group of idioms is proverbs and sayings. These express some commonplace truth or useful thought. Their idiomaticity as well as that of the taboo words is shown by their special meaning and their literal one. Some examples are:

Don't count your chickens before they're hatched. (Don't celebrate the outcome of an action prematurely because you might fail and then look ridiculous).

A burnt child dreads the fire. or *Once bitten, twice shy.* (Once you suffer, you avoid the cause of that suffering the next time).

Handsome is as handsome does. (Besides his good looks a person must act well in order to gain respect.

Fine feathers do not make fine birds. (Don't judge someone or something by their outward appearance.)

It is an ill wind that blows nobody good. (Someone can gain from somebody else's misfortunes.

Don't kill the goose that laid the golden egg. (Don't spoil something or a good thing by being greedy.)

Lightening never strikes twice in the same place. (The same accident doesn't occur twice.)

Out of the frying pan into the fire. (From something bad to something worse.)

Penny wise and pound foolish. (Wise or careful in small things, but not in important things.)

People who live in glass houses should not throw stones. (Don't complain about others if you are just as bad.)

A rolling stone gathers no moss. (Changing jobs or moving doesn't often help you to save money or buy property.)

A stitch in time saves nine. (Being careful at the right time in the beginning, helps you avoid more trouble in the end.)

Common idioms for everyday use

He cut off his nose to spite his face. (Making things worse for oneself because of anger or frustration.)

I can't *get a word in edgewise.* (I don't have a chance to speak.)

That's a *piece of cake.* (something very easy)

Mary has a big *sweet tooth.* (to have a fondness for sweets)

His comment was very *tongue in cheek.* (ironic or insincere)

Jack really *got it in the neck.* (to be scolded)

I'm *all keyed up* about the exam. (to be excited or nervous)

He doesn't know whether he's *coming or going.* (not be sure of one's actions)

Jim is always *in hot water.* (to be in trouble)

I'll pass the exam *come hell or high water.* (no matter what happens)

Jim argued with Pat until he was *blue in the face.* (very angry or upset, excited)

The bottom line is that he's a spy. (the naked truth)

How come you're late? (How is it that, why?)

Pat won a scholarship. *How about that!* (That's wonderful or very good)

Idioms in context: A dialogue

A very effective way to teach idioms is through dialogues which provide a context for students to understand the meaning of idioms more easily. The storyline of this dialogue is the effort of one speaker to convince the other of a certain line of action. This helps drive home the meaning of the idioms.

Liz: Do you <u>feel iffy</u> about teaching idioms, Phil?
Phil: I sure do. Liz. I just <u>feel so down in the mouth</u> because I can't <u>get some of them through my head</u>.
Liz: Oh, <u>come on!</u> <u>Get with it</u>, Phil. <u>Make up your mind</u> to get them <u>down pat</u>.
Phil: <u>No way</u>, unless you <u>give me a hand</u>.
Liz: <u>O.K.</u> I'll <u>help you out</u>. I've got a dictionary of idioms that's <u>out of this world</u>. I'll be glad to lend it to you.
Phil: That ought to <u>do the trick</u>, Liz.
Liz: When can we <u>get together</u>?
Phil: <u>How about</u> next Monday night?
Liz: <u>Right on</u>, Phil.

If this dialogue can be presented with pictures, all the better. The book *Illustrated American Idioms* (Curry 1989) illustrates each of its idioms with a letter-size, black and white drawing which can either be held up for the class to see or be used on an OHP.

Explanation: Meaning, usage, grammar

We come to the explanation of the idioms underlined in the dialogue. Even though the idioms may have more than one sense, it is pedagogical to teach only one sense, that used in the dialogue. There will be several abbreviations used to facilitate the use of this section: *inf*: informal, *for*: formal, *sl*: slang, *cl*: cliché, *vph*: verbal phrase, *phv*: phrasal verb, *adjph*: adjectival phrase, *sep*: separable, *insep*, inseparable. The order followed in this section will be meaning of idiom, grammatical description, usage label, and intonation marks when necessary.

1. *feel iffy about*: to be doubtful, unsure; vph, inf.
2. *feel down at the mouth*: to feel sad, discouraged, dejected; vph, inf.
3. *get something through your head*: understand, learn; vph, insep, inf
4. <u>*oh, come on*</u>: to show displeasure or disapproval; exclamation, phv, insep, inf.
5. *get with it*: to pay attention, be alive or alert; command form, vph, insep, sl.
6. *make up your mind*: to come to a decision; phr, sep, inf.
7. *get something down pat*: to learn very well; vph, sep, inf.
8. *no way*: absolutely not, impossible; adverb phrase (used after a statement) sl.

