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Contents/Contenido

From the Editor	6
Reality and Authenticity: A critical look at modern ELT materials.....	9
Peter Hubbard, Universidad de Guadalajara	9
Professionalisation in English Language Teaching: The development of a discourse community	23
Sue Wharton, University of Aston, United Kingdom	23
Oral Presentations as a Communicative Activity	33
Connie R. Johnson, Universidad de las Américas-Puebla	33
Interview with Chris Joslin, English Language Officer at the British Council in Mexico	43
Nevin Siders, MEXTESOL	43
Teaching Tips: Choosing the vocabulary we teach	51
JoAnn Miller, Universidad del Valle de México-Tlalpan	51
Book Review: More fun than a barrel of monkeys.....	53

From the Editor

As the school year winds down, it is a good idea to evaluate our performance throughout the year and to contemplate what we would like to do to improve ourselves in the future. One suggestion is to consider how to become more professional. Obviously, if you are reading this journal, you are either already a professional in our field or on the way to becoming one; however, there is always more that can be done. For example, have you attended any regional MEXTESOL meetings this year? If not, plan to do so in the future. Do you have a regional chapter in your area? It really is not that difficult to form one. Contact the National MEXTESOL office. Have you begun making plans to attend the National Convention in Acapulco from October 12 to 15? There is still time. See the advertisement in this issue.

Hopefully this issue of the *MEXTESOL Journal* will also help you become more professional. There are many different articles that we are sure will interest you. Our first article is by Peter Hubbard of the University of Guadalajara. In this article he looks at the ideas of authenticity and realism in ELT materials. After a clear discussion of the background of the use of authentic materials in the early communicative movement, he examines how authentic texts are used today and discusses the different challenges that have arisen as to the use of these materials. He finally offers a compromise solution based on the use of real data.

Sue Wharton of the University of Aston in England has sent us an interesting article dealing with professionalisation in ELT. First, she reviews Hoyle's model of professionalism and introduces the concept of a discourse community based on Swales. Finally, she discusses cultural and professional values and applies these ideas to the relationship between local and global discourse communities.

Our third article is by Connie R. Johnson, University of the Americas-Puebla. She offers us some very practical ideas on how to include oral presentations as communicative activities. She presents us with notions of how to organize and explain the different skills involved with public speaking and gives us some examples of exercises we can use to help students overcome common errors while speaking in front of a group.

This issue also includes an interview with Chris Joslin, the English Language Officer at the British Council here in Mexico, a *Teaching Tips* section and a book review.

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*.

Reality and Authenticity: A critical look at modern ELT materials

PETER HUBBARD, UNIVERSIDAD DE GUADALAJARA ¹

Introduction

The purpose of this article is to take a critical look at the notions of authenticity and realism in the context of ELT materials. This is worth doing because many modern textbooks are written under the influence of communicative approaches ², which, among other things advocate an emphasis on authentic materials and tasks. While there can be little doubt that authenticity and realism have an important role to play in ELT materials, we should perhaps be cautious in identifying this role. As a first step, it would be helpful to analyze the concept of authenticity and consider in what ways exactly textbooks can incorporate authentic elements.

Background

Before engaging with the main ideas to be presented here, it is worthwhile to take a look at the early days of the communicative movement.

The influence of linguistics

Language as a natural object of study can be viewed from different angles, depending on your particular purposes or interests. Hence both American Structuralist Linguistics and Transformative-Generative Grammar viewed a language as a self-contained system: their interest was in how the different parts of the system functioned with each other. They were less interested in the relationship of language to the world in which we live and act. Cook (1989: 10) observes:

In linguistics, especially in the English-speaking world between the 1930's and 1960's there have been several schools of thought which believe that context--this knowledge of the world outside language which we use to interpret it--should be ruled out of language analysis as far as possible. In this way, it is

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² I use the term communicative approaches throughout, because there are a wide variety of realizations of communicative language teaching; and also because to speak of *The Communicative Approach* might seem to imply that there is a well-defined and well-established body of theory and practice under this name. I prefer to see communicative language teaching as a broad movement rather than a dogmatic, take-it-or-leave-it position.

believed, linguists will be able to make discoveries about the language itself, and its system of rules which exists quite independently of particular circumstances.

British linguistic tradition, on the other hand, which can be traced from the linguistic observations of the anthropologist Malinowski through the work of Firth and then Halliday, has always been concerned with the context in which language is used and the uses to which it is put. Hence, Halliday's Systemic Grammar, for example, begins with language function and views the different options available to a speaker who wishes to **do** something with language.

Language teaching theory and practice

When we look at the field of language teaching, we can note that there have also been some differences between American and British traditions. It has been said (e.g. Howatt 1984: 267ff) that American ELT was driven by abstract theories generated by university researchers, whereas British practice was based on field experience translated into sets of working principles. This, of course, is a gross overgeneralization³. However, what is true is that in the American sphere of influence, the twin disciplines of structural linguistics and behaviourist psychology, both rooted in a positivist philosophy of science, assumed complete authority over the practice of language teaching, and the product of this union was the dogma of audiolingualism. Language teaching was effectively isolated from the general field of educational studies and this was to its loss. The advent of Transformative-Generative Grammar did not in itself shake practitioners out of the grip of this dogma, but Chomsky's attack on behaviourist accounts of language acquisition did. We then saw the gradual dismantling of audiolingual materials and approaches, and the dissolution of moldering language laboratories.

Meanwhile, in British traditions, there was relatively little contamination by audiolingualism. Structural-situational teaching was a development of the old-style direct method. Both in this type of approach and in the Audio-Visual method, which incidentally had particular influence on the teaching of French, there was a strong emphasis on meaning. Language teaching had to be meaningful. It was intuitively predicted (in the total absence of scientific evidence) that language learners would both retain and analyze language better if it was presented and practiced in a context of real use. However, we could say that the motives for this partial form of realism were methodological rather than

syllabus-related: they were more concerned with **how** we teach than **what** learners will learn.

³Consider for example the impressive work done at the University of Columbia, NY, based in large measure on the experience of Peace Corps teaching.

Communicative approaches

We must remember that the Notional Syllabus (also called the Functional Syllabus, the Notional-Functional Syllabus, the Functional-Notional Syllabus and the Semantic Syllabus) was in part the result of a historical accident. The historical context in this case was the integration of European states into what was, in the early days, the Common Market and later the European Economic Community or EEC. Collaboration on a common syllabus for the learning of languages within the Community led to the development of the Threshold Level, a unified concept statement that expressed in definitive form the objectives of teaching any language. Since the teaching of English, French and German, not to mention the other languages, differ markedly in terms of pedagogical emphasis and strategy. It made considerable sense to specify objectives in terms of language function rather than language form (although the formal goals were also included in the statement).

However, other ingredients were thrown into the witches' cauldron: British linguistic traditions, noted above, of analyzing language beyond the sentence level, some remarkable philosophical work on speech acts (Austin, Searle), pioneer work on discourse analysis (Sinclair and Coulthard) and a growing body of research on needs analysis. Also, across the Atlantic, repeated attacks on Chomsky's notions of grammatical competence and deep structure, led to Hymes' (1972) postulation of communicative competence, a concept that has since been modified and refined by numerous workers in the field.

In a parallel development, the growing body of research on second language acquisition, originally provoked by Chomskyan speculation about the existence of a language acquisition device (LAD), has increasingly influenced language teaching, first prematurely in the development of **methods** based on highly speculative theory (Krashen and Terrel 1983); and later, more satisfactorily, in the development of **task-based syllabuses** (Long and Crookes 1992).

Communicative approaches: The what

Communicative language teaching was initially concerned with **what** learners will learn. Language is viewed as a means of communication rather than a closed system. Wilkins in his modestly titled but widely influential book *Notional Syllabuses* states:

In drawing up a notional syllabus, instead of asking how speakers of the language express themselves or when and where they use the language, we ask what it is they communicate through language. We are then able to organize language teaching in terms of the content rather than the form of the language.

(Wilkins 1976: 18)

It is interesting to note that Wilkins' original perception of a functional-notional syllabus was quickly metamorphosed by textbook writers into a 'structural-

functional' syllabus, in which neither functions nor structures assumed dominant emphasis. Notions were all but abandoned, since semantico-grammatical items were closely linked to grammatical forms anyway (and nobody would be so rash as to abandon grammar altogether). On the other hand, textbook writers swiftly latched on to functions as communicative items that would possess face-value and immediate relevance for learners. Sequencing of grammatical items followed the traditional 'simplicity' criterion, which Wilkins had criticized and there was a parallel functional syllabus based partly on the urgency of learners' needs and partly on the grammatical means they had at their disposal to form the exponents of each function.

Communicative approaches: The how

Later work concentrated on how to achieve the communicative goals outlined in the Threshold Level and other functional specifications of objectives (Johnson, Morrow, Brumfit and many others). Hence there has been development of communicative exercise types that are congruent with functional-notional syllabuses. Especially popular are communication gap types. Prabhu (1987: 46-47) has classified these into three groups: information gap (exchange of information in a collaborative tasks), opinion gap (exchange of opinions) and reasoning gap (collaborative problem solving). We should add role-play and simulation, which were in use long before communicative approaches were identified as such, and may involve all three of the 'gap' elements mentioned above. And let us not forget humble personalization, in which students are given an opportunity to use their own knowledge of the world as the content of practice.

All these exercise types share the same underlying principles. Learners are encouraged to concentrate on expressing themselves by whatever means available and to complete the communication task, rather than focusing on language form. In other words, the emphasis is on fluency rather than accuracy. The practice activity should be perceived by learners as being collaborative tasks. Students' knowledge and intelligence is made use of.