9. *give me a hand*: to help; vph, inf.
10. *out of this world*: wonderful, satisfactory; adjph, sl, cl.
11. *do the trick*: to have a desired result; vph, inf.
12. *get together*: to meet, come together; vph, inf.
13. *how about*: what do you think of _____?; IWQ, inf.
14. *right on*: animated approval, that's correct, satisfactory; adjph, sl, inf.

Ten ways to practice idioms

1. *Definition correspondence*. Use one of the idioms in the dialogue to answer the following questions:
    a. Do you feel sad about the grade you got on the math exam?
    b. Can't you understand these idioms?
    c. What do you think of this book I found on idioms?

2. *Sentence completion*. Complete the following sentences with one of the above idioms:
    a. I think that compact discs are _____.
    b. I need some help with my English. Can you _____?
    c. You're going to lend me $20,000, aren't you? _____?

3. *Choosing situations*. Which of the following situations makes you feel *down in the mouth*?
    a. Going on a trip.
    b. Knowing that your parents are going to get a divorce.
    c. Thinking about your new girl/boyfriend.

4. *What will do the trick?* Consider the following situations and then think of a sentence ending with *will do the trick*. Begin your sentence with a special instrument or action with the -ing form of the verb.
    a. How can I get rid of this splitting headache?
    b. I can't read this small print.
    c. How can I eat this wonderful mango?

5. *Making comments*. The following statements contain idioms. Comment about each statement without using an idiom in your comment.
    a. I'm worried about my daughter. She feels iffy about her job.
    b. Oh, come on. Don't feel so disappointed about losing all that money.
    c. I'll give you a hand with your new computer.

6. *Answering with no way*. In which of the following situations would it be possible to answer with *no way*? Give a reason for your answer.
    a. I'd like to give you a watch for your birthday.
    b. At the end of this class you will have a test on these idioms which will last one hour.
    c. Jack met Liz last week and he wants to marry her next month.

7. *Missing parts*. Choose the appropriate word or words from the above idioms to fill the blank spaces.

    a. Now, come _____. Get _____.
    b. I'd like to _____ you _____ , but I can't.
    c. I can't _____ my _____ where to go on my vacation.

8. *Classification*. Find the right idioms for each of the following classifications:

    a. disapproval, disgust, displeasure   d. learning very well.
    b. complete satisfaction, agreement   e. willingness to help
    c. inability to learn   f. indecision
                  g. marvelous, fantastic, wonderful

9. S*panish equivalents*: what equivalents are there for the following idioms in Spanish?

    a. *How about* coming to my house next Saturday to practice English?
    b. Let's *get together* for a cup of coffee sometime.
    c. Showing patience and understanding to your students ought to *do the trick*.
    d. I *can't make up my mind* about marrying Sara or Jessica.

10. *Creativity*. Form a team of four classmates and create your own dialogue, skit or paragraph using the above idioms or any others.

Conclusion

    The idea for this paper has been to inspire teachers to learn and teach idioms since they re so commonly used in everyday life. Many examples of idioms have been given as well as a definition, ways to classify them, a dialogue illustrating their use, explanations and ten exercises for practicing them.

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Marco's World

What if...

MARCO MORALES

When I was told I was going to start teaching at that school my pants fell down around my ankles. Fortunately, nobody was around. It was just going to be a two-hour class every other day, but when you are a new teacher you want to do things right. I would start teaching a grammar class from nine to eleven in the morning on Monday, Wednesday and Friday.

"You'll have fifteen or sixteen students," the principal said. "Most of them are teenagers, but you might have older people too. There's a five minute break at 9:55. Here's the program, the books, plenty of chalk and an eraser. If you have any questions, feel free to ask, OK? Good luck!"

And, that was that. Of course, I had a couple of thousand questions about all kinds of things, but I decided not to ask anything in that moment. I wanted the principal to think I had everything under control , so I decided to go home and start planning my class for the next day.

I was a new teacher, but I was also a professional teacher and I felt anxious to put everything I knew into practice. I was determined not to let my students notice I was rocky. I started planning my class at five and at seven I was done. I had a beautiful lesson plan in front of me that covered all aspects of the material to be taught in one day. I stood up from the chair and went to the kitchen to make myself a cup of coffee. As I was coming back to my room I saw myself in the mirror in the hall.

"You're a genius," I told the guy who was standing there with a cup of coffee in his hand and a smile on his face.

Suddenly, he changed his pleasant, happy expression to a worried one. "I wrote my lesson plan on a sheet of paper in normal handwriting," I told myself. "What if I can't see it from where I'm standing? Oh, no!"

I dropped my coffee on the floor and hurriedly left the house. I rushed up to the stationary store on the corner and bought a couple of big markers and Bristol boards because I was planning to re-write my lesson plan in big letter size so I could see it clearly from anywhere in the classroom. Back home, it took me an hour to finish the job. I used all the stuff I bought, and I was sure I would be able to see everything fine.

But, as soon as I finished, another worry crossed my mind. "What if they don't know some of the vocabulary I need to use in the class?" I assumed my students knew it, but what if they didn't? An hour later, I finished drawing lots of wall charts I would use to present unknown words. Just in case, you know...

It was already nine thirty when I finally had everything ready, but as I was going over my lesson plan for the fifth time I thought, "The principal told me I would have teenagers and adults in my class. What if the kids don't find my warm up activity and my grammar presentation as appealing as I think they are?" I was sure adults would like them, but they might had been sort of boring for kids. I needed something fun... So, I adapted a song and an Archie comic strip to those activities. It took me forever, but I did it.

After that, I thought about my wind up activity. "What if I don't have the 15 students I need to make this activity work? I'd better think of an alternate activity. Just in case..." It took me thirty more minutes. It was eleven by my watch, but I was so nervous I didn't even think about the time.

"What if I have a blind student? From what I've heard, many blind people attend that school. What if I happen to have one? Or two...? They won't be able to follow the rest of the class." So, I decided to create some special materials for my possible handicapped students. I also got a tape recorder and clean tape to record my class so those students could listen to it as many times as they wanted to. I had to borrow the recorder from a friend who was already in bed when I called him. I went to his apartment to get it and I was back home an hour later. As I was going into my bedroom, resolved to go straight to bed, I ran into my brother in the hall who, by his breath, was coming from a party.

"Hi." he said.

"What's up?" I replied.

"Hey, brother" he said with a guttural voice. Obviously, he had drunk a lot. "I have a question for you."

"What is it?" I asked.

"How do you say *heart* in French? I just met a French girl, but I couldn't tell her what I wanted because I didn't know how to say it." The last three words were pronounced like one.

"I don't know" I said. "How am I supposed to know? Go to bed, now. Come on." I pushed him into his bedroom while he was talking to himself and I went to my own room.

As I was closing my eyes, I thought, "What if I don't know a word they ask me about? I'm the teacher. I'm supposed to know everything they ask about." I had already checked all the unknown words in the lesson and I had happened to find two or three, but what if the students asked me something I didn't know? I stood up and went to work again. Two hours later I had compiled two hundred possible words students might have come up with in class, but that was not the end...

"What if a student gets sick in class? I'd better take my portable first aid kit with me..."

"What if I get nervous? I'll put sedatives in the kit..."

"What if they don't like the song I use?"

"What if they won't sing along?"

"What if I sing out of tune?"

"What if I'm not properly dressed?"

"What if I have an observer in my class like the principal or another teacher?"

"What if a student doesn't bring his book?"

"What if there's an earthquake?"

"What if I faint?"

"What if Mexico wins the World Cup?"

"What if...what if...what if...

"Hey, wake up! Didn't you say you had a new job?"

My brother was shaking my shoulders. I had been sleeping on the desk and the light coming through the window hurt my eyes.

"What time is it?" I asked with a drowsy voice.

"It's day time, and it's late too" he said. "You'd better take a shower, get dressed and go or you'll be late for your first day of work."

Was this the same person I talked to last night? I just couldn't believe I had fallen asleep in the middle of work, but it happened. I got into the bathroom, took

a shower, put my best suit on, had breakfast, picked up my things and went to work. As I was driving to school, I thought of all the work I had done. I was so proud of myself and my work that I couldn't help feeling a little selfish. I knew there was no way on earth I could have forgotten anything. I arrived ten minutes early. After I parked my car, I picked up my lesson plan, visual aids and the rest of the stuff and went to the secretary's office to ask her where my room was.

"Good morning," I greeted her with a sweet voice.

"Oh! I'm glad to see you now" the secretary said.