Other influences on modern communicative practice

We should note at least two other influences on communicative approaches as they are used today: humanism and student autonomy. Both these influences have come from the mainstream of educational research, theory and philosophy. And it is evident that language teaching and learning will return to the fold of general education more and more in years to come, although we would expect second language acquisition studies to continue to inform theory and practice. At any rate, communicative approaches are congruent with general humanistic principles and with learner centred learning. Interesting blends have

emerged, some of them more effective than others. For a critical counter-example, see O'Neill (1991).

The return to grammar teaching

As noted above, grammar teaching was never really abandoned altogether. Now second language acquisition research is providing scientific evidence for the position that conscious attention to grammar may be necessary (Montgomery and Eisenstein 1985, Schmidt and Frota 1986, Spada 1990) and that mere immersion in comprehensible input does not necessarily lead to intake.

Authenticity and Communicative Approaches

The position on authenticity in communicative approaches was stated by Wilkins (1976: 79):

...In courses based on a notional syllabus in particular, much more attention needs to be paid to the acquisition of a receptive competence and...an important feature of materials designed to produce such a competence would be authentic language materials. By this is meant materials which have not been specially written or recorded for the foreign learner, but which were originally directed at a native-speaking audience...Such materials will be the means by which [the learner] can bridge the gap between classroom knowledge and an effective capacity to participate in real language events.

We should note that Wilkins was committed to what he called **analytic** rather than **synthetic** syllabuses. The latter introduces the learners to bits of language one at a time, whereas the former plunges the learner into language in use as an integrated whole.

Since then, there has been a marked tendency for textbooks to contain authentic texts (mostly written texts, for reasons that will be discussed shortly). This tendency has been followed almost without question and it is worthwhile considering in simple terms the underlying argument for using authentic texts. David Nunan (1989: 54) states:

The argument for using authentic materials is derived from the notion...that the most effective way to develop a particular skill is to rehearse that skill in class. Proponents of authentic materials point out that classroom texts and dialogues do not adequately prepare learners for coping with the language they hear and read in the real world outside the classroom.

In general, communicative approaches emphasize the need to bridge the gap between classroom practices and real use of the language outside the classroom. Nunan again (1989: 40)

Classroom tasks are generally justified or rationalised in either 'real-world' or 'pedagogic' terms. Tasks with a real-world rationale require learners to approximate, in class, the sorts of behaviours required of them in the world beyond the classroom...Tasks with a pedagogic rationale, on the other hand, require learners to do things which it is extremely unlikely they would be called upon to do outside the classroom.

However, later Nunan softens this distinction (1989: 44)

...The distinction between real-world and pedagogic tasks may be more apparent than real. Many may be justified both in real-world and pedagogic terms...Pedagogic activities (such as some problem-solving ones), while they may look artificial, particularly in terms of their content, may, on analysis, be practising enabling skills such as fluency, discourse and interactional skills, mastery of phonological elements and mastery of grammar.

Prabhu, in designing his well-documented Bangalore Procedural Syllabus, did not regard real-world tasks as necessary. Prabhu (1987: 93):

...A procedural syllabus of tasks only envisages constant effort by learners to deploy their language resources in the classroom, and does not attempt either to demarcate areas of real-life use for different stages of teaching or to bring about a 'thorough' learning of use in some functions at each stage.

To sum up the arguments, then, communicative approaches are committed to the view that language should not be separated from its social and pragmatic context. The purpose of learning a foreign language is to enable the learner to communicate in it. Therefore, teaching should concentrate on communication skills and learners should be given classroom opportunities to practice the most useful areas of communication that they are likely to encounter outside the classroom. Included in such tasks are listening to and reading authentic texts, that is to say, samples of spoken and written language not designed for the pedagogical purpose of teaching foreign languages.

Authenticity in Textbooks: How it comes out in print

Perhaps the most effective use of authentic material has been in the teaching of reading comprehension, especially in the case of English for Academic Purposes (EAP). In many parts of the world, non-English speaking students need to read books and articles in their area of specialization written in English. They need to read these quickly and understand the gist of the reading passage, examining the ideas contained in it critically and comparing them to the knowledge they already possess; and they have to extract the most important details (facts, figures and quotations) that they need for their own studies. Well planned and executed teaching involving the academic texts the students need to read has resulted in

enabling the students to become better academic readers and, arguably, better students in general.

However, how well has authenticity of texts fared in general English courses?

One obvious problem is that beginners are faced with unsimplified materials and this increases the learning load. Nunan (1989: 138):

Many low-level learners are traumatised when first exposed to authentic samples of language, and have to be taught that it is not necessary to understand every word for communication to be successful.

Teachers and textbook writers are well aware of this difficulty. There are only two strategies for dealing with it: selecting the text with great care or adapting it. An example of selection would be to present the learners with an extremely short piece of text, such as a notice in a building or on a street corner; or one written in extremely simple language. However, short texts are highly dependent on contextual clues, and if these are given to students, they can hardly be said to be reading at all, in the normal sense of the word. On the other hand, if texts are adapted, they are no longer *ipso facto* authentic. Nevertheless, a number of textbook writers have opted for including so-called 'simulated-authentic' texts in their materials. In other words, the texts are either adapted from genuinely authentic texts to make them more accessible or they are completely fabricated, but with the look and 'feel' of the real stuff. Hence students are given a gradual introduction to texts that they may encounter in real life. This is supposed to be at the same time both motivating and instructive.

It is particularly difficult to get hold of authentic spoken texts that are pedagogically usable. It is impossible to record a spontaneous conversation without using CIA-type bugging devices. Even then, apart from ethical considerations, we would have extraneous noise, overlapping speech and incomplete sentences (which some proponents of authentic materials, incidentally, may regard as bonuses). Off-air recordings from radio or television are likely to be far more usable because they will be professionally recorded under studio conditions and the speakers will be people accustomed to speaking in public. Some writers have experimented with 'unscripted' conversations, where actors or ordinary native speakers are given a role to play, but not an exact script to follow.

To sum up, then, authentic materials may have a useful role to play in ESP or EAP teaching situations, but they usually suffer some kind of sea change when included in general English course materials. In many cases, the resulting texts

are no longer authentic, in the strict sense of the word. This may not be a problem, in fact, as I will try to show later on.

Challenges to the concept of authenticity

To what extent can it be said that authenticity in language teaching is mere dogma without systematic pedagogical foundations?

The question has been elaborately discussed by Widdowson (1990: 44-48). In this passage, he proposes that the arguments in favour of authenticity are based on what he calls the 'means-end equation'.

By the means/end equation, I mean the assumption that what the learner has eventually to achieve by way of language ability should determine what he does in the process of acquiring that ability... The belief here is that the language behaviour of natural use, which is the end of learning, should be replicated as closely as possible in the classroom as this language behaviour will also be conducive to learning... (Widdowson 1990: 44)

Widdowson challenges the view that language practice in the classroom should always as far as possible closely reflect what the learner should be able to do at the end of the course. If authenticity is 'natural language behaviour', then it is hard to see how learners under normal classroom conditions can engage in authentic practice.

Authenticity of language in the classroom is bound to be, to some extent, an illusion. This is because it does not depend on the source from which the language as an object is drawn but on the learners' engagement with it. In actual language use... meanings are achieved by human agency and are negotiable: they are not contained in text. To the extent that language learners, by definition, are deficient in competence they cannot authenticate the language they deal with in the manner of the native speaker. The language presented to them may be a genuine record of native speaker behaviour, genuine, that is to say, as textual data, but to the extent that it does not engage native speaker response it cannot be realized as authentic discourse. (Op. Cit.: 44-45)

Language texts in the classroom may be authentic, but learners' tasks based on those texts will almost certainly not be authentic; and the language practiced during the performance of those tasks will not be authentic.

Authenticity, then, in the classroom is only to be found in limited quantities and questionable forms. Is it, however, also desirable?

It may be generally true that the natural language use which constitutes the goal of learning is realized by a focus on meaning rather than form, and is a matter for top-down rather than bottom-up processing, but the process of arriving at that goal, the development of the authenticating ability, calls for an ef-

fective internalization of form and capability of analysis which will allow for their use across a wide and unpredictable range of different contexts. In other words, the very learning process implies a focus on form as a necessary condition for the subsequent focus on meaning. (Op. Cit.: 45)

Widdowson throws doubt on the idea that learners should be discouraged from focusing on form altogether:

The idea that learners should be discouraged from attending to the formal properties of language is comparable to the idea, prevalent in a previous era, that learners should be denied all access to translation. Learners will attend to form and make use of translation anyway because the learning process requires them to do so. A pedagogy which denies this perversely creates difficulties which hamper the learner in this task. The central question is not what learners have to do to use language naturally, but what they have to do to **learn** to use language naturally. In my view, the authenticity argument is invalid because it does not distinguish between the two questions: it confuses ends and means and assumes that teaching language **for** communication is the same as teaching language **as** communication. (Op. Cit.: 45-46)

As pointed out earlier, there is now second language acquisition research which provides evidence that drawing learners' attention to the formal properties of language does in fact aid efficient learning.

In short, Widdowson is arguing that authenticity in the classroom is neither possible nor desirable. As I have mentioned earlier, this assertion needs to be qualified: reading comprehension of authentic texts in an ESP context is still a valid use of authentic materials. However, it is certainly true that arguments in favor of using authentic materials seem weaker than they did in the early days of the communicative movement.

Alternatives: The use of authentic data

I have already mentioned that the question of authenticity is not a take-it-or-leave-it one. Rather than arguing against authenticity altogether, we need to consider what role authenticity and realism have in textbook design.

Authentic texts and authentic tasks

I have already made the point that the theoretical justification for authentic texts is that they bring the learner closer in the classroom to the end point of the process: the use of language in real situations. Widdowson (1990) has pointed out that this argument is weakened by the fact that learners' handling of authentic texts is never likely to be authentic. This is certainly true. And indeed most exercises based on authentic texts are far from authentic. However, as Nunan (1989, above) has pointed out, there are many non-authentic but communicative tasks

that have important pedagogical value for future authentic language use. This argument is, in fact, congruent with that of Widdowson.