"Why, thanks " I said smiling.

"It's not what you think," she said, "there's been a change."

"What do you mean a change?"

"You're going to teach a conversation course not a grammar one, so take this book and go to Room 19. Your class starts in five minutes."

My pants fell down around my ankles again. But, this time, there was an audience...

Teaching Tips

Teaching Vocabulary

JOANN MILLER, UNIVERSIDAD DEL VALLE DE MÉXICO AND AMERICOM

Vocabulary teaching is probably one of the most important and most ignored segments of language teaching. We expect our students to use all sorts of grammar rules and communicative functions, but we often forget to give them opportunities to learn sufficient vocabulary to be able to use what they learn. As Michael McCarthy says:

> It is the experience of most language teachers that the single, biggest component of any language course is vocabulary. No matter how well the student learns grammar, no matter how successfully the sounds of L2 are mastered, without words to express a wide range of meanings, communication in an L2 just cannot happen in any meaningful way. And yet vocabulary often seems to be the least systematized and the least well catered for of all the aspects of learning a foreign language. (p. x)

There are many techniques that can be shown to students to help them improve their vocabulary and, of course, each student should choose the strategy that best fits his/her learning style:

Resourcing	Using target language reference materials such as dictionaries, encyclopedias, or textbooks.
Repetition	Imitating a language model, including overt practice and silent rehearsal.
Grouping	Classifying words, terminology, or concepts according to their attributes
Imagery	Using visual images (either mental or actual) to understand or remember new information
Auditory representation	Playing back in one's mind the sound of a word, phrase, or longer language sequence.
Keyword method	Remembering a new word by identifying a familiar word in the first language that sounds like or otherwise resembles the new word.
Transfer	Using previous linguistic knowledge or prior skills to assist comprehension or production.

(Adapted from O'Malley and Chamot.)

Let's look at what we, as teachers, can do to help students practice to use these strategies for learning vocabulary.

Resourcing	Using target language reference materials such as dictionaries, encyclopedias, or textbooks and other resources.

Students should be asked to go beyond their textbook. The use of other forms of language input can help them increase their vocabulary. Besides, by letting them choose what they want to read or what they need to investigate, they will more readily acquire necessary vocabulary that interests them.

Repetition	Imitating a language model, including overt practice and silent rehearsal.

Encourage students to practice new vocabulary both silently and out loud. Incorporation of new vocabulary words into a dialogue or oral practice can facilitate this. As students plan their conversations, they say the words and hear them from their partners; they are learning them, effortlessly.

Grouping	Classifying words, terminology, or concepts according to their attributes

Studies of how vocabulary is stored in the brain have shown that it is organized by categories. You can demonstrate this by using the famous word association test, so often used as a parlor game: You say a word and your partner says the first thing that comes into his/her head. For example, if I say *black*, you probably will say *white*; if I say *apple,* you might think *banana*, etc.

How can we use this in the classroom? Old fashioned word category lists. Instead of using them in the same way they were once used (translate and memorize), but we will present vocabulary in categories, for example, parts of the body, foods, rooms, etc. Also, present adjectives with their opposites (high/low, tall/short).

Imagery	Using visual images (either mental or actual) to understand or remember new information

Present new vocabulary with visuals whenever possible. A simple translation of a new word helps students understand at that moment, but it does nothing to help them remember the word. I can answer a student's question, "What is sheep?" by saying "*Oveja,"* but they will remember my poor picture of the animal drawn on the board longer.

Auditory representation	Playing back in one's mind the sound of a word, phrase, or longer language sequence.

Encourage students to listen to words in their minds. They can practice conversations or even have practice conversations silently. These repetitions will help them remember.

Keyword method	Remembering a new word by identifying a familiar word in the first language that sounds like or otherwise resembles the new word.

This technique is similar to Robert W. Blair's *Easification*. When confronted with having to learn Russian, he suggested the following:

Zdrástvujite   Hello!

... it sounds like STRAWS TO WITCH YA. Not STRAYS to witch ya, but STRAWS to witch ya. Got that? Imagine people greeting each other by exchanging straws and saying, STRAWS TO WITCH YA. It means "hello". Make a sign of greeting now and say it. Now listen to the tape. Did you notice there's only a couple of little differences between the English sound-alike phrase and the native Russian? For example, it's ZDRAWS, not STRAWS. (p. 221)

Transfer	Using previous linguistic knowledge or prior skills to assist comprehension or production.