Authentic texts, tasks and data

At this stage, I wish to make a distinction between three types of authentic elements. These are:

Authentic texts

Authentic tasks

Authentic data

We have already dealt exhaustively with the first two. Authentic data differ from the first in so far as it (data is only plural in theory!) need not be directly represented in the materials, but can be used as the basis for the design of pedagogical materials.

The point has been made again and again that textbook content is often highly artificial, at times grotesquely so. In contriving to include all the formal elements of language that he wishes to present, the textbook writer may introduce content that has nothing to do with either the world of the learner or that of the target language community. In short, it is unreal. Authentic texts can reduce this fault by including real-life elements into the book and classroom practice.

However, as we have seen, perhaps it is fallacious to assume that texts need to be authentic in order to facilitate efficient learning: In fact, the opposite might be the case. We have already considered authentic texts that have been adapted for pedagogical use; and unscripted dialogues that produce semi-authentic language. There are also simulated-authentic texts and probably more hybrid varieties produced by blending the natural with the artificial.

I think that all of these attempts to include realism in the materials are valid. However, perhaps what needs to be made authentic is not the language itself, but the content of the materials. Too many textbook writers are trying to be novelists or journalists--which they are not. It is not our job to write fiction or documentaries, but to produce usable pedagogical materials that can help teachers prepare classes better and in less time. Learners will, according to my view, be able to relate to the content of textbooks better if this is real and authenticated as such. It does not mean that the texts have to be authentic, but the data on which they are based does.

How can authentic data be obtained?

Authentic data can only be obtained by research. This need not be highly rigorous scientific research because we are not trying to prove a theory but simply take samples from reality. On these samples, we can build our pedagogical materials.

It might be instructive to take a parallel example from our own field, that of the COBUILD project⁴. The object of this project was to produce a dictionary (and other materials) based on authentic data. A large number of authentic texts were scanned into computer memory and a concordancing programme produced concordances for every word to be included in the dictionary. Then human judgment entered into the process and co-workers examined the concordances to arrive at suitable dictionary entries. Actual samples from the data were used to illustrate uses of words.

Exactly the same approach can be adopted for the production of textbooks. However, instead of using a corpus of authentic texts as our data base, we can gather a collection of authentic data about human beings, their families, working lives, leisure pursuits and so on. We may be able to use actual samples of the speech produced by the subjects of our research, but this is not an essential part of the process. What is essential is that the content of the materials we produce be real and based on the lives of real people. It is also important that students be made aware of this reality.

What kinds of real data can be used?

The following is a list of possible types of data that could be obtained for the construction of a data base on which to design a textbook:

Data about real situations that have happened, or happen regularly.

Data about real people, their lifestyle, work profile, their family and so on.

Data about how people react to a certain situation and what they say in these circumstances.

Data relating to the naturalness of language to be used in the textbook.

⁴The COBUILD project was a collaboration between a team of workers at the University of Birmingham, UK, under the leadership of John Sinclair, and Collins Publishers.

There are many other types of data that could be used depending on the precise nature of the endusers of the book and an analysis of their needs.

Why use real data?

Prabhu (1987: 49-50) discusses the concept of students' ownership of language. To what extent is the content of the language that students produce in class their own and to what extent is it put into their mouths by the teacher or textbook writer? Many teachers observe a dramatic change when practice in the classroom shifts from artificial content to personalized practice (mentioned above) in which the learner talks about herself, her family, her home town, her country or famous people she knows about. What is happening here is that the learner is communicating personal knowledge. The message produced therefore comes from the learner and there is a greater chance that the language used will **belong** to the learner. Compare this to standard drilling about a situation in a textbook and you will find that there is a considerable change in the quality of motivation. It would be limiting to base a course entirely on students' personal knowledge, but by using authentic data as the basis for textbook construction a similar enhancement to the learning process can be produced. The learner is aware that the content of the textbook is not invented but based on real life experience. It is like the difference between watching a soap opera and a documentary. The former may have more dramatic impact, but is of limited importance to the learner in the long term. The latter is more likely to find a connection with the learner's schemata of life experience.

Bridges between cultures

There are arguments for and against taking the authentic data simply from the target language community, if such a community can be identified. Data taken from the target group may provide the learner with valuable cultural information and be interesting in itself. However, in many cases, there is a danger of rejection, especially since we should remember that a large proportion of learners are sent to school and obliged to study English. It is the case now, anyway, that English is increasingly being used as a medium of international communication and few learners actually plan to spend time in the countries where it is spoken. It is also the case that data taken from an alien community may make the content of the materials difficult for the student to relate to in a personal way.

ESP and authentic data

As in the case of authentic texts, an ESP teaching situation makes materials based on authentic data much more likely to be relevant to students' needs and wants. In every sense, a narrowing down of the teaching situation makes the textbook writer's task easier when it comes to selecting content. Sadly,

there are a very large number of 'world wide' general English textbooks produced, editorial and authorial greed being a prime reason for this. It is, in my opinion, becoming less and less justifiable to produce books of this kind. Time will tell whether there is a change towards a more localized and specialized textbook.

Summary

The role of authentic tasks and texts in language teaching materials was discussed critically. An argument was made in favour of producing materials based on authentic data, rather than those containing authentic tasks or texts.

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Professionalisation in English Language Teaching: The development of a discourse community

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A series of changes is currently taking place in English language teaching in Mexico, and one term that might describe the process is *professionalisation*. A particular conception of professionalism in teaching which was developed by Hoyle (1975) is relevant to the case. This conception of professionalism can be linked to the concept of discourse community (Swales 1990), and it can be shown that the construct of discourse community is able to illuminate the processes by which individuals who have the same work activity might come to see themselves, and come to be seen by others, as a united professional group. This discussion throws light on the importance of relationships between local and global discourse communities.

Introduction: A time of change

There has recently been much discussion of the rapid changes that are taking place in the field of English language teaching in Mexico. One term that is used to describe the changes is *professionalisation* and this term reflects a particular view of the direction of those changes; it is descriptive, and yet it is also representative of aspirations. In this introduction it is not my intention to enumerate or to examine in detail the specific changes that are taking place, but rather to discuss the process of change itself.

Investigations into change in other educational systems may be relevant to the situation in Mexico. In a paper on recent developments in British schools, Osborne (1990) alleges that in order for any educational change to be effectively managed, it is not enough to focus on particular goals; there is also a requirement to consider changes to structures and processes. This is because change is an ongoing process; it is to say the least unlikely that a grand solution will ever be found that will solve our problems once and for all. It is of limited value to achieve one specific change; what we need to develop is a generic capacity for changing well and appropriately.

Such a generic capacity could only come about by a focus on structures and processes; this is true for individual institutions, and also for wider fields of

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activity. In either context, the possession of a high-quality idea is not in itself a guarantee of successful change. Success depends not only on the quality of the idea, but also, vitally, on a continuing commitment to quality of implementation.

The demand for continuing quality in change brings with it a drive towards professionalisation. Professionalisation both leads to, and results from, a focus on structures and processes, and as such it can empower the community to take control of change.

A View of Professionalism

Having sketched out the background, it is now appropriate to consider a concrete view of what professionalism is. One way to do this is to look at the interactions between the individual practitioner and the wider community or organisation. This is the approach taken by Hoyle (1975) who develops a dual model of professionalism in the context of education. Hoyle focuses particularly on teachers' activities, and he uses the term *professionalism* to emphasise the dynamism of his interpretation. Hoyle's model is as follows:

<u>Restricted Professionalism</u>	<u>Extended Professionalism</u>
Skills derived from experience	Skills derived from a mediation between experience and theory
Perspective limited to the immediate in time and place	Perspective embracing the broader social context of education
Classroom events perceived in isolation	Classroom events perceived in relation to school's policies and goals
Introspective with regard to methods	Methods compared with those of colleagues and with reports of practice
Value placed on autonomy	Value placed on professional collaboration
Limited involvement in non-teaching professional activities	High involvement in non-teaching professional activities (especially teacher's centres, subject associations, research)
Infrequent reading of professional literature	Regular reading of professional literature
Involvement in in-service work limited and confined to practical courses	Involvement in in-service work extensive and including courses of a theoretical nature
Teaching seen as an intuitive activity	Teaching seen as a rational activity

(Hoyle 1975: 318; also quoted in Osbourne 1990: 13)

There are some important points to make about this model. Firstly, it would be simplistic to suppose that the left-hand column should be seen as wholly undesirable and the right-hand column as wholly desirable. Professionalism itself is not a unitary concept, and we should not *automatically* assume that it is *a good thing*.

Secondly, it should be remembered that the model represents ideal types only. It is not suggested that an individual practitioner would conform exactly to one column or to the other. As teachers we are likely to feel that aspects of both columns are applicable to us, in different working contexts and at different stages of our careers.

Having considered the above points, I would like to go on to suggest that there is one underlying theme of the model which is of particular relevance to the present discussion: and that is the left-hand column's emphasis on isolation, and the right-hand column's emphasis on collaboration. Osborne (1990) suggests that if we are to have autonomy and influence beyond the immediate context of the classroom, it is necessary to engage in a process of movement from the restricted to the extended approach to professionalism. Such a movement implies the forging of closer professional links and the ongoing development of the professional community.

The Concept of Discourse Community

In order to examine the notion of a professional community more closely, I intend in this section to introduce Swales' (1990) characterisation of a discourse community. I will relate Swales' characterisation to the ELT context in Mexico and to Hoyle's model discussed above.

For Swales, "discourse communities are socio-rhetorical networks that form in order to work towards sets of common goals" (p. 9). So it is already clear that the notion of discourse community, unlike that of speech community, for example, contains an idea of *intentional* formation, joining and belonging.

Let us now look in detail at the characteristics of a discourse community as defined by Swales (1990). He lists six characteristics, which will be discussed briefly in turn.

1. A discourse community has a broadly agreed set of common public goals.

There may be dissension, within the community, regarding the best way to go about these goals. The goals themselves, however, are likely to be reasonably specific and they are likely to represent agreement at paradigm level. The perception of shared goals and a shared paradigm may provide individual professionals

with the "perspective embracing the broader social context..." which Hoyle (above) associates with extended professionalism.

2. A discourse community has mechanisms of intercommunication among its members.

The importance of this characteristic cannot be overemphasised. In Mexico, a certain number of mechanisms of intercommunication in the field of ELT are well established; many more have developed comparatively recently, and still others are planned. The mechanisms are varied in nature but they all have the same effect: they allow the members of this emerging discourse community to advocate and to reinforce the notion of its existence. In this sense, recognition is strength.

3. A discourse community uses its participatory mechanisms primarily to provide information and feedback to its members.

Membership is therefore explicitly linked to the uptake of informational opportunities. Uptake provides opportunities for exchange, and exchange in turn provides the substance for intellectual growth and debate within the community. Uptake is the individual's link to the local community and via that to sister communities in other parts of the world.

4. A discourse community utilises and hence possesses one or more genres in the communicative furtherance of its aims.

Genres are the ways in which a discourse community uses language to get its business done. Genres may be written or spoken: academic articles, conferences, teachers' meetings and newsletters are all examples. It is important to realise that genres are subject to constraints, both in terms of form and in terms of content. A discourse community by its nature has discursual expectations, perhaps about the appropriacy of topics, or about the precise roles of texts. The important interplay between genre and discourse community expectations will be discussed in more detail below.

5. In addition to owning genres a discourse community has acquired some specific lexis.

All EFL teachers regularly use lexical items which would be puzzling to those who do not belong to our profession. Such lexis has both a group solidarity function, and a professional communication function. First, the fact that we understand and use it helps us to feel like a group when we meet and interact. Secondly, it gives us intellectual access to the thoughts of members of the global EFL discourse community, and a common baseline for sharing our thoughts with them, even when opportunities for meeting are limited.

6. *A discourse community has a threshold level of members with a suitable degree of relevant content and discursal expertise.*

Anyone who is involved in teacher education in Mexico has a direct responsibility for socialising new members into the emerging discourse community of the Mexican EFL profession. The strength and vitality of the emerging community depends directly on the success of this process; discourse in a community is a means of maintaining and extending the group's knowledge (Herzberg 1986, cited in Swales 1990).

This sixth and final characteristic makes it clear that the concept of discourse community includes a rather strong notion of gate-keeping; and this idea in turn is commonly associated with increasing professionalism. The consequences, positive and negative, of such a gate-keeping function will be discussed in more detail below.

Having considered the characteristics of a discourse community in some detail, it will also be illuminating to think about what a discourse community *not*. We have seen that discourse communities grow out of fields of activity which individuals share; but a number of people all doing the same thing do not necessarily constitute a discourse community. Swales (1990; 25) examines this issue in the guise of "The Cafe Owner Problem." he asks: Suppose there are three cafe owners, all doing substantially similar work in the same town, even with some of the same clientele, but who have no contact among themselves. Can they be said to constitute a discourse community? The answer, for all that these three people have in common, is no: their lack of established methods of intercommunication makes it impossible for them to have shared communicative goals.

The cafe owners' situation relates directly to Hoyle's model. Hoyle's extended professionalism depends on the kind of professional network that a discourse community can provide; without such a network, practitioners are forced to work in isolation.

Genres

What does a professional network consist of, in concrete terms? To examine this question it is useful to relate Swales' concept of genre to Hoyle's extended professionalism. Hoyle (above) makes reference to "reading of professional literature", to "in-service work" and to "non-teaching professional activities" such as "subject associations" and "research". As will be seen below, these communicative events can be thought of as genre-based activities.

Swales (1990) emphasizes that "the main feature that turns a collection of communicative events into a genre is a shared set of communicative purposes" (p. 46). Goals, not content or form, are the essential criterion. The ELT community

in Mexico is giving rise to an increasing number of communicative events, such as conferences or newsletters / journals, which are representative of local discourse community goals and which can therefore be thought of as genre-based.

In any context, the relationship between genres and discourse community activities is symbiotic: they feed from each other and shape each other. It can thus be seen that the development of genres in Swales' sense is at once a goal of professionalisation, and a tool to help achieve it.

Cultural and Professional Values

It was stated above that genres tend to be constrained, in terms of form and in terms of content. These constraints are significant because they provide information about the cultural and professional values of the community which owns the genres.

As a discourse community develops and its networks strengthen, there may be an increasing tendency for its genres to become fixed. We might argue that the more established a community is, the more pressure there is for an individual to show that they can conform before they are allowed membership--and certainly before they are allowed to make changes. So the affinity that an individual feels for the values of a discourse community becomes an important issue.

The concept of discourse community is a unifying concept. It emphasises shared expectations and participation, and as such it has strong implications of conformity and convention. But Raftery (1990) poses an important question: Does the concept obscure all the variety and all the conflict that exist in actual, real communities?

Real discourse communities are full of dynamic forces, power struggles and pressures for change. These struggles arise precisely because discourse communities are not *only* networks for information exchange and for the disinterested furtherance of science; rather, they are "organised around the production and legitimisation of particular forms of knowledge and social practice at the expense of others, and they are not ideologically innocent" (Chase, quoted in Raftery 1990; 146)

Raftery's points have a clear application in the context of this paper. We can see that the "forms of knowledge" and the "social practices" supported by the emerging and the established discourse community in this case will include specific views about the nature of teaching as an activity; about the purposes of education; and about the descriptive and explanatory adequacy of different ways of looking at language.

The question, then, is clear: Does increasing professionalisation necessarily mean increased standardisation? To what extent will it be possible, for an individual or for a small group, or have their voices heard in the community if their way of speaking does not fit with that of the orthodoxy? In short, how can a discourse community ensure that it continues to be dynamic and so to benefit from all the variety that exists within it? Such questions have no simple answer but they do point towards a particular intellectual attitude. Rafoth (1990) suggests that discourse community members should seek to *understand*, not merely to imitate, conventions; in doing so, he suggests, we will be able to unmask and hence have the possibility to weaken the control which they exert. We are all capable of critically examining our own roles in the system of social reproduction, and this examination may in fact empower us to change the structures of that system.

It is doubtless inevitable that an academic discourse community will have power structures, that it will develop an intellectual orthodoxy, that there will be a socialisation process for novices, and that outsiders will be kept outside. From the point of view of professionalisation, all this might even be seen as desirable. But recognition of a general trend should not prevent us from examining in detail the processes of that trend and the structures which it is engendering, and from taking positive action where this seems to be appropriate.

An academic community which is prepared to engage in critical self-examination will be more dynamic intellectually and better grounded socially; it will be more effective at serving both the needs of its members and the needs of the wider society of which those members are also a part.

Conclusion: Relationships between local and global discourse communities

This paper has talked about the discourse community of Mexican EFL teachers / researchers. But of course, there is also a wider discourse community of EFL teachers and researchers all over the world, and individuals, whether in Mexico or elsewhere, may have direct membership in that group. This last statement should make it immediately obvious that there are many different ways of belonging.

Probably the most widespread form of belonging is that which relates to the reading of professional books and journals or attendance at educational events; by interacting with the wider discourse community an individual becomes aware of its ideas and has the possibility to assimilate them, whether passively or creatively. A second form of belonging involves the individual in a more equal mode of interaction with the ideas of the established discourse community. He or she uses ideas as the starting point for local research, so that any resulting practice will be fully informed by the local context. A third form of belonging is

achieved when the individual gains a forum for his or her research within the wider discourse community; for example, by publishing in one of the established journals of the community.

I would suggest that it is only via the third form of belonging that one has any possibility of shaping and influencing the wider discourse community. It therefore stands to reason that if the people in a given local group want the wider discourse community to take account of them, then they need to have a significant number of their members contributing to the wider discourse community in the third way described above.

That is why the *development* and *growth* of the local discourse community is so important. Not only does such development provide for the continuing intellectual development of established members and for the education of new ones, but it also allows the local group to develop a unique approach to its subject of study: an approach which is grounded in an individual context and yet which is sufficiently well-researched and well-documented so that those who do not belong to its native context can still assess its relevance to themselves.

Any local community which develops such an approach will be very well placed to increase the profile of those of its members who are already active contributors to the wider discourse community, and to allow some members who are not yet contributing, to begin to do so. The wider discourse community will thus be able to benefit from the increasing professionalisation of a particular local group.

These last points suggest an active and an optimistic interpretation of the term "professionalism", on which I would like to end. Readers of this paper are invited to consider whether increased participation in the wider professional community could, paradoxically, be one of the keys to increased prestige at home.

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Oral Presentations as a Communicative Activity

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The skill of public speaking has been for the most part overlooked in our adult level EFL classrooms. English teachers have been so concerned with the linguistic preparation of our learners that we have forgotten to provide them with the chance to use the language for more than answering a teacher-directed question, participate in group work or give a random opinion during the class. The ability to give an oral presentation is a necessary skill for any professional or future professional and especially now in Mexico; it can help expand and practice those linguistic skills that teachers are so interested in developing. Also, repeated exposure to classroom oration fosters self-confidence, practices clear articulation, cultivates better library research skills, promotes careful preparation for the use of the language, provides authentic listening practice and motivates the students to communicate.