Here we show the students that they can rely on what they know of English or Spanish or any other language to help them understand and learn new words. Whenever they find themselves either having to understand some new word or needing to produce an idea for which they do not have sufficient vocabulary, they should trust cognates (very few are false), word building through affixing and suffixing, and even slang expressions they might have learned in songs. Encourage students to supply vocabulary for their classmates and don't let them get by just translating for each other. Trying to describe the meaning of a word without recurring to Spanish is a great strategy building activity.

By helping students have confidence in their own abilities and giving them study options, vocabulary building becomes much easier. In future issues we will be giving more ideas on how you can help students build their vocabularies, painlessly.

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MEXTESOL XXII National Convention

CALL FOR PARTICIPATION

22nd Annual MEXTESOL National Convention: *A Bridge to Better Understanding*

Proposals due May 15, 1995

Steps in Submitting a Proposal

1. Complete both sides of the **Proposal Form**, using either the form itself or a photocopy. *Make a copy for yourself.* This Proposal Form is also required for Exhibitor's Sessions (Commercial Demonstrations).

2. Prepare 3 copies of a single-page **abstract** to be read by the *Academic Readers* and put the following information in the upper left corner of all copies:
   - the type of presentation (*demonstration, exhibitor's session, in-progress, paper, workshop*)
   - title of the proposed presentation.

3. Put the presenter(s) name(s) in the upper right corner on **one** of the copies. **Do not** put names on the remaining **two** copies.

4. Be sure to include **all** of the information requested on the Proposal Form, including a maximum 75-word **summary** of the presentation and a maximum 50-word **Biodata** statement for each participant. This information will be included in the program. If the Summary or Biodata information exceeds stated limitations, it will not be printed in the program. Exhibitors may include a maximum of 100 words for the Summary and 75 words for the Biodata.

5. Mail the completed package to:

> **MEXTESOL**
> **San Borja 726-2**
> **Colonia del Valle**
> **03100 México, D. F.**
> **TEL./FAX: 575-5473**

6. All proposals which fulfill the above requirements (Proposal Forms duly filled out, 3 copies of abstract--one with name, two without) will be read by two different Academic Referees. These referees will judge proposals based on academic merit, evidence of clear planning, and accepted proposals will also be chosen in order to present a balanced program.

To enhance your proposal:
- *complete your Proposal carefully.*
- submit readable material, typed and dark copy.
- state your topic and point of view clearly.
- select the best format (paper, demonstration, workshop, etc.).
- plan to use a variety of presentation techniques (activities, visuals, etc.).
- include supporting details and examples.
- allot sufficient time to cover the material outlined.
- show familiarity with current practices and/or research.
- use a title that correctly reflects the content.
- prepare a program summary that will draw the most appropriate audience to your presentation.
- edit and proofread the abstract carefully.
- *A note about multiple proposals.* Participants are encouraged to submit any number of proposals. Since sessions will be determined based on academic merit, more than one Proposal may be chosen. When a presenter accepts more than one spot on the program, others may be prevented from attendance. For this reason, the Committee asks that participants accept MEXTESOL's invitation to be primarily responsible (main presenter) for ONLY ONE session on the program and to limit their participation to a maximum of one or two other sessions.

Disqualifying Factors
- The Demonstration, In-Progress Session, Paper or Workshop *promotes commercial interests.*
- The Proposal was *not completed according to the guidelines* on this Call for Participation.
- The Proposal involves *extensive use of expensive audiovisual equipment*, making the cost of presenting the session prohibitive.
- The Proposal was not received at MEXTESOL Offices by the deadline.

To simplify editing

Title. Only the title and presenter's name and institutional affiliation appear in the Daily Schedule section of the program book. The title is important for attracting participants to your session. Choose a title that will be clear to the intended audience and limit it to 9 words. Capitalize only the first word, initials, proper nouns, and the first word following a colon. Use a colon instead of a dash.

Summaries. Summaries will appear in the convention program. They help convention participants to decide which presentations will be the most appropriate to their interests. Summaries of more than 75 words cannot be included. They should be written in the third person future tense ("The presenter will begin by... and she will then...").

Biographical statements (Bio-data). In a maximum of 50 words for each participant, give the first name or initials, family name(s), institutional affiliation (optional) and relevant activities. Degrees are not usually listed, titles such as "associate professor" are not capitalized, and "currently " is normally omitted. Write in complete sentences, it is not a list.