Some teachers may already be including student presentations in their courses but many do little more than assign a topic and provide class time. Most EFL teachers have been well-trained in the grammatical code and the teaching of the English language but few are aware of the aspects involved in the instruction of public speaking. This is possibly because it has always been considered a skill principally for native speakers and the texts tend to ignore it as a worthwhile EFL ability. Oral presentations can be acquired by the student as systematically as any other point on your syllabus and with a lot more fun and genuine communication being used. As to teaching methodology, all four language skills are present in the preparation and delivery of the speech. When the students are familiar with the aspects of oral presentations, the classroom becomes more learner-centered and the teacher is free to act as a resource person while the students prepare their speeches.

The remainder of this article will briefly discuss the most important aspects of public speaking that are necessary for the teacher and young adult or adult EFL students to know in order to initiate the skill in the classroom. Following this discussion, some suggestions for classroom practice activities which the teacher can easily adapt or expand in order to design new classroom speaking activities will be mentioned.

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Important Aspects to Consider

Adequate preparation for a speech is much more than insisting that the students visit a library to gather material and the organizing of that material. Good preparation involves understanding the audience and the occasion for the speech, identifying the purpose and correctly organizing the material to transmit the purpose to that particular audience for that specific occasion. It even involves choosing the correct kinds of visuals to transmit the ideas and being aware of one's particular body language idiosyncrasies when presenting in front of the group. It is the responsibility of the L2 speech instructor to aid the students in understanding and applying all these points.

Context

Conversations differ depending on where you are, what you are doing and with whom you are. A conversation between two lovers on a park bench is quite different from two friends having a discussion about a football game or the formal discourse between a teacher and a student. As the context changes so does the content and the manner with which it is given. In the same way, speeches differ with the context. According to Pearsall and Cunningham (1982: 319) when we refer to speech context, we usually are referring to **occasion** and **audience**.

When required to speak in front of a group it is a good idea to find out as much about the occasion as possible. We should make our students aware of the following questions about the occasion. How many speakers will there be? Where will your speech fit into the program? What is the purpose for the occasion? What will they expect from you? How many people are expected to attend? What are the restrictions of the room? Will they have the equipment you need for your speech?

They will also need to find out as much as possible about the audience (Pearsall and Cunningham: 321-322). How closely do they relate to the audience and vice/versa? The answer to this question will determine the level of formality for their speech. How much does the audience know about the topic? Their level of expertise will allow the speaker to correctly choose at what level (low high or high level of content knowledge) to prepare the speech. What does the audience expect of the speaker? Do they want to learn or be entertained?

After determining these variables, the mode of speech can be chosen. The four basic types are impromptu (spur-of-the-moment with no rehearsal time), memorized (speeches that must be repeated many times), written (for politicians or businessmen who do not want to make a misstatement), or extemporaneous (prepared, rehearsed beforehand but not read nor memorized). The mode the speaker chooses is determined by his occasion and audience.

Purpose and content

Determining the purpose for giving the speech also determines the content. In other words, if a speech is designed to persuade the audience that a product or method of doing something is better than what they are using or doing, the content of the speech should be organized around the positive elements not the negative. In general, most purposes for speeches are either to inform, persuade, amuse or welcome. In fact, most speeches contain two or more of these elements, but with only one principle purpose. When the purpose is clear, then the specific content can be chosen always focusing on the needs and expectations of the audience.

Organization

The preceding considerations will affect the organization of the material presented in the speech. The speaker needs to let the audience know what to expect and how the information will be presented. Once they have a good idea of the organization they can better organize the information. The majority of students are aware of preparing first an introduction and lastly a concluding remark to their paragraphs/compositions, however, they will need to be taught that these differ in speeches. First the use of attention-getting devices probably needs to be mentioned to students. Also, the idea of identifying the topic and purpose, letting the audience know what to expect from the speech and how the speaker plans to present his information by stating the order of the subdivisions of the body will probably need explicit class time teaching.

In most speeches for the purpose of EFL students the body of the presentation will be organized along a general to specific plan. Since most programs teach main ideas (generalizations) and examples (supporting evidence), this type of format should pose the fewest problems. There are other types of speeches that do not follow the general-specific organization, such as process descriptions or analytical business reports, but these should be approached after the students have acquired a higher level of "speech proficiency".

A conclusion in a longer more formal speech usually consists of a short summary of the main points to leave the listeners thinking of the entire picture rather than the last details. This arrangement uses the natural tendency of the audience to listen more carefully at the beginning, and at the end to remember what they have heard last (Sherman and Johnson 1975: 304-305). Recommendations and/or a concluding statement should also be taught for analytical or persuasive speeches. The students must learn that for no reason will they end by simply saying: "That's all!!!"

Visual aids

As in reading or writing a long report, visuals are indispensable in speaking in front of a group. They add variety and interest to the presentations, support and clarify the points being made, keep the audience's attention and provide the support the speaker needs to support and clarify a point being made. Visual aids come in many shapes and sizes. There are movies, slides, acetates, drawings or charts and graphs, handouts, etc. The main point to remember is that they are only aids and not substitutes for the talk.

There are three important criteria for the preparation and judging of visuals: visibility, simplicity and clarity, and control (Connolly 1968: 54-55). Visibility refers to the fact that the visual does no good to the speaker or the audience if it cannot be seen. For this reason the speaker must be especially careful of electronic equipment since it is not unusual for the lights to go off or the plugs not to work at the most critical times. The blackboard can be useful for impromptu speeches but it is time consuming and tends not to be well-executed during a prepared speech. The cheapest visuals and in many cases the best for classroom purposes are hand drawn posters or flip charts. However, the speaker must be careful to make the letters large enough to be seen. The rule indicates that each letter or number must be a half inch in height for each 20 feet of distance. Also an inappropriate choice of color, such as yellow or pink, that no one can see at a distance, can ruin the best prepared speech.

Clarity and simplicity means that the audience should be able to glance quickly at the printed material and immediately understand its meaning. For this reason many diagrams, charts or tables are perfect in magazines where the reader has time to study them to derive meaning, but they would be disastrous as a poster. The poster must be simple and uncomplicated in order to transmit a clear idea. Even though a visual may not be complicated, the speaker must not forget to point out all its salient features. This will enable the audience to understand it faster and the speaker will not lose contact with them if they are focusing on the chart while the speaker continues on to another point. For this reason, the visual aid should be withdrawn from view as soon as the speaker has completed discussing the information it illustrates.

In visuals, control refers to the control of the audience through a well prepared and used visual. A properly made visual will increase the audience's concentration on the speaker and the speech and draw attention to the points that the speaker emphasizes and wants the audience to understand. Also, the visuals assist the speaker in presenting the speech. If the speaker forgets what point is to be covered next, he only needs to glance at the posters in order to remind himself of the order. The factor of audience attention is a reason why handouts should be

avoided. The audience cannot listen or understand well while passing out the papers, and few can resist reading the handout instead of listening.

Body language

The aspect of body language in public speaking is possibly one of the most difficult for students to acquire. They may be totally aware of what they should and should not do, but at the moment of the actual presentation, they become nervous and commit exactly the error that they told themselves not to do. This instructor has had the most success in teaching this point by first dividing the most important errors made into three areas (listed below), having a class discussion concerning examples of specific errors usually made in these areas, acting them out in the front of the group and finally providing student suggested topics to practice with short (1-2 minutes) impromptu speeches during which time the other class members will note body language problem areas. These peer evaluations are written anonymously on small pieces of paper with the speaker's name on the outside and left on the teacher's desk for the speakers to collect after the class. Peer comments are very valuable in correcting problem areas; perhaps more so than teacher comments. Also, this method works very well for practicing any of the aforementioned aspects of oral presentations.

This author has subdivided the area of body language into what she has found to be the three most problematic areas: eye contact, voice and body movements. Good eye contact is a difficult skill to acquire quickly because if they make correct eye contact they realize how many are in the audience which, in turn, makes them nervous and they could forget their speech. Eye contact requires practice in being in front of a group. However, it does help to give an alternative to those who cannot at first look at their classmates while giving a presentation. If, in a small class, they practice looking at a point just over the tops of the heads of the audience, they will not make eye contact nor will they see their classmates looking at them. This is not as noticeable for the audience as staring at a light bulb on the ceiling or looking out the door while speaking although it is not the most advisable technique to continue with. With practice and more self-confidence the speaker can improve.

The area of the control of voice quality is also an important point. If the audience cannot hear the speaker due to poor articulation or if the speech contains too many "uhh's", "ahh's", or "este's" the message is affected. Serious problems in this area do not occur with all students and after evaluating which students need the most assistance, special help can be provided after class or while others are working in groups. This point will also become more acceptable through teacher guidance, peer evaluations and practice.

Excessive body movements by the speaker are also a distraction for the audience. In this category, among other errors, fall moving watches, rings or bracelets, pacing back and forth while speaking, and exaggerated hand movements. Also, the lack of body movement can be considered an error because the audience does not wish to see a speaker who stands as stiff as a statue and does not move at all. The best advice to give students is that any movement in excess is not recommendable during a speech.

Perhaps the most important aspect of body language is the speaker's attitude which is almost impossible to disguise. It will show in the speaker's choice of words, in posture, gestures, and tone of voice. Fear of speaking to an audience is a feeling that every speaker has felt and is common even after years of practice. This "fear" can be avoided in two ways. First, a speaker must be confident in the knowledge of the material that they will present. This knowledge can be gained by practice and reviewing all the pertinent information until they have no doubts about it. Second, the speaker should have no doubt about the value or interest of the information to the audience. The confidence they gain also helps them avoid the distracting mannerisms that many people have when they first begin public speaking.

Grading Methodology

Assigning a number or letter grade to any student as a final product for all their effort in a course is always a frustrating process and often more a sad than a happy one. Grading oral presentations as with any grading tends to be very subjective unless we, the teachers, provide the control in the form of an evaluation form such as the one provided in the appendix. The author has found that the use of grading forms where all the elements taught are included and which all the students have had prior access to is a more desirable alternative. This makes the teachers' job easier and eliminates or at least lessens the possibility of grading students lower or higher than they deserve due to teacher subjectivity.