Abstracts. The abstract does not appear in the program, but it is the only part of the Proposal seen by the referees. Carefully read all instructions. Abstracts are limited to 250 words and one page. Evidence of careful planning is essential in the abstract.

Description of Types of Presentations

Demonstration (50 minutes) An academic presentation in which most of the time is used for showing, rather than telling, a technique for teaching or testing.

Exhibitor Session (50 minutes or 1 hour 20 minutes) Presented by book publishers, authors, editors, distributors, manufacturers and others whose goods or services have significance for TESOL students and educators.

In Progress (20 minutes) An opportunity for research graduate students, administrators, teacher trainers, classroom teachers, or any other interested person to report on research, programs, textbooks or techniques. that are "in progress" and to meet others interested in the topic.

Paper (50 minutes) An oral summary. The presenter discusses and describes something the presenter is doing or has done in relation to either theory or practice. The presenter often has handouts and may also use audiovisual aids.

Workshop (1 hour 20 minutes) Very little lecturing by the leader; the emphasis is, rather, on the participants' activity, which is carefully structured by the leader. The leader works with a group, helping participants solve a problem or develop a specific teaching or research technique.

Topic Area:

Classroom Methods/Techniques: Ideas that can be applied to ELT classes.

Applied Linguistics: Theoretical aspects of ELT, i.e., research.

Technology in EFL/ESL: Technological advances, such as computers, video...

Testing: Presentations related to classroom evaluation situations.

Teacher Training/Supervision: Related to teacher training or supervision situations.

Program/Syllabus Development: Ideas for material or course development.

Program Administrators: Directed at administrators and their work.

Area of Interest:

Pre-primary: Under 6 years old; before first grade of primary school.

Primary: Elementary School. 6 to 12 years old. Grades 1 to 6.

Secundaria: Junior High School. 13 to 15 years old. Grades 7 to 9.

Preparatoria: High School. 16 to 18 years old. Grades 10 to 12.

Bilingual Education: ESL Programs. English and Spanish are taught equally.

University: Post High School. 18 years old and up; higher education programs.

Adult: Over 18 years old. Usually in private language institutes.

MEXTESOL National Convention
Proposal Form

Type the mailing address to whom all correspondence should be sent:

Name: _____ **Home Telephone:**
_____

Address:_____ **Office Telephone:**
_____

_____ **Fax Number:**
_____

_____
(City)   (State/Province)   (Zip/Postal Code)   (Country)

Presenter(s): (Listed in the order in which name(s) should appear in program.)

Family Name, Other Name(s)	Institutional Affiliation
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Title of Proposal:
_____
(9-word maximum)
_____

Summary for Program
(Maximum 75 words. Exhibitors-100 words.)

_____

Biodata
(Maximum 50 words. Exhibitors-75 words.)

Type of Session (blacken ONE box only):

50 Minutes:	**1 Hr, 20 Min.:**	**Exhibitor Session**
☐ Demonstration	☐ Workshop	☐ 50 Minutes
☐ Paper		☐ 1 Hr. 20 Min
	20 Minutes:	
	☐ In Progress	

Topic Area

☐ Classroom Methods/Techniques	☐ Teacher Training/Supervision
☐ Applied Linguistics	☐ Program/Syllabus Development
☐ Technology in EFL/ESL	☐ Program Administrators
☐ Testing	☐ Other: _____

Area of Interest

☐ Pre-primary	☐ Preparatoria	☐ Adult
☐ Primary	☐ Bilingual Education	☐ Other:_____
☐ Secundaria	☐ University	

Preferred Audience Size

☐ 50	☐ 75	☐ 100	☐ 150	☐ 200

Audiovisual Equipment

(All rooms will be provided with either blackboards or flipcharts, with chalk, markers and erasers). Please mark other equipment you will need. Note: Due to availability restraints, some items will have to be charged.

☐ Overhead Projector (OHP) (No charge)	☐ Videotape Player: (N$?)
	☐ NTSC (US) ☐ PAL/SECAM
☐ Cassette Tape Recorder (No charge)	☐ VHS ☐ BETA ☐ 3/4"
	☐ Slide Projector (N$?)
	(Call the office for prices.)

Mail this form and 3 copies of the single-page abstract to the following address before the deadline.

MEXTESOL
San Borja 726-2
Colonia del Valle
03100 México, D. F.
(TEL./FAX: 575-5473)

DEADLINE: May 15, 1995