The sample evaluation form provided in the appendix is one that this teacher uses because it best reflects the areas which are the most emphasized in her class and the value of the assigned points she has found to be best. Each teacher should design one that would best fit his or her particular situation.

Classroom Practice Activities and Ideas

Obviously a teacher wishing to include oral presentation activities in their classrooms would not make the first speech a 10-15 minute presentation concerning a complicated topic in their professions or possible future careers. As with all teaching we should follow the simple to difficult pattern and the known to unknown arrangement of material and skills. The impromptu speeches being rather

simple to execute and needing less preparation time can provide a wealth of worthwhile but fun practice. The best way for the teacher to acquire a variety of topics of impromptu speaking that the students would be interested in is to do the obvious and ask the students. Of course, it may be necessary for you to help make their suggestions more specific since it would be difficult for a student to organize and discuss in two minutes the topic of *Pollution*; however, he could if given the topic of *The worst causes of air pollution in Mexico City*. All the topics would require a personal opinion so there is no right or wrong and they should be topics that all members of the class know something about and are interested in. As previously mentioned, the impromptu speeches should always be anonymously peer evaluated, not teacher evaluated. The evaluations should be restricted to specific points that the class has been discussing, such as the area of introductions or body language.

Another form of practicing for speeches would be by using role plays of parts of speeches to aid in reducing the jitters during the actual speeches. For example, after the aspect of speech introductions has been taught, two students can be chosen to prepare a two-minute introduction for a speech which they can read to the class. Each should exemplify the correct organization of an introduction, but each should have a content and purpose that are different. For example, one student could exemplify a correct introduction for a literary meeting of a neighborhood ladies' club and the other also a correct introduction, but for a totally different audience, such as a convention of mechanics expecting to learn new techniques for working on computerized cars. The audience (class) who was not told what type of introduction to expect would determine for whom each introduction was meant and discuss how it could be made better. They should especially include in their discussion the considerations of occasion, audience, content, and purpose as well as organization. This type of activity can also be used for practicing conclusions and body organization.

Role play can also be used as a fun practice for body language. Several students can work as a group preparing one speech (1-2 minutes); however, each will choose different body language problem areas to exemplify while they read the speech. The audience's job is to locate those errors for discussion later.

In order to practice making visuals the teacher can give one topic for the entire class, divide the class into small groups of 2-3 in order to allow students to plan their visuals and during the next class period they can make their posters. The purpose is to see which group has the best visuals as decided by class vote. The criteria would, of course, be the same as discussed in class.

Each time aspects of oral presentations are practiced in the classroom, even though the assignments increase in difficulty, the students become more confident and feel more at ease in the front of the group. Another interesting idea

is product descriptions for pair or small group presentations. As a basis, new product blurbs from weekly magazines, such as *Time* or *Newsweek*, can be used. Again the class should be divided but each time into smaller groups to allow more opportunity for each student to be in front of the class. Each pair or group is given a description of a product that has been cut from one of the magazines. They must prepare a description of the product and of its manner of operation without providing its name. If the students have already studied processes and their descriptions for a writing class, then the same format or outline can be used, but for oral presentations. If not, the teacher should provide one or help the students develop it, depending on the level of the students. At this point in their preparation, students should face the audience and give their portion of the description without the aid of notes since they should have visuals and need not speak for more than two or two and a half minutes each. If the members of the class cannot identify the product, audience questioning should be encouraged until it is correctly named.

The next step requires more creative thinking and must be done in small groups of 2-4 students. They must develop their own ideas for wacky inventions, describe them, using visuals, and produce television commercials for their products which, of course, are acted out in front of the class. Again this activity involves the use of the four skills and can be fun for all, since by this time the members of the class feel comfortable with each other and with being in the front of an audience. They are not in competition with the others and want to produce the most original product.

The final step to more formal, analytical extemporaneous presentations depends on the particular circumstances of each setting. The best situation would be close access to a library containing books, magazines and professional journals; however, many students may already have materials in their homes, since the topics should be about fields they are interested in. If a library is to be used, the instructor may need to incorporate library skills into the course before beginning.

Each teacher must set the restrictions concerning minimum length, number of sources to be used, types of visuals, topics, etc. depending on their situation and goals. Students should bring their necessary materials to the classroom so the work can be done with the teacher present in case of problems. The students should be required to only organize their speech using a specific outline and not to write out the speech since there is too great a chance that the student will attempt to memorize it. The use of notecards consisting of a simplified outline should be encouraged during the presentation. Above all, the teacher should encourage the students to develop an informal extemporaneous speech, one in which the speaker expresses himself in an honest and candid personal manner.

Conclusion

Public speaking is a skill that improves with practice and students need ample opportunity to perfect it. Classroom motivation also improves as the skill is polished and the students see the activity as a chance for genuine communication as the language class becomes more learner-centered. It is not necessary that oral presentations be the center of the curriculum, but should be included as one element of the program that complements the others. A good speech depends on the same careful use of the linguistic rules that all the other skills require. Using oral presentations in your classes during the course can provide an optional means of using the second language in a relevant and enjoyable activity.

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Appendix

Oral Report Evaluation Form

Name _____ Time Began _____ Time Ended _____

Topic _____

I. Content (60 pts)

Introduction:

The topic identified without being explicitly stated (5) _____
 Indicated the order to be discussed in the body (5) _____

Body:

Logical order (5) _____
 Smooth transition (5) _____
 Vocabulary not at a high level (5) _____
 Grammar not disruptive (5) _____
 Knew the topic well (5) _____
 Explained the topic completely (5) _____

Conclusion:

Ending anticipated without being directly stated (5) _____
 Short summary provided (5) _____
 Conclusion or recommendations given (5) _____

Time limit: (8-10 minutes)
 respected (5) _____

II. Posters (30 pts)

Visibility (10) _____
 Simplicity and clarity (10) _____
 Control (10) _____

III. Body Language (10 pts)

Eye contact (4) _____
 Body movements (too little/too much) (3) _____
 Voice (high/low/ahh's/etc.) (3) _____

IV. Other comments:

Grade _____

Interview with Chris Joslin, English Language Officer at the British Council in Mexico ¹

NEVIN SIDERS, MEXTESOL ²

MEXTESOL Journal: What does the British Council have to offer Mexico?

Chris Joslin: I am part of a team of over twelve people, Mexican and British, with a lot more experience in Mexico than I have. Six of these are based in Mexico City and six have a regional remit, three of them living in the cities of Mérida, Monterrey and Guadalajara, and another three around the Mexico City area who service the states in the middle of Mexico. Teacher training is our *forté*. I think British expertise is fairly well known, and Mexicans have developed and adapted our best practices to produce a very high quality training capacity here. My predecessor and this team have demonstrated this in developing a very close relationship, both with the Ministry of Education, the SEP, and the state universities.

Currently we are working on a three branch program. One branch concerns a range of programs which enable Mexican teachers in the universities to study for British language teacher training degrees here in Mexico. They can study either purely by distance, in the case of one of our Master's programs, or by attending two three-week modules each year, basically over a period of two and a half years; this enables Mexican teachers--without leaving Mexico--to get British qualification. This program ranges from diplomas through Bachelor's up to Master's degrees. Currently we're probably covering about 150 teachers nationwide in this way.

Secondly, we have a much bigger problem of certificates for overseas teachers of English awarded by the University of Cambridge, like the COTE. About 750 teachers throughout the country have been involved in this program over the last three years. Again, these are mainly from the state universities, and again, the support of SEP has been crucial in underpinning this program.

And then the third stream of our activity, with the SEP and the universities, is in advising on how to install and equip new self-access centers which all the state universities are setting up. As you know, the principle of self-directed learning is new in many countries; and even where countries *say* they have intro-

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² This interviewed took place on March 8, 1995 in Mexico City.

duced it, some of the problems and benefits are not always well understood. So, we're really working very closely with the administrators of these centers at the beginning and with the teachers who will work with the students who use the centers, advising them on how best to incorporate this new resource into their own methodology, on how to prepare materials, how to set up pathways that students can follow through the materials, and how best to conduct the interviewing and counseling that has to go on in a very exciting pilot project.

And so, these three areas keep our team very busy. Most of the teacher training, which all of these programs involve, is done by our regional representatives, the six people that I talked about. Of course, for the British degree programs, the British universities send their own permanent lecturing staff here about twice a year to conduct courses. Our team here exists to support that, to provide the liaison, some moderating and observation, so that it becomes a coherent program. And, we offer as much help as possible to the individual students taking these courses.

MJ: Which of the university-level institutions are you supporting?

Joslin: Well, in the Estado de México, for example, we would be working with the University in Toluca and then we would be with the University in Pachuca, and in Tlaxcala, and in Puebla at the state universities. There's at least one university in every state that we're working with at the moment with the support of the SEP [*Secretaría de Educación Pública*].

MJ: SEP public schools at the seventh-to-twelfth grade levels (*secundaria* and *preparatoria*) are implementing required foreign language courses in English and French. Is the Council lending any support to this effort?

Joslin: Yes, in a number of ways. Not with such a concerted national effort as the one I've described, but we have a parallel range of events which we open to all practicing teachers. We have about six regional conferences each year, and a big event, one of which was just held in Mexico City called the "Best of British"--in which we bring together all these sectors. So, we're certainly in contact with people at secondary level. In some of the courses, like the COTE courses that I mentioned at the state universities, we have had the participation of individual teachers who are involved both in the university and in the *prepa*, or even in the *secundaria*.

So, we've had contacts at the individual level. And we've run the odd, one-off, specialist seminar for *jefes de enseñanza* at both secondary and primary level. But, none of this has constituted an area of work quite as big as what we've been doing with the universities. Obviously, as the power to commit resources is being

increasingly decentralized, and developed in Mexico to the state level, it's much more complicated to arrange a national program at secondary or primary levels.

But we're very keen to make the expertise that we've been developing available more widely, if we can. And we have, as I say, one-off conferences and specialist courses of different types which we offer to teachers, basically, at any level. It is possible, that as time passes we may be increasingly involved at the secondary level.

Obviously, if you're trying to address a national problem (if it's perceived as being a problem) or a national requirement, for example that of making more and more Mexicans competent in English, then--if you want to make a quick, effective start--it's better to start where the size of the population you're dealing with is smaller, and where they can have a trickle-down effect (*Joslin spreads his hands out like two spiders reaching across a web*) on far more people, than it is to start where the pool is that much bigger. And I think the thinking of the SEP and the universities was actually very wise and far-sighted in this respect when they started off these programs with us.

Although the focus is on the universities, it is clear that the training is actually going to trickle down, because you have teachers in the universities who are involved in other areas. They will set up events in their regions which will bring in teachers from these other areas, until gradually awareness levels will build up, and I think, as more and more resources get committed at state level, there will be opportunities for states to know more precisely what kind of training they need and come to people like ourselves and others who offer this support.

MJ: Do you, or would you, also offer services to private schools and institutes?

Joslin: Oh, yes! We don't restrict our attention to the state sector. But I think our overriding priority has been to assist the state system, by setting up of kind of national framework, which has given I think an impetus to the whole profession here.

Of course, the relationship between "public" and "private" is now more complicated than it was five or six years ago. You may find--certainly in other countries, and this may well be the future here--public entities contracting their work out to private ones, and obviously the very rigid split that there was between public and private no longer quite holds.

So, we're basically interested in working with anyone in the profession who shares our objective of trying to raise the quality of English teaching, the status of the teachers, their conditions, their possibilities for professional advancement, their security; all of these things we are interested in assisting, as well

as the final objective of improving the quality of English the students who are leaving school and entering the job market will be able to use in their careers.

So, although our emphasis has been in the state sector, obviously we're willing to work with partners from wherever they come to help improve the level of English teaching in Mexico.

MJ: What are the periodicals of the British Council?

Joslin: Published from this office we have our British Council *Mexico Newsletter*. And then there's another newsletter, *Network News*, which is edited by Pat Grounds and published by the self-access team under the SEP project. And we also have newsletters and publications that come from England, and the head office, such as the *Literature Matters*, that I mentioned.

And if any of your readers are interested in seeing what these are like, I'd be very grateful if they'd write to us. We always need some evidence that there's a demand for the things that we are producing. And if people write in, then I can say, "Yes, we need to order more of these from London!"

I'd just like to add that the area of literature and literature teaching is one that's always interested me particularly. And I do think that particularly among the teaching force we do need to work to improve their access to and knowledge of some of the things that deepen their knowledge of the language. Now these may be partly cultural, may be to do with literature, may be to do with institutions in English-speaking countries. But I think teachers can't get by on just a very *high-protein* diet of methodology and language-focused reading. I think, to be confident in the class, they need to read widely. Otherwise, in the end, I think the kind of language model, perception of the language, that they eventually will offer their students is going to be a limited one.

That's a personal credo. So, I hope we in the Council will be able to offer, over the next year, events which can bring together teachers who'd like to know more about new approaches of teaching, shall we say, language or cultural material, or how using literature texts can help their language teaching; or how they can improve and deepen themselves as teachers by reading more, by finding out what is there that is coming out of Britain and the English-speaking countries; that it is interesting for them to read! Because, what's clear is that production, in English, is very varied and very lively, very rich at the moment. I think there's a lot of potential interest.

MJ: Could you tell us a bit about yourself? Where have you served? What do you like?

Joslin: I was in Mexico between 1977 and 1979 as a teacher in the Anglo, so this is my second visit to Mexico and I'm very lucky to have this opportunity. I wasn't working for the council then. I was a, you know, humble English teacher. After I left Mexico, I went to Portugal, where I worked for the British Council Language Teaching Center, and at the same time I taught literature and basically, language, the interface if you like--at a Portuguese university for about four years.

And after that I went to China, where I worked on a large textbook project. We were designing course books for Chinese university students in English. This was a massive project; a theme-based course covering about forty different subject areas. It was a fascinating experience.

MJ: What were those "subject areas"?

Joslin: Well, basically, they were over things like foreign trade, the environment, travel, sports. Basically areas the Chinese curriculum designers thought their students would need to be able to interact with foreigners.

And then, after that I joined the Council as a career officer. And, in working with the Council since 1987, I've had four different posts. My first one was in London, where for two years I worked in the Literature Department of the Council. This was very much in line with my own particular interests, and I ran two of our conferences there. The main one was "Literature Teaching Overseas", which is held in Oxford every Easter, and that brings together those people who teach literature and those people who teach language, and helps them to see that they have things to learn from each other. And we brought in quite a lot of new methodologies derived from applied linguistics and TEFL, we brought them to bear on the teaching of literature. And the other conference was on critical theory, which was more or less a one-off, but extremely popular at the time. It brought together a lot of people who were curious to know how you could bring deconstructional, reader-response theory to work on the literature that they were teaching to mainly non-native speakers of English. So that was also interesting.

While I was there, I had a marvelous boss, Dr. Harvey Wood, and he made me first editor of the new newsletter, *Literature Matters*. This is now an extremely useful publication that the Council produces about three or four times a year, bringing people overseas up-to-date on literary developments, new publications, and developments of interest to teachers of literature in English.

After that I've had three overseers postings as English Language Officer. Three years, first of all, in Nigeria, where I was largely involved with university programs in English for Academic Purposes. Obviously, English is the official language in Nigeria, although it's a multi-lingual country, very complex linguistically. And it's a fascinating country to work in because of the contact with the fascinating writers that Nigeria has produced and keeps on producing. So literature was still an interesting part of my job there.

Then I went to Peru, where I was for just under two years. Our main involvement there was with the secondary schools through the Ministry of Education. Basically, following up a textbook writing project.

MJ: What ages are covered in "secondary" in Peru?

Joslin: Well, basically the twelve- to fifteen-year-olds. We'd produced some new materials, a course called *Express English*, with the backing of the Overseas Development Administration, which is the aid wing of the British government. And, while I was there, the main thrust of the work was trying to set up a network of teacher training seminars, so that teachers would know how to use these new materials. After two years of Peru, I came here in August.

MJ: You seem to be very interested in literature and I see a quote by poet Emily Dickinson on your wall...

Joslin: Which I didn't put up! (*chuckles*)

MJ: ...and who are some of your favorite authors or periods?

Joslin: It's one of those awfully impossible.... Well, two things, I have some very old-fashioned tastes, and then also some fairly wide, modern ones. When I was in the Literature Department, I had the fortune to have access to the Booker Prize submissions list--after the result had been announced--which were *all* the books sent by *all* the British publishers to the prose adjudicating committee of the Booker Prize, which is probably Britain's most prestigious literary prize. And the shelves were *filled* with books by authors you'd heard of, and first novelists, and people you'd never heard of, and will probably never hear of again! And as I had a long train journey to work, I read voraciously! I don't think I've read so much as during the two years of that job. And what struck me was how amazingly high the overall standard of creativity, and of style actually was in a wide range of very different kinds of writing.

Now, from that list, I could pick out names like Craig McDougall, Jim Crace, Jenni Diski, Jeanette Winterson; those are just four from off the top of my head who wrote extremely powerful and immediately impressing and very eloquent, elegant books. And I think all of them have gone on to establish their reputations since. You would also find odd novels by people who had primarily made their reputations as academics, like the New Zealand critic C. K. Stead, for example, or those who play with the academic mode like Julian Barnes or long-established writers who continue to write challengingly, like Iris Murdoch and Muriel Spark. It was a real ragbag of every kind of writing under the sun and I just read it voraciously cover to cover, and I'd be hard out to say just who my actual favourites are, other than I find, both in poetry and fiction, that what has come out of Ireland and Scotland, and has continued to come out over the last ten years, seems to be the kind of thing that attracts me personally. There are certain traditional lyric strengths and strengths of story-telling which--one has to be careful of falling into this hackneyed stereotyping of racial characteristics--but somebody like George Makay Brown from the Orkneys has this particular, I think, "Celtic" story-telling gift, which I find very attractive. And to read any of his books is pure pleasure. Whereas, again he was, I think on the same Booker short list as James Kelman, who won last year, who writes in a style I think most people would find very difficult and some very unattractive, but he's boldly experimental and is digging away at some of the most painful areas of British experience.

All of this, without mentioning of course the overseas writers, if I can use that word. Ben Okri, for example, is a Nigerian who now really writes in Britain and is part of the British literary scene. His *Famished Road*, of course, won the Booker prize two or three years ago and I read it fresh from Nigeria.

Anyway, I think those two years were a real period of luxury for me in terms of readings from which it's very difficult to pick out actual favorites. If I were to start looking back into the "classics", then I suppose my tastes are very conventional... They would be Shakespeare, Keats, Byron, Hardy, Dickens--who is still a writer for Mexico City and all big cities--and even people like Samuel Johnson, all the famous "dead white males". This century I would think of Edwin Muir and Robert Graves and William Golding as in a sense of classics, if in minor keys. I think I have very conservative tastes on the one hand, and very free tastes on the other. And [there is] nobody that I'm reading *exclusively* at the moment.

MJ: What do you think of the word that is going around here in Mexico that the "whole language" approach is going out of fashion in Europe and that a movement is toward more structured, grammar-centered teaching?

Joslin: Of course, there are fashions in language teaching and there are key topics at all the conferences. But, what we're describing now, is a teaching industry, if one can use that work, that's so enormous and so varied that I think it would be very difficult to say that there were one or even two trends which are predominant. I think there's always been, among some people, strong reservations about the "whole language" teaching approach or an excessive reliance on authentic materials. But I don't think the insights that this kind of teaching has brought are going to go away. And I think it's always rather the case that the intelligent teacher forms individual conclusions on what is appropriate for the situation that teacher is working in and makes a selection of methodologies that the teacher thinks is appropriate. And I think publishers, who are one other important factor in this equation, also will always be keen to offer distinct approaches to teachers. I think teachers have to make their own minds up about the balance they want to strike in their own classes.

I was actually involved in the production of a course using, or purporting to be using, authentic materials as its rationale, this Chinese textbook project I've described to you. I *know* that the very concept of "authentic materials" can be manipulated, and I know that there are all sorts of practical difficulties in actually collecting these and presenting them! There are problems of copyright, which is something we mustn't run away from. There are problems of distorting the original message of the author in some cases. And there are problems of actually getting the amount of text you need onto a page in the textbook because you're bound to make a selection.

I think the more interesting question is: What is the future of the textbook? I think competent teachers have never been the slaves of textbooks, and competent teachers have always been capable of doing good teaching even using badly designed textbooks. I'm not above saying that there are no difficult materials, but I think a really good teacher can rise above poor material.

And one thing that's always interested me, is to try and move away from the dependence of the teacher on a particular course book, and one of the conclusions I drew from working on this textbook project was that it was time to develop databases of material which teachers could pick from and adapt, i. e., that instead of having courses in your class, you would have access to banks of materials produced by teams who might be physically separated. These texts can be called down when you need them, electronically adapted, printed off, used in class, and entered back into the databank. It is a shame that for political and economic reasons it hasn't been achieved more widely than it has. It is something that may now start to develop here in Mexico. Some of the things that have been done with our self-access project might point in that direction.

MJ: Thank you.

Teaching Tips: Choosing the vocabulary we teach

JOANN MILLER, UNIVERSIDAD DEL VALLE DE MÉXICO-TLALPAN

Probably the first step in teaching vocabulary is deciding what vocabulary to teach. Sometimes we are lucky and our textbook includes wonderfully logical vocabulary building activities and we do not have to do anything. However, more often than not, there is no vocabulary component in the text or we, as teachers, feel that maybe students can handle more vocabulary than the textbook writers originally envisioned. Two possible roads are available to us. We can choose the vocabulary we feel the students need or we can let our students do the work for us.

Generally we try to select the vocabulary that we think is both related to the topic being studied and that students probably will be using. So, if we have a unit that includes a restaurant scene, we might want to augment students' vocabulary related to food and ordering a meal; if they study air travel, we may want to include travel vocabulary.

Michael McCarthy (1990), however, has found some difficulties with this topic approach that we should keep in mind if we develop our own vocabulary lists:

1. The "topic" is often difficult to define. What would air travel really include? Being at airports and doing predictable things or also accidents, boredom, reading matter, etc.
2. What vocabulary are the learners really interested in? If we are at an Italian restaurant, we will obviously include spaghetti and pizza in our menus, but are our students *really* interested in eggplant parmesan, even if it is our favorite dish.
3. What about frequency? There are some well-known frequency lists, but these must be used with care. Often the most frequently used words are not the most useful for the learner.

Perhaps the best idea is to let students make up the lists themselves. Not only will they be more relevant for their needs, but the students will also enjoy the process. Here are some ideas for creating these student-generated lists.

Palmberg (1993) suggests giving students a key word, such as *travel*. Students are asked to write ten to fifteen words they associate with this word when they see or hear it. Their associations are then written on the board. It is important to be sure everyone knows the meaning of the words and how they are pronounced. *Voilà!* Your vocabulary list is ready.

Another variation (Sökman 1992) is through the use of "seed words" (which are really the same as *key words*). Students are given magazine pictures and asked to write a description using one new word they do not know in English. They can use bilingual dictionaries or ask the teacher how to say the new word in English. Next, all the pictures are displayed in the front of the class and students read their descriptions while others try to guess which picture was the inspiration. Finally, the "seed words" found by the students are put on the board and explained. One benefit of this method is that students have to find words they do not already know. One disadvantage is that the words usually won't be developed around a specific theme.

Finally, a third method is more individualized and could be useful in university-level or executive classes. Carroll and Mordaunt (1991) suggest encouraging learners to build a "frontier" dictionary of words they feel they will need to know in the future--words that are "on their frontier or verge of mastery" (p. 24). As students are reading and find a word they do not understand, they are asked to create 3x5- or 4x6-inch file cards with information about the word from the dictionary along with the original sentence containing the word and a new sentence written by the student. These cards should be checked occasionally by the teacher and could form part of a "student-generated" vocabulary list which could be later used by the entire group.

Now, we have our vocabulary list, what should we do with it? The next *Teaching Tips* column will give you some ideas.

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Book Review: *More fun than a barrel of monkeys*

David Burke. 1992. Street Talk: How to speak and understand American slang. Los Angeles. Optima Books.

Review by JoAnn Miller

One of the most common requests we get from our students is for *slang*. Unfortunately, many of us--both native and non-native teachers--don't feel qualified to teach the up-to-date slang our students want. Non-native teachers are often not sure exactly how slang expressions should be used and native-speakers (especially those who are distanced from current usage by age or time out of the States) don't always know current slang. We hear it on the television and in songs; we read it in books, but in reality we don't use it. Even if we understand what is being said, we aren't confident enough to use it sufficiently in class to fulfill our students' desires.

Street Talk is a book that can help both students and teachers get up-to-date. It is a part of a series of books dealing with slang in various languages (There are French and Spanish versions as well). A second volume (*Street Talk 2: Slang used by teens, rappers, surfers and popular American television shows*) has recently come out.

This volume consists of ten different lessons dealing with common situations (*At School, At the Party, At the Mall, etc.*). Each lesson begins with a cartoon illustrating part of the vocabulary to be presented. This is followed by a dialog including many slang expressions. It is then repeated again in a standard English version. Here is a fragment of the conversation from the first unit (*At School*): (p. 2-3)

Dialogue in Slang

Anne: You seem really **ticked off**. **What's up?**
Peggy: Just **Get out of my face**, would you?
Anne: **Chill out! What's eating you**, anyway?
Peggy: Sorry. It's just that I think I **blew the final** and now my parents are going to get all **bent out of shape**. I **like** totally **drew a blank** on everything!

Translation of dialogue in standard English

Anne: You seem really **angry**. **What's the matter?**
Peggy: Just **leave me alone**, alright?!
Anne: **Relax! What's the matter with you**, anyway?
Peggy: Sorry. It's just that I think I **failed the final examination** and now my parents are going to get all **upset**. I, **uh**, **couldn't think of any of the answers!**

After the standard English gloss, the conversation is written as it would be spoken: (p. 4)

Anne: You seem really **tict off**. **What's up?**
Peggy: Jus' **ged oudda my face**, would ja?
Anne: **Chill out! What's eatin' you**, anyway?
Peggy: Sorry. It's jus' thad I think I **blew the final'n** now my parents'r gonna ged all **ben' oudda shape**. I **like** todally **drew a blank** on ev'rything.

There is also a cassette available which can be helpful when utilized with the written texts. After the various versions of each conversation, there is a glossary section which defines the terms previously presented. Besides the definitions, relevant notes, synonyms, antonyms and examples are included.

get out of someone's face (to) *exp.* to leave someone alone • *get outta my face! I'm busy!*; Leave me alone! I'm busy!

→ SYNONYM: **to get lost** *esp.* • *Get lost*; Leave me alone!

→ ANTONYM: **to hang [out] with someone** *exp.* to spend time with someone (and do nothing in particular) • *I'm going to hand [out] with Debbie today*; I'm going to spend time with Debbie today.

NOTE: (1) A common shortened version of this expression is "*to hang with someone.*"

NOTE: (2) The expression "*to hang (out)*" is commonly used to mean, "to do nothing in particular." • *Why don't you go without me? I'm just going to stay here and hang (out) today*; Why don't you go without me? I'm just going to stay here and do nothing in particular.

Once the vocabulary has been presented and explained, there are a series of exercises allowing students to practice what they have seen. In general, these exercises are not communicative but do give students practice through multiple choice and matching type drills.

The next section of each lesson is entitled *A Closer Look*. Here students are given more vocabulary used in slang expressions (i.e., fruits and vegetables,

How do you like them apples, body parts, *birdbrain*, colors, *Catch someone red-handed*, proper names, *no way*, *José*) and the first unit offers a very clear explanation of how contractions (really phonetic reductions) are used in slang.

Standard	Common Contraction	Example	Notes
should not have	shouldn'a	You shouldn'a done that.	
some	s'm	Want s'm breakfast?	
what do you	what cha or what chya or wuddy'a	What cha/What chya/Wuddy'a doing?	When wuddy'a is pronounced as two syllables, <i>wud'dya</i> , it becomes past tense. When pronounced as three syllables, <i>wud'dy'a</i> , it changes to present tense. This subtle difference is easily detected by any native-born American.

These *Closer Looks* are also followed by exercises. Answers to all exercises appear at the back of the book, a fact that makes this book useful for independent study.

At the end of each lesson, there is a brief section called *Just for Fun* which presents a paragraph including some of the slang which was just studied, together with a translation into standard English. And at the end of the book there is a glossary of all the slang expression presented in all the dialogues.

While this book works best at an intermediate level, it is possible to simplify the conversations for lower level students. Also, teachers should be warned that while no really "dirty words" are included, some of the dialogues are a bit crude and sexist and should be used with care.

So, why don't you make a bee line for the nearest bookstore and check this book out. Don't stop to grab a bite, hit the road and in no time flat you'll get into slang in a big way